HOW TO ADDRESS A

SHRINKING

MANUFACTURING WORKFORCE

> **As we celebrate the 40th Anniversary of our Company in 2019, I feel compelled to reflect back on the incredible journey that brings us to this milestone.** — *Kathy Hartung*

THE RESOURCE

As we step into our Company's 40th year in 2019, we begin by digging into the current state of our marketplace, our customers' needs, and how we are doing meeting their needs.

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Best Regards,

Kathy Hartung

Kathy Hartung, CEO

Labor& Industrial INSIGHTS Magazine®

COVER STORY

HOW TO ADDRESS A SHRINKING MANUFACTURING WORKFORCE

BY ALEX OLIVER

Each day, an increasing number of manufacturers find themselves short staffed. Not only is the industry enjoying a period of modest growth, but employees are retiring faster than recruiters can replace them. These conditions are unlikely to change any time soon. If manufacturers are going to figure out how to manage in this new reality, they must become adept at finding new qualified workers quickly. Recruitment teams need to start working on three key areas.

PRIORITIZE EMPLOYER BRANDS

Just over 45 percent of respondents in a recent National Association of Manufacturers survey highlighted "the inability to attract and retain workers . . . as the biggest threat to their business." In fact, nearly three in ten manufacturers have "turned down new business" because they can barely handle their current orders.[1] These numbers highlight a people problem that could have long-term ramifications as manufacturers struggle to maintain and grow their workforces, costing them opportunities and eating into their bottom lines.

To address this problem, manufacturers need to focus on their employer brands and, by extension, their employer value propositions. In the United States, there's considerable nostalgia for manufacturing as a profession. But few people want these jobs today, largely because they have an outdated perception of the industry. Modern manufacturers rely heavily on automation, which has created new job categories beyond the traditional blue-collar ones.

The decline in the number of candidates from younger generations is a clear sign that manufacturing has a serious image problem. Attention-grabbing career portals and social media strategies that highlight benefits, career opportunities, and engaging work cultures go a long way toward helping the industry increase its appeal. But if employers expect to change outdated ideas about what it means to work in manufacturing, they also need to do a much better job of convincing candidates to give the industry a closer look.

LEVERAGE EMPLOYEE REFERRALS

Employee referral technologies are relatively inexpensive to operate and result in consistently high performers. In one recent LinkedIn survey, nearly one-third of respondents counted "employee referral programs" as one of their "top sources of quality hires."[2] Such programs aren't perfect, though, and when problems arise recruitment teams need to assess and resolve them as quickly as possible.

Challenge: Referrals aren't top of mind for employees, because they're focused on their usual day-to-day duties.
Solution: Work with department heads and team leads to schedule time for periodic conversations about referrals.

Challenge: Employees refer candidates outside existing, formal channels.
Solution: Ensure that the referral process is easy and that all employees understand how it works. Provide them with pregenerated posts to make it easier for them to share openings on social media.

Challenge: Referrals are inconsistent across teams and fluctuate over time; participation is sporadic and hard to predict.
Solution: Employees may not be aware of openings outside their immediate teams or business units, so communicate openings across the business regularly and incentivize participation.

Challenge: Employees consistently report that they don't know whom to refer and that few of the candidates they do refer are hired.
Solution: Pull employees' networks into a collective database (with their permission, of course), then use matching technology to pair potential candidates with current and projected openings.

INCREASE WORKFORCE DIVERSITY

Manufacturers have long struggled to diversify their workforces. For example, men make up 53 percent of the overall workforce in the United States yet make up 71 percent of the manufacturing workforce. About four-fifths of the manufacturing workforce identifies as white.[3] Large pockets of older workers are set to retire in the coming years. If manufacturers want to expand (or even just maintain) their workforce numbers, they need to work harder to recruit and retain groups who are typically underrepresented in that industry. That means increased outreach to younger people, women, and minorities—and it means working harder to reduce bias in hiring (by hiding names and photos on resumes, for example).

Manufacturing isn't going anywhere—but if employers aren't careful, their workforces might. As automation increasingly becomes a part of manufacturing processes, the industry needs to attract people with the skills to thrive in a more high-tech environment. Those employees—stuck with outdated perceptions of manufacturing—may not think to give manufacturers a closer look when considering the next steps in their careers. It's up to employers to make job seekers aware of this option and to promote their industry as a desirable career option.

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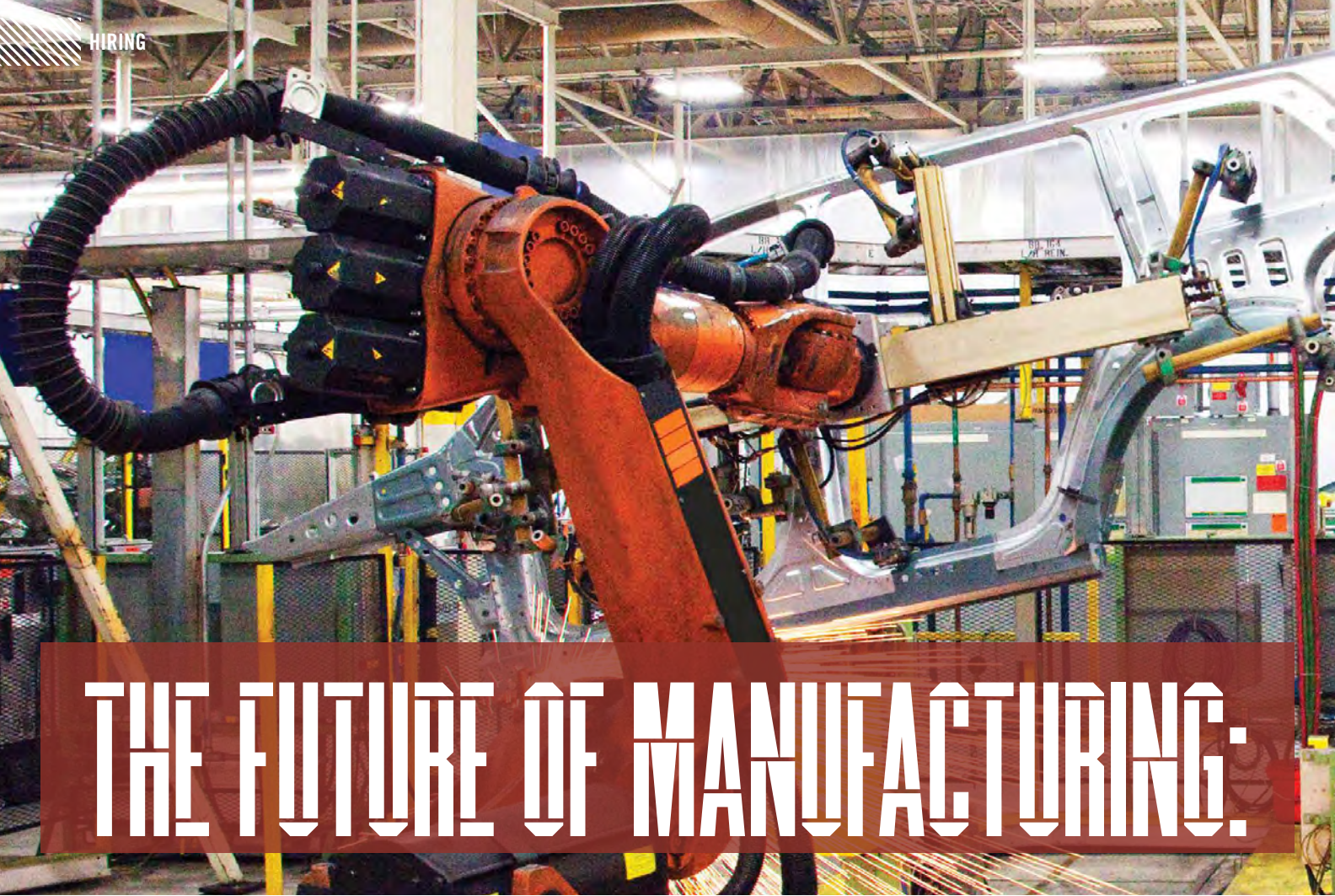
THE FUTURE OF MANUFACTURING:

The longstanding, widespread perception that automation and robots are putting manufacturing jobs at risk is simply wrong: humans will always be a necessary part of the manufacturing process. As facilities continue to evolve and connect more of their assets, people will be needed to process the vast amounts of data generated from the floor so that companies can build things faster, better, and cheaper. For this to be possible, that data must first be converted into a shape and scope that humans can digest.

Enter artificial intelligence (AI), which can transform large amounts of raw data into information that a human can read and interpret. Without AI, people would have to learn how to gather data from multiple database systems, connect them together, know which features to investigate, extract those elements manually, and then interpret the results. This process is not only cumbersome and tedious but also very prone to errors—and by the time all of that data is prepared the analysts have usually already run out of time (and patience) to examine it. With the help of AI, those individuals no longer have to spend their time manually crunching numbers but can instead focus on drawing useful intelligence from that data and putting it into action.

Recent research from AT Kearney and Drishti presents further evidence to dispel the myth that AI and automation are taking jobs away from people. Their survey found that "72 percent of the tasks in a factory are performed by humans" and that humans continue to drive significantly more value than their machine counterparts.[1] Even as more parts of the manufacturing process become automated, no machine will ever be able to replace human judgement and intuition.

As demonstrated by past industrial revolutions, innovations in technology always generate new positions. For example, one PwC report estimates that over the next twenty years in the United Kingdom, robotics and AI will produce as many jobs as they will displace.[2] AI, machine learning, and automation create jobs because specialized skill sets are required to support and maintain them. After machines start generating troves of data, software is needed to analyze that data and convert it into human-readable information. In order to benefit from this information, companies still need humans to leverage that data in meaningful ways.

FILLING A VOID

To fill these roles, organizations will need to draw on younger workers. However, the job profiles that appeal to this talent pool differ greatly from the job profiles that are currently available on the factory floor. The members of today's younger generations are accustomed to getting everything on demand—including information. Therefore, digitizing the manufacturing business is a strong first step toward connecting with these potential employees as they enter the workforce.

AI & People

BY PRATEEK JOSHI

Younger generations are showing an increased interest in science and engineering careers. According to the National Science Foundation, "S&E bachelor's degrees have consistently accounted for roughly one-third of all bachelor's degrees for at least the past 15 years." Additionally, the percentage of doctorates in science and engineering has increased during that time and in 2015 amounted to 64 percent of all doctorate degrees granted in the USA that year.[3]

More and more students are demonstrating an interest in science and engineering, and the pursuit of careers in advanced technologies is a logical progression of that interest. As AI and machine learning continue to mature, they will become more mainstream components of technology-focused college curricula and training programs.

AI IS A KEY COMPONENT TO MANUFACTURING'S FUTURE

Manufacturing processes generate an immense volume of data. But raw data by itself is useless: there is little point in gathering it unless it is used to learn something. Unfortunately, there is simply too much data for any one person or even an entire team of people to analyze—which again demonstrates the need for AI and machine learning. They were made to analyze huge amounts of information, identify the trends within them, and enable business leaders to make more informed decisions faster.

Manufacturers are always looking for ways to improve margins. The information generated by AI is key to operating a leaner facility and addressing potential concerns quickly and effectively. (After all, the longer a condition persists, the more money a manufacturer flushes away.) For example, because it is paramount that facilities know how their machines are operating, if they're suddenly consuming too much power or are headed toward a malfunction, the ability to notice and act on key indicators (such as temperature and pressure) proactively can prevent costly downtime.

AI is already helping organizations stay ahead of their assets' performance and have positive impacts on their bottom lines. This continuing trend will also help create more jobs that will attract the next generation of talent, which is keen to work with the latest technologies. As the industry continues to change, the roles supporting it will change as well. The future workforce will not only focus on keeping machines running but will also learn from the data that those machines generate, which will position them to make better decisions for their companies. AI and machine learning technologies will empower humans, not replace them.

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6 WAYS TO CHANGE THE RECRUITMENT EXPERIENCE

BY LILITH CHRISTIANSEN

Thanks to a challenging hiring environment, companies are struggling more than ever to hire people for open positions, and in many cases "it's taking . . . longer to fill jobs today than in any other period in the postindustrial era."[1] In today's competitive market in which 51 percent of applicants keep "[looking] for other jobs even when an offer has been extended" and 67 percent of employers report that "up to 25 percent of employees drop off between accepting a position and starting at their company," a candidate's first introduction to an organization is a pivotal moment.[2] A candidate who isn't impressed may not finish applying, accept an offer, or even show up for his or her first day on the job. A key differentiator for top talent is how organizations show, during the recruitment process, how valued candidates will be as employees.

EMPLOYEES ARE IN HIGH DEMAND

In a tight labor market that's increasingly job-seeker–centric, employers need to hire from the candidate's perspective. If they don't understand what employees want in a recruitment and new hire experience, employers risk losing prospective candidates and current employees.

Employees are the backbone of every company, regardless of industry. Because the workforce is the sole driver of product creation, client service, and customer service, it's imperative for an organization to demonstrate an understanding that its employees are the core of its business. A company's failure to embrace an employee-centered approach often leads to issues with productivity, engagement, and retention.

For the past few years, the unemployment rate in the United States has been dropping steadily. In October 2018 it hit 3.7 percent, its lowest point in 50 years, and since then it has stayed near that number, with projections for the economy and job growth to remain strong.[3] The current job market is shifting the leverage in the job search process to the candidate: with more job opportunities and a strong economy, a job seeker who is evaluating prospective employers has more options now than when jobs are scarce.

Difficulties in recruitment and retention have a significant impact on productivity and a company's speed to market. The fight for talent will only intensify as candidates have more choices in employment. In order to attract and retain the right candidates, U.S. employers need to meet job seekers' continuously evolving expectations.

Currently, 68 percent of employees report that "their experience as a candidate reflects how the company treats its people," and 43 percent of them "say they have higher expectations for how employers will treat them as a candidate."[4] Clearly, this is an evolve-or-die-moment for companies when it comes to managing talent pools. Organizations that want to attract and retain talent need to change their recruitment processes in six fundamental ways.

1 MAKE THE JOB APPLICATION FAST, EASY, AND CONVENIENT.

Candidates' experiences when completing applications on websites or career portals can drastically shift how they view potential employers and determine if they will finish applications, accept offers, or even show up on day one. Employees today are easily frustrated and turned away when an application is cumbersome and repetitive. Among the top complaints candidates have about looking for a job are dealing with "applications that take too long to complete" (35 percent) and "uploading a resume when they [also] have to manually complete fields" (33 percent).[5] With many candidates willing to give only a few minutes' attention to an online job application or mobile job portal, companies need to do a better job of engaging them.

2 COMMUNICATE EARLY AND OFTEN WITH APPLICANTS.

When the Internet and technology playing such strong roles in everyday life, candidates know that it's possible for companies to send "We have received your application" confirmation notices with a click of a button. Candidates want transparency in the application process: 82 percent "expect employers to keep them updated throughout the process when they apply for a job."[6] As consumers they receive plenty of e-mails, confirmations, and notices from other industries, and as candidates they want a similar stream of communication from potential employers. Increasing the frequency of communication with candidates is key to keeping them interested.

3 GO MOBILE AND AUTOMATE.

With more and more candidates applying to jobs via mobile devices, having a mobile-friendly application helps prospective employers stand out. Similarly, automating touchpoints of the recruitment process so that candidates know when their resumes and applications are received, when they can expect to hear from a hiring manager, or how long the review process may take not only makes things easier for HR and hiring managers but also helps the organization stay in a candidate's good graces.

4 SPEED IS KEY—DON'T LEAVE CANDIDATES HANGING.

More than half of applicants (55 percent) will give up on a potential employer if they haven't heard from it within two weeks.[7] Although the longtime standard in recruitment has generally been to let candidates know they are out of the running only after someone else has accepted an offer for the position, people today are accustomed to speedy communication from companies such as Amazon, Uber, and Netflix—and they expect the same speedy communication in the hiring process. People aren't used to waiting and may be unwilling to go through time-intensive "hoops" (such as screening calls or in-person interviews) that have often historically been part of the hiring process. Companies are increasingly recognizing that if they don't accommodate those preferences, they may be forced to choose from the lower tiers of talent pools (which is why many seasonal hires are made after only one phone call—and managers don't even meet those new employees until the first day of work).

5 START ONBOARDING BEFORE DAY ONE.

Many companies spend an employee's first day (or even first week) on paperwork. But that can all be done before he or she sets foot in the office. Providing materials to employees ahead of time gives them time to review them carefully, ask their loved ones for advice, and make decisions on insurance and other benefits. Also, open communication prior to the start date gives employees a chance to ask their hiring managers about logistical matters related to a new job (such as commuting tips, where to park, whom they'll meet the first day, and where they'll eat lunch). These seemingly small things can actually have a big impact and can turn first-day jitters into excitement and hope rather than anxiety and frustration. Tackling transactional elements ahead of day one allows employees to focus on what will truly make them strong contributors to their roles, to their departments, and to the company overall.

6 FOR LONG-TERM ENGAGEMENT, INTEGRATE NEW HIRES PURPOSEFULLY.

Many companies fail to foster engagement from day one with strategic onboarding. In fact, nearly 10 percent of employees cite "poor onboarding experience" as a reason for leaving a company.[8] The value a company places on its employees is communicated through its employee experience: how it orients and acculturates employees through onboarding and whether that process is meaningful to them.

Today, companies are increasingly able to leverage digital assets and capabilities to learn more about and anticipate their customers' needs, wants, and desires. Through this process, many organizations have recognized a strong correlation between their internal practices and their external results: a positive employee experience often leads to a positive customer experience. Companies that want to build on the strong relationship between engaged employees and satisfied customers need to work on developing those engaged employees right from the start—with the recruitment experience.

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First Impressions Set the Stage

BY ERIC MAGNUSSEN

When Susan shows up for her first day on a new job, no one waits to greet her. When her HR representative (who is running late) finally arrives, Susan is asked to fill out some forms for taxes and benefits but receives no guidance on her 401k distributions until she specifically asks for it. Next, she watches a two-minute "welcome" video that gives a basic overview of the company, then is whisked away to meet her team only to find out that half of them are at lunch and she has no assigned workspace yet and can't access any of the tools she needs to do her job. It's only half past noon, and Susan's new company has already let her down.

The first impression a company makes with its new employees sets the tone of their relationship. It can determine whether new hires develop a long-term commitment to the organization—and or are willing to leave for the next best offer. For many companies, this first impression takes place during the onboarding process.

Historically known as "orientation" (which highlights the concept of pointing a new employee in the right direction), at its core onboarding involves giving new hires basic company information and having them complete forms. But this level of engagement often ends up being more about covering the requirements for a new hire than about welcoming a new member of the team. Consequently, it can easily leave employees feeling lost amid the whirl of their first day on the job.

The ramifications of a poor first day can resonate for years. Left unaddressed, employees' feelings that "from day one" they weren't taken seriously or that the company wasn't concerned about their well-being can lead to poor performance, negative attitude (expressed both inside and outside of the workplace), and disloyalty. By following basic onboarding guidelines and tailoring the process to fit their needs and cultures, companies can create great first impressions with their new hires.

THE BASICS

Onboarding should always be a structured collaboration between HR and management. In most companies, the HR professional will use the first portion of the day to discuss corporate policies and benefits and provide an overview of the company and its culture. Then the hiring manager will take over to cover the specifics of the role and introduce the new hire to his or her team.

By incorporating the following elements into onboarding, HR can help a new hire's first day go smoothly:

· **Welcome e-mail or phone call.** This takes place before the employee's first day and includes information about the workplace location, where to park, which entrance to use, the company dress code, and where and when the new hire will meet with HR.

· **Agenda.** This lists the names and titles of the people who will be meeting with the new hire throughout the day, as well as the times and locations of those meetings.

· **Forms and benefits.** Review tax information, 401k distribution and matching, benefits and bonuses (and the new hire's eligibility for such), beneficiary forms, and healthcare policies. Call out places for signatures to make it easier for the employee to find them, and highlight each section's key points up front.

· **Handbook, HR documentation, and corporate information.** The level of detail needed varies for each company. But if the amount of information is extensive, divide the presentation into easily understandable segments, with built-in breaks to give employees time to digest the material. Also, explain to employees how they can access this information in the future at their own leisure.

· **Technology and access.** Work with IT to ensure that hardware (computer, mobile phone, tablet, etc.) is available from the moment the employee arrives and to schedule a first-time walkthrough and login session. Having access to e-mail, team folders, and intranet sites on a new hire's first day also expands his or her options for employee training. Building and parking access, ID photos, and employee profiles should also be covered.

· **Workspace arrangements.** Make sure that the employee's workspace is identified and available. Acclimating a new hire to that location helps smooth the transition and make him or her feel like a part of the company.

· **Manager and team introductions.** This is a soft handoff, with HR (as the familiar face with whom the new hire has spent the day so far) remaining for a little while through introductions and making sure that the employee is comfortable. Consider planning an activity (such as lunch) that can include HR while the employee gets to know his or her team members.

THE PERSONAL TOUCHES

Companies can add or tweak elements of onboarding to make better connections with their new hires and to add even more value to the experience.

· Include a picture of a new hire's HR contact in the "welcome e-mail" (to help the employee recognize him or her on the first day)

· Provide refreshments (such as coffee, tea, light pastries, and fruit) during the morning session

· Include a full tour of the location, including how to get in and out of buildings and other work sites

· Recommend nearby lunch places (especially if an employee is new to the area or has a long commute)

· Bookend the onboarding experience by circling back at the end of the day to check in with the employee and maybe even walk out with him or her

JUST THE BEGINNING

It can seem time consuming to tailor onboarding to match each new employee's needs and interests, but as something that can make a world of difference to someone who is joining a company, it is definitely a worthwhile investment. Use company surveys to solicit feedback about what employees liked (or didn't like) about their onboarding experiences, and use that valuable information to make improvements. And remember, onboarding is just the beginning of a long process of employee engagement that starts with a great first impression.

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How to Motivate Employees

BY KEITH COPPERSMITH

Sometimes companies take the "we are a customer-centric business" approach so seriously that either they neglect their employees or they fail to grasp the role those employees play in their brands' successes. Although it's commendable when an organization does its absolute best to amaze and dazzle its audiences, the company should also remember that its teams, too, are part of that audience—as well as its most valuable brand ambassadors. Fortunately there are several time-tested methods that organizations can use to find and cultivate motivated, happy employees.

REWARD WORK

A kind word is a great start, but companies that expect results on a daily basis need to offer tangible rewards too. Rewards do more than show an organization's appreciation for exceptional accomplishments; they also help a company express to its employees that it values their time and their work (and for that reason it's critical to reward effort as well as results). Rewards can take many forms (such as an extra day off, tickets to a game or a play, or a dinner for two in a local restaurant)—and none has to cost a fortune. Even small tokens of gratitude can convey a great deal of positive meaning, and employees will work eagerly to earn them.

REFINE THE HIRING PROCESS

Sometimes companies miss out on finding motivated employees because of a narrow approach to recruitment. By actively exploring new hiring practices and new talent pools, an organization increases its potential to connect with motivated candidates. For example, by enlisting the help of an employment agency that works with a particular population (e.g., veterans, people with disabilities, former convicts), a company might find great employees who would have been overlooked in a more "general" search. It's amazing how many people can flourish—and feel more motivated—when given a chance to do so. And when an employer gives everyone equal chances and has an open-minded approach to hiring, its current teams also feel more motivated too.

PROMOTE TRANSPARENCY

Can a company's employees easily take their questions or concerns to managers? How often does management hold meetings to share information with people at all levels of the company? (And how much information does it share with its employees at all?) People can't feel like part of a culture or team if they are treated as expendable parts of a machine. A company that nurtures transparent communication from its very first contact with its employees improves its ability to motivate them. In addition to promoting regular face-to-face communication, video conferences, team-building activities, and other meetups, managers should ask employees for feedback (and give them feedback too), share and offer advice, and make sure that everyone is involved in the organization. These efforts are necessary to build strong relationships and should form the foundation of any modern-day business.

INTEGRATE LEARNING INTO THE CULTURE

Few people nowadays will settle for dead-end positions: if a company doesn't offer learning opportunities, it will find its workers looking for other employment options soon enough. Whether its team members want to perfect their e-mail correspondence skills, become better negotiators, learn new languages, or develop some other abilities, a company should build a reputation as a place that encourages curiosity. (And in addition to professional development, an organization should also promote learning for the sake of learning!) By encouraging and facilitating personal growth, a company can only increase its employees' motivation and loyalty—and its own branding.

ACKNOWLEDGE EMPLOYEES

Finally, no matter how confident they are, all people want to be recognized for their accomplishments. A company that doesn't recognize its employees for their contributions to the company's growth is giving them a reason to look for jobs elsewhere. As mentioned above, rewards are a key part of this acknowledgement. But it's also important to show gratitude by publicly praising exceptional work, cheering on those who need a confidence boost, and empowering employees to encourage one another as well. When employees support and praise each other regularly, they'll build a close-knit team of people who believe strongly in the business and are motivated to work for its benefit.

Sometimes motivated employees can be found in the least likely of places or after an extensive search; sometimes they are already in plain sight at a company. By giving its employees opportunities to thrive and showing appreciation for their contributions, an organization can build a healthy company culture that motivates workers and promotes mutual growth.

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3 Ways Millennials Have Changed Candidate Engagement Strategy

BY ALLIE KELLY

When the oldest Millennials entered the workforce at the turn of the century, they found an environment dominated by Baby Boomers and the members of Generation X. In the ensuing two decades, Millennials have had their own significant impact on American work culture, particularly in how employers engage with the candidates entering their recruitment funnels. By understanding the evolution of this engagement, organizations can raise the bar on their own hiring efforts and stay one step ahead of their competition.

JOB-HOPPING HABITS

Millennials are more likely than their older colleagues to job hop, with one LinkedIn survey indicating that job-hopping rates during the first five years after graduation have nearly doubled during the past two decades.[1] One of the primary drivers of this practice is the fact that many workers can increase their earning potential by changing jobs. In fact, in a strong economy (and in certain fields) that increase can be as high as 10 percent![2]

Because many Millennials are constantly on the hunt for their next opportunities, they're never really done job hunting. For that reason it's more important than ever for recruiters to keep candidates engaged during the application process: a recruiter who fails to communicate adequately could see prospects accept other offers before he or she has time to consider all other candidates. This dynamic means that hiring managers need to keep new hires engaged—and happy—during their first year on the job if they want to lower the likelihood of early attrition.

DESIRE FOR MORE CONSISTENT COMMUNICATION

Because Millennials grew up using the Internet and many of them had cell phones from a relatively young age, they communicate differently from previous generations. For example, consider how they use texting as one of their primary modes of communication. For them, a texting exchange isn't a one-off conversation similar to a phone call (with a specific purpose, as well as a beginning, a middle, and an end) but a long, ongoing conversation (with pauses and sometimes long breaks) in which no one says "goodbye." Among Millennials, "text messaging is the top choice for candidates because of its immediacy," and when recruiters don't give them the type and degree of communication they prefer, Millennial candidates are likely to take their job searches elsewhere.[3]

SHARING JOB-HUNTING EXPERIENCES WITH OTHERS

Whether they're making a purchase, trying a new restaurant, or applying for a job, many Millennials do the same thing: check for reviews. Millennials want social validation that the products, services, or opportunities that interest them are worthwhile and good matches for their desires. This interest in sharing and comparing notes means that a candidate who has a bad recruitment experience is likely to tell someone about it. Because negative online reviews could hurt a company's ability to attract top talent, it is essential for recruiters to track candidate satisfaction metrics so they can resolve any talent pipeline issues (such as getting stuck or becoming disengaged) before they become problems.

Thanks in part to the rapid pace of technological change over the past two decades, today's employees have a very different workplace experience from what their predecessors had. As Millennials grow in number and in influence in the business world, recruiters and managers must prepare for their arrival. By understanding the needs and expectations of Millennial employees, employers can position themselves to keep those employees engaged and productive.

Allie Kelly is the vice president of marketing at JazzHR (www.jazzhr.com), where they're on a mission to make recruiting and hiring easy, effective, and scalable no matter what growth looks like at your company. The Jazz Performer Platform doesn't just help your company grow, it can help your recruiting process grow up, putting you on the path to hiring "Performers Only."

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