MEP National Network™

The Manufacturers' Guide to Finding and Retaining Talent

Table of Contents

01 Introduction

02 Build Your Workplace Strategy With a Systems Thinking Approach

06 It's Time to Approach Attraction and Recruitment Differently

11 Training and Development Will Improve Retention and Business Value

16 How to Become an Employer of Choice

21 Your Local MEP Center Can Help You Find and Retain Talent

Thank you to the experts across the MEP National Network whose work inspired this document.

Introduction

As part of the annual NIST MEP survey, we ask clients from the 51 MEP Centers to identify the top three challenges their companies will face over the next three years. We use a predetermined list of challenges, which allows us to track responses over time. We've asked this question for over a decade and thousands of clients have taken the time to give us their thoughts.

Not surprisingly, manufacturers continue to report that employee recruitment and retention are their greatest challenges. In fact, these concerns have heightened during the COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent workforce disruptions. The market forces driving these challenges are not likely to improve soon. Based on a Manufacturing Institute and Deloitte study, the National Association of Manufacturers estimates that manufacturers will need to fill 4.6 million jobs by 2028.

In this guide, we outline steps that will help you improve and enhance your employee recruitment, retention and engagement. We'll look at:

- Strategy
- Attracting and retaining talent
- Training and development
- Workplace culture

Manufacturers are experiencing incredible workforce disruptions – some unthinkable just a couple years ago.

Some manufacturers have seen a brand new employee fail to return from their first meal break on their very first day on the job. If this happens, you have to ask yourself how your hiring process resulted in someone who was such a poor fit. Besides figuring out what went wrong when someone leaves unexpectedly, it's important to consider the other side of the equation – what about your firm makes people stay.

This guide will show you how to become an employer of choice that lives up to the adage that your people are your most important asset.

> Manufacturers will need to fill 4.6 million jobs by 2028.

Build Your Workplace Strategy With a Systems Thinking Approach

Your shop had to become more adaptive and responsive in operations during the pandemic. Take a similar approach to hiring and developing your people. The principles that apply to lean manufacturing and continuous improvement in production processes also apply to recruiting, managing and assessing your employees' performance.

What Is Systems Thinking?

Systems thinking focuses on how different parts interrelate and how systems interact through various connections and feedback. Systems thinking helps you see connections holistically through:

- Feedback loops
- Direct and indirect relationships
- Interactions and influences
- Systems within systems

Barry Richmond, a leader in systems thinking and system dynamics, emphasized that people embracing systems thinking will position themselves so they can see both the forest and the trees – and keep an eye on each.

What does this look like? Let's consider a common example: when a manufacturer experiences a higher attrition rate in one department than others. You might naturally assign blame to the hiring process or failure of the talent pipeline. You might look at what's different about the front-line oversight or working conditions. But there could be many other factors that influence the negative outcomes, such as:

- **Inadequate feedback loops.** Is clarity lacking between what the training programs are capable of and what the recruiting efforts should be looking for?
- **Informal onboarding process.** Are too many shortcuts taken, missing opportunities to engage new employees early in their career journeys?
- **Vague goals during interviews.** Is the definition of what makes a good employee vague, leading to the interview process failing to identify good matches?
- **Bland job postings.** Are job postings not compelling enough to attract the raw talents that the training program can transform?

A Systems Thinking Approach Must Be Holistic

The reality is that people working within systems frequently miss the signals these systems rely upon. They may not be as apparent as one machine's impact in a production line. Look at how people and systems communicate with each other. What signals does training send to recruiting – and vice versa?

More questions to consider:

- Is there a systematic approach to filling a staff position?
- Does the training program establish a common understanding for what kinds of mindsets and skill sets make for a good match?
- Does the onboarding process, which really begins during recruiting, leverage the training program to ensure that new hires are actively engaged from the start?
- What data is collected and reviewed from recruiting and onboarding?

Address Long-Term Issues to Solve Short-Term Challenges

Systems thinking and culture change are long-term commitments. Systems thinking helps you grapple with both operational and strategic challenges. Here are some persistent challenges facing many small and medium-sized manufacturers:

OPERATIONAL CHALLENGES	STRATEGIC CHALLENGES
Difficulty training people	Can't find the right people
Can't train fast enough	Aging workforce
High turnover	Succession planning
Soft skills lacking	Ineffective culture
Poor technical skills	Retaining key people
Weak leadership skills	

Continuous Improvement in Five Key Areas

If a culture of continuous improvement exists in your company's operational side, it should be easier to break down the silos and look at your employee development as a system as well. Just as you collect data on the operational side, you can identify feedback loops and system structures, and begin collecting data to improve your employee development system. There are five interdependent functional areas to consider:

1. Training
2. Recruiting
3. Onboarding
4. Performance management
5. Retention

For example, a well-structured training program will allow you to generate development pathways. If you give your people – both new recruits and seasoned staff – clearly articulated development pathways and career ladders, they'll have a common understanding, which ties into performance management and retention. This will drive demand and expectations in many areas, such as:

- Frequent and consistent systematic performance feedback
- Support for front-line managers in terms of motivating employees and mitigating issues
- Structured training that drives improvement

Help Implementing a Systems Thinking Approach

Seeing your employee development as a whole helps identify the causes leading to your long-term pain points and workforce problems. You can provide your people with a systematic approach based on data instead of assumptions and emotions. You can influence the choices people make. By anticipating issues, you can work within systems to avoid them.

5 Tips for Developing Effective Talent Management

It takes time to build a pipeline of skilled workers, but with hard work and a solid plan, you can find and train the talent you need. Where should you start? Assess your current talent management efforts and build a plan that gets you where you want to be.

1. **Identify desired goals and outcomes:** Get serious about planning innovation and growth strategies. Define specific outcomes you want – and how your workforce will support those outcomes.
2. **Review internal human resources and training processes:** Create an environment of continuous learning. Your company culture should reinforce workforce development. Develop career ladders and conduct employee satisfaction surveys annually.
3. **Communicate expectations:** Do your employees understand how their performance impacts your business goals? Generally speaking, the more employees understand how their roles fit into your company performance and customer satisfaction, the more ownership they take.
4. **Provide honest feedback:** Are employees getting the feedback they need to do the best job possible? Good front-line managers provide regular feedback and opportunities to listen to the staff.
5. **Gather data to evaluate efforts and quantify successes:** We all know the saying that what gets measured, gets managed. Analytics are a must.

It's Time to Approach Attraction and Recruitment Differently

If dozens of job seekers viewed your most recent job listing but few applied, it means either your listing wasn't attractive to them or you didn't reach a broad enough audience.

Every job posting and interview is a chance to tell prospective employees why they should want to work at your company. Every step from the way you post open positions to how you conduct exit interviews presents an opportunity to cultivate your company's reputation as a great place to work – a place that attracts and retains employees. With a shrinking talent pool and more competition for skilled workers, how your company is perceived by job seekers is more important than ever.

Tips to Successfully Attract Employees

Cast a wider net

Diversity, equity and inclusion play a critical role in attracting and retaining employees. Diversity takes many forms – race, ability, age, gender, nationality, socioeconomic status and more. The case for increasing diversity in every industry is clear. As McKinsey has written extensively, "Companies in the top quartile of gender and ethnic diversity were 25% and 36% more likely to financially outperform those in the bottom quartile, respectively." Moreover, the pandemic has disproportionately displaced workers of color, and connecting displaced workers to higher-paying job opportunities in advanced manufacturing is a win for the worker, for the company, for our economy and for our society overall.

Sell your company to potential employees

Potential employees need to know why your company is a great place to work. Don't simply list position requirements on a job posting. Instead, describe your company's culture. Describe why a potential job seeker will find meaningful employment with your firm while becoming part of an engaged and mission-driven team. Conduct an objective assessment of how your company is described on websites such as Firsthand, Glassdoor and LinkedIn. It is important to update and refine how your company appears to applicants.

Talk about career paths with potential hires

When writing job descriptions and spreading awareness of career opportunities, companies must articulate the potential for career advancement. Candidates are more engaged when they see their career path provides room for growth and consistent improvement.

Make recruiting a priority

Even when companies are not searching for new employees, hiring managers should always keep an eye out for new recruits. This should be an ongoing process for companies looking to attract prospective candidates.

Raise awareness of the manufacturing industry

The major talent gap in the industry exists because most college students and young professionals are unaware of attractive career paths in manufacturing. Many college graduates don't realize the opportunities that exist and what today's manufacturing jobs pay.

To overcome the shortage of qualified workers, companies should promote manufacturing career opportunities throughout their community. Manufacturing Day, the first Friday in October, is a great way to showcase the reality of modern manufacturing careers by opening doors to students, parents, teachers and community leaders – to give a glimpse at what today's manufacturing really looks like and inspire the next generation of skilled workers.

Create a Competitive Advantage Through Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

Diversity is a key ingredient for better decision making. Homogenous groups may be susceptible to groupthink, while diverse teams draw from a greater variety of perspectives. Diverse teams likely consider information more thoroughly and accurately. Research also shows that diverse teams:

- Solve problems faster
- Produce more and higher-quality intellectual property such as patents
- Manage group conflict better
- Maximize creativity among team members

Let's look at strategies for how to expand your workforce pipeline and break down barriers to reach underserved and underused talent pools.

Rethink Why You Exclude Certain Groups From Consideration

It's natural to hire people you think will be a good fit based on procedures, environments and cultural norms. Unfortunately, this often ends up excluding good people. For example, do you eliminate prospects who rely on public transportation or have child care needs? Do you require new hires to be fluent in English? If they can be trained to do the job, should it matter? Do you exclude applicants who were previously incarcerated? Many people turn their lives around and become contributors to society when given the chance.

Sometimes companies abide by outdated policies or rules that have unintended consequences. For example, some manufacturers check applicants' credit to reduce the risk of theft. However, job seekers may think their poor credit disqualifies them for the job – so they don't even apply.

Rethink What Makes For a Good Fit Through the Lens of Inclusion and Access

Rethinking "good fit" through the lens of inclusion and access will expand your potential employee pipeline. It opens up more places for you to look for employees.

Remember the other side of the coin – a good fit is also important to prospective employees. If they don't see people like themselves, will they be comfortable sharing their ideas or concerns? If management lacks diversity, will they see a viable career path?

Rethink the Rules About Qualifications

Two of the most common required qualifications in job posts are a college degree and professional experience related to the position. This is a prime example of how the old rules of employment have limited prospect pools.

Earning a college degree requires a large investment of time and money that many people can't afford. Education requirements eliminate many potential workers, especially from underserved communities.

5 Tips for Creating a Diverse, Equitable and Inclusive Workplace

1. **Create a strategy team:** Your diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) strategy team should include the internal stakeholders whose buy-in will be crucial to advancing racial, ethnic, gender and other areas of equity in your organization. They will take the lead on implementing the equity actions.
2. **Assess your current DEI state:** The first step of an assessment process is to break the concept of DEI down into more concrete, measurable dimensions. There are many ways to do this and firms should consider their context, goals and experiences.
3. **Identify meaningful metrics:** Identify intended outcomes and the metrics you'll use for them. Set your benchmark with a survey based on your metrics. From there, set a target improvement for each metric. Since the DEI process evolves over time, you may need to identify new outcomes as things change.
4. **Create a plan:** Use the previous steps as a foundation for addressing DEI goals and assessing your baseline performance regarding employee outcomes, corporate commitments and vendor engagement.
5. **Perform and disclose:** Once you have created a strategic plan for advancing racial and ethnic equity, implement your plan and share your progress. Use your framework and feedback loops to collect information and adjust accordingly.

Ask yourself if those credentials are really needed. Many of today's excellent job training programs teach career-based skills such as CNC machining in as little as 16 weeks. Higher education institutions offer programs for career paths in marketing, analytics, IT and cybersecurity with similar timeframes. If employees can learn these skills in the equivalent of a college semester, why limit your prospect pool from the start with an education requirement?

Similarly, requiring related experience can be extremely limiting in today's job environment. Instead, look for transferable skills and what can be taught in-house.

Rethink the Rules for Workplace Structures, Incentives and Perks

Research shows people are not just looking for a job – they want a career. Companies that offer training and professional development during work time send a clear message that they value their employees' futures.

Research also shows that employees value flexibility. Consider offering remote opportunities when possible and options like four-day work weeks. Offer shorter work days that accommodate your employees' child care – a common employment hurdle for many parents.

Employees value incentives and perks that help subsidize their personal expenses such as transportation, food and tools. Consider providing:

- **Breakfast for an early shift.** It makes it easier for people to get to work on time, offsets expenses and provides nutrition to start the day.
- **Laptops, phones and any tools required to do the job.** Provide whatever employees need – work boots, safety equipment, etc.
- **Help with transportation expenses.** Provide mileage reimbursement for employees in rideshare programs or informal carpools. Pay for bus passes. Provide incentives for workers that carpool.
- **Partner with a child care provider.**

Rethinking the old rules is essential to meet current and future hiring needs. Seeking, recruiting and hiring a more diverse workforce will add value to your organization.

Training and Development Will Improve Retention and Business Value

Employee turnover is a reality for every business. However, intentional employee training and development practices help minimize the impact of turnover. At the same time, these practices help make your company more profitable and your managers less stressed.

Why is this so important? Numerous studies document the cost of employee turnover – as much as 50-150% of base salary, depending on the level of the position in the organization! Consider this:

- Replacing an hourly employee with an annual salary of $40,000 costs approximately $20,000 on average
- Replacing a salaried employee with 4-5 years of experience, such as an Accountant or Quality Engineer earning an annual salary of $80,000 costs about $80,000
- Replacing a manager or leader with an annual salary of $150,000 costs about $225,000 or more!

Employee Development Starts on Day 1

The first 90 days are the most vulnerable period of the employer/employee relationship. Effective onboarding of new employees helps create an engaged workforce from day one. Give your onboarding program a structure that provides useful milestones, mentoring and maybe even wage progression. Once you have hired people, it's important to work hard to keep them.

To create a successful onboarding program or enhance your existing program, examine how new employees are trained when they join the company. Identify 5-7 new hires who have at least 6-9 months experience with you. Ask them to identify things that were the most difficult to learn. Ask for ideas about how to make the training less complex so they could achieve higher productivity levels sooner.

Create a mentoring program. Mentoring is a proven approach that enhances learning and development for both mentees and mentors. Make sure each new employee is teamed up with a more experienced person in the same department – someone who is a strong supporter of the organizational culture.

Have a Career Development Plan in Place

Investing in your workers' professional and personal growth demonstrates that you genuinely care about their future. From certification programs to associate degrees, there are many affordable options for providing educational opportunities for your employees.

The first step is asking each employee how they want to grow professionally. From there, develop a personalized plan aligned with the organization's goals. Finally, match that plan with both internal and external training opportunities. Talk to your employees and get to know where they want to be in the next five years. Be sure to offer development opportunities to allow employees to learn what they need to know to advance within their career path.

Other keys to a successful training and development environment include:

- **Provide easy access.** Offer training and development through a variety of platforms. Training is only effective if it is used. By providing a mix of opportunities – on-demand, virtual, on-the-job, and classroom instruction – you make it easier for employees to participate.
- **Attract tech savvy people.** If you use advanced manufacturing technologies like simulation or augmented reality (AR) for your training, be sure to share this with potential employees during the hiring process. It can help you recruit a more tech-savvy workforce.
- **Track employee progress.** As mentioned earlier, what gets measured, gets managed. Analytics are a must. A great way to do this is through a learning management system (LMS). These platforms allow employees to manage their own learning journey while enabling you to monitor and manage their progress.
- **Start an apprenticeship program.** Apprenticeships help create new streams of talent while adding much-needed bench strength. Career development can begin with apprenticeship programs. Collaborate with high schools that can identify students with good problem-solving skills and interest in relevant subjects. Apprenticeships can be the cornerstone for creating a learning organization.

Apprenticeships Can Be A Path to Growing Talent

As manufacturers struggle to recruit skilled workers, more are turning to apprenticeship programs to develop and grow skills they need for their internal talent pool. Apprenticeship programs combine on-the-job learning with related instruction in technical areas. This combination produces qualified, highly-productive employees ready for careers requiring precision skills. Apprenticeship training ensures workers have the knowledge and competencies companies need for today and the future.

Apprenticeship programs are popular and effective – 97% of employer sponsors recommend apprenticeship programs, 91% of apprentices stay at the job where they've received training, and employers receive an average of $1.47 of increased productivity for every dollar spent on apprenticeships. In short, apprenticeship programs lead to lower turnover and more engaged employees – always a good thing.

Modern apprenticeships often accommodate on-demand e-learning in addition to or in place of traditional in-class learning. Many apprenticeships now are competency-based instead of time-based, allowing people to progress at their own pace.

Attending traditional classroom training can be a barrier for people due to lack of transportation or time constraints. Program flexibility can open career pathways to higher-skilled positions for many people – especially women and underrepresented populations. For example, a young parent might have child care challenges that make even a full-time job difficult to manage. Attending evening classes in person at a community college would be beyond reach. Now they could do the curriculum at home whenever it is convenient, such as nights and weekends.

Link Training to Continuous Improvement Through Proven Processes

Align existing skills in your workplace with skills needed for current and future business growth. By mapping operations to the workforce, and then to your business plans, your company will have a clearer understanding of the investments you need to make in your workforce. There are proven workforce training programs to do this, including:

- **Lean overview:** The best path to process optimization for a group of new employees who have never been in a manufacturing environment may be a program that covers the fundamentals of lean manufacturing and workplace organization.
- **Training within industry:** A TWI program will not only provide the efficiency and speed required to get people into the right job roles and adopt new technology, but will also help top performers grow into supervisory roles.
- **Toyota Kata:** The big wins in improving processes will come from a program that guides people through a problem-solving process to discover root causes of issues and stop the cycle of putting out fires with quick fixes. Grow your team while you grow the business.

5 Tips on Leadership and Succession Planning

Succession planning means preparing the next generation of leaders so your company thrives in the future. It provides a strategy for passing leadership roles to other employees gradually over time.

Succession planning involves cross-training your employees to develop leadership capabilities, multidimensional skills, company knowledge, and a holistic understanding of the organization. Careful succession planning helps ensure that your business continues to run smoothly and your operations aren't critically attached to the presence of one specific person.

There are many reasons to consider succession planning for your manufacturing company. The process empowers your employees to envision possible career advancement – they'll take more ownership of roles that might be theirs in the future.

Succession planning enables supervisors to mentor their employees effectively. Internal operations strengthen when they share their knowledge and expertise. This affirms your manufacturing company's vision and values by demonstrating that your managers value all employees. Cultivating new leaders also assures stakeholders that your organization has plans for future growth!

1. **Identify key positions:** Look at your organizational chart and identify people that will likely retire soon. You should also identify positions that might turn over for reasons other than impending retirements. The effect of losing one key person can ripple across the whole organization. This exercise enables you to map successors by identifying future gaps.
2. **Capture institutional knowledge:** Begin by updating process documentation, standard operating procedures and standard work instructions. An updated training library helps ensure seamless transitions for skilled workers.
3. **Select high potential employees:** Identify key contributors that consistently outperform their peers and consider how their career development could fit into your succession pipeline.
4. **Create development plans:** Once you've identified your high potential employees, assess their skills gaps. Create a learning plan for each person that addresses gaps and includes leadership training. They'll be prepared for higher positions within your organization when the opportunities arise.
5. **Do not overlook ownership succession planning:** Whether you're planning to transfer the business to your children, to an Employee Stock Option Plan (ESOP), or selling the company outright, an ownership succession plan can take 3-5 years to complete. Develop individual objectives and milestones, and communicate that plan to appropriate stakeholders to ensure a smooth transition.

How to Become an Employer of Choice

An employer of choice is a company that candidates seek out for employment opportunities. The defining characteristics of an employer of choice are:

- Strong leadership
- Competitive pay
- Engaged workers
- A company culture that employees believe in and are excited to be part of

Creating a positive workplace culture that successfully attracts and retains talented people will not happen by chance. The best employers truly believe that employees ARE their number one asset – without exception. Local workers choose to work there over other options.

How do you know if you are an employer of choice? Your employees tell you through their loyalty, high retention rates, and especially when they encourage others to work for your company.

You are competing with many industries and companies to fill entry-level positions. How are you positioning yourself? How does your entry-level pay compare to other industries? How often do you measure employee morale or satisfaction?

Here are five best practices for becoming an employer of choice (you'll recognize many of these tips from other sections in this guide).

Conduct Cultural and Engagement Assessments

Gathering the information to build a great company culture involves collecting both quantitative and qualitative data.

You can use a third-party survey to collect quantitative data. Survey topics can give you a wider company perspective – for example, whether people are held accountable for low performance. Surveys can also give you insight into your employees' personal views – for example, whether they find personal meaning and fulfillment in their work.

Surveys are important, but you may find even greater value comes from the qualitative data you get from focus group interviews, where facilitators can dig into the responses. Focus groups can provide both context and examples that everyone can relate to. Culture is about common expectations and behaviors, and focus groups often reveal subtexts and drivers of the current company culture.

Employers of choice tend to take these follow-up actions after conducting surveys and focus groups:

- **Own the results.** Position the results of the assessments as a report card for top management. It's essential for company leadership to own the results.
- **Commit to change.** Commit to changing the organization based on feedback. Doing surveys or focus groups and ignoring the results is worse than not doing them in the first place.
- **Make it routine.** Collect employee feedback annually.

Meet Employees' Personal Needs

There are two essential types of employee needs and these aren't mutually exclusive:

- Personal needs – the human aspect that people bring to their work and to an interaction
- Practical needs – objectives accomplished through an interaction

Here are five key principles to meeting your employees' personal needs, according to Development Dimensions International:

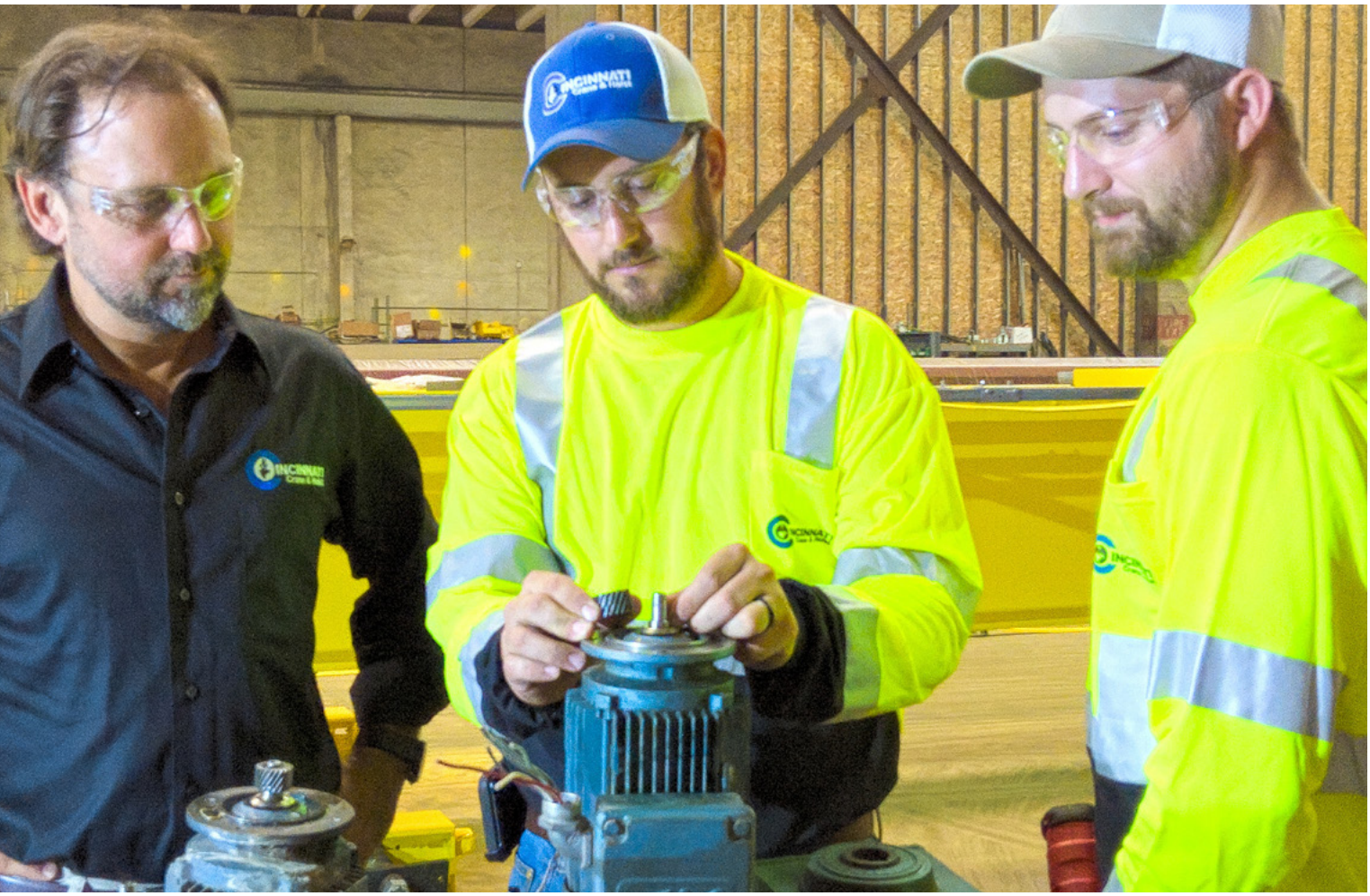
- **Esteem:** Focusing on facts, respect and support will help employees with their sense of self-worth, enabling them to be motivated, confident, innovative and committed to their work.
- **Empathy:** Acknowledging people's feelings of success, failure, pride and frustration defuses negative emotions and encourages positive emotions.
- **Involve:** Show you value your people by asking for their input. Greater commitment and success is likely when ideas belong to the people who carry them out.
- **Share:** People work best with leaders they trust. Leaders should appropriately disclose thoughts, feelings or rationales.
- **Support:** Providing coaching, training, guidance and mentoring builds people's sense of ownership and confidence.

Provide and Receive Meaningful Feedback

Just as you can measure overall equipment efficiency, there are now tools for collecting "people analytics" that you may find very useful. For example, Rhabit Analytics provides tools to measure work culture for cross-functional teams. This is a simple, sustainable feedback loop with a visual dashboard that brings a data/operational mindset to individuals, departments and the entire company. Tools like this can lead to positive change for everyone from hourly workers to executives. The process is not punitive – it's more of a continuous improvement mindset designed to reward positive actions.

Two other considerations:

- **Provide more feedback.** Supplement annual performance reviews with frequent coaching/feedback sessions. Companies that encourage regular one-on-one sessions are more likely to create organizational alignment with performance goals.
- **Ask "stay interview" questions.** Exit interviews tell you why employees leave. Why not consider asking why employees stay? Questions like these prompt meaningful discussions:
  - When you travel to work each day, what things do you look forward to?
  - What are you learning here?
  - Why do you stay here?
  - When was the last time you thought about leaving our team? What prompted it?
  - What can I do to make your experience at work better for you?



5 Tips for Building a Positive Workplace Culture

1. **Articulate your core values:** Have your management team present a long list of values to your employees and take a vote on the core values they can get behind. By being part of the process, they will own it. Make the top five part of your performance review process or accountability sessions with individual employees.
2. **Recognize employees:** Regularly acknowledge employees whose actions or behaviors reflect one of your core values. Make it part of monthly companywide or daily shift meetings. At first it may feel awkward, but stay the course and celebrate these victories. Your team will appreciate it.
3. **Lead by example:** As a leader, it is important that you live by the ideals you promote. When you fail to live up to those standards, acknowledge it, pledge to do better, and ask your team to hold you accountable to that promise.
4. **Identify your cultural ambassadors:** We all have team members who are amplifiers and influencers – people who other employees listen to. Engage them and make them your cultural ambassadors. They are usually pretty adept at winning the hearts and minds of fellow employees.
5. **Treat your people right:** It sounds simple, right? But you probably often find yourself too busy putting out fires to stop and listen to your employees. Make the effort. Walk the floor, talk to your team members. Tell someone to cut out early to go to their kid's game. A simple gesture or a thank you goes a long way

Use Effective Job Postings

Many manufacturers don't realize how important the wording of each job posting is for attracting applicants. Research competing job postings, not just in manufacturing but in other industries competing for the same people. Ask your marketing team to help with the postings.

Employers of choice often include these elements in their job postings:

Sell the job like you're selling a product or service

Include what makes your company a great place to work

Describe your culture

Tell your company story

And by all means emphasize continuous improvement in job postings. How do these two examples sound to you? Where would you rather work?

"Setting objectives and reviewing shift's performance versus objectives" or "Fostering an environment of continuous improvement by inspiring employees to problem solve within their work cell."

Prioritize Your Actions Around What You Can Control

Things like the local labor market are out of your control. But other employers are dealing with the same challenges.

What's in your control? Create a culture of learning where training is foundational. Create development pathways so employees see themselves on a journey and feel confident that there is a role for them.

What You Can Control

Attracting prospects and candidates

- Positive job postings
- Expand the labor pool
- Competitive wages
- Robust onboarding

Training

- Job modules
- Standard work
- Developing paths
- Upskilling trainers
- Training tracker
- Effective onboarding

Engaging employees

- Career ladders
- Pay increases
- Promotions
- Performance-based pay systems
- Company growth

Your Local MEP Center Can Help You Find and Retain Talent

The MEP National Network has a holistic suite of workforce development services that are tailored to the needs of smaller manufacturers. If you need skilled workers but are finding it difficult to identify, attract, develop and retain qualified people, contact your local MEP Center to talk with a workforce specialist about becoming an employer of choice.

Contact your local MEP Center

MEP National Network™

The MEP National Network is a unique public-private partnership that delivers comprehensive, proven solutions to U.S. manufacturers, fueling growth and advancing U.S. manufacturing.

Focused on helping small and medium-sized manufacturers generate business results and thrive in today's technology-driven economy, the MEP National Network comprises the National Institute of Standards and Technology's Manufacturing Extension Partnership (NIST MEP) and 51 MEP Centers located in all 50 states and Puerto Rico.

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