

Recruitment and Retention: The Reality, and the Response

To get a clearer picture of the labor pressures that printers are facing, a coalition of 15 regional printing trade associations took part in a survey that had two aims: Gauging the impact of unfilled jobs on the industry, and identifying ways in which companies can address the problems that gaps in employment cause them.

The findings were plain. Nearly 70% of survey respondents said that labor shortages had affected their businesses. At their companies, job turnover from all causes averaged 14%. More tellingly, employers indicated that on average, they were unable to fill 36% of their open positions for more than a year.

Experience necessary

Thomas J. Majerski, president of BNP Empowered Printing in Buffalo, NY, oversees a heatset web offset operation that specializes in high-speed, long-run print manufacturing. In such a



business, Majerski says, “the lack of printing experience is always a problem. One of the biggest challenges we have is trying to find people with that type of experience.”

“Where we’re finding the most difficulty is at that top end: actual pressmen, and men in charge. That’s really where we need qualified people, and it takes years to develop and get to that level.” The pool of available talent

is “certainly not what it used to be,” Majerski acknowledges. “As the number of printing plants decline, that’s always a huge challenge.”

“We don’t live in a society anymore where people really want to roll up their sleeves,” Majerski observes. “It’s a dirty environment. It’s a loud environment. The hours are long, and it’s physically laborious work.”

Can’t locate candidates locally

The perennial difficulty of finding the right candidates is what prompted the H&H Group of Lancaster, PA, to join with others in launching a formal apprenticeship program to create the skill sets the company needs.

Nate Heisey, operations manager at H&H, says that besides wanting to hire machine operators for its signage division, the company also has openings for installers: “Someone who is comfortable getting up on a ladder and putting a mural on a wall, or hanging a sign from a ceiling, or digging a hole in the ground to install a post-and-panel sign.” It can be a struggle to find people who are able and willing to put their backs into that kind of work, Heisey acknowledges.

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BUSINESS MANAGEMENT

Paper Supply Chain: A Deeper Look at Our October PIPI Data, and the BIG Takeaway

Here’s a formula:

Paper mills producing less printing paper + pandemic-related shipping problems from overseas + labor shortages and strikes at mills + an increase in demand = significant delivery delays, some unavailable products and significantly higher costs.

A few years ago, who could have imagined that our industry would face these paper supply issues?

In our October PIPI (Printing Industry Performance and Insights) study, we explored how supply chain problems affected our industry and how high-performing firms reacted to these issues. Recently, we stepped back and took a deeper look at our data to consider what printing company leaders might learn from a 30-thousand-foot overview. What’s the big takeaway?

Applying more sophisticated statistical analysis reinforced what we saw in our first look at the data: higher-performing firms proactively address paper supply issues. They are preemptive in their approach, seeking actions that forestall future disruptions. This strategy contrasts with a reactive approach – applying band-aids when a problem surfaces. Here are examples of proactive supply-chain tactics:

- Seek relationships with alternative suppliers, even when solid relationships are present.
- Discuss future projects with customers and negotiate plans to order paper well ahead of when the project is ready to start.
- Have scheduled meetings with suppliers to discuss the current situation and have open-ended, creative discussions of potential approaches.
- Aggressively seek to reduce waste.
- Continuously and objectively assess suppliers’ commitment to your firm and your trust in them.
- Review your history of purchases, consider your sales forecast and build a paper inventory.
- Continuously monitor relevant financial ratios – such as days-in-inventory and days-in-accounts payable – and adjust as needed.



So, what’s the big takeaway from all this? Be Proactive!

One would think the pandemic taught company leaders to be more proactive in preparing for “black swan” events. However, consider prior events that significantly disrupted supply chains in other industries, such as the Southeast Asia tsunami in 2004 or the Tohoku earthquake and subsequent tsunami in 2011. After these events, many companies discussed the need to be more proactive and more diligent with their risk management strategies. However, 10 to 20 years later, many had not taken significant measures toward hardening and insulating their supply chain. While it would have been impossible to foresee or mitigate a total shut down of the global economy, many companies failed to learn from these past events how to undertake a basic proactive approach.

Let’s expand this “proactive approach” beyond the supply chain

What can you do to prompt “proactive thinking” by your team from a broad view of your firm?

Most are familiar with “SWOT” analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats). But how many of you apply SWOT in your leadership? In consulting printing firms, I found SWOT discussions especially

effective in prompting proactive thinking. Indeed, looking back, I should have applied SWOT more in the three printing companies I led. Consider discussing these questions with your team regularly:

- What are our internal strengths (something we do well), and how can we use those strengths to serve our customers better and attract new business?
- What are our internal weaknesses (competitive disadvantages), and what is our plan to address those weaknesses?
- What are potential market opportunities for our company, and what’s our plan to leverage those opportunities?
- What are external threats to the company’s well-being, and what’s our plan to prepare for those possible occurrences?

Bottom line... from the current paper supply-chain issues, grow your team’s ability to think proactively on an ongoing basis. Consider discussing SWOT monthly to prompt proactive thinking. Leaders, take a positive away from the present paper mess!

Source: Dr. Ralph Williams Jr., Associate Professor of Management and Dr. Richard Tarpey, Assistant Professor of Management, Jones College of Business, Middle Tennessee State University

HUMAN RESOURCES

Does Discipline Always Have to Be Consistent?

Picture this: A longtime good employee was caught forging his timesheet. You have terminated others for this policy violation in the past. Do you have to terminate this employee as well? His work has always otherwise been excellent, and you don’t want to lose him.

The most risk-averse approach would be to terminate this employee as well. Any time you deviate from consistent disciplinary practices—in this case terminating for forging timesheets—you open your organization up to greater risk of discrimination claims.

This employee would no doubt appreciate not losing his job. But former and future employees terminated for this same offense could claim that their termination was discriminatory; that it was based on a protected class or protected activity. Responding to a discrimination claim can be costly, even if you eventually win.

A more risk-tolerant approach would be to document how this situation is different from the others that resulted in termination. For example, this employee may have had consistently good performance while the other

dismissed employees did not. If you decide to give this employee a second chance, it’s important to communicate just how serious forging timesheets is and what will happen if he does it again. Document your conversation.

Another risk-tolerant approach would be to change your disciplinary practices. This could entail giving a written warning for the first policy violation and then terminating for the second. If you decide to change your policy or practices around discipline and termination, make sure the changes are documented, clearly communicated to employees, and consistently applied moving forward.

Ultimately, nothing you do can guarantee that an employee won’t call a lawyer, the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission or some other government agency and claim that their discipline or termination was for an illegal reason. That said, you can take steps to reduce risk. Clear, consistently enforced policies and practices are your best line of defense.

Source: HR|BIZZ

NATIONAL NEWS

You Won’t Want to Miss These All-Star Speakers



Have you made your plans to go to Americas Print Show 2022 on August 17-19 in Columbus, Ohio? This three-day industry event will present a wide range of opportunities...including the chance to hear some of the “rock stars” of the graphic communications world speak.

For example, some sessions that are sure to be popular are:

- **Bill Farquharson** will speak about “Your New Sales Cocktail: Familiar Recipe But New Ingredients.” Bill brings incredible energy and insight to the show as a sales trainer and presenter for the print, signage, label and packaging industries. His almost 40 years of hands-on sales experience and motivational style never disappoint. His talk will introduce new techniques coupled with old-fashioned persistence.

- **Kelly Mallozzi** will speak on two topics: creating opportunity for your sales engine, and the ABC’s of your social media presence. Kelly Mallozzi is a sales and marketing coach for the print industry and the owner of Success.In.Print. She is focused on helping print professionals engage with their clients and prospects in a more meaningful way. Kelly is also deeply involved with Girls Who Print, the world’s largest online network of women in the printing industry, with almost 9,000 global members spanning all segments and career paths.

Other presenters will address paper supply chain issues, how to weather the current labor storm, how to protect your company’s brand by thinking like a hacker, the mega trends driving success in the printing industry and more.

Register now

For those who are not exhibiting, attendance is free if you register in advance at www.AmericasPrintShow22.com/ attend.

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Not only the skilled

This exposes the mistake of thinking that only skilled workers are the ones in short supply. The degree of difficulty an employer faces in hiring “depends on the position you are trying to hire for,” says Becky Almeter, president of Hodgins Engraving in Batavia, NY. “I think it’s easier to find folks with skilled experience such as HR, accounting, customer service, prepress. It’s harder to find people to fill less skilled, manual labor jobs and in my opinion, it’s a social problem across many industries, not just printing.”

At the root of the problem, according to Almeter, are attitudinal changes that make it difficult for a business like hers to engage new people when so many potential hires, especially younger ones, are insisting on rapid advancement and higher wages “right out of the gate.”

Dollar definition of “entry level”

Jobs in manufacturing industries like printing are hard to fill across the board. Brian Regan, founder and president of the Semper Group, a provider of staffing solutions to the graphic communications industry since 1995, sees some of the stiffest competition for workers taking place in the \$15 to \$20 hourly pay range. “In today’s terms, that’s entry-level,” he says. People will not work for less than that, or if they will, they “won’t care” about keeping the jobs or putting serious effort into them.

From Myanmar to the Queen City

Sometimes, good solutions to the talent shortfall can come from sources that printers haven’t previously investigated. Facing difficulty in getting the people it needed from the local labor pool, BNP worked with the International Institute of Buffalo, a group that advocates for immigrants and refugees, to find talent among the city’s foreign-born community.

The effort paid off. “We have some Burmese employees on our press floor,” says Majerski. “It’s a close-knit community. We’ve hired friends and family from the people we initially hired.”

Bill Duerr, president of Hatteras, a three-shift commercial printing business that is expanding into packaging, says that Hatteras has recalibrated its

thinking about hiring for “front office” positions such as sales, customer service, production planning and estimating. “We’ve tried to focus less on skill set and more on culture,” he explains, citing a positive attitude, a strong work ethic and a desire for continuous personal improvement as the most desirable attributes for front-office candidates to have.

Hatteras has a four- to six-week orientation program for new hires, and it extensively cross-trains its production employees to broaden their skills and increase their value to the company. Duerr also introduced an incentive payment program that rewards both new hires and the employees who referred them after the new hires have completed six months in their jobs.

ROI from money well spent

The referring and signing bonuses “definitely helped us attract some new talent,” Duerr says. “Yes, it cost us money, but we grew our labor force by about 50 people doing that. We paid for it, but if we keep those people for several years, it will pay for itself.”

Compensation in all the forms it can take is a key ingredient of hiring and retention in any industry. Regan says that Semper has been advising printers “for years” that they need to pay more, and he sees evidence that lately, the message has started to resonate. He advises those unable to increase

their pay scales to use non-monetary compensation – for example, better healthcare benefits, extra time off, more flexible work schedules – as alternatives for rewarding their valued employees.

Age-accommodating workspaces

Given the continuous difficulty of replacing a greying work force, says Regan, the industry also ought to think about changing its manufacturing environments in ways that enable older workers to stay on the job longer. Automated systems for cutting, jogging and stacking in the bindery illustrate the kinds of labor- and stress-reducing solutions that printers and OEMs can deploy throughout the plant to assist older employees, Regan believes.

The bottom line

Each of the foregoing examples shows what can happen when printers apply basic principles of good management to solving their problems of recruitment and retention.

This article was excerpted from the “Recruitment, Retention and Pathways to Employment in the Printing Industry White Paper.” To download the full white paper, visit <https://bit.ly/Recruitmentreality> and scroll to the bottom of the page.

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GOVERNMENT & LEGISLATIVE

On Our Radar

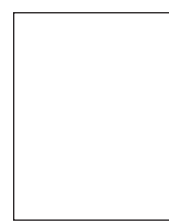
Recently added to the list of proposed regulations and other issues that we’re following:

- **Discrimination in employment: Use of cannabis**
AB 2188 would prohibit an employer from discriminating against a person in hiring, termination or terms and conditions of employment based on a drug screening test finding the presence of non-psychoactive cannabis metabolites in their system, or for the person’s off-the-job use of cannabis. Although the bill states that it does not affect the rights or obligations of an employer to maintain a drug and alcohol-free workplace, it would clearly impact an employer’s ability to do so.
- **Publication of pay data**
– SB 1162 would require the Department of Fair Employment and Housing (DFEH) to publish the detailed pay equity data that employers with 100 or more employees are required to submit to the DFEH each year. It would also require covered employers to include pay scale information in all job postings, and to notify all workers about opportunities for internal advancement when they arise.
- **Updates to proposed legislation, regulations and other issues we’ve been following:**
 - **4-day workweek proposal killed** – AB 2932 would mandate a four-day, 32-hour workweek for non-exempt employees for employers with more than 500 employees. While this was killed for this year, don’t be surprised if similar proposals are put forth in the future.
 - **Effort to replace PAGA** – CalChamber reports that the Fair Pay Initiative, which aims to stop frivolous lawsuits against employers by replacing California’s onerous Private Attorneys General Act (PAGA), now has more than 60% of the necessary signatures to be placed on the November ballot.

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PIASC Events Calendar

AUG 17-19	<p>America's Print Show 2022 Wednesday-Friday, August 17-19 Columbus, OH www.americasprintshow22.com</p>
JUL 21	<p>PIASC Colorado Golf Tournament Thursday July 21 Littleton, Colorado https://contra.cc/3MavL4H</p>
OCT 22	<p>LA Printers Fair Saturday-Sunday October 22-23 Carson, CA www.printmuseum.org/los-angeles-printers-fair</p>
SEP 13	<p>Labelexpo Americas 2022 Tuesday-Thursday, September 13-15 Chicago, IL www.labelexpo-americas.com</p>

For full list of events, please visit www.piasc.org/events

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