


A photograph of a manufacturing facility with a purple overlay. Several workers in safety glasses and dark shirts are working at various stations. In the foreground, a man and a woman are working on a large wooden mold. In the background, another worker is at a table, and a robotic arm is visible on the left. The scene is industrial and well-lit.

How Manufacturing Companies Can Supercharge Talent Acquisition



Talent acquisition is challenging right now for every industry, but those challenges are particularly unique in manufacturing. High turnover rates, seasonal hiring rushes, and the challenge of meeting ever-changing production quotas can contribute to a stressful environment. It's no wonder many people search for some "secret sauce" that will turn recruiting from an art into a science.

Recruiting guru and Berkshire Associates adviser **Tim Sackett** recently joined us for a **webinar** on talent acquisition in manufacturing. While he didn't have a recipe for any secret sauce, he did provide a few best practices you can follow to hire quality workers in an efficient manner that will also reduce your marketing costs. All you need is some patience, preparation, and an openness to doing things a little bit differently.

Here's a roundup of Sackett's suggestions.



Recruit Locally

As you search for talent, be careful not to look for people in the wrong places. With so many online recruiting tools available, it's easy to expand your organization's target reach. However, you should focus your efforts on your immediate area. Eighty percent of hourly workers live within five miles of their home, and they'll be searching for positions

that don't require them to spend a disproportionate amount of their income on transportation.

Because so much of your talent will be centralized locally, billboards are a great advertisement tool. Billboards have the lowest cost of any advertising method and social media ads tend to be more expensive.

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Create Talent Pipelines

A cost-effective means of recruiting talent is to participate in co-op work programs with local schools: high schools, community colleges, and other educational providers. These programs provide skills training for participants, and offer you the chance to train workers at a lower cost as they enter the workforce, providing the opportunity to mold skills to fit your organization.

Many certification and training programs don't take long to complete, making them very attractive to those entering the

workforce or changing careers.

Fab Lab Hub, based in Santa Fe, New Mexico, offers high-tech training programs that offer credentials in six weeks.

Although participants in a training program may decide to continue their education—or perhaps seek employment elsewhere—many will transition into full-time employment.

Show these trainees the value of continuing to work with your organization and you'll have a new employee motivated and ready to work for you.



Don't Overlook Valuable Talent Pools

While co-op programs offer a cost-effective method of training and integrating young workers, there are numerous other pathways to finding quality talent.

Many organizations neglect to think creatively when considering their next candidate. For example, organizations often prioritize younger workers for manufacturing positions based on the idea they will provide energy to the workforce. However, older workers and those returning to the workforce—such as mothers—can be valuable assets, and can bring

skills, maturity, and dedication to your organization.

Military Veterans are another important resource. Even though they may not have the specific employment experience you're looking for, they likely have proven leadership skills that will translate to the workplace. Don't just stick them in any position; find a role that suits their unique skills. There are organizations such as [Hire Heroes USA](#) that help connect Veterans and military spouses with employment opportunities.



Also, don't overlook those with criminal records. One-third of the U.S. population has a criminal record, and 1 in 10 adults have spent time in prison. But if they've paid their debt to society and are trying to turn their lives around, your organization may gain a competitive advantage by making the effort to hire them. Organizations such as the [National HIRE Network](#) offer resources for employers looking to integrate

the formerly incarcerated into the workplace.

Finally, as you consider other avenues for talent discovery, remember to audit yourself. Run metrics on who you hire and who you don't so you can reduce bias in your hiring processes. While you will have difficult conversations, the cost of losing out on talented candidates is simply too great.

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Don't Forget Former Candidates

The No. 1 mistake recruiters make is failing to search through past candidates when considering an open position. Many applicant-tracking systems have features like candidate rediscovery, which can help you match applicants for past positions with current openings. These features help you find qualified candidates quicker while minimizing your marketing costs.

Embracing a feature like candidate rediscovery is especially helpful for seasonal work, where multiple positions have to be filled over a short period of time. Instead of going

through the trouble every year of marketing for seasonal positions, you can consult your database and reach out to past candidates, saving you time and money.

Candidate rediscovery is also valuable for full-time, nonseasonal positions. You likely have plenty of great candidates you have made touchpoints with in the past, and they may still be interested in joining your organization. You may also find that a candidate's skill set has grown since your last contact with them, making them even more qualified for current positions.

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Smartphones Are Your Friend

Eighty-five percent of hourly workers only access the Internet through a smartphone. However, most job applications aren't optimized for mobile use.

You don't want to miss out on a quality candidate because your application process is burdensome. We expect ease of use as consumers, and this is no different in professional environments. So ensure your application process is optimized for smartphone usage—it should only take a few clicks to complete an application.

And make sure your referral system is similarly simple. The majority of new

workers at organizations are hired via referral, and you want to make it as easy as possible to find new workers.

Also, incorporate SMS messaging into your recruiting. Studies have consistently shown that people are more likely to respond to a text than they are to a phone call. And text messages also allow you to maintain a record of contact points between the organization and a candidate.

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Use AI to Make Recruitment More Human

Recruiting for high-volume positions can be overwhelming. The sheer volume of candidates means it can be challenging for recruiters to make quality contact with every candidate.

Chatbots are a great solution to this challenge. Organizations that use a chatbot as part of their recruiting

process are twice as likely to fill a job within 14 days compared with those that don't. Additionally, this contact through a chatbot will let you learn more information about a candidate more quickly, in a way that reduces human bias.



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Make Turnover a Thing of the Past

This is going to sound obvious, but there's only one time-tested way for recruiters to bring in the best candidates: Have fewer job openings. That way recruiters can focus their energies on finding the best people possible.

Manufacturing organizations often assume high turnover is simply part of the cost of doing business. But this doesn't have to be the case. **To keep turnover low, recruiters need to become more hands-on with company culture. Examine your leadership programs and other methods of maintaining employee engagement.** Make sure the relationship between management and line employees is what it needs to be, and that quotas are being met in a safe, healthy manner.

But most importantly, look at your policies. Organizations often

have one-size-fits-all policies for employees, particularly when it comes to absences. Rarely, though, do they account for the realities many hourly workers face, such as transportation issues, child-care complications, or other personal emergencies. Instead, many organizations fire someone upon their first unexcused absence.

Walmart recently introduced a policy allowing multiple unexcused absences throughout the year. And some manufacturing organizations have introduced flexible start times for shifts, which is especially helpful for working parents. It's a great way to show your employees the respect and trust they've earned—and earn their loyalty in return.





About balanceTRAK

In a world where 80% of customers are unhappy with their ATS, balanceTRAK is a forward-leaning applicant tracking system that is simple, powerful, and adaptable. It's easy to use, so it's easy to hire. BalanceTRAK is built and backed by Berkshire Associates—a company where HR people and technology people work together to build easy-to-use HR solutions.

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