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2024 RECRUITMENT TRENDS REPORT

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INTRODUCTION

Organizations and businesses across the country are asking:

How can we build a strong future workforce?

Even as economic uncertainty eases, the supply and demand gap between qualified skilled workers and unfilled positions grows.

One of the greatest challenges of hiring in the trades has been communicating the opportunities that exist to younger workers, particularly those not seeking a college degree. Today, sentiment is shifting: More individuals are understanding the potential for a satisfying career in the trades and the benefits—diverse work opportunities, competitive pay, and flexible work schedules.

The primary challenge now is speaking directly to those individuals and showing them how your company can deliver that fulfilling work experience.

The challenge is not only making the hire: It's delivering on your promise. It's retention.

When it comes to hiring and retaining workers—finding those good people that will stick—there's a lot of chatter regarding AI. Machine learning models can predict candidate success using historical data. Chatbots can handle your initial candidate screenings. These tools have their place.

But here's the thing: Assessing whether a person is a good fit for your organization shouldn't rest with artificial intelligence tools. You must look at each candidate not only for their skillset and job history, but how they relate to your company culture and your employer brand.

In 2024, it will be critical to establish an authentic employer brand for your organization. The next generation of skilled workers wants to be part of something bigger than them and their individual role and job duties. They want to work for an employer that aligns with their mission, values, and goals.

If a new hire ultimately isn't the right culture fit—if they weren't given the opportunity to genuinely know and understand your organization prior to accepting your job offer—they will not stay. In a few months, they'll depart for another organization that they believe in.

Recruitment success this year will look like finding the right people and investing in them: giving them the training and tools they need to succeed. With the right approach, your organization can become a leader in the talent acquisition space in your industry.

INDUSTRY OUTLOOK

What does recruitment look like for top skilled-labor-based industries in the United States?

THE BLUE-COLLAR INDUSTRY IS STRONG



“While college graduates have long held an edge in employment, those with fewer degrees have seen the sharpest hiring rebound this year.”

- Those without a high school degree saw a 5.7% jump in employment level in 2023.
- The national average of employment growth is 1.1%.

Sources: [NBC News](#)

YOUNG PEOPLE NEED YOUR SUPPORT TO ENTER THE TRADES



Thumbtack surveyed 1,000 young adults between the ages of 18 and 30 about the skilled trades. Here are their findings:

- 73% respect skilled trade as a career (second only to medicine)
- 47% were interested in pursuing a career in a trade
- 80% said there are benefits to a skilled trade job over a desk job
- 74% believe skilled trade jobs won't be replaced by AI
- 82% reported being told going to college is the only way to be successful in life

“ AT THIS POINT, THE PROBLEM IS CLEAR: SKILLED TRADES OFFER OPPORTUNITIES THAT YOUNG PEOPLE ARE EAGER TO EXPLORE, BUT THEY NEED MORE ENCOURAGEMENT AND SUPPORT TO GET STARTED.”

- David Steckel, [Thumbtack](#)

Sources: [Thumbtack](#)

UPSKILLING IS CRITICAL FOR HR IN 2024



Upskilling to meet the moment is HR's top focus area.

- [Qualtrics 2023 State of HR Report](#)

HR Challenges:

- Addressing waning employee perceptions of growth and development opportunities.
- Closing a nearly 10% experience gap between talent attraction/hiring and onboarding
- Stepping up to captain change management efforts
- Responding and adapting to unexpected events

Top HR Focus Areas for 2024

1. Employee Training and Development
2. Talent Attraction and Hiring

Source: [Qualtrics 2023 State of HR Report](#)

YOUR WORKERS NEED TO BE EMPOWERED

“In 2024, the scarcity of skilled workers will cause organizations to redefine their approach and focus on what matters most. Training is not merely an investment, it is the lifeblood of sustainability, where every worker is not just skilled but empowered to build the bridges to progress.”

- Jim Pauley, President and CEO, National Fire Protection Association®

Top Challenges at Work in 2024:

- 53% said shortage of qualified hiring candidates (up from 45% in 2023)
- 39% noted lack of knowledge sharing and collaboration on the jobsite
- Stepping up to captain change management efforts
- 30% noted an rise in co-workers retiring

Source: [National Fire Protection Association](#)

OUR PREDICTIONS FOR 2024

1. FEWER JOBS WILL REQUIRE A COLLEGE DEGREE

Degree requirements are (on the way) out for skilled workers.

We have seen the national increase in the employment level of individuals without a high school degree: There was 5.7 percent growth in 2023 compared to the national average of 1.1 percent. Part of this shift is due to more employers recognizing that a college degree shouldn't be required for jobs that don't require college-level skills.

There's evidence of this: In 2023, the volume of jobs on ZipRecruiter that listed a bachelor's degree as a requirement dropped to 14.5% (down from 18% in 2022). We're also seeing more companies—45 percent of those surveyed—doing away with degree requirements for certain roles.

This creates more opportunity for active—and qualified—job seekers previously excluded from the talent pool. At their Future Works conference, [Indeed reported](#) that 2 million job seekers were searching for jobs with “no degree required” in the first half of 2023.

2. SKILLS-BASED HIRING IS IN

Skills are the greatest indicator of an employee's success on the job.

[McKinsey reports](#) that “skills are 5x more predictive of [a candidate's] job performance than hiring for education.”

Skills often reflect a candidate's ability to translate theoretical knowledge into real-world accomplishments. Practical skills demonstrate problem-solving capabilities, creativity, and the capacity to apply learning to diverse situations.

Educational qualifications, while valuable for some roles, usually do not align with the practical demands of a blue-collar job. Many roles require a blend of technical proficiency, soft skills, and adaptability, which may not be fully captured by academic credentials alone.

Assessing a candidate's skills allows employers to gauge their immediate applicability to the job and their potential for contributing effectively to the organization's goals.

3. RETENTION IS ALL ABOUT UPSKILLING

Position your employees to succeed—and stay.

In their [2023 State of HR Report](#), Qualtrics found a 10 percent experience gap between talent attraction and hiring and onboarding. What's the solution? Upskilling.

Upskilling enhances the employability of your workers in a rapidly changing job market. As industries evolve and adopt new technologies, upskilling ensures that blue-collar workers remain relevant, adaptable, and capable of handling modern tools and processes.

Second, upskilling contributes to employee satisfaction and engagement—perhaps the most important indicator of retention. When you invest in the professional development of your workforce, it demonstrates your commitment to their growth and success. This investment fosters a positive work environment, boosting morale. It also addresses skill gaps, allowing your company to meet changing demands more effectively.

Upskilling is the most proactive approach to talent retention in 2024. Offering opportunities for career advancement and skill development makes employees more likely to stay with their current employer—reducing turnover and saving you the recruitment and training costs of replacing skilled workers.

4. EMPLOYER BRANDING IS NO LONGER OPTIONAL

Investing marketing dollars in building your employer brand is a necessity.

Your employer brand is so much more than a tagline. It is the story of your business—it communicates why a candidate should choose to work for your company.

Skilled workers seek more than just a paycheck. They desire a workplace that aligns with their values, provides opportunities for growth, and fosters a positive work environment. By strategically investing in employer branding, you are not merely advertising job openings; you are curating an image that resonates with potential hires, making your company stand out in a sea of options.

Positioning your company as an employer of choice is a recognition of the pivotal role people play in your organization's success.

CLOSING

The key to blue-collar hiring in 2024 is not just finding the right people but investing in them for the long run. Establishing an authentic employer brand is critical. It aligns your company with the values and goals of the next generation of workers who seek a meaningful connection to what they do. This shift in perspective from merely making a hire to cultivating a lasting relationship emphasizes the importance of assessing candidates not just for skills, but for their cultural fit. You are fostering a work environment that resonates with individuals on a personal level.

2024 demands a commitment to understanding, training, and connecting with your workforce, upskilling your new hires, and staying tuned into employee morale and fulfillment.

ABOUT MAIN STREET RECRUITMENT



Main Street Recruitment, a recruitment marketing agency, helps HR professionals and hiring managers connect companies with the digital channels that their prospective blue-collar and skilled-trade candidates are actively using. We are not recruiters; we use our suite of proven digital marketing tools and methodologies to help you reach your recruiting goals, define and promote your employer brand, and position your company as an employer of choice.

Our social recruitment campaigns are highly personalized and tailored to your ideal candidates and result in a streamlined candidate search, a larger pool of qualified candidates, and improved time to hire. Our innovative tech stack shares the same information your audience needs and expedites the application process when candidates are ready to apply. When you work with Main Street Recruitment, we help you identify the right solution for your unique sourcing needs. Reach out to our team today to learn more and schedule a discovery call.

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