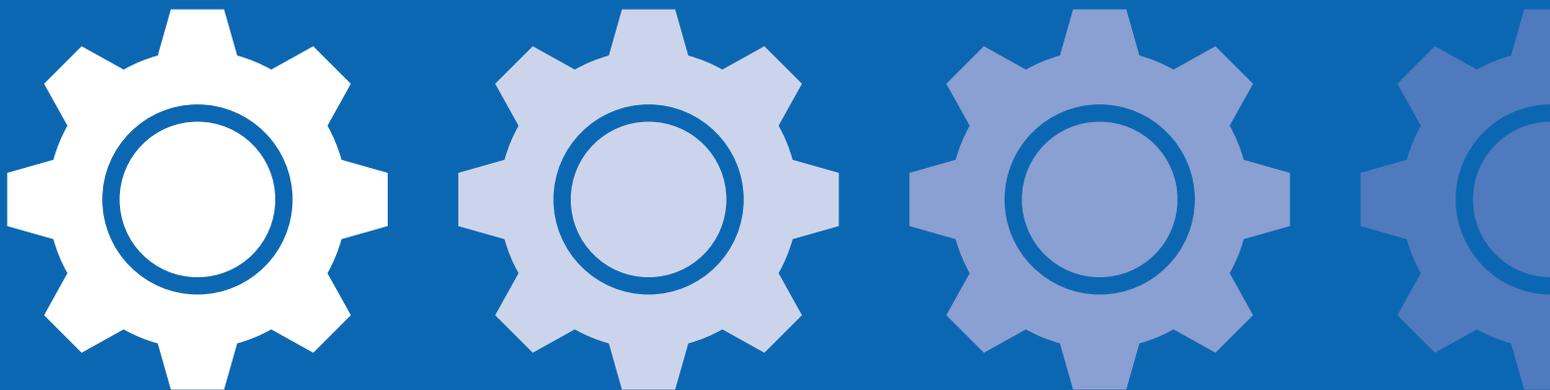


**Key Priority:**  
**Recruiting Technical Talent**



# THE NEED

There is a growing talent shortage, and **U.S. manufacturers could face a shortfall affecting over 2 MILLION JOBS BY 2025**, according to a Deloitte/The Manufacturing Institute study. Those shortages will be especially significant when it comes to technical talent.



Part of the problem, of course, is the wave of Baby Boomer retirements over the next decade, which will add up to about 2.7 million manufacturing employees. At the same time, manufacturers often struggle to attract Millennial workers, because the industry does not have a positive image among many of those younger workers.

That's due to:



Manufacturing's reputation for mass layoffs over the past few decades.

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Young workers being unaware of the clean, high-tech, safe work environments that are the reality in most manufacturing plants today.

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Most manufacturers doing a poor job of tailoring work to young workers, who typically look for employers with a social mission, and that provide both flexibility and clear advancement opportunities and career paths.

As many CEOs pointed out, if manufacturing companies are to contend successfully with the talent shortage, they need to be creative in the way they recruit, develop and retain people.

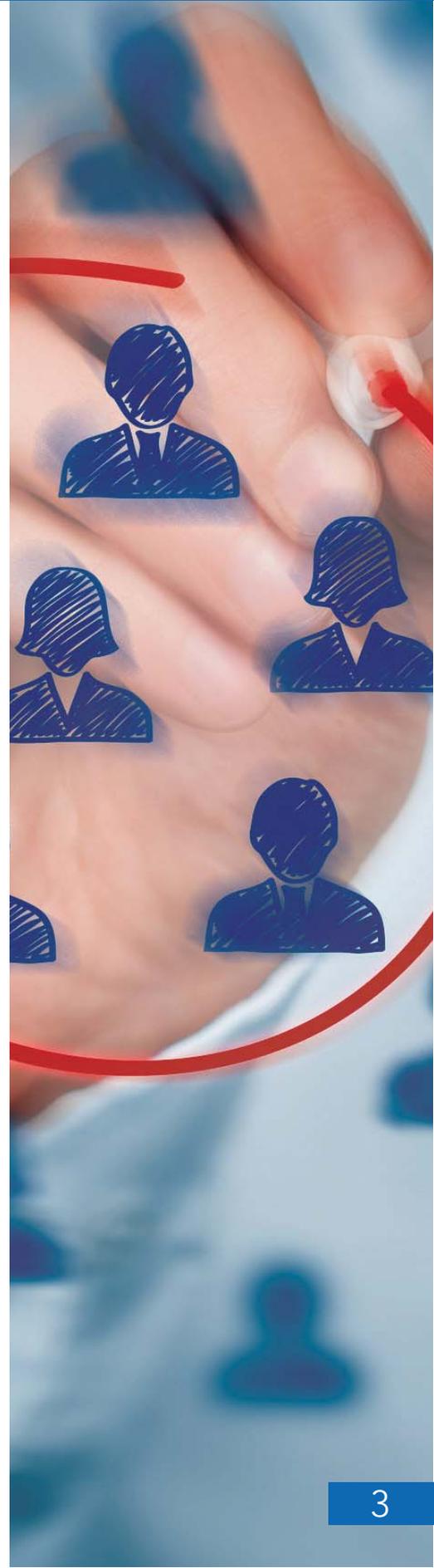
## Approach recruiting with a supply-chain mindset.

Manufacturers can be more proactive in seeking talent and think holistically about building a sustainable pipeline. This means linking talent and business strategies—identifying skills requirements five or more years out, based on:

- The ages of existing technical/engineering employees and their likely retirement plans.
- The normal attrition rates of those workers.
- The expected needs of the business in that time frame, based on projected growth, new product/technology lines, new markets being entered, etc.

That exercise provides insight that can help companies fill in gaps in the future workforce. These estimates should be refined over time, as the business changes.

Think in terms of recruiting all the time, not just when there's an opening to fill. When a promising recruit appears, it can be an opportunity to upgrade an existing marginal player, or to begin creating a "reserve" against coming talent shortages.



# Develop a targeted “employee value proposition.”

Once you’ve identified the talent you need, it’s important to create an employee value proposition designed to appeal to those workers. This should clearly answer two questions—“Why is our company great to work for?” and “Why will the job be great for the candidate?” As part of this, try to tie your mission as a company to something larger and more altruistic. Rather than saying “we produce medical equipment and aircraft engines,” GE’s mission is “to invent the next industrial era, to build, move, power and cure the world.”

The value proposition should be reflected in all communications. Your website—a point of contact for many candidates—should have a career section explaining the proposition. Also, it’s important to show the proposition in action: Videos with current employees and executives discussing the company, employee successes and the attractiveness of the workplace will be more persuasive than a mission statement.

# Rethink recruiting and development for a Millennial audience.

Manufacturers can use social media to reach younger candidates with positive communications. Encourage employees and former employees with positive experiences to help the company attract top talent by adding their comments. Designate a person to monitor jobseeker sites such as [glassdoor.com](http://glassdoor.com) to uncover negative comments from disgruntled former employees. If negative comments are unfounded, petition the site to remove them.

Millennials typically value and expect more frequent interaction and constructive feedback/coaching. Establish programs to meet those needs: In addition to formal interactions such as reviews, provide opportunities such as weekly coffees and/or check-ins, monthly lunches with management, etc.). Start early, with an onboarding program that assigns new hires to a mentor to help them navigate their new environment.



## Tap into local community colleges and groups for talent.

Develop relationships with school career centers, school administrators, engineering chairs and/or engineering professors and, where appropriate, encourage local schools to train for specific disciplines or skills that you're looking for.

Also consider:

- Establishing summer and after-school internships to attract and evaluate candidates.
- Sponsoring engineering contests at the school to elevate your company's employer brand with students.

- Coordinating/partnering with other local businesses to support/expand these types of programs.

In addition, veterans can be a valuable source of trained, motivated talent. You can create apprenticeships and other programs targeting this group. EJ Ajax Metalforming in Milwaukee created a state-approved work-study program for vets who work full-time and use their military education benefits to attend college part-time.

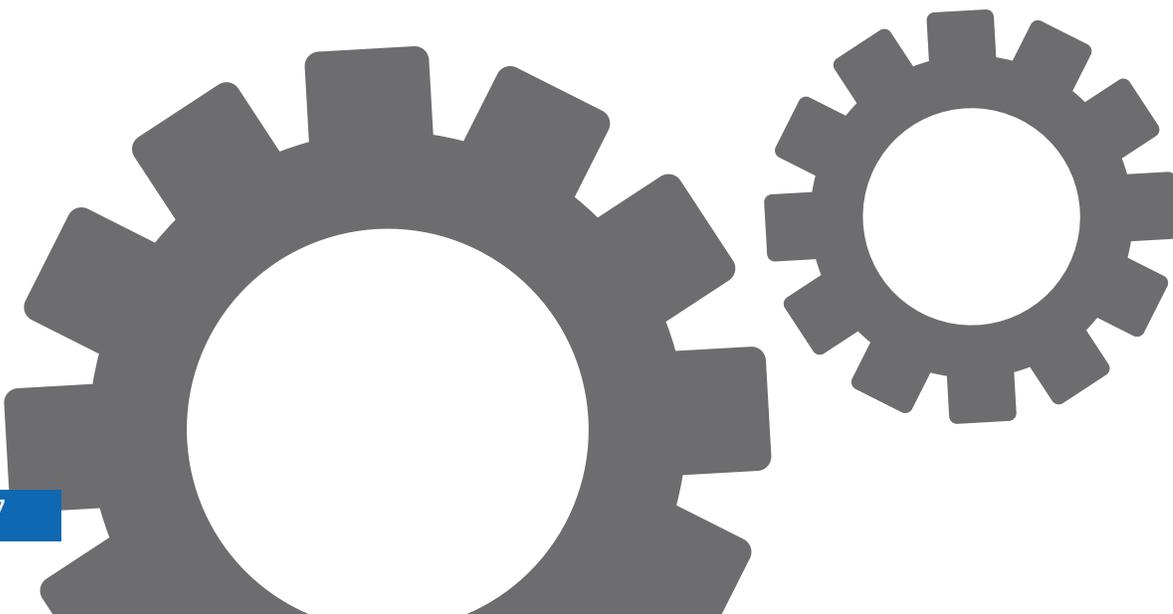


# Think long term and encourage pre-college students to explore engineering.

CEOs who have found success with this type of outreach suggest getting involved in high school internship programs, or perhaps sponsoring a high school or junior high school science fair to build interest in your company's brand and engineering in general to your local community. GenMet Corp., a Wisconsin metal fabrication company, brings high school students on factory tours to see the automation and computers that are typical of modern manufacturing.

# Make better use of job boards and career sites.

In addition to major sites such as Indeed.com, look at relevant local job boards and niche sites that serve key groups, such as engineers or IT specialists. The Society of Women Engineers, Society of Hispanic Professional Engineers and several fraternities are among the professional groups that are worthwhile resources. In your listings, promote not only salary and standard benefits, but also the training and development opportunities that can help your company stand out with candidates.



# Don't forget to leverage existing technical talent.

Make the most of the talent you have. Cross-train engineers and technicians so that they can fill in gaps as they arise, giving you more time to find the right talent rather than having to hurry to fill positions with less-than-ideal candidates. Cross training can also benefit the employees themselves, broadening their experience and skills.

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This report is part of a series of best practice tip sheets written for Chief Executive Network (CEN) members, based on discussions at recent meetings as well as input from other leading manufacturing CEOs. CEN's manufacturing peer group is a forum where CEOs exchange ideas, benchmarks and best practices on the challenges and opportunities they face and gain strategic insights and actionable ideas.

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For more information about CEN and how it can help you and your key executives adopt successful ideas and avoid costly mistakes, please contact our CEO Wayne Cooper at **WCooper@chiefexecutive.net** or **(203) 930-2702**.