

How To Recruit Young Workers Before It's Too Late

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The construction industry is facing a crisis. More and more workers are entering retirement age, and few people are stepping up to take their place. The younger generations were raised in a digital era that promoted university and technology-based fields rather than the trades. Now, we're seeing a labor gap in the construction industry.

The National Center for Construction Education & Research reported that 41% of the current construction workforce will retire by 2031. While Generation Z is slowly entering the construction industry, they still make up only approximately 14% of the workforce, according to the National Association of Home Builders.

This isn't nearly enough to replace retiring baby boomers. Companies have an obligation to meet Gen Z where they're at and to attract and retain young talent before the industry runs out of workers.

RECRUIT YOUNG WORKERS

With the rise of artificial intelligence and a saturated market, people are graduating from college and struggling to find good-paying jobs. Additionally, the demand for laborers is making trades more lucrative. This provides the perfect opportunity to recruit young talent.

Several of these new college graduates are desperate for work and willing to pivot career paths. To help them do so, builders should offer more formal apprenticeship programs. Employer-



sponsored training is critical for recruiting those looking to change careers. Make it clear that their commitment to learning a new skill will lead to a more lucrative outcome.

Recruiting isn't just about having a job opportunity. It's also about showing an alignment and cultural focus for younger workers. Gen Z doesn't like clocking in and out of a job. They care about the bigger picture. They want to know who they're serving and why the job is important.

When recruiting, identify the purpose behind your vision. Your job postings shouldn't just say "looking for laborers." You need the right messaging to communicate who your workers will serve and why. For example, if your company has done municipal work, make sure recruits know just how important

that is by telling them they'll be building future infrastructure to keep the community moving forward. The more you can emphasize how the industry helps serve the greater good, the more likely you'll make an impression with this cohort.

Benefits are another great way to recruit. Gen Z values flexibility and mental health advocacy. Provide paid leave for school events and family obligations. Even if they don't have kids, this implies that the company is willing to be flexible. Offering a couple of mental health days is also important. Make sure they know that while there's a job to do, you value them as a person, not just a worker.

INVEST IN SOCIAL MEDIA

To attract Gen Z, you need to reach them where they're at. That means hiring someone with social media experience to get your message out there. Once you do, hit them with the benefits of going into this industry.

Get on these platforms and explain that if they've earned a degree but can't find a good-paying job, a trade can provide the income to afford many of the items and experiences celebrated on social media.

Videos on TikTok and Instagram showing them how they can afford a desired lifestyle if they pursue a trade can be a powerful tactic. This is also a great opportunity to promote your company's culture and projects, giving potential employees insight into what your company does and if it aligns with their values.

ELEVATE COMPANY CULTURE

Gen Z was raised in a short-form digital era. Everything is quick and at the touch of their fingertips. Therefore, if they don't like where they're at, they're quick to leave, making retention difficult.

Young people enjoy spaces that are uplifting and positive. You must be intentional when building company culture. Leaders and jobsite managers need to make an effort to be outgoing. Ask new hires about their personal life. If they share that a pet or roommate is having issues, ask them how it's going the next day.

Team events and happy hours are also great ways to build teamwork and collaboration, and to develop the culture. This fosters community and helps employees get to know one another. The more comfortable employees are with one another, the more enjoyable the workday will be.

The more you invest in these young people, the more you're going to retain them. Provide them with a clear career path and opportunities for advancement to help them succeed. Many don't enter construction because they mistakenly believe there are no growth opportunities. Inform them of their opportunities, such as superintendent, project manager, or the higher salaries of more specialized trades. Offer certificate opportunities to help them meet those goals.

The construction industry's labor shortage is more than just a hurdle; it's a ticking clock. To keep your business from being left in the dust, you have to stop viewing Gen Z as a "difficult" demographic and start seeing them as the architects of your company's longevity.

By changing your messaging, developing young talent, and fostering a purpose-driven culture, your company can help close this gap. Invest in their growth now, so we as an industry can benefit later. 🦋



About the Author

John Waters is the CEO and founder of [Waters Business Consulting Group](#). He brings over 35 years of strategic business development with proven results and experience to help entrepreneurs navigate through business challenges and optimize growth opportunities. John is passionate about transforming the lives of small to medium business owners using his successful “Profit by Design” program resulting in improved financial freedom, more personal income, with less stress, and a balanced lifestyle.

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