Talent Trends Quarterly

Practical Workforce Strategies for Growth-Focused Employers

For many of you, Q4 is planning season. As we work with manufacturing leaders throughout the year, we often find that production plans are challenged not by demand, equipment, or capital investments, but by workforce planning gaps. When critical workforce needs are not built into your plan, your risk experiencing hiring delays, workforce shortages, increased overtime, and higher staffing costs that can affect production goals.

Our Workforce Planning Readiness Audit is designed to help you identify potential risk areas now while there is still time to address them before they affect your 2027 business objectives.

Here's to a productive planning season,

Amber
Amber Schleinkofer

Urgent hires are expensive hires.

Workforce Planning Audit

Review each section and rate your current plan from 1 (Not Ready) to 3 (Ready):

Production Alignment **Score: __**

We have identified the roles, skills, shifts, and timing required.
□ Customer and contract demand, new products, and market expansion
□ Equipment and production-line additions
□ Additional shifts or schedule changes

Workforce Capacity Forecast **Score: __**

We have forecasted workforce needs and potential vacancies to reduce the risk of disruption to production, quality, or customer delivery.
□ Turnover rates by job, shift, department, supervisor, and recruiting source
□ Critical roles without qualified backup coverage
□ Retirements (known and anticipated)
□ Forecasted hiring demand by quarter

Recruiting Strategy & Budget **Score: __**

We have evaluated current-year recruiting-source effectiveness, including cost per retained hire, and budgeted accordingly. Typical investment areas include:
□ Referral, sign-on, and relocation bonuses
□ Job boards and advertising
□ Staffing and recruiting agencies
□ Career fairs and hiring events

Retention & Engagement Planning **Score: __**

We measure 30, 60, 90, 180, and 365 day retention and use the results to improve recruiting, onboarding, and supervisor development.
□ Voluntary, involuntary, strategic, and unavoidable turnover trends are captured and reviewed
□ Internal-mobility opportunities are identified and communicated
□ Employees have access to career-development plans, including training, cross-training, and career pathing

Workforce Metrics & Accountability **Score: __**

Our team has the capacity and tools needed to support hiring goals and report on workforce-performance metrics.
□ Internal fill rate
□ Recruiting-funnel capacity: applicants > interviews > offers extended > offers accepted > start
□ Hiring speed: role posted > offer extended > accepted > start
□ Days to productivity by role
□ Turnover by job, shift, department, supervisor, and recruiting source

How Did You Score?

5–9: Your growth is at risk.
Create a workforce-capacity plan before finalizing production commitments.

10–12: Strengthen the foundation.
Prioritize your two lowest-scoring areas, assign an owner, and strengthen them by December 1, 2026.

13–15: Prepared to execute.
Revisit your plan quarterly and continue monitoring critical-skill coverage.

What Turnover Means for Your 2027 Hiring Plan

Retention and recruitment are not separate HR initiatives. Together, they determine whether your plant has the workforce capacity to achieve your production and growth plan.

A 200-person plant experiencing 25% turnover would need approximately 50 replacement hires before creating a single growth position. Reducing turnover from 25% to 20% could reduce expected replacement hiring by approximately 10 positions before considering growth positions. Recruiting and retention are often budgeted independently, even though every preventable departure creates another recruiting assignment.

A useful planning equation:
Total Expected Hires = Growth Hires + Replacement Hires + Anticipated Retirement Hires

Then estimate the impact of improved retention:
Avoided Replacement Hires = Projected Workforce × Improvement in Turnover Rate

Even modest improvements in retention can significantly reduce hiring demand, recruiting costs, onboarding requirements, and operational disruption.

Turn Your Audit Results into an Action Plan

Production goals, capital investments, and growth initiatives depend on having the workforce capacity to execute them. If one or more audit sections raised questions, now is the time to act. Workforce shortages, turnover challenges, and succession risks are easier and less expensive to address before they affect production schedules, overtime costs, customer commitments, or growth plans.

Urgent hires are expensive hires. The best time to address workforce challenges is before they become workforce emergencies.

Send Amber your two lowest-scoring sections. She will help you identify potential workforce risks, evaluate practical options, and prioritize actions you can take before your 2027 plans are finalized.

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Want an early look at the workforce metrics we will feature in Q1? Ask Amber for a preview as you complete your 2027 planning.