

Create a Talent Pool Lifeline

3 tips for hiring skilled workers
when talent is scarce



There's a limited pool of skilled talent, and everyone is dipping into the water at the same time.

In construction, much of the work is seasonal which means recruiting for workers when you have projects you need to staff.

To make matters even more challenging, your competitors are all doing the same thing, so the competition for those skilled people can be fierce. And some of those competitors who are recruiting your local talent may even be from other parts of the country, turning skilled worker shortages in other regions into a headache for you.

The fact is construction continues to face some significant head winds in terms of talent, and the stakes are high.

- 1. There's a shortage of skilled workers.** According to the [US Chamber of Commerce](#)¹, 85% of contractors find it challenging to hire the people they need and 49% believe it will be just as hard or harder in the coming year.
- 2. Turnover means recruitment is a constant necessity.** Even for the [41%](#)² of construction companies that aren't looking to increase headcount in 2021, as a result of employees leaving, retiring or becoming disabled, simply keeping the same staffing level requires finding new talent regularly.
- 3. Work is left on the table.** More than a third of contractors report [turning down projects](#)³ because they can't find skilled labor to do the work.

With what may feel like a war over skilled workers and considering the potential impact on your bottom line if you can't find the people you need, it's important to focus now on your hiring process. Improving how you find and manage potential employees can give your company a serious competitive advantage as you wade into that shrinking talent pool.

To identify and hire the best candidates as quickly as possible, construction companies need to enhance their approach by making tactical improvements in several parts of the process.

- Sourcing candidates
- Cultivating a pool of talent for future hiring
- Managing for efficiency and effectiveness

Let's look at some tips, techniques and best practices that will help you enhance your recruiting and hiring in these areas, using a combination of low-tech approaches and high-tech solutions.



Improving how you find and manage potential employees can give your company a serious competitive advantage.

1. Find your next great hire.

An amazing skilled tradesperson may be right under your nose but if they don't know about your company and your open opportunities you'll miss out.

Finding great workers may feel like looking for that proverbial needle in the haystack. You know they're out there but locating them isn't easy. You might get lucky and find someone right away but more often it takes some persistence and some tried-and-true techniques to get the people you need.

Discovering those potential workers requires a combination of approaches.

The personal connection

In construction and contracting, personal relationships and referrals are one of the best sources of talent. This is a low-tech way to jumpstart your recruiting.

- Chances are your employees know other skilled people so make sure that when you're hiring you let your staff know and consider offering referral bonuses if you'd don't already use that lever.
- Your superintendents are a great source of potential hires as they often know many other people in the industry and can help recruit for you. Keep them in the loop about your hiring plans and again, don't forget those referral bonuses.

While those in the business can be great resources, various outside groups can also be rich sources for potential employees. Consider contacting local community groups such as workforce development organizations, fraternal organizations, training groups, local chapters of trade associations and even faith-based groups. It might feel old school, but a posted job opening on the bulletin board at a church or in the local grocery store can certainly catch someone's attention.

Bonus tip: Don't forget to use your social media accounts to advertise open positions. The key is to exploit every possible interpersonal technique to reach the skilled people you need.



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Job boards and job sites

While referrals and word-of-mouth are great, you also need to leverage formal online recruitment tools. Your first task is to post jobs on your own website.

However, skilled professionals looking for work often start with general and industry-specific job sites and job boards. You want to make sure your current and upcoming opportunities are posted as widely as possible to ensure potential applicants see them.

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Finding appropriate job boards and sites and then posting jobs can be time-consuming, so the best way to guarantee your openings are advertised is to automate the process using an applicant tracking system (ATS). This is where technology starts to offer significant advantages in enhancing your recruiting and hiring.



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2. Always be recruiting.

Estimating is a year-round activity, so if you're bidding on work, you should be recruiting. Work can come in at any time so you need to be prepared. Waiting until a project is ready to start is too late to begin looking for talent so ideally you should have a pool of candidates to contact before the proverbial ink is dry on that next contract.

Again, this is where technology can really help. A cloud-based system to capture, store and manage applicants enables you to better compete for talent quickly and efficiently.

Here are three tips for cultivating a talent pool.



Leverage candidates from previous openings. When you hire, you collect applications from numerous people, including the ones who were solid but weren't offered a position, those who didn't accept an offer and those who might be perfect for other jobs. Keeping applicants' information in your tracking system (ATS) means you can reach out to those people proactively when you are hiring again.

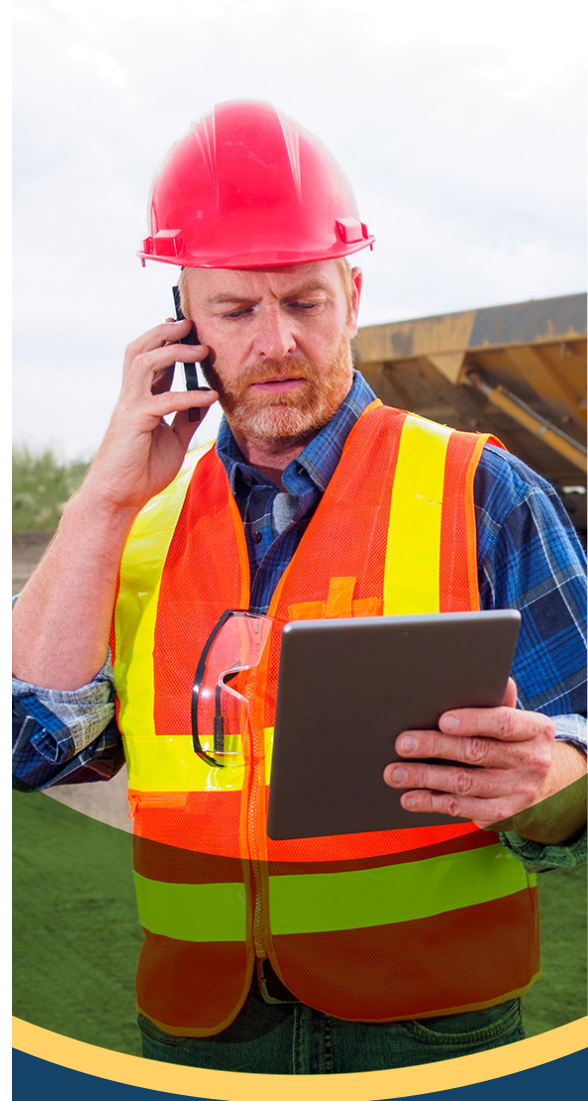


Use pre-screening questions. One of the keys to having a truly useful applicant pool is gathering basic information about people's qualifications so you can easily identify strong talent for current and future needs. For example, you can ask candidates to provide a rating on their skill level in various functional areas when they submit their credentials. This enables you to quickly identify the right level of experience and expertise for your openings.



Nurture candidates. When you're competing for talent, it's important to retain strong relationships with your talent pool. You want to maintain an active conversation about your company to ensure you are top of mind. Think of your candidates as a unique mailing list and send people regular communications about your company including projects you've completed, awards received and any company milestones or changes. Make your best applicants feel like members of your extended family and they'll be more likely to want to work for you.

These techniques can be accomplished efficiently using an applicant tracking system that maintains your candidate pool online. You can use its search functions to mine your applicant list to proactively communicate with key talent while embedded email capabilities help you nurture your candidates with key messages throughout the year. If you maintain applications on paper, you won't be able to compete with other employers who can be more agile in their hiring.



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3. Be systematic.

Whether you're a professional recruiter or an HR pro wearing multiple hats, it's important to have a system that enables you to work as quickly and efficiently as possible.

Part of being systematic is leveraging automation. For example, get postings to job boards through an online ATS platform so you don't have to do these tasks manually.

Another component is reporting. You want to be able to measure and benchmark your results so you can repeat what works well and adjust where improvements are necessary.

Some key metrics to track include:



- Sources of applicants



- Appropriateness of applicants



- Time to hire

You want to know where the best people are finding you, whether your job description is eliciting the right type of applicant and whether there are breakdowns in the timeline or approach that leads to people leaving the process. Evaluating your recruitment process with effective data and reporting helps you refine your approach to maximize successful hiring.



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Make good help less hard to find... and hire.

Construction and skilled trade businesses have been facing a talent shortage for some time, and to address the challenges the most successful companies have adopted an always-on approach to recruiting.

This is not hiring constantly; no one can afford to do that. However, always-on means consistently cultivating talent so you're in the best position to compete for workers when projects are starting.

While personal relationships and referrals are a vital component of recruiting in construction, it's likely not enough to fill current openings and position you to hire for future needs.

Leveraging technology with a robust applicant tracking system can support your recruiting efforts by gathering and documenting your talent funnel and enabling you to identify top applicants so you can nurture them throughout the year. It also helps you refine your approach to maximize efficiency so you can hire the people you need quickly.

When you're competing for skilled workers, you need the right approach and the right tool for the job—an online applicant tracking system.

Arcoro can help. We support construction companies across the US in meeting their workforce needs, including recruiting and hiring. Learn more about how our [applicant tracking system](#) can help you connect to the talent you need to be successful.

Sources:

1. [U.S. Chamber of Commerce. Commercial Construction Index, Q1 2021.](#)
2. [2021 Construction Outlook National Survey Results, AGC.](#)
3. [U.S. Chamber of Commerce. Commercial Construction Index, Q1 2021.](#)



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Arcoro delivers modular HR & people management solutions to help companies hire, manage and grow their workforces.



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