



**PRIDESTAFF®**

## **THE 2026 WORKFORCE RESET: PLANNING SMARTER FOR WHAT'S NEXT**

Automation, generational shifts, and widening skills gaps are reshaping how companies hire, train, and retain talent.

Take a clear look at your workforce, close critical gaps, and prepare for what's next with this practical guide.

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## A NEW WORKFORCE REALITY

The workforce is evolving more rapidly than many organizations can respond. Automation and AI are reshaping job roles, experienced tradespeople are retiring in record numbers, and younger generations are redefining what they want from work.

Ignoring these shifts carries a cost that eventually shows up in your bottom line. Companies that fail to adapt soon feel the impact of labor shortages:

- Lost productivity as open positions remain unfilled
- Increased turnover from burnout and overworked teams
- Missed opportunities because projects stall without the right talent in place

Now is the right time to step back and look at the big picture.

Companies that take the time to forecast, train, and adjust now build the stability and flexibility they'll need to succeed in an unpredictable labor market.



## WHAT'S CHANGING: TRENDS EVERY EMPLOYER SHOULD WATCH

### Human-AI Collaboration

Technology is changing nearly every job. Over **86%** of organizations expect new technologies such as AI to drive changes in their workforce.<sup>1</sup> From welders using robotic systems to technicians relying on predictive analytics, automation isn't replacing people. It's augmenting them.

AI creates demand for workers who can manage, interpret, and maintain advanced tools and technologies.

### The Expanding Skills Gap

In skilled trades, open jobs continue to outnumber qualified workers. Machinists, electricians, and HVAC technicians are especially hard to find. As these gaps widen, production slows and costs increase.

About **87%**<sup>1</sup> of organizations report that they already face skill gaps or expect to within the next few years, and **70%**<sup>3</sup> of business leaders believe skills gaps limit innovation and growth.<sup>3</sup>

### Generational Shift

As Baby Boomers retire, Gen Z is bringing fresh expectations. They value flexibility, purpose, and growth just as much as they value pay. Employers who support career development and employee well-being will find it easier to recruit and retain top talent.

**FURTHER READING: [Building Your Talent Pipeline to Compete in the Sansdemic](#)**

### Flexibility in the Trades

Flexible scheduling isn't just for office jobs. Manufacturers and construction firms are experimenting with four-day workweeks<sup>4</sup>, rotating shifts, and staggered start times to reduce burnout and improve retention without losing productivity.

### Growth of the Contingent Workforce

Temporary and project-based staffing continues to grow as companies adjust to changing demand. About 2.5 million people in the U.S. work through staffing firms each week<sup>5</sup>. Whether it is a seasonal ramp-up or a new build, contingent workers help businesses stay nimble and control costs.



## PLAN WITH PURPOSE: FORECAST AND CLOSE WORKFORCE GAPS

Planning for tomorrow starts with a clear picture of where you stand today and what you'll need next.

### Where to Start:

- Align your workforce plan with long-term business goals
- Identify which roles will grow, shrink, or evolve as technology advances
- Take stock of your team's skills to see where strengths and gaps exist
- Use that insight to guide hiring, training, and succession planning

A Deloitte study estimates that nearly 1.9 million manufacturing jobs could remain vacant<sup>5</sup> between 2024 and 2033 if talent challenges go unresolved. With millions of manufacturing roles projected to go unfilled, workforce forecasting and succession planning are essential.

## BRIDGE THE SKILLS GAP BY GROWING TALENT FROM WITHIN

When skilled labor is scarce, investing in your current team is one of the best moves you can make.

### Why It Matters

Hiring from outside takes time and money. Developing your own people builds loyalty, preserves know-how, and keeps your workforce ready for changing demands. Companies that emphasize internal mobility retain employees for an average of 5.4 years<sup>6</sup>, nearly twice as long as those that do not.

### Where to Focus

- **Technical literacy:** Working with automated systems, robotics, and data tools
- **Adaptability:** Staying open to new processes and technology
- **Safety and compliance:** Always a priority in industrial settings
- **Leadership development:** Preparing tomorrow's forepeople, supervisors, and managers

### Build a Culture of Learning

Make learning part of daily work. Offer certifications, mentoring, or structured on-the-job training tied to clear outcomes. Recognize employees who take initiative and track progress to show that training leads to real results.

### Use Temporary Staffing as a Bridge

While your team is training or transitioning to new technologies, temporary staffing can fill immediate gaps without long-term risk.

### BY THE NUMBERS The High-Performance Payoff

When organizations prioritize a culture of internal growth and development, the impact on business outcomes is immediate and measurable:



## RETHINK HIRING FOR A CHANGING WORKFORCE

Traditional hiring methods no longer align with how people work or search for jobs. To stay competitive, companies need to rethink how they find and evaluate talent.

### Hire for Skills, Not Just Credentials

For technical and trade roles, ability often matters more than formal training or a degree. By 2026, 70% of employers have transitioned to skills-based hiring for mid-level roles, prioritizing demonstrated proficiency over traditional degrees to solve critical talent shortages<sup>7</sup>. They have broadened their talent pool and identified candidates with transferable experience.

### Save Time with Technology

About 88% of companies now use some form of AI<sup>9</sup> or automation for initial candidate screening. AI-driven sourcing tools can help uncover hidden talent by matching skills and experience patterns. Data analytics can also identify bottlenecks in your hiring process and improve conversion rates.

### Explore Alternative Channels

Look beyond job boards. Promote from within, reach out to retirees for part-time consulting, or build partnerships with trade schools and veterans' programs.

### Share Your Brand Story

Why should someone choose your company? Highlight what sets your workplace apart: safety, stability, opportunity, and purpose. Ensure candidates feel a sense of commitment from their very first interaction.

### Improve the Candidate Experience

Fast, responsive communication builds trust. Streamlined applications and clear timelines help you avoid losing qualified candidates to faster-moving competitors. Make it easy for candidates to say yes.

Nearly half of candidates surveyed by PricewaterhouseCoopers said they turned down a job offer due to a poor hiring experience.<sup>2</sup>



## BUILD FLEXIBILITY INTO EVERY PART OF YOUR WORKFORCE PLAN

A flexible workforce is a resilient workforce. Companies that can scale or pivot quickly are better equipped to handle economic shifts, new technologies, and changing demand with less disruption.

### Use Temporary Staff to Stay Nimble

Temporary staffing allows you to quickly boost capacity without incurring permanent overhead. It is a practical solution for industries with seasonal or project-based workloads.

**READ MORE: Bridging the Skills Gap with Creative Staffing Solutions**

### Promote Internal Mobility

Encourage employees to explore lateral moves or cross-training. Internal transfers fill gaps quickly, keep employees engaged, and reduce turnover.

### Flexibility as a Retention Tool

In skilled trades, flexibility doesn't mean remote work. It means creative scheduling, predictable hours, and fair overtime. When companies respect employees' time, loyalty follows.

### THE TRUE COST OF HIRING

A permanent hire often costs **1.4x their base salary** once benefits, taxes, and overhead are included.

The Savings Factor:  
For companies facing seasonal surges, a flexible staffing model can reduce annual fixed labor costs by **20% to 30%**<sup>12,13</sup>.



### Keep Plans in Motion

Move from static yearly plans to rolling forecasts that adjust quarterly. The more often you review data and adjust strategies, the better prepared you'll be for change.



## LEVERAGE STAFFING TO STAY READY FOR CHANGE

In uncertain markets, staffing should not be limited to a short-term fix. It can be a competitive edge. The right partner brings expertise, flexibility, and access to skilled talent you might not reach on your own.

A Strong Staffing Partner Offers:

- **Quick access** to pre-screened, job-ready talent
- **Market insight** on compensation and hiring trends
- **Flexible options**, including temporary, temp-to-hire, or direct hire to match your goals
- **Reduced time-to-fill** through established talent networks
- **Strategic guidance** that helps you plan smarter and reduce hiring risk

Your staffing partner should operate like part of your team and understand your goals, culture, and long-term vision.

## JUMPSTART YOUR WORKFORCE RESET WITH PRIDESTAFF

Every year brings changes to your business, your workforce, and the market. PrideStaff helps you prepare with strategic workforce planning, access to hard-to-find talent, and flexible staffing solutions designed for both immediate needs and long-term goals.

### Partner with your local PrideStaff office to:

- Forecast upcoming workforce needs
- Access skilled trades and professional talent across industries
- Build a flexible workforce strategy that helps you stay ahead of change

### Plan Smarter. Hire Faster. Stay Flexible.

Your workforce is your greatest asset and your greatest opportunity. It's a great time to take stock, realign, and prepare your team for whatever comes next.





## START YOUR WORKFORCE RESET TODAY

Contact your local PrideStaff office to schedule a free workforce planning consultation.

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### Our Mission:

Consistently provide client experiences focused on what they value most.

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