

# HVACR HIRING & RECRUITING TIPS



A COMPENDIUM OF ARTICLES FROM:

**Contracting  
Business**

**HPACEngineering**

**CONTRACTOR**



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## INTRODUCTION



**MIKE EBY**  
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**I**t should come as no surprise to anyone in the HVACR market that this industry is suffering from a labor shortage. Contractors are in dire need of field technicians. Distributors are on the hunt for qualified counter personnel. Manufacturers are looking for machine operators and technicians. The list goes on and on. So, the question is, “How do you find, recruit, hire and hang on to the best talent out there?”

The six articles in this e-book offer some great advice on how to address these key challenges. As you read through it, you’ll realize that recruiting isn’t a one-time event. It’s an ongoing process that should be a top priority for everyone in your organization.

You’ll pick up some valuable tips on how to improve your recruiting process, such as creating a recruiting brochure or video and developing a career page on your company’s website. You’ll learn about the pros and cons of different avenues for recruitment including specific examples around LinkedIn, Craigslist, and Facebook. You’ll also see what some industry organizations and contractors are doing to attract the next generation of workers to the industry and, more importantly, their companies.

Your employees are your greatest asset. Knowing how to find, recruit and retain them will be the key to your future success.



# FINDING & RECRUITING GREAT HVAC TALENT

*Recruiting is the lifeblood of your business. You never know when you'll need a new employee, so recruit whenever you can and build a network of outstanding employees.*

**BY MIKE MOORE, HVAC Training Director, HVAC Learning Solutions**

**F**or an organization to be successful, the management team must find, recruit, and hire outstanding talent. From the management team to front line employees — it's important that everyone in the organization is involved in the recruiting process because it is critical to the long-term success of the entire business.

But what is recruiting? Well, to begin, let's define what it isn't. Recruiting is not selection, a one-time event, or something to be taken lightly. It is an ongoing process that should happen constantly — at community events, career days, trade schools, etc. It is also not a one-person job, but a responsibility of everyone in the organization. Think of it this way — what's louder at a football game, one screaming fan or 50,000 of them? So the more people you have talking about your company, the more people will hear about it. It's also important to distinguish recruiting from selection. Recruiting is spreading the word and enticing people to become involved with your company, whereas selection is a process in which candidates go through a series of steps to be screened for job openings.

So why should you be recruiting? First, it's the lifeblood of your business. You never know when you'll need a new employee, so recruit whenever you can and build a network of outstanding employees. In addition to networking, recruiting allows for business growth, creates viable business in the community, and creates a cycle of constant talent upgrading in your business.

Understanding the what's and why's of recruiting is vital to ensuring that an organization remains vibrant. Not only do you need to recruit new employees, you must reengage current employees every day by providing training and engagement opportunities, in turn improving employee retention.

*Mike Moore offers HVAC advice for managers, technicians, and sales teams daily on Facebook, Twitter, and blog. Follow him and stay in the know.*

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# 15 BEST PRACTICES FOR HIRING BETTER



*Few contractors recruit well, yet almost every contractor needs new recruits. Here are 15 best practices to help improve your recruiting.*

**BY MATT MICHEL, CEO, The Service Roundtable**

1

## EMPLOYEE RECRUITING BROCHURE

**I**t is the rare contractor who uses an employee recruiting brochure. This is basic. The brochure should identify all of the benefits of working for your company. Do you provide tools? Training? Holidays with pay? Vacation? Health benefits?

It should position your company. What is your mission? Vision? Values? What makes your company stand apart from your competitors? How do you support your community?

Include pictures of employees on the job and solicit quotes from them. Quote them talking about their goals and dreams. Quote them talking about what they like to do in their spare time. Quote them talking about why they like your company. Quote them stating why the work they do is important and how they make a difference.

2

## VALUES BASED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Have you identified a set of shared values for your business? If not, you should. Think about the values you want your employees to exemplify. Do you want them to be honest, to care about the customer, to have a true service mentality, to go the extra yard, to be positive, and so on? Think how someone behaves when he or she possesses each value. Write questions you will ask in interviews that identifies whether a person behaves consistent with the values you seek.

MANY CONTRACTORS NOTE HOW DIFFICULT IT IS TO FIND PEOPLE WHO CAN  
PASS A DRUG TEST TODAY. ASIDE FROM THE SAD COMMENTARY  
ON SOCIETY, MEET THIS CHALLENGE HEAD ON.

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3

**CREATE RECRUITING VIDEOS**

Video is rapidly surpassing (if it has not already surpassed) the printed word as a way of delivering content over the Internet. Accordingly, you should have a recruiting video. It should be short, fast, and watchable by millennials with attention deficits. A recruiting does not need to be slick. In fact, it can be better if it's not. Instead, it should show your team in action, show smiling happy humans, and convey a sense of your mission.

4

**BUILD A TECHNICIAN LOUNGE**

No one recruits like college football programs. They furiously compete for the best talent each year. One of the ways they compete is with facilities. The facilities of most plumbing companies leave plenty to be desired from an employee attractiveness perspective. Make them stand out by carving off a room to be a technician lounge. Give it comfortable seating. Include a place where field service personnel can complete paperwork while watching TV. Give away free snacks and soft drinks. Install a video game console. Add a foosball table, ping pong table, etc. Like college football, a superior facility will give you an edge.

5

**DEFINE YOUR HIRING PROCESS**

More times than you think, a great prospective employee tries to join your company, but gets lost when the ball is dropped along the way. Define a process you will follow when someone applies for a position with your company. What is the next step and the one after that? Who is involved? What is the follow up? What happens when you find someone you want to hire right now? Later? Never?

6

**RECRUIT EVERYWHERE**

You may recruit using a job board like Indeed or Monster. Make sure you post when you are hiring on your website, on your trucks, in your direct mail and other advertising. Prepare a short recruiting flyer that can be handed to your customers (you never know who your customers might know) with customer appropriate information about who you are looking to bring on board. Recruit in your on-hold phone messages.

7

**RECRUIT FROM CRAIG'S LIST**

Look under plumbing services on Craig's List. Chances are that small one and two truck contractors can be found. Call them and see if you can hire them. Many will be struggling and might welcome a rescue from self-employment. Pay them a percentage of all of the work you get from their customer list for a period of time, plus what you pay your plumbers.

8

**USE SOCIAL MEDIA**

Your social media pages, personal and business, are excellent ways to recruit. Do not overlook the potential to post positions on local community pages.

9

**KEEP ON THE LOOKOUT IN YOUR DAILY INTERACTIONS**

Prepare recruiting business cards that are short, sweet, and focused on opportunity. When you engage with someone during the course of the day who you think might make an excellent plumber, CSR, and so on, hand out a recruiting card and suggest the person call you at an appropriate time.



10

**RECRUIT SPOUSES**

Do not overlook the husbands and wives of your target employees. Mail information to them about what your company believes, your benefits, etc. Send them thank you notes with a gift card when you hire a spouse. Winning a spouse's support will go a long way toward successfully recruiting a new hire and retaining the person in the future.

11

**PROMOTE DRUG-FREE REQUIREMENTS**

Many contractors note how difficult it is to find people who can pass a drug test today. Aside from the sad commentary on society, meet this challenge head on. Advertise, clearly note on job applications, and job postings that applicants must be able to pass a drug test before hiring and random tests during employment. This will reduce, though not eliminate, the number of applicants who cannot pass a drug test. It will also attract those who are clean and sober. Who wants to be handling a jetter with someone who is high?

12

**INTERVIEW AFTER HOURS**

Do you require people to take time off from work, just to interview with you? If you do, you are making the recruiting process more difficult. It's okay if applicants are knocking down your door. It is not if you are struggling to put butts in trucks. Offer the option to conduct interviews at night and on the weekend.

13

**STAY IN CONTACT WITH A TECHNICAL TIPS EMAIL NEWSLETTER**

At the Service Nation Alliance, we create a special email newsletter every month with technical tips, written for tradesmen. Members send this to an email list that includes current field service personnel, past personnel, and any plumber who has ever applied or given the company an email address. This keeps the company top-of-mind with a recruiting base and provides an excellent way to get the word out when new positions become available.

14

**ADD A WEBSITE CAREER PAGE**

Along with a recruiting brochure, a career page on your website is basic. Include a way to apply online, the information from the recruiting brochure, recruiting videos, pictures of your employee lounge, a message for the spouses, your drug free requirements, and a way to subscribe to your technical tips.

15

**NEVER STOP RECRUITING**

Recruiting does not stop when you hire someone. Constantly reinforce the decision to join your company. Recruit people to stay as hard as you recruit new people to join. Employee retention is even more important the customer retention.

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*Matt Michel is CEO of the Service Roundtable. For more information on recruiting and other aspects of operating a successful, profitable, modern plumbing business, reach out to the Service Roundtable at [www.ServiceRoundtable.com](http://www.ServiceRoundtable.com), or call 877/262-3341. Be sure to check out the "Free Stuff" available for download at the website.*

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# 4 STRATEGIES TO RECRUIT AND HIRE THE VERY BEST EMPLOYEES

*Ask any HVACR distribution company manager about their biggest headaches in the day—chances are, they will tell you that it has to do with employees.*

**BY MIKE AGUGLIARO, Founder, CEO Warrior**

**M**ost of your employees are probably great. But it's likely that you have a few that aren't pulling their weight. And, even the great employees are rarely as dedicated to your company as you'd like them to be. You're a reasonable boss but sometimes it feels like a challenge to recruit and hire the very best employees.

Use these powerful, proven, and innovated tips to overcome the hassles and build a STRONG team.

## **STRATEGY #1**

### **CHANGE YOUR THINKING ABOUT WHO YOU WANT**

When you have a spot to fill on the schedule, and your other employees are grumbling about picking up the slack, it can be easy to take the “any warm body” default approach and just hire someone to fill in. However, this doesn't help you in the long run and only causes problems. The better approach is to just keep looking, and assure your existing employees that you only hire the best, which not only reinforces the need for you to keep looking, but also reinforces the value you place on them.



Look for new team members who view themselves as more than employees. Look for team members who consider themselves partners, leaders, and go-getters. Unfortunately, a lot of managers shy away from these types of employees because they see them as hard to manage or not team players, but the star players KNOW they are star players and if you can get them to work for you, AND figure out how to manage them, you'll focus their energy to help your company grow.

## STRATEGY #2 CHANGE YOUR THINKING ABOUT WHAT THEY WANT

Many leaders make the mistake of thinking that all new employees care about is money. And the logical conclusion of this thought process is: "If I want to hire top performers I need to pay top dollars," which can sound restrictive if you don't have a big payroll budget.

Fortunately, nothing is further from the truth. While you should be paying your team a fair wage, and potentially slightly better than your competitors, money is not the only thing your employees care about. Many employees, even A-players may come to you for other advantages—you just need to figure out what those advantages are. If you're a small company, maybe there is a faster climb up the corporate ladder. If you have a lot of training, maybe eager learners will appreciate that. If you have flexible hours, you might get A-players who can't work traditional shifts. Find out what your advantages are and highlight them.

## STRATEGY #3 BUILD A CULTURE

This is overlooked but so important to your company. Your culture is the strength of the community of your team, and it's how your team feels about working together and working for you. Every company has a culture. However, only the most successful companies create their culture by design (while the rest allow culture to grow by default).

Your culture should be one of tight-knit camaraderie, in which every team member feels that they are a valuable member of the group, and no one gets left behind. If you want to build culture, first decide what you want your culture to be, then create shared experiences that your team members participate in. And if this is all new to you, find a culture-building expert and study how they build culture in their company.

## STRATEGY #4 HOLD A RECRUITING NIGHT

Instead of taking precious hours of your day to interview many candidates, use this very powerful approach: invite all candidates to your office for a group interview at the same time. Bring everyone into a room and interview them as a group. Ask questions and see who responds. Get people to tell you about themselves in just a few seconds, in front of everybody.

This powerful approach will not only save you time but quickly reveals how your potential employees act in an unusual situation. The cream rises to the top in these scenarios and the stand-out A-players will be easy to spot in this crowd.

## SUMMARY

Running a business with employees can be challenging, yet it's necessary. But the companies that grow are the ones who master recruiting, hiring, and managing A-player employees. These 4 strategies can give you an unfair advantage against your competitors and put more star employees on your company roster.

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*Mike Agugliaro is the "Business Warrior" and founder of CEO Warrior, a business consulting, training and mentoring firm, providing tested and proven methods to defeat the roadblocks that prevent small to mid-sized businesses from achieving their ultimate success. He has played a key role in building and selling Gold Medal Service, New Jersey's largest and most respected home service company. For more information about CEO Warrior, visit [www.CEOWARRIOR.com](http://www.CEOWARRIOR.com).*

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# HOW TO RECRUIT PLUMBERS, HVAC TECHS AND ELECTRICIANS MUCH FASTER



*I have used LinkedIn, Craigslist, BirddogHR, Facebook, gone to supply houses, offered recruiting bonuses, and even hired a designated recruiter. No one method is superior to another, just different. Recruitment should be thought of as another sales channel in your growing business. Don't take your foot off the gas — ever.*

**BY TREVOR FLANNIGAN,**  
COO, HomeServiceChats

Recruiting technical roles is one of the largest pain-points in managing a residential service business. It actually makes me sad when I listen to the news and they say it's hard to find a job. I'm thinking, "Go be a plumber or an HVAC tech!"

After having great success with hiring for these technical roles over the last several years, I thought it would be helpful to share my methodology. I have used LinkedIn, Craigslist, BirddogHR, Facebook, gone to supply houses, offered recruiting bonuses, and even hired a designated recruiter. After using each avenue to recruit, I have learned there is no "magic bullet." No one method is superior to another, just different. Please allow me to share my method of success for recruitment and its corresponding pros and cons.

## LINKEDIN

This is great for salespeople and more advanced roles inside your office such as HR or marketing. I have hired all three of these positions using LinkedIn Job Postings.

*Pro:* This is designed for genre recruiting because it delivers your posting as a recommendation for people who fit that genre. If you are looking for a marketing person, then you'll be able to attract a chunk of marketing people because that genre fits into the framework.

*Con:* It doesn't work for a lot of management roles. I tried to hire a HVAC service manager from here and it's not really a genre that LinkedIn catches (it was a total waste of money). And it costs upwards of \$400 to post a job on LinkedIn.

## CRAIGSLIST

In many ways, this is my secret weapon of choice, but I'll spill the beans here. Posting is fine and it'll bring you candidates; however, calling people who are offering plumbing, HVAC or electrical service is where you'll really excel. I cold-called them all every week. I told them, "I just want to tell you what our company is all about." More on this in a bit. These people aren't job hunting, but they do feel alone. They don't have a network of people who can empathize with their situation. Many of them would actually sit down with me because I was in the industry.

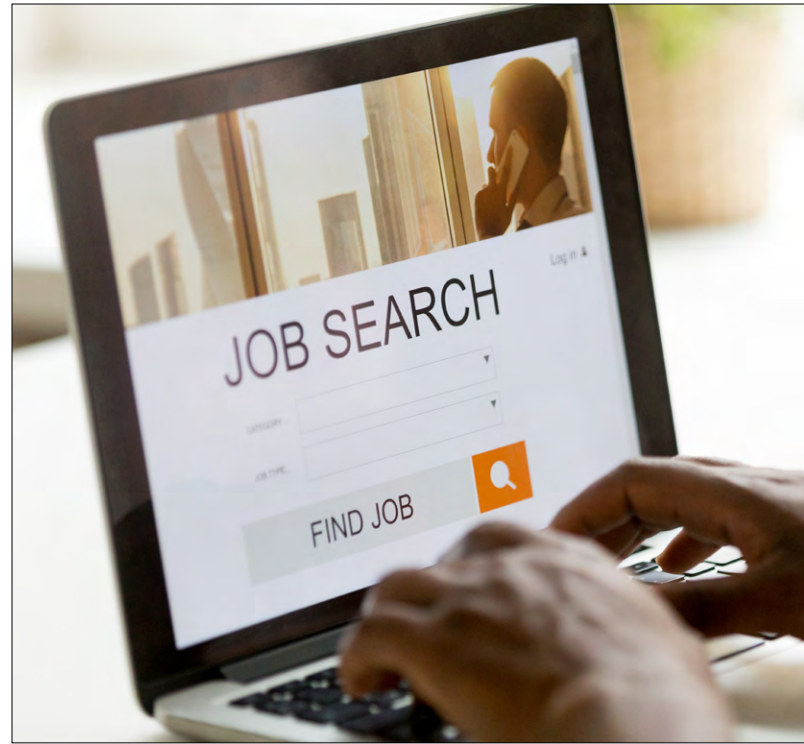
*Pro:* I hired many people from my cold-calling efforts. Not everyone worked out; sometimes they had a hard time wrapping their mind around the price or the pay structure, but the quantity made it work. I had one major success: he was a million-dollar service plumber and best in the company at sales, work ethic and attitude.

Additionally, I had many other wins including earn-out situations for their usually small customer lists and phone numbers. Additionally, posting for an entry-level plumber (or electrician or HVAC technician) was a fantastic way to find drain technicians or apprentices. It's free to call "competitors" and only \$25 for a Craigslist job posting — just make sure you are posting weekly because your listing gets buried fast.

*Con:* You have to kiss a few toads here. This is a quantity play, not always quality. Posting here is a good way to fill the pipeline and keep your technicians' sales engine going.

## BIRDDOGR

This is not a magic bullet either. This is mostly a CRM/pipeline in my mind. It's a great tool for posting, too. More importantly, it is a great place to track and house all the applicants in your company. The most important part of recruiting and using this



tool — or the similar Zip Recruiter — is making sure you follow up with every single lead. (More on that later.)

*Pro:* This is such an easy way to post for jobs. It hits Indeed and a few dozen other random sites. You can refresh job postings every 30 days with zero effort and refreshing them is important. You will see huge influxes at the beginning of these refreshes because it pops to the top of all the boards. It is a great way to house all your applicants, easy to search them and organize what you've done with each one.

*Con:* Maybe it works too well as an always running piece of recruiting because I've noticed that it almost becomes white noise if you don't make it a priority. Be deliberate about checking this all the time so you don't leave any applicant wondering. They almost tote this product as a one-stop shop. I would argue that it might be this way for many businesses, but it's not for our industry. To hire plumbers, HVAC techs and electricians, you have to do all things.

## FACEBOOK

Social media is great because you can hit a lot of people quickly. However, it's very difficult to target a specific kind of person with the technical experience you want. Facebook ads are great for attracting green technicians — that person working in the



stockroom at Michael's, wondering what they're going to do with their life. Target your post knowing this: If you ask for someone with a lot of experience, you probably won't find that person.

*Pro:* Pretty cheap for the amount of impressions you get. You are exposing someone to your ad when their defenses are down (you are more likely to have someone digest it that way). People can share what you post if it's compelling enough and then you'll get real traction.

*Con:* Probably not going to get you someone who can just start in a truck right away. Use some level of creativity if you want the viral effect.

## SUPPLY HOUSES

This is super old-school. It's more of a time suck than anything else if your plan is to hang out and build up your network. The technicians coming and going from the supply house already have a job to go to that day and are making money. What does work with supply houses is posting a flier with your recruitment bonus on it; I even put the little cut pieces of paper at the bottom of the flier for easy tear-and-call functionality.

*Pro:* If you have a contact at a supply house and all the technicians know them, they can be super beneficial to feed you leads. You can always find a cork board next to the front door that you can post information on. Make sure to replenish it because it will be torn down, often.

*Con:* Good and loyal technicians do not want to be seen talking to their competitors, management or ownership. If someone does come up, it might not be the attitude of the person you want on your team.

## RECRUITING BONUS

Most of us have built pay-for-performance environments in the residential service industry. It's natural then that giving them an incentive to recruit goes a long way. I like to encourage retention on this. The referring plumber or tech can get \$2,500 after 90 days and then \$1,000 for each year their referred plumber or tech stays. I only use this incentive for technical roles.

*Pro:* People tend to hang out with the people who look and act like them. If you have a performer, then you would do well to hire their friends. Your employees want to work with good people. Very few employees will choose an incentive over poor work relations as a long-term strategy. They are more likely to bring in quality candidates.

*Con:* You have to make it rewarding to bring people in, meaning: plumbers, electricians and HVAC techs need not worry about having less work by recruiting for you. If they work less as a result, the incentive failed. And make your company an environment they will want to refer into! If everyone is worried about being fired or the next change, they won't bring their friends into that environment.

## DESIGNATED RECRUITER

For many of you, I know that hiring a person to only recruit is difficult because of your company size. I would argue, however, that if you have good management, then you can hire someone for around \$13/hr. Also, you can look to fill the position on a part-time basis. Maybe someone in school would be a good fit? It's a hard position to find, but will pay off in a big way once you find someone who "gets it."

*Pro:* This person can grind for you! Cold calling is not for everyone. If you can find someone who can deliver on par or better than you, then it's a perfect situation. Managing all the channels above isn't easy while trying to run a business. A dedicated recruiter will, at the very least, relieve some of the hiring pressure for you. This person can handle the grunt work, leaving you to be the face who meets with prospective people (if that is your desire).

*Con:* It's hard to find this person — someone who has the ability to make something from nothing. I have found that people who are good with phone sales have this something-from-nothing ability. The cost is not beneficial if it's not done right. Like many things in our businesses, it becomes an overhead headache. A super-dynamic person or a pretty good person, coupled with super-strong leadership, is the key to success here!

## THE PIPELINE

I thought of my recruiting efforts as just another sales department in the company. I built up a pipeline of leads and I chased them until I lost them or won an employee. As with all sales departments, you need to constantly be feeding the machine with leads. You need to aggressively do all the things mentioned on a daily, weekly and monthly basis.

I had a revelation one day last year. I heard about a fantastic HVAC salesman from another company and I was told I should go after him. I worked hard and finally got to sit down with him. We talked about the typical sales vetting things and then

he dropped a bomb. He disclosed that he already applied for a job my company two months prior. He said he would think about my offer, but he eventually turned it down. He had already given us a chance, but we “wouldn’t interview” him.

*Lesson:* Never stop reviewing your applicant pool. It’s your pipeline! If you stop talking and reviewing your applicants, this could result in some major misses. From that point forward, I reached out to every single applicant who applied for a technical or specialty role in our company.

If you are swamped and have “no time” or you are in a seasonal lull and “don’t really need anyone,” you still need to talk to your applicants. Often, you get the best candidates applying in your seasonal lulls because their current company can’t provide them with enough calls.

To recap, your recruitment should be thought of as another sales channel in your growing business. Don’t take your foot off the gas — ever. If you stopped taking calls into your company for one day, what would be the impact to your sales? It’s no different for recruiting.

*“I just want to tell you what our company is all about.”*

This is more or less the phrasing I used when asking prospects out to coffee or lunch. I never used the word interview. What comes to mind when people hear the word ‘interview’ is typically an objection, at least in most gainfully employed people’s minds. But having a conversation over a cup of coffee is no big deal. Get the prospect off-site, comfortable and make it casual.

The off-site venue is another key. The best guys are typically already employed and they don’t want to have their work truck

or van seen in their competitor’s parking lot. Having their truck at Panera is not a big deal.

My goal with recruitment was to build as much of the pipeline as I could into relationships. I would always gauge the interest of the prospective employee. I would either offer them a job on the spot or often times just leave it at, “Let’s do this again!” or, “If you ever need anything give me a call.” Throughout our meeting, I would ask them about themselves, tell them about the company, and then share personal things about myself. I focused on building the relationship so that the chance of them wanting to meet with me again was greater.

Ultimately, my goal was to be the person they called on the worst day at their current employer, asking if I was still hiring (it happened more often than you think).

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*Trevor Flannigan is the COO of HomeServiceChats ([www.HomeServiceChats.com](http://www.HomeServiceChats.com)). He previously managed a residential plumbing, HVAC and roofer company in Kansas City for several years. He now provides website chat service support to hundreds of companies, helping them get more leads, recruit more employees and amplify their overall brand. He can be reached at 816-282-0406 or [info@homeservicechats.com](mailto:info@homeservicechats.com).*

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# DEVELOPING THE PHC WORKFORCE

*Resources to help recruit, hire and train new workers.*

**BY KELLY FALOON, Contributing Editor/Writer**

**W**orkforce development is a broad term for the various methods businesses, communities, state and local governments, and organizations use to teach the skills people need to get a job and be successful. The concept has evolved to match the skills of individuals to the specific needs of U.S. industries and businesses.

In the plumbing-heating-cooling industry, the skills gap is a significant obstacle for many contractors, distributors and manufacturers, and has been for decades. Without enough workers trained and certified to maintain, repair and replace today's highly technical plumbing, heating and air-conditioning equipment, many industry entities are unable to thrive and grow. Investment in new construction projects peaked at more than \$1 billion in November 2017, and everyone in the construction industry is feeling the pain of the labor shortage and skills gap.

The stigma of blue-collar jobs still exists in 2018 as parents, high-school guidance counselors and college administrators continue to push the idea that a university education is the only secondary education needed to secure

a high-paying job. The once-prevalent vocational schools found in small towns and rural counties have almost disappeared. Subsequently, students who may not be good candidates for college — who are more mechanically inclined or interested in how things work — are pressured into taking on enormous debt for a degree or career they may not be interested in.

But positive change is happening, albeit slowly. Charter schools have tried to bridge the gap with architecture, engineering and construction charter schools forming to teach young people the construction trades. In addition, Congress recently reauthorized the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act, which approves more \$1 billion each year for states to fund vocational and career-focused education programs.

Funding for these programs is a crucial issue; many times national, state and local governments reduce or eliminate these programs when they have a budget shortfall. Yet these types of job-training programs are critically needed to get people working in occupations that are in desperate need of workers.

“Part of the funding problem is that available resources tend to cover only the direct operating costs of a training program, and nothing more,” writes Maureen Conway, vice president for policy programs and executive director of the Aspen Institute’s Economic Opportunities Program, in a Fast Company article. “Instead, we also have to be willing to support the participants of job-training initiatives, who have real costs to bear outside of the training coursework itself. Learning takes people away from existing work, even if their jobs are low-paid. They often still have rent to pay and family members to take care of.”

“Successful job training programs need to factor these costs into their funding projections, or at least offer adequate resources to connect participants with other organizations that can help with childcare, housing, transportation, food and other basics.”

Television personality Mike Rowe, well-known for his programs “Dirty Jobs” and “Somebody’s Got to Do It,” is a staunch defender of men and women who work in the trades. He has helped elevate the conversation about trades careers. His mikeroweWORKS Foundation (<http://profoundlydisconnected.com>) provides “financial assistance to qualified individuals with a desire to learn a skill that is in demand,” the website notes. “The foundation has been instrumental in granting more than \$3 million in education for trade schools across the country.”

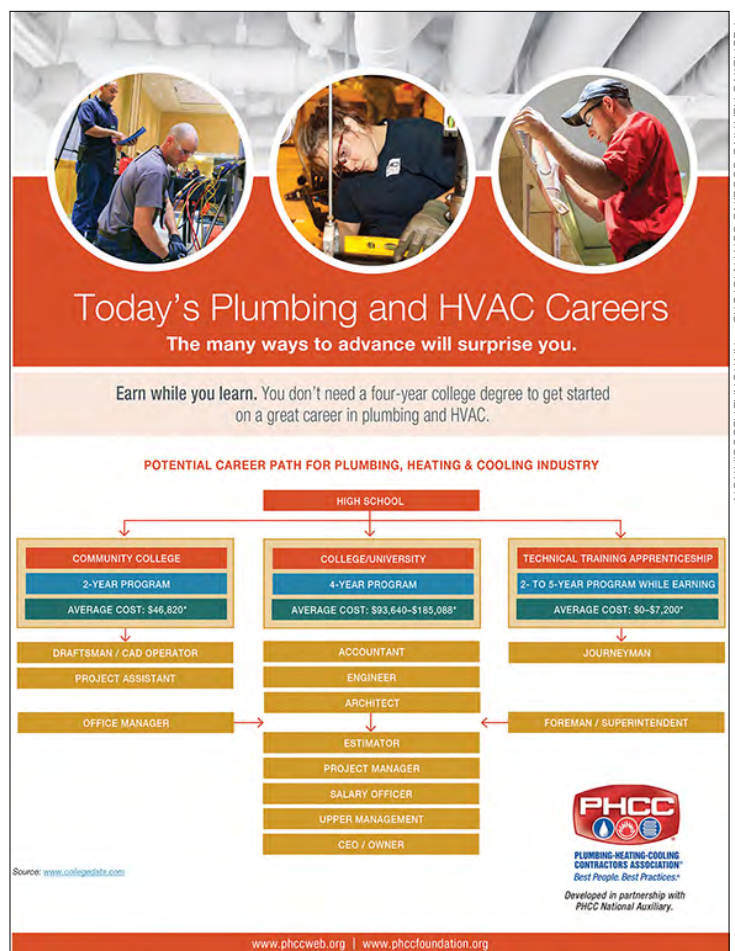
What you see in the next few pages are some of the workforce development resources available to trades businesses to recruit and train the next generation of plumbing and heating contractors. It is by no means exhaustive; if you know of a program or resource not listed, contact the editors and we’ll add it to the list.

## PHC ASSOCIATION RESOURCES

The PHC industry has spent much time and money over the last couple decades to raise the level of professionalism in the industry, thereby trying to make the PHC trades more attractive to high-school students and their parents.

Many industry groups focus attention on providing members with the best practices they need to differentiate their businesses from competitors. They, too, have looked at how to attract the right people to the industry.

• **Plumbing-Heating-Cooling Contractors** — National Association Workforce Development Center ([www.phccweb.org/workforce](http://www.phccweb.org/workforce)). Includes career videos, “Earn While You Learn” posters and ads, success stories, information on pre-ap-




PHCC’s Workforce Development Center has many resources for members, including this flyer that illustrates the different career paths found in PHC careers, as well as how much can be saved in college expenses.

prenticeship programs, and tips on recruiting resources such as Career Days.

The PHCC Career Center is for members to post available jobs or to look for jobs. The PHC careers website ([www.phccareers.com](http://www.phccareers.com)) is geared toward students looking at possible trades careers. The site includes information on scholarships through the PHCC Educational Foundation, apprentice training and connecting with local and state chapters.

• **Mechanical Contractors Association of America Great Futures website** (<https://mcaagreatfutures.org>). This site grew out of the MCAA Student Chapter initiative at more than 50 colleges and universities across the country. Potential employers can look at student resumes, and students have access to news and resources to learn more about the industry.





## Today's Plumbing and HVAC Careers

The required and portable STEM skills will surprise you.

A knowledgeable and successful workforce in the plumbing-heating-cooling industry is dependent on the skills taught through STEM.

**PLUMBING TECHNICIAN STEM SKILL PROFICIENCIES**


- MATH**: geometry, ratios, proportions, algebra
- SCIENCE**: water conservation, energy conservation, biology, chemistry, public health, physics
- ENGINEERING**: building systems, fluid handling systems, appliance and equipment design
- TECHNOLOGY**: circuitry, control systems, instrumentation, meters

**HVAC TECHNICIAN STEM SKILL PROFICIENCIES**

- MATH**: geometry, ratios, proportions, algebra
- SCIENCE**: smoke prevention, air quality, biology, chemistry, physics, heat transfer, energy conservation
- ENGINEERING**: building systems, fluid handling systems, appliance and equipment design, duct design and fabrication
- TECHNOLOGY**: circuitry, control systems, instrumentation, meters

**Plumbing and HVAC Careers: The Facts Will Surprise You!**

- High Salaries** – Average technician salaries are more than \$49,000 plus benefits.
- High Demand** – More than 138,000 mechanics and installers will be needed by 2022.
- Opportunities for Women** – Growth of women in the industry is on the rise.
- Cutting-Edge Skill Sets** – Today's jobs are highly technical and require a variety of skills such as analyzing and problem solving.
- Multiple Career Advancement Paths** – Career opportunities range from technicians to tech-savvy CAD and BIM operators to management.

  
 PLUMBING-HEATING-COOLING CONTRACTORS ASSOCIATION  
 Best People. Best Practices.<sup>®</sup>  
 Developed in partnership with PHCC Educational Foundation.

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics  
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[www.phccweb.org](http://www.phccweb.org) | [www.phccfoundation.org](http://www.phccfoundation.org)

This flyer from PHCC's Workforce Development Center explains how science, technology, engineering and math are used in PHC trades careers.

• **Nexstar Foundation Explore the Trades program** (<https://explorethetrades.org>). A key feature of this program for the plumbing, HVAC and electrical trades is the Personal Guide Program, where a successful person in the trades will mentor anyone interested in a trades career by sharing experiences and answering questions. Information on scholarships and apprenticeships is also available.

## WHAT OTHER CONTRACTORS ARE DOING

Many contractors have taken it upon themselves to "grow their own" apprentices and technicians by implementing training/recruitment programs or starting their own training schools. Others are working with community organizations to recruit people into their companies.

## Invest in America's Workforce: We Can't Compete if We Cut

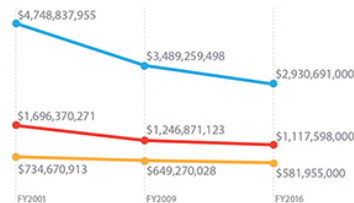
**MIDDLE-SKILL JOBS** – those requiring more than a high school diploma, but not a four-year degree – make up 53 percent of today's labor market, but only 43 percent of U.S. workers are trained at the middle-skill level. That leaves businesses struggling to find workers with appropriate skills, and leaves workers without meaningful pathways to better-paying jobs. Congress must sustain critical investments in workforce and education.

### Congress should:

**INVEST IN WORKFORCE PROGRAMS.** In 2014, Congress overwhelmingly approved the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act, modernizing our workforce system and making it more responsive to industry. But state grants have been cut by 16 percent since FY 2009, and by 38 percent since FY 2001. **We can't compete if we keep cutting.**

**INVEST IN CTE PROGRAMS.** Congress is poised to reauthorize the Carl D. Perkins Act, which funds secondary and postsecondary CTE programs and prepares our workforce of tomorrow. But funding for Perkins has been cut by 20 percent since 2009, and by 32 percent since 2001. **We can't compete if we keep cutting.**

**INVEST IN ADULT EDUCATION.** There are more than 32 million Americans with low basic skills, including 24 million who are currently in the workforce. But funding for adult education has been cut by 6 percent since 2009, and by 21 percent since 2001. **We can't compete if we keep cutting.**



Source: NSC analysis; all totals adjusted for inflation

**ACT NOW!**

**Invest in America.  
Invest in our workforce.  
We can't compete if we cut.**

[www.nationalskillscoalition.org](http://www.nationalskillscoalition.org)

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Funding job-training programs is crucial to get people working in occupations that are in desperate need of workers, such as plumbing, heating and cooling.

• **TDIndustries' THRIVE program.** In the pilot program, which concluded in May, TDIndustries partnered with the United Way and hired 10 of its workers to teach sheet-metal production. Program participants spent the first few weeks in training but then worked at a Houston jobsite. The program has widened access to female applicants and has sparked another similar program in the company's Arizona branch. Other locations are working to make it possible.

"When brainstorming solutions in 2016, we had a shift in mindset: We were always going to operate in a deficit so long as we were only recruiting 50 percent of the population," says Randee Herrin, senior vice president of Houston new construction and who came up with the idea for TD. "We realized that if we shifted our focus to the training and development of



*TDIndustries partnered with the United Way's THRIVE program to provide instructors from its workforce to teach men and women the mechanical trades.*

women, we could create a pipeline of talent that could lead us out of deficit and into abundance.”

- **Atomic Plumbing's apprenticeship program** ([www.atomicplumbing.com](http://www.atomicplumbing.com)). Owner Jim Steinle pays for his apprentices to go to school and become journeymen plumbers. He gives apprentices a detailed career path so they know they can stay with the company in a lucrative career.

- **S & D Plumbing's Plumbing Pipeline Program** ([www.sanddplumbing.com](http://www.sanddplumbing.com)). Founder Sam Dowdy Sr. started the program to teach young people the plumbing trade — evenings, weekends, summers. In return, after graduating high school, students would get a full-time job at the company and a scholarship for apprenticeship training. That morphed into working with the state PHCC organization and the Texas State Technical College to provide a curriculum for high-school students to learn plumbing.

- **Hiller Plumbing, Heating, Cooling and Electrical's Total Tech school** ([www.totaltechschool.com](http://www.totaltechschool.com)). Owner Jimmy Hiller got so frustrated trying to find qualified workers for his company that he bought out the owner of the school that he sent his techs to for training. The school teaches HVAC and plumbing; a full-time recruiter works with area high schools to make sure the school is at trade fairs and career days. Students spend one month in class and three months on various jobsites.

## TRANSITIONING VETERANS

Veterans leaving the military are sought-after employees in the PHC trades. They are used to processes and procedures, working hard and being on time. These groups can help contractors recruit and hire veterans for their businesses.

- **Nexstar Foundation's Troops to Trades** (<https://explorethetrades.org/troops-to-trades>). The foundation offers scholarships and training opportunities to individuals who have dedicated parts of their lives to the armed services for the United States and are interested in learning a technical trade. All scholarship cover costs of training, travel and food and lodging.

- **Hiller Plumbing, Heating, Cooling and Electrical's Transition to Trades** (<http://transitiontotrades.happyhiller.com>). This program is an approved Career Skills Program developed by Hiller Plumbing and U.S. Army Garrison, Fort Campbell. It allows separating soldiers the opportunity to attend the Total Tech trade school to learn valuable technical career skills while remaining active duty in the U.S. Army.

- **United Association's Veterans in Piping program** ([www.uavip.org/veterans](http://www.uavip.org/veterans)). The UA established the Veterans in Piping program to equip military service members preparing to leave the service with sought-after skills that can lead to lifelong




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Veterans leaving the service are looking for jobs. They have the soft skills that PHC employers are looking for.

careers in the in-demand pipe trades. Through 18-week accelerated courses — provided free of cost on military bases across the country — VIP participants earn industry-recognized certifications and direct entry into solid private-sector jobs with good pay and benefits.

## GOVERNMENT RESOURCES

Just about every state has a workforce development program for its residents. The listing below is only a partial listing; if your state isn't listed here, Google workforce development and your state, or contact your state's labor department.

- Hawaii Workforce Development Division (<https://labor.hawaii.gov/wdd>)
- Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity ([www.illinois.gov/dceo/Pages/default.aspx](http://www.illinois.gov/dceo/Pages/default.aspx))
- Indiana Department of Workforce Development (<https://secure.in.gov/dwd/>)
- Iowa Workforce Development ([www.iowaworkforcedevelopment.gov](http://www.iowaworkforcedevelopment.gov))
- Louisiana Workforce Commission ([www.laworks.net](http://www.laworks.net))
- Maryland Division of Workforce Development and Adult Learning ([www.dllr.state.md.us/employment](http://www.dllr.state.md.us/employment))
- Michigan Workforce Development Agency ([www.michigan.gov/wda](http://www.michigan.gov/wda))

- Nebraska Department of Labor (<https://dol.nebraska.gov>)
- North Dakota Workforce Development ([www.workforce.nd.gov](http://www.workforce.nd.gov))
- Ohio Office of Workforce Development (<https://jfs.ohio.gov/owd>)
- Pennsylvania Department of Labor & Industry's Workforce Development ([www.dli.pa.gov/Businesses/Workforce-Development/Pages/default.aspx](http://www.dli.pa.gov/Businesses/Workforce-Development/Pages/default.aspx))
- Texas Workforce Commission (<https://twc.texas.gov>)
- Utah Department of Workforce Services (<https://jobs.utah.gov>)
- Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development (<https://dwd.wisconsin.gov>)

*Kelly Faloon is a contributing editor and writer to Contractor, Contracting Business and HPAC Engineering magazines. The former editor of Plumbing & Mechanical magazine, Faloon has nearly 20 years experience in the plumbing and heating industry. She formed a freelance business in 2017, where she has a varied clientele.*

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The summer BBQ at E.M. Duggan.



# THE RIGHT STUFF:

## RECRUITING AND MAINTAINING TOP TALENT

*Recruiting and maintaining top talent is the main goal for any contracting company. Achieving this takes a clear business philosophy, and execution. CONTRACTOR looks inside the action plans of three plumbing and mechanical companies.*

**BY JOHN MESENBRINK,**  
Editor-at-Large

**W**e hear terms like great fit, perfect complement and ideal candidates bandied about when talking about the recruitment process. The fact of the matter is that with a seeming shortage of skilled workers coming down the pipeline, companies are ensuring that the hiring decisions made are the right ones, and understanding that keeping these employees is just as an important process.

“We’re looking for employees that demonstrate the values and core competencies of our organization, have the passion for the industry and love being a part of a driven company that is striving to be the best,” said Tom Palange, director of marketing, J.C. Cannistraro LLC, Newton, Mass. “What’s most important is to ensure that the candidate is a right fit, both for the position and the organization.”

According to Len Monfredo, LEED AP, executive vice president operations, E.M. Duggan, Canton, Mass., “When hiring employees, E.M. Duggan tries to make sure the personality of the employee fits with the culture and personality of the company; everything else is trainable.”

In Colorado, for example, Sunshine Plumbing Heating Air's President Susan Frew said that the state has close to 10,000 new people arriving every month. Outbuilding and the real estate boom is out of control, so there is a substantial shortage of technicians in residential construction, commercial construction, new homebuilding and service. The philosophy put into action at Sunshine Plumbing Heating Air, Henderson, Colo., must be an attractive one.

"We look for experience, of course, but one thing we do that is different than most interviews is that we test for 'are you a giver or a taker?'" said Frew. "We are very generous people, and we support our community, many non-profits, serve at the food bank, hand out necessary bags to the homeless from our trucks. If a potential hire cannot demonstrate a 'giver' value, he will never fit in with our culture. Takers end up getting 'de-selected' very shortly by the rest of our team."

### FINDING THE RIGHT STUFF

Okay, so how does a company get there? What are some action items to help go from philosophy to execution of hiring solid employees?

Since 2013, there has been a building boom in Boston, which has kept E.M. Duggan busy, for example, "The trade unions have been key in helping us get and keep skilled workers, plus we offer extensive training programs within the company," said Monfredo.

Having said that, businesses need to constantly follow the trends of the nation and make things relatable to future generations, said Monfredo. "This information can help us understand our workforce and create a corporate culture that appeals to the younger workforce. Implementing the latest technologies into the business is key, and it keeps us on top of the game, but it also speaks to the younger generation of employees, which helps us recruit and maintain them as part of the Duggan family."

Cannistraro has a robust recruiting program that reaches out to potential employees in a variety of different formats



*Sunshine Plumbing Heating & Air looks for candidates that value giving back.*

and locations. Its human resources team travels throughout the Northeast and Mid-Atlantic regions to career fairs at top engineering universities. It also has an active "Careers" page on LinkedIn and its corporate website where candidates can get a sense of our culture and apply for a job directly.

"Perhaps the most successful, long-term recruiting tool, however, is our co-op program," said Palange. "We welcome in anywhere from 15 to 20 co-ops each school semester, working in project management, estimating, coordination, facilities, IT and HR. In 2017 alone, we've already hired five full-time employees directly from our co-op program, many of whom worked with us over multiple co-op terms."

According to Sunshine's Frew, "We use the traditional methods such as Craigslist and Indeed, but we run our ads a little differently. We say, 'Do you fit in here?' Are you valued? Appreciated? Heard? We also have won 'Top Places to Work' by the Denver Business Journal, so that tends to bring people in the door," she said.

Notes Palange: as the company has grown, it has expanded its recruiting process to include more than just a series of interviews. Depending on the position — coordinators and designers, for example — certain skills assessments may be required to ensure that the company's standard criteria are

met. All candidates for office positions now complete the Predictive Index (PI) behavioral and cognitive assessment to help the company — and the individual — understand their natural tendencies and how their personality profile fits in with the role and the team in which they work.

“There are no right or wrong answers, but the assessments allow us to build stronger teams using proven data rooted in sociology,” said Palange.

## MAINTAINING THE GOOD ONES

Keeping excellent employees takes just as much effort as it does to find them. For instance, maintaining the family-friendly atmosphere past leaders instilled in E.M. Duggan’s 126 years of existence, it is the norm for employees to stay at the company for decades and make it their last place of employment.

“As a fifth-generation, family-run company, we strive hard to meet employees needs by offering training and good benefits,” said Monfredo, “plus we are big believers in promoting from within. We also keep up with state-of-the-art technology for those in and out of the field, to make their jobs easier and safer.”

Another big factor for E.M. Duggan is keeping up with generational trends. “For instance, we recently upgraded our offices to give it Millennial feel. We moved most of the employees under one roof so that all three trades can work together as a team. We also want them to take time to play together so we recently built a game room, in addition to our in-house workout facility.”

Cannistraro’s leadership recognizes how important it is to attract and retain talent, so the company offers a lot of great, creative perks — starting with a strong benefits’ package the includes healthcare, dental and 401(k) options, and employee benefits, which include things like bonus programs, paid community service days, a charitable contribution benefit, tuition reimbursement, year-round flex-time, team building activities, and free access to neighborhood facilities like a rock gym and yoga studio.

In the year ahead, Cannistraro is investing in a more formalized training program for its employees that places an emphasis on individual skills training and career planning.

At Sunshine, the worth of the employee is reciprocated through some of its benefits. The company offers prizes and trips for reviews, including a trip for two to Mexico, free boots twice a year, financial planning services, legal shield services, days off for volunteering, unlimited personal time off — without pay — tool allowance, weekly bonuses for performance, and health club memberships.

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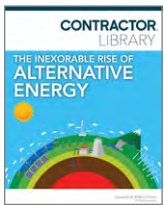
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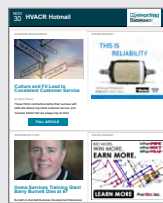


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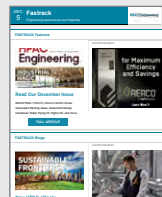


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