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## The Talent War – Engaging and Recruiting Top Talent in a Multi-Generational Workforce

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The Manufacturing and Distribution sectors are making a big comeback in the U.S. We've seen continued expansion on U.S. soil, and hiring managers in these sectors are poised to add staff, but we aren't seeing a multitude of people ready to take on these jobs. To ensure this growth is sustained, the industry must continue to innovate and increase the skill set and technical knowledge of employees. To do this, it's imperative that we close the generational gap and create career-long appeal for millennials and future generations.

Currently, millennials range in age from early twenties to mid-thirties, and they will quickly make up approximately 75% of the full-time U.S. labor force (by year 2025). At the same time, the baby boomer generation is phasing out of the workforce, with close to 40% of those who were born between 1946 and 1964 actively in the process of retiring or leaving the full-time job market. To close this gap and transition our labor force, hiring managers must plan for and provide opportunities that offer long-term stability and career progression to this new generation in a way that speaks to them, meets their expectations and provides opportunities for career longevity. How will we do this?

### Engage: Capitalizing on Dynamic Rebranding

The manufacturing and distribution sectors must modify public opinion to increase appeal and excitement among both skilled, degreed millennials and upcoming generations to effectively close the work force gap and maintain long-term innovation. This process is two-fold and involves accessibility and rebranding through technology in addition to developing strategic long-term partnerships that bring opportunities to students, allowing them to envision and commit to a long-term career in manufacturing and distribution.

Dynamic rebranding of the industry will start at the individual company-level and must include a robust online presence as well as immediate accessibility through technology: social media, corporate websites, a community involvement platform, etc. Effective long-term rebranding will catch the attention of future generations, perhaps even as children, and has the potential to instill a lifelong feeling of brand loyalty and trust.

Capitalizing on rebranding efforts with updated websites, social media pages and technology-based accessibility will create opportunities to more effectively interact with and engage millennials as they come of age and begin to explore career options. Your online presence must tell a story that appeals to your target audience and enables them to see your organization in a positive light, as a company that's engaged in the community and supporting issues that matter (to them) while also sustaining long-term viability and offering career potential. Accessibility through the web, via social media and throughout the hiring process requires internal systems that work properly to attract and engage new talent.

Millennials have grown up in a tech-savvy world where instant gratification is king. They have less patience for long, drawn out processes, especially with regards to job seeking activities and recruitment. You must strike fast to catch their attention and immediately push them through a seamless and efficient process of submitting a resume and application, otherwise, you'll lose their attention. Millennials are a generation of potential employees who may not return to your malfunctioning website if something goes wrong during their initial process of resume submission. Once you have their attention, you rarely get more than one chance to secure engaged and long-term interest.

### **Recruit: Forming Partnerships on Campus**

Lasting and meaningful partnerships with high schools, universities and trade/vocational schools will be crucial in shifting perception and enabling future generations to truly grasp the possibilities of building their careers in the manufacturing and distribution sectors. These partnerships must be collaborative and built on mutual trust and cooperation. In many cases, organizations may need to offer more than the idea of "job possibilities" to truly show or gain any value through these partnerships.

Companies who support and attend career fairs, present to upcoming graduates, and offer summer and work-study internships throughout students' education, tend to do a better job of attracting and retaining new graduate talent. Internships and work study programs that allow students the best chance to experience the industry, the corporate culture of a company and explore multiple potential career paths within certain sectors will be the most appreciated and desired by students interested in the industry. Such internships should be selectively offered, which will demonstrate to the chosen students that they have

been selected to help provide value as well. These students will be able to support overloaded and understaffed teams, take on small projects and take ownership of the opportunity for continued learning.

### **Retain: Anticipating Future Talent Needs with Succession Planning**

In addition to rebranding and engaging recent graduates and future generations, it's also important that companies possess talented people with necessary skill sets in the right positions to successfully transition as baby boomers continue to leave the full-time workforce over the next decade. Succession planning is something that many companies leave to chance, but it's one of the most important factors, across all industries, to ensuring continuity and long-term continued success. There may be circumstances when it's cost-effective and efficient to fill a retiree opening with a recent graduate, but more often that may be difficult to do. When a key position or leadership role becomes available and requires experience and a specific skill set, companies should know where to locate experienced talent in the current market.

With the unemployment rate below 5% in many parts of the country, there is a war on finding experienced talent. Clearly this is the case in many industries due to the numbers previously discussed, so companies should have a strategic recruiting approach that covers multiple generations in order to attract the top talent to your organization. Such an approach should include the same tools above for branding and processes, but should also include utilization of your internal associates to foster referrals, as well as referral programs to attract experienced talent. This will help to create relationships in associations and trade groups to make future connections to target.

An exciting brand with a positive public perception and strong social media presence, coupled with a seamless recruiting and onboarding process that involves educational and recruiting partnerships, will allow organizations to attract and engage talented people, whether they are seeking experienced hires, new graduates or both. Ongoing innovation has and will continue to generate growth in these sectors, which will in turn offer the potential for long-term career viability and ongoing professional development for many generations to come.

DHG Search can assist in building solid relationships and talent brand positioning in the marketplace. Contact your DHG Search Advisor for further assistance:

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