

A guide to recruitment and retention in manufacturing

A free guide from Marsh Commercial



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The recruitment and selection process can be challenging for any business. As a manufacturer, your people are your biggest asset. By hiring the right talent, you're likely to contribute to improved competitive advantage. And retaining your employees is equally as important as the hiring process itself. Happy employees will want to stay longer. Your reputation as an employer will bump up to the next level. You'll naturally attract more business and better candidates as a result. You won't have to recruit as often which will likely save you money.

At Marsh Commercial, we don't just sell insurance. We find better ways to manage your unique risks, protect your assets and people, and free up capital to support your growth.

To help you get started with your next round of recruitment, we've taken a deep dive into some of the key recruitment and retention areas in the manufacturing industry and given you some practical tips and food for thought.

Recruitment

Getting the right people through the door is the first place to start.

When you're recruiting, you're looking to do two main things – properly advertise your role so that you're attracting the right people, and properly advertise your business, so candidates can view it as a place they'd like to join and stay with.



Build your candidate profile

As your business grows, so will your need for specific skill sets. Do you have a gap in certain skill sets that you need to fill? What kind of experience and personality traits would your ideal candidate have?



Manual skills

Do you have a skills gap or are you missing specific roles in your business? Such as experience with specific machines, fabricating and complex assembly?



Customer-facing skills

These could include a need for sales staff and account managers. Do you need a charismatic, people-person who can also use manufacturing customer management applications?



Manufacturing management skills

Do you need someone who is super-organised, has large project management experience and is able to manage people effectively?



New technology skills

They may or may not have previous manufacturing experience, but are they a whizz with software, computer models, Computer-aided Manufacturing (CAM), and technology of different kinds.



Job description and person specification

Building your candidate profile should help you be clear from the outset what you're after. Don't sell the role as something it's not – this will only end in a new recruit leaving down the line when they realise they've been mis-sold.

When you're writing your job description there are a couple of things you need to be really clear about:

- The exact skills required for the position and any desirable but not absolutely required skills.
- Whether the position is temporary or permanent – do you need a unique skillset for one part of a specific job, or do you need to fix a long-term skills gap in your business?
- The background a preferred candidate will have – do they need manufacturing experience or are you hiring for a position with transferable skills?
- Qualifications or accreditations required – does your ideal candidate need specific educational or professional credentials?

It might also be worth touching on where you see the role leading in your job description. That way, candidates will know that you invest in your staff and they can start to imagine a future working for you.

For your person specification, really think about what kind of characteristics are needed for candidates to gel with your existing team and culture.

Remember... The Equality Act 2010

Under the Equality Act 2010, it's against the law to discriminate against anyone on the grounds of protected characteristics. These include:

- age
- disability
- marital status or civil partnership
- gender reassignment
- race – including colour, nationality or ethnic origin
- religion
- gender
- sexual orientation
- pregnancy and/or maternity leave.

It's therefore essential that your job descriptions and person specifications do not unlawfully discriminate against any prospective candidates. If you need a hand with ensuring these are legally sound, our HR and employment law experts can help.

Advertising your job

Don't limit your advertising to one or two places – you could be missing out on great candidates just because they haven't seen your vacancy! Use several avenues, like job boards, newspapers, social media and your own website. Consider using specialist manufacturing sector recruiters also.

You might incur a cost for some of them, but it will pay off in the long run. As they say, if you think hiring good employees is expensive, try hiring bad ones!

Word of mouth is free and often the most trusted way of recommending someone, but remember, a strong company culture is what makes word of mouth work. How confident are you that your employees would recommend you to a friend?



Don't just promote pay

If you're concerned your advertised salary isn't enough to attract great candidates, make a point of highlighting other perks.

If you don't really have any employee perks, consider introducing some. It may be more difficult for a manufacturing business to implement some traditional work perks – working from home (obviously when you're working on a site) or flexible working (when you're up against tight job deadlines) aren't so feasible.

But, that's not to say that manufacturing businesses can't make great use of some competitive nonsalary benefits to attract some great candidates.

Some examples that work well for the manufacturing industry include early finish on a Friday or the 'nine-day fortnight'. This is a working schedule that means on four days per week you work nine hours and on the fifth day you either work eight hours or take the day off. The name comes from having nine working days over a fortnight, working the same hours but having an extra day off every second week by working longer on the other days.

The interview

Think of an interview as a two-way conversation, rather than an interrogation. The interview stage is also an opportunity for you to impress a candidate – not just the other way round. If someone leaves feeling unexcited, odds are they won't accept the job even if you offer it to them.

Types of interview questions

Competency-based questions

These types of questions delve deeper into a candidate's previous experience to indicate how they're likely to perform in a typical situation in your business.

Example

"Tell me about the biggest obstacle you've faced during a project. How have you resolved it?"

Situational-based questions

This includes presenting a candidate with a hypothetical situation and asking how they would respond. Usually the best answers refer to a similar situation they've handled in real life.

Example

Situational questions tend to start with phrases like, "what would you do if..."

Open-ended questions

These kinds of questions are a great way to let the candidate reveal a little more about themselves, such as their career history, what motivated them to get into construction and can give you a better sense of their personality.

Example

"Tell me a little more about yourself."
"Talk me through your CV."



Remember...!

Always consider hiring for attitude and fit, over skill. You can always train for skill, but you can't train for how well someone will fit into the culture of your business.



Note to self!

Sort out parking for new starter where possible.

Retention

Did you know the average cost of recruitment is **£30,000**?¹ The price tag includes factors like loss of productivity, recruitment costs, training and time spent interviewing, to name just a few. It's an outgoing we're sure you could do without. So, let's take a look at how you can better your retention with effective HR tactics...

01

Did you know that employees who have a proper induction are 69%² more likely to stay at a business for three or more years? That speaks volumes about the impact a proper induction to your business can have.

02

Make sure your new starters have all the relevant information they need (transport, parking, PPE information, work hours etc) before they start. Introduce them to the team they'll be working with, and try to enable different members of the team, have a chance to properly meet with your new hire, so they can understand how they'll be working together.

03

Make sure your induction process is thorough and try to mix policies with positives and perks. This is your opportunity to enhance their excitement for the journey ahead and embed them into the team.

¹ <https://www.hrreview.co.uk/hr-news/recruitment/it-costs-over-30k-to-replace-a-staff-member/50677>

² [https://res.digital/must-know-facts-about-online-induction-systems/#:~:text=69%25%20of%20employees%20are%20more,the%20first%202%20months%20\(source\)&text=Companies%20with%20a%20Induction%20process,greater%20new%20hire%20retention%20\(source\)](https://res.digital/must-know-facts-about-online-induction-systems/#:~:text=69%25%20of%20employees%20are%20more,the%20first%202%20months%20(source)&text=Companies%20with%20a%20Induction%20process,greater%20new%20hire%20retention%20(source))

Consider using a mentor system

Having a mentor – someone other than a direct line manager – can help boost retention. Having a longstanding member of the team showing a new hire the ropes can aid in acclimatising to the business’s culture, can share skills and bridge knowledge gaps.

Appraisal

The problem:



Sadly, 24%³ of the working population do not feel valued in their job. Among many other detrimental knock-on effects, is the likelihood of undervalued employees leaving you.

The solution:



Set up a well-communicated and structured review process and stick to it – no excuses! When someone’s done a great job, tell them. If they need to improve in a certain area, constructively help them.

Team building

The problem:



Nobody likes turning up to work, day in and day out, to face a disconnected team that doesn’t get on. The morale and dynamic of your team can have a big impact on employees’ happiness, so invest in it!

The solution:



As we touched on earlier, during the recruitment process, you should be looking out for personality traits that will blend with your existing team.

In addition, consider organising a Christmas party and team building events every now and then, to give employees a chance to enjoy each other’s company outside of the work environment – neither need be expensive!



³ <http://hrnews.co.uk/a-quarter-of-uk-workers-do-not-feel-valued-by-their-organisation/>



Exit interviews

Admittedly by this point it's too late to retain but try and learn from an employee's departure. Ask them questions like, why are you leaving? What could we have done better?

From their responses, you can identify any trends and address issues that might be triggering your employee turnover.

Five benefits of an engaged workforce

Engaged employees are passionate, energetic, innovative and loyal. And if you follow the tips outlined above, that's what you should have. As well as staying with you longer, there are a number of business benefits that stem from engaged employees:

1. enhanced job performance and productivity
2. more innovation, ideas and creativity
3. increased discretionary effort
4. higher attendance rates
5. better customer satisfaction, retention and recommendation.

Refreshingly human advice and support

Recruitment and retention can be tough. With so much to consider, it can be a daunting path to embark on. As one of the UK's leading commercial insurance brokers, we get to know your business inside out. From insurance, to risk management and employee health and benefits, it's our passion to advise, protect and support you on your journey.

If you want help revamping your recruitment strategy, keeping hold of great people and making sure they're engaged and happy, get in touch. Visit [marshcommercial.co.uk](https://www.marshcommercial.co.uk) or speak to your **Marsh Commercial adviser**.

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