

# ATTRACTING AND RETAINING TALENT IN MANUFACTURING

## Q&A

### WITH JEFF GILLES

DIRECTOR, COMMERCIAL EXCELLENCE AT ADVANCED TECHNOLOGY SERVICES

Ahead of the American Manufacturing Summit 2019, Generis Group spoke with Jeff Gilles, Director of Commercial Excellence at Advanced Technology Services, to discuss the secret to attracting and retaining talent in manufacturing. In this Q&A, we examine the impact and risk the skills gap poses to the manufacturing industry, how companies can attract new talent, and why ongoing development and training are crucial.

Attracting and retaining top manufacturing talent is more challenging than ever as the supply of highly-skilled workers fails to keep up with demand. The combination of an aging workforce and significant industry talent shortage is projected to leave an estimated 2.4 million positions unfilled between 2018 and 2028, with a potential economic impact of \$2.5 trillion.

At the current rate, these positions are unlikely to be filled by the next generation of workers. The manufacturing industry is suffering from a perception problem - eligible recruits fear layoffs and a "lower status stigma." As manufacturing companies begin to feel the effects, focus is turning towards what can be done to fill the skills gap.

Workers who can leverage robotics, big data, 3D printing and other disruptive technologies to drive process innovation are needed, and manufacturers that can develop and retain such skilled workers may have a competitive advantage. So how can today's well-equipped, forward-thinking manufacturers attract top skill to fill the talent gap? Here's a look at the manufacturing job landscape and strategies available that can help manufacturers find and keep manufacturing talent.

### WHAT IMPACT DOES THE SKILLS GAP HAVE ON THE MANUFACTURING INDUSTRY TODAY?

All manufacturers are looking for a solution to the skills gap problem. Companies are struggling to fill machine operator, maintenance and engineering positions. However, there are a few options manufacturers can turn to. Paying more to hire top talent, leveraging staffing companies, utilizing contractors and developing talent internally are some of the solutions manufacturers are exploring to address the skills gap.

Advanced Technology Services, for example, provides a more efficient alternative as an outsourced maintenance company. Attracting the best talent currently on the market, ATS delivers best-in-class maintenance and reliability programs to manufacturers, driving industry leading technologies to capture data, analyze it and implement improvements necessary to keep factories running efficiently.

By training these employees to reach technical capabilities beyond those found at other companies, ATS is strategically placed in a competitive position as automation and advanced technologies are implemented in manufacturing facilities.

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**WHAT RISK DOES THE SKILLS SHORTAGE POSE  
TO THE FUTURE OF MANUFACTURING?**

The biggest risks are:

- Falling behind the competition and not meeting customer demand;
- Increasing costs to address the problem and losing critical margin points that allow reinvestment in technology and product advancements and;
- Lost revenue through increased equipment downtime caused by lack of skill or training on essential maintenance needs.

Manufacturing companies will need to invest heavily in automation, new equipment and sensor technology to eliminate the quantity of skilled workers needed, but this will also drive the required skill level up. Some manufacturers will begin looking elsewhere to build their products and manufacturing facilities, possibly even outside of the United States.

**HOW CAN MANUFACTURERS ATTRACT AND  
RETAIN NEW TALENT?**

Ongoing development is crucial to hiring, training and retaining top talent, but it is how companies do this that matters. Simply spending more money on training will not provide optimal results. Companies must have a fully integrated plan for development that is intertwined with both the personnel and HR

practices of the organization. Ongoing development needs to become part of the company culture, encouraged and rewarded.

Attracting skilled talent can be accomplished by developing career paths for skilled trades, investing in training programs that increase employee skill sets and add value to the organization, and providing competitive benefits packages.

**WHY IS ONGOING DEVELOPMENT AND  
TRAINING CRUCIAL TO RETAINING NEW AND  
EXISTING TALENT?**

Career development and compensation growth is closely tied to technical advancement. This is a significant difference when compared to those who pursue a traditional bachelor 's degree. Career advancement and compensation comes when skills are increased.

**WHY SHOULD MANUFACTURERS FOCUS ON  
RETENTION?**

Manufacturers will be investing heavily in the previously mentioned resources to help them develop their trades and careers. Turnover will be very costly.



Advanced Technology Services, Inc. (ATS) is a leading solutions provider with over 30 years of proven experience in reliability-centered industrial maintenance and MRO services. ATS' technically skilled workforce, established processes and smart technologies provide manufacturers measurable results through optimized plant productivity. To learn more, visit [www.advancedtech.com](http://www.advancedtech.com) or contact us to discuss your specific challenges and needs.