



# 6 Best Practices for Bridging the Talent Gap

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**To bridge the talent gap and meet the demand for a strong, competent workforce,** companies must take matters into their own hands by sourcing and developing a new generation of employees.

## **1. Engage Upstream**

Many employers complain about the status of America's workforce development programs but then wait at the end of the education pipeline for the finished product to come out. Successful companies engage upstream by developing partnerships with nearby community schools. They get involved with local community colleges, technical schools, high schools and middle schools to shape curriculum, donate equipment to help students learn, serve as trainers and build awareness of the career opportunities available within the industry they represent.

## **2. Hire with Development in Mind**

Companies should not expect to find the perfect candidate fully loaded with the right skills, education and experience. Instead, they should hire expecting to train and develop new employees. Employers that worry less about the current open position and more about finding workers with the right generalist skills and critical competencies (e.g., willingness to learn, maturity) who can learn quickly and grow with the company will develop a competitive advantage.

## **3. Invest in High Touch Onboarding**

Effective, high touch onboarding of employees mitigates the costly threat of attrition and prepares employees for success. Successful companies onboard new hires with structured schedules that teaches employees about the job and organization, rotate them with subject matter experts and provide appropriate training and development at key phases of the onboarding process (first week, first month, first 90 days, first six months and so on).

#### **4. Use a Multi-pronged Approach**

Training is no longer one-size-fits-all. To be successful at bridging the talent gap, employers must leverage all forms of learning. Deploying a variety of development methods to train employees will increase learning retention and employee engagement. Examples include job shadowing and rotations, mentoring, coaching and a mixture of classroom, virtual and on-the-job training.

#### **5. Collaborate with Other Companies**

To close the skills gap, organizations should be unafraid to share knowledge with other employers in the industry. For example, some companies set up open access training programs to ensure more people have the skills they need in specific geographic regions. Large manufacturers, medium-sized businesses, and small business startups are also coming together successfully to collaborate on training programs that collectively benefit a particular industry.

#### **6. Incentivize Your Seasoned Workforce to Transfer Knowledge**

Many industries are facing dramatic knowledge loss due to the pending retirement of their Baby Boomer workforce. Employers will need to incentivize seasoned workers to share their knowledge with younger workers in a productive way. Examples include offering phased or flexible retirement programs that allow employers to continue tapping into employees' institutional knowledge for extended periods of time. Providing bonuses or pay bumps to seasoned employees who take on the additional responsibility to formally train and/or mentor younger employees is another effective knowledge transfer incentive.

Building and maintaining a pipeline of employees with the skills needed to keep production, service and leadership at top efficiency requires a sincere investment in developing and retaining skilled talent overtime. With thoughtful planning this can be done exceptionally well. Those companies that embrace these best practices will not only bridge the talent gaps in their own organizations, but also contribute to the talent prospects for the industries they serve.