

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT 101



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Rental[™]

WHAT RENTAL COMPANIES CAN DO TO KEEP THEIR LABOR FORCE STRONG

The issue of hiring and retention in the rental industry is nothing new.

In fact, James Auerbach, ARA vice president, industry workforce development and event segment, says it has plagued the industry since well before the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic—though the pandemic exacerbated an already-tight labor market.

“Even before the pandemic, American Rental Association (ARA) members nationwide consistently expressed their primary concern regarding the difficulties faced in hiring suitable candidates,” Auerbach says. “While sales and administrative roles had relatively better outcomes, finding qualified drivers and individuals for yard and warehouse operations proved increasingly challenging. This scarcity of talent was a prevalent struggle that persisted long before the pandemic emerged and has increased since the pandemic as the job market expanded for drivers and retailers.”

THE REASONING

So why has finding and retaining good labor become such a challenge?

1. Increased Competition from Other Industries

Demand for workers in alternative job opportunities—such as driving for Amazon or working in warehouses for large retailers—has increased, according to Auerbach.



“These jobs required less physical labor and offered competitive wages and attractive benefits,” Auerbach says. “Additionally, the rapid growth of delivery services like Door Dash and Instacart, plus restaurants and supermarkets offering delivery options, dramatically changed the job market. This shift led many potential rental industry employees to pursue these new opportunities instead.”

As a result of those alternative job options, rental companies are now competing for the same pool of candidates, aggravating the hiring challenges they already faced.

Additionally, career opportunities within the rental industry require skilled labor, further limiting the number of potential candidates.

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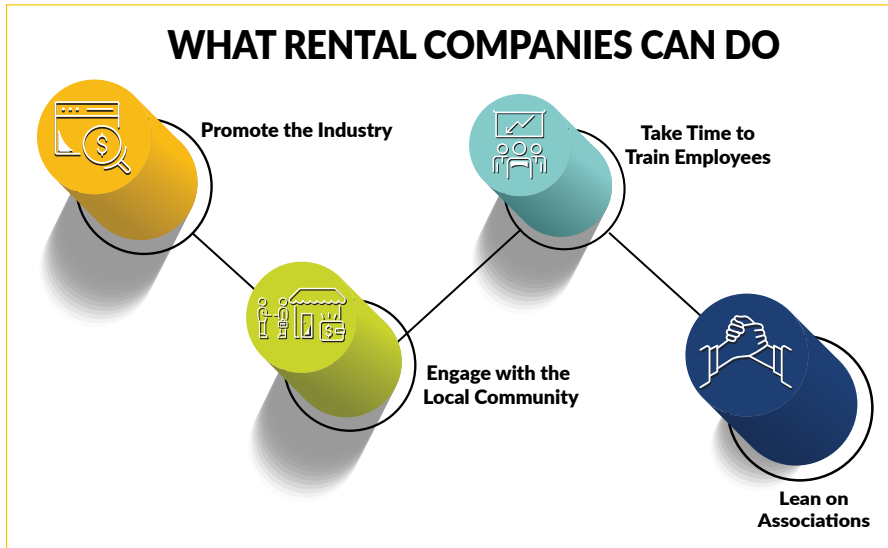
Instantly transforming someone into a diesel mechanic or training them in complex systems like hydraulics or tent installation is no easy task. These roles demand specific expertise, resembling trade skills, which narrows the number of qualified candidates.”

—James Auerbach,
ARA Vice President

2. Lack of Awareness

Another challenge for the rental industry includes a lack of awareness of jobs in the industry.

“Most people are simply unaware of the existence of rental industry jobs,” Auerbach says. “Schools at all levels organize seminars and training sessions about career choices, and they touch on construction and landscaping opportunities but fail to address the fact that rental companies provide 55 percent to 60 percent of the equipment used for construction jobs.



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WHAT RENTAL COMPANIES CAN DO

To help ease their labor woes, rental companies can employ various strategies.

1. Promote the Industry

One way to attract more people to the industry is to promote awareness of the industry.

Auerbach notes that sustained marketing campaigns through social media and traditional advertising are key.

“Take auto mechanics, for instance. Their commercials are omnipresent on radio, TV and social media,” Auerbach says. “FedEx and UPS are also prime examples. Working at the post office used to be a multigenerational career, but now people view FedEx and UPS as long-term career options. They have successfully spread the message.”



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The rental industry needs to match that level of intensity and volume, emphasizing that rental industry careers offer lucrative opportunities, upward mobility and immediate availability in one of the fastest-growing industries throughout North America.”

—James Auerbach,
ARA Vice President

2. Engage with the Local Community

Rental companies can also increase awareness of the industry by engaging in community events and with cultural centers, religious institutions, local workforce boards, military bases and recruitment offices and schools, including technical high schools and colleges offering relevant programs.



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3. Take Time to Train Employees

It's also crucial that rental companies prioritize comprehensive training programs for new hires so that they are equipped with the skills and knowledge they need to be successful.

Additionally, training can serve as a retention tool because employees will value the opportunity to develop a clear career path and access advancement prospects. In other words, they won't feel like they are stuck in a dead-end job.

Furthermore, items such as certifications and certificate courses can help them gain knowledge and skills.

"By committing to ongoing learning, employees enhance their personal and professional development, fostering job satisfaction and loyalty," Auerbach says.

4. Lean on Associations

The good news is that rental companies don't have to tackle the labor problem alone.

Associations such as the ARA offer comprehensive educational resources and professional certification courses that provide in-depth knowledge and skills that can be showcased on resumes and LinkedIn profiles.

"With a dedicated team focused on workforce development, the ARA actively collaborates with members to increase candidate availability," Auerbach says. "By joining forces, we can effectively enhance the awareness and understanding of careers within the rental industry. Together, we have the power to accelerate and achieve remarkable success in this endeavor." ■



By participating as speakers and being present in these educational institutions, local rental businesses can establish themselves as preferred employers. By becoming well-known employers of choice at a local level and leveraging national marketing efforts, the goal is to be part of career discussions at earlier stages, including middle schools and high schools."

—James Auerbach,
ARA Vice President



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