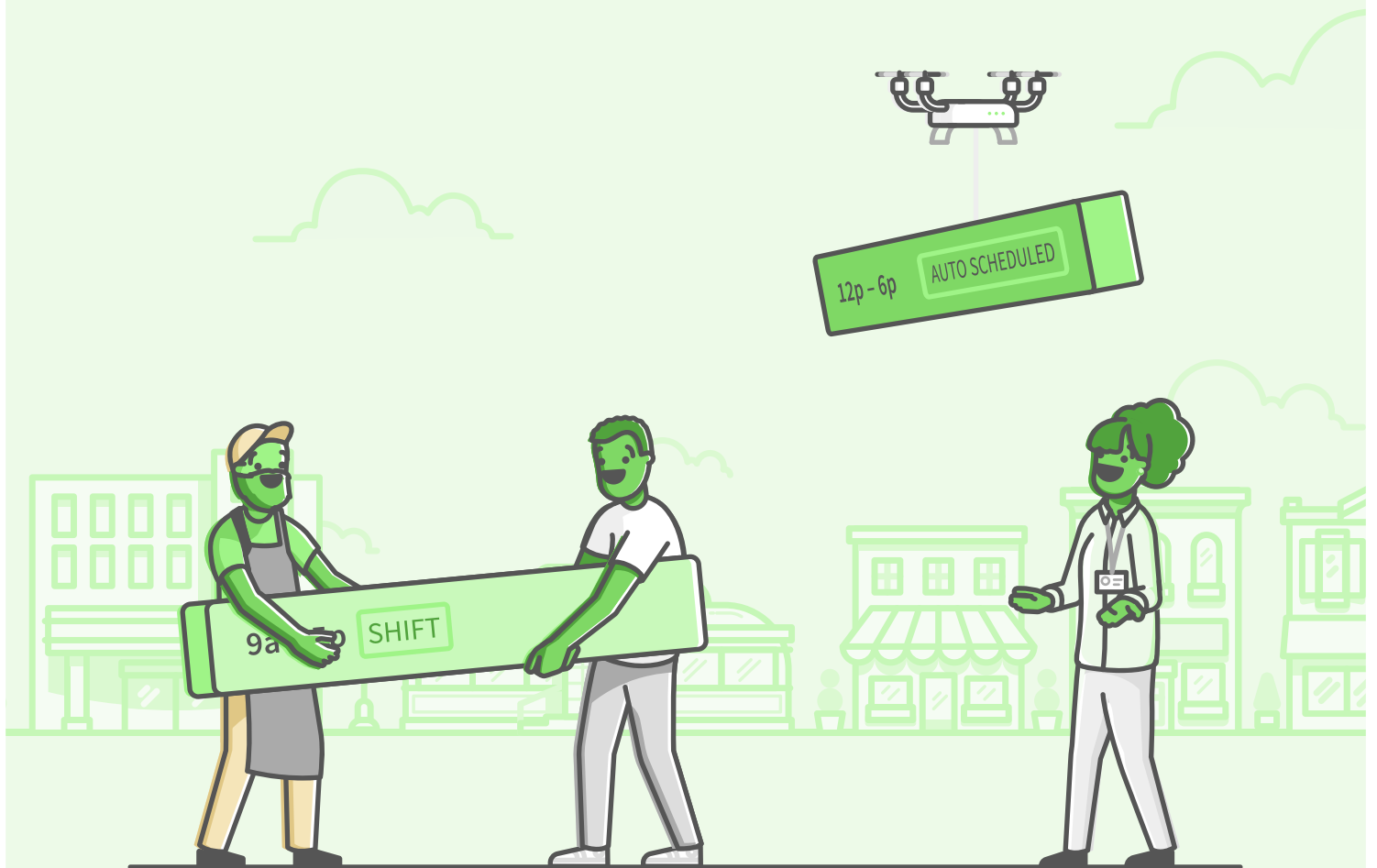


How To Succeed In An Employees' Market



American Airlines [cancelled hundreds of flights](#) just as people emerged from the 2020 lockdowns and travel began to increase. The reason for the cancellations?

Staff shortage.

The timing couldn't have been worse, but American Airlines wasn't alone.

Lack of staff and [increases in worker resignations](#) means customers are facing long wait times, limited access to services due to reduced hours, and fewer options. Help wanted signs are popping up everywhere, while weak new jobs numbers seem confusingly unrelated.

Labor shortage issues are affecting everyone, from employers to customers to the employees trying to pick up the slack for missing staff.

From an employee standpoint, they own the market and have the power to call the shots. But for everyone else, it's creating a sluggish emergence from 2020 and a slower return to normalcy.

The question everyone is asking is, what is causing this, and then, more importantly, how to fix the problems stemming from it.

What is causing the labor shortage situation?

Here's the news you don't want to hear: [experts don't know if or when the labor shortage will end](#). There isn't even perfect agreement on what is happening that's causing the labor shortage.

While some have said that high pandemic unemployment benefits from 2020 have created a gap in available workers coming back to their previous jobs, there's more to the story.

For a while now we've been nearing the edge of where there are more jobs than available workers. Add this to the confusion of 2020, with fear of becoming ill mixed with a workforce tired of adapting to constantly changing COVID-19 protocols, and it's difficult to separate out what's going on and how to deal with it. A [Pew Research Survey](#) revealed that 66% of those who were unemployed have seriously considered changing their occupation entirely.

These are significant shifts, exceeding the numbers from the Great Recession of 2007-2009.

2021 has brought us the Great Rethink as we decide what work should be and how we want to incorporate it into our personal time. 2020 brought a huge upheaval in people's lives, including their view of work and how they want to live their personal lives. They got a chance to step back and consider how, where, and when they wanted to work. The result is what experts are calling the Great Resignation. With the labor shortage and the ensuing war for talent, workers feel more empowered than ever to leave their current jobs for something new. [The "quit rate" is the highest ever, at a shocking 4 million people resigning each month.](#)

The pre-2020 era of work is gone, and things are still shaking out while business owners,

managers, and employees try to find the new normal.

How to attract and retain employees during a labor shortage.

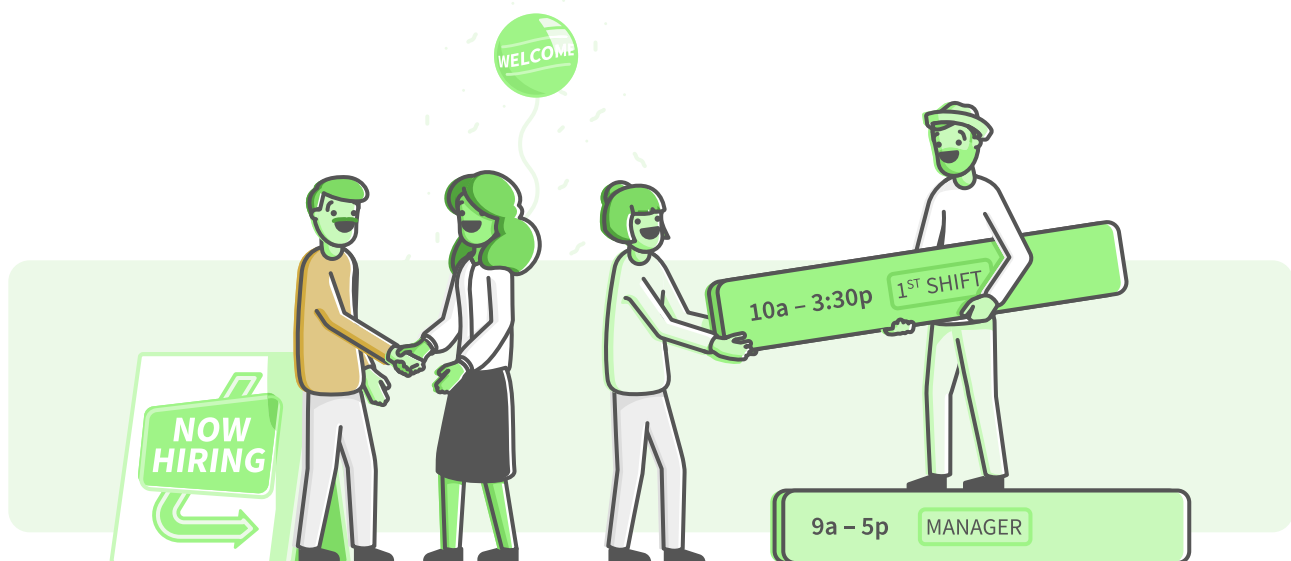
There's no sense kicking against the wall.

For now, there's a labor shortage and that's what you have to work within. Change is necessary, and it starts with understanding the labor shift that occurred in 2020.

Knowledge workers, having gotten a year-long taste of working from home, are demanding that this continue, along with other benefits that are tied into a change in how work-life balance is viewed. Even shift workers are demanding some kind of flexibility and increased benefits.

That means that in an employees' market, if you are going to remain competitive and [overcome the labor shortage](#), you have to find a way to attract this new kind of worker.

Here are a few tangible things you can do to attract workers.



Make commuting easy.

Where people live, in relation to the job you're offering them, is a deciding factor.

In 2020, we saw large numbers of people relocating for various reasons. [Research has shown](#) that the closer the person is physically located to the job, the better chance you have at bringing them on board.

It sounds obvious, maybe, but the way you recruit and attract new employees is often

dismissive of location. Generic signs in broad locations, postings on job boards that reach far beyond a reasonable commute—these methods ignore this truth. And while it's true some employees will end up having to commute to some extent, you can still make it easier on them.

- **Recruit locally.** Look for employees near where they'll be working. Invest in hiring locally; it may mean getting creative and working with an employee pool that needs training.
- **Create shifts that take high traffic times into account.** Help employees avoid commuting during those times.
- **Partner with ride services.** Offer ride services, vouchers for ride services, or a team carpool system.
- **Address commute costs.** Help cover the cost of their commute as a benefit.

People who have been working from home or have relocated this past year are done with long and stressful commutes.

Increase pay to reflect reality.

What you paid in 2019 probably won't cut it in 2021 and on.

The cost of living has changed. Inflation is an issue. If your employees can't make a living off of what you pay, they simply won't work for you.

The obvious fix is to increase base pay, but if you're at your limit with that, there are other ways you can help offset employee living costs beyond payroll. These are mainly done through benefits and perks. Commuting expenses (which we just covered), healthcare, child care, paid vacation, and other similar benefits are a good start.

Don't forget sign-on bonuses, and other financial rewards—like retention bonuses—that reward employees for sticking around. Replacing employees is expensive, and if an employee sticks with you and helps you avoid the expenses associated with [employee turnover](#), you should pass that savings on to them as a reward.



Offer the benefits employees are looking for.

Let's take a closer look at some of those benefits that help pad out the base pay you offer employees.

Keep in mind that benefits are no longer just for full-time or salaried workers. In a labor shortage, benefits are now on the table for every employee in nearly every industry.

First, let's look at what you might call "typical" employee benefits:

- **Healthcare.** Offer health insurance or other health-related assistance.
- **Paid time off.** Pay employees for set vacation time, or holidays.
- **Child care assistance.** [Recent studies](#) have shown that women are more loyal employees. Helping them stay on the job by offering child care assistance, or working with them on child care concerns, is a solid investment in your business.
- **Schedule flexibility.** Give employees more control over their schedule. Keep reading for more detail on this.
- **Paid leave.** Offer sick time, family leave, or other times away from work while getting paid.

But if everyone else is offering those standard benefits, you'll need to do something additional to stand out to attract workers.

The benefits that passed muster previously may not work anymore. You're going to have to [get creative](#) in addition to some of those more traditional benefits. Non-traditional benefits might include:

- **Interview or sign-on bonuses.** Some restaurants, such as Applebees, gave out free appetizers to those who came to job interviews. In Illinois, McDonalds offered free iPhones to workers who stayed for at least six months.
- **Help with educational costs.** Some jobs require certifications. Paying for those certifications removes the barrier for people who'd make great employees but aren't yet qualified. You can also offer to help with education or training costs, or associated debt management for those.
- **Increased overtime pay.** More [valuable benefits may mean more overtime pay](#). Employees may not realize it, but when their benefits go above their base rate, they may also receive overtime pay whether they work more hours or not. That in itself is a benefit that's worth pointing out if the base rate isn't as high as they'd like.
- **Apprenticeships with competitive pay.** On-the-job training isn't unusual, but offering competitive pay for those positions is. Since the data suggests that some people are

looking to make a career change, you need to offer training to bring new employees on board. Get them on your payroll, pay them well from the start, and train them into position.

While there are many [ways to attract new employees](#), benefits have some of the biggest pull right now during the labor shortage.

Create a culture of respect and safety.

There is now a stronger focus on keeping employees and customers safe, and as things get back to normal, that focus may lessen but not go away. Part of the labor shortage comes from people who are going to enter the workforce, but they are holding out for positions where they feel safe and respected.

[Workplace culture](#) has always been an important part of attracting and retaining employees, but now you must be sure that respect and safety are front and center. How do you do it?

- **Address health safety.** You'll need to have protocols and a system in place that addresses safety concerns about COVID-19, of course, but health safety extends beyond the pandemic. It includes protection from harmful chemicals, assembly line injury, sufficient breaks, bathroom breaks, floor mats, ergonomic tools, and an overall sense that their physical safety matters.
- **Build shifts around employees.** Don't try to cram employees into your rigidly defined shifts but instead, build shifts around your employees. You may have to rethink how you structure shifts and how you make sure the work gets done, but you'll have employees who feel valued and respected. They'll stick with you in the long run.
- **Make shifts predictable.** When the schedule is predictable, people have more control over their lives. Predictable shifts are a way of showing respect for employees outside of work. Employees can structure and plan their lives if they can plan around standard shifts. After you've built shifts around employees, try to be regular about how you schedule them.
- **Do away with clopenings.** Clopenings are part of erratic shifts where an employee might work the closing shift one night, and then be scheduled to the opening shift the next day. Not only is this physically exhausting, but it's disrespectful to the person. That kind of scheduling says you don't care about them, just about covering shifts.

The bottom line is simple: care about your employees as people whose physical and emotional well-being matter to you. Don't see them as workers there to simply serve customers and keep the money coming in.

Build flexibility into every employee schedule.

Predictable shifts and building shifts around employees are a way to give shift workers control

over their lives. They get a better work-life balance.

This is about flexibility, and it's what today's workers now demand. This comes down to flexible self scheduling, where employees have control over their work lives.

But here's the bonus: when you use the right tool to help you build flexibility into your employee schedule, you're going to save yourself time and effort as well. This is the big win-win for all involved.

[Flexible self scheduling](#) allows you to make work schedules much faster. If you're taking commutes, closings, and predictable shifts into account when you build your schedule, you're going to need this approach. Handling all of that manually, with spreadsheets and calendars posted in the break room, won't cut it anymore.

You set up the overall structure and define the parameters, and then employees choose their shifts. Employees can swap shifts with each other and communicate with each other directly, instead of going through you, when it comes to those shift changes.

Using the right tool, like When I Work, makes it easy for you to set top-level definitions of shift requirements, overtime limits, and other considerations. From there, employees are empowered to build their work schedule.

Employees get control over their lives. You just got more efficient building schedules.

This is true flexibility for everyone. [Scheduling your employees](#) has always been a bit of a hassle; it's good to do away with the old methods going forward.

+++

Don't be overwhelmed by this list of what to do in a labor shortage. Everything you need to be competitive in the current labor market can be summed up in two words: flexibility and empathy.

It's what shift workers have always wanted in the past. Now they are in a position to demand it.

Reset how you view shift workers and benefits. Then, use the right tools that make it easy to give them what they want. Respect for your employees starts by letting them have control over their life and acknowledging that their personal lives are valuable enough that work shouldn't intrude or overtake it.



**Book time with
a scheduling
expert today.**

BOOK TIME NOW

