Facing the Labor Shortage for Manufacturing Jobs: How Cloud Communications Can Help

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To industry outsiders, manufacturing might seem like an unlikely contender in the global war for talent. Experts continually predict that manufacturing jobs will be taken over by robots, despite the fact that advanced technologies have actually created new jobs in recent years. At the same time, baby boomer workers are retiring en masse, and too few young people see the industry as a viable career destination.

The workforce shortage in manufacturing has been growing at double-digit rates since mid-2017, according to a new report by Deloitte and The Manufacturing Institute. This could leave 2.4 million vacant positions between 2018 and 2028. Between skill deficiencies and production role shortages, many modern manufacturers are worried about their ability to continue meeting customer demand.

But new cloud communications technology could help. With these tools, companies can improve the day-to-day operations of production facilities, retain existing talent, drive greater connectivity between existing employees in the industry, and make their line of work more attractive to prospective talent.
A Well-Oiled Machine

Without enough new talent to fill vacant manufacturing jobs, existing workers will need productivity tools that let them do more with less. To accomplish this, companies will need to automate as much of the workflow as possible, use analytics to increase operational efficiency, shore up supply chain gaps, and provide employees with tools that enable seamless communication and data-sharing with colleagues, partners, and vendors at various locations.

That’s a tall order, but one that cloud communications can help manufacturers fill. Using unified communications-as-a-service (UCaaS), manufacturers can consolidate all communications features — voice, video, messaging, conferencing, SMS — into one cloud-based platform. Employees can make and receive calls from any internet-connected device, whether they’re at their desks, on the factory floor, or on the road. And with features like virtual receptionist, call forwarding, and visual voicemail, they’ll never miss an important message. UCaaS makes existing workflows smoother, easing the burden otherwise placed on employees.

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Bring on the APIs

Using APIs, companies can also integrate cloud UCaaS with other key technologies — including CRM, file-sharing apps, productivity tools, and IoT-enabled machines — for manufacturing jobs. The benefits of these integrations include:

- **Productivity boosts**: Employees don’t waste time looking up phone numbers, tracking down colleagues, or running back to their desks to take calls or send messages. CRM is accessible through the UCaaS on their mobile phones, and their colleagues (even in other facilities) are just an SMS or instant message away.

- **Real-time alerts**: UCaaS integrations with machine software allow facilities managers and maintenance teams to receive real-time alerts when machines are experiencing problems, enabling them to act fast and avoid unnecessary downtime.

- **Supply chain visibility**: UCaaS makes it easier for logistics managers to communicate with suppliers, drivers, and other individuals along the supply chain to anticipate (and potentially head off) facility downtime and costly delays. They can also integrate control tower communications software to collect valuable data from mobile devices along the supply chain — yielding insights from "where is my truck right now?" to "how can we do this more efficiently in the future?"

- **Improved analytics**: With UCaaS and communications APIs, manufacturing leaders can tap into a myriad of data that helps streamline workflows, eliminate inefficiencies, better train employees, and better serve customers.

Not only does cloud communication help manufacturers enhance operations, it might also help enhance their reputation with tech-savvy young people looking for a new career.
Manufacturing Jobs Get a Digital Makeover

Like leaders in any industry struggling to fill jobs with labor shortage, manufacturers are keen to attract millennial and Gen Z workers. Not surprisingly, these younger generations are attracted to companies that prioritize digital transformation. After all, Gen Z has never known life without cloud computing and mobility, so they certainly don't want to work without it.

Deploying best-in-class cloud communications technology shows younger generations — and their tech-savvy parents — that manufacturers take communication and digital transformation as seriously as they do and that manufacturing jobs are worth serious consideration. Meanwhile, by using technology for manufacturing jobs, companies get collaboration and productivity tools that help employees of all ages work smarter, better serve customers, and drive innovations that will attract the next generation of workers — and the next.

A New Era of Communications

Adopting a UCaaS system is just the first step. Learn how a full digital transformation can benefit your organization.