

Who Would You Hire?

Joel Hans, Managing Editor, Manufacturing.net



Recently, I saw a burst of news on the issue of "long-term unemployment" in America. A frightening large number of people have been unable to find jobs for a year or more, which creates a host of issues. They are relying on government aid for a longer period of time (whether they want to or not), which costs everyone more money. Their skills start to decline when they can't be active in their chosen field. And most importantly, employers hesitate to take them on -- even if they do qualify for a given position -- because they're worried long-term unemployment is indicative of a bigger problem, one that's personal and not systemic.

The last point is the one I'd like to take issue with. I don't disagree that it's happening at all, but I think it's a grievous error on the part of many employers.

I hope that someday in my career, I'm in a position to make some hiring decisions. In doing so, I'll put out a call for applicants, weed through the resumes for the most talented candidates, and bring them in for interviews. Let's say I narrow the applicants down to two people -- Tim and Brett -- with precisely equal qualifications and similar personalities. The only difference is that Tim already has a job, and is looking to move, while Brett has been out of work for fourteen months. Given that position (and feel free to call me an optimist, naive, or straight-up nonsensical), I'd hire Brett every time.

I'd even hire him if his skills weren't quite up to par, and you know why? I believe that every time, he will be the better employee. Tim, being already employed, sounds like someone who is simply looking to move up a rung on the ladder, while Brett just wants to earn a living wage and get off unemployment. I know if I was in Brett's position, I would do just about everything in my power to make sure I solidified myself firmly in that position. Tim, however, would be more likely to take that job for granted, which might reduce his level of productivity.

I realize that in the real world, this equation isn't quite so simple. Tim and Brett, in a

Who Would You Hire?

Published on Industrial Maintenance & Plant Operation (<http://www.impomag.com>)

real situation, would likely have wildly different personalities and qualifications. In other words: There could be a good reason Brett's been unemployed for fourteen months. Maybe he showed up to every interview in jeans and a wrinkled, un-tucked shirt. Perhaps Brett's skills really did drop significantly over his time without a job, and he would need a few months to reacquaint himself with doing the tasks he credited to himself on his resume. This decrease in efficiency could have a significant impact on business.

In the end, the crux of what I'm trying to say is, because many *Manufacturing.net* readers are also employers in their own right, they should give this issue a second thought. If it's HR that's causing a fuss when you want to hire someone who's been out of work for a year, start asking them what they know about manufacturing operations, and if they would be all right with you picking their new assistant.

The real problem is that because these long-term unemployed people are considered to be damaged goods, hiring needs to pick up *considerably* on a national level in order for them to find jobs on a consistent basis. They're last to the food trough, and I bet you in a lot of cases, it's not because they're bad people, not personable, or lack the requisite skills. Leaving them to fight over scraps of unemployment benefits doesn't benefit the economy one bit, and I'd wager that it *hurts* it more than hiring someone who lost their job two weeks ago.

I think this issue will become increasingly prevalent in the next six months or a year, as more high-tech manufacturers continue to claim that they're having trouble finding qualified employees to take on their open positions. Is it a matter of no qualified candidates, or are some being brushed aside because they've been out of work "too long"?

What do you all think? Have you hired anyone who was a victim of "long-term" unemployment? How did it turn out? Sound off below, or send me an e-mail at Joel.Hans@advantagemedia.com [1].

Source URL (retrieved on 11/23/2014 - 12:00pm):

<http://www.impomag.com/blogs/2011/10/who-would-you-hire>

Links:

[1] <mailto:Joel.Hans@advantagemedia.com>