Technical Training in 2024:

Trends, Challenges, and Insights to Help You Get Ahead

2024 Research Report

BILT®

Today, companies spend months finding, recruiting, and upskilling new hires, but many training programs are antiquated.

Manuals, videos, and side-by-side training may have resonated with previous generations, but it often fails to engage today's digital native talent.

Bottom line:

89% of executives fear their training programs **can't get it done.**

Wakefield Research conducted an independent study among 250 U.S. executives at companies with a minimum of 5,000 employees and a manufacturing or field operations team with a minimum of 500 employees, between January 4th and January 12th, 2024, using an email invitation and an online survey.

Findings at a Glance

89% of executives fear their **training programs are inefficient.**

Nearly a third **(29%)** of executives at companies with inadequate training programs **predict a loss of revenue.**

90% of executives ranked **on-the-job training as the top method** most likely to resonate with recent hires.

Predictions show inefficient training programs will lead to an **11% average drop in productivity and operational output over the next two years.**

Half of VPs and senior executives **(50%)** and more than one-third of trainers and managers **(34%)** are **concerned about their current training cycle length.**

It takes an average of **nine weeks of training** before new hires can carry out daily tasks on their own.

On average, companies spend more than **$4.4K – $4.8K per employee** to train new hires in manufacturing and field service positions.
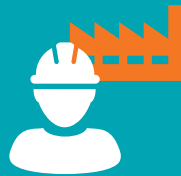
92% of businesses use training content that is at least three years old, and nearly one-fourth (24%) said they're **still using training content that hasn't been updated in 6 years or more.**

Why can't companies meet their talent needs? Of executives surveyed: **72% cited high turnover as their top challenge.**

71% said they could not recruit enough candidates.

Boardroom vs. Shop Floor:
Executives & Managers See Things Differently

Managers and top leadership don't always see eye to eye when it comes to the perceived effectiveness of training programs – or the resulting negative consequences. Managers are twice as likely as VPs & above to say their training program needs work.

In the C-Suite:

Only half (49%) of vice presidents & above see their programs as "somewhat" or "much less efficient" than required to meet their talent needs.

Less than one-fifth (18%) say their current program is "as efficient" as they need.

In the Trenches:

Those closest to the situation say the need to update training is dire.

Nearly all operations trainers & managers (95%) – those directly involved with designing and implementing the training programs – report their **current program is "less efficient" than it needs to be to meet their talent needs.**

Almost two-thirds **(64%) say it is "somewhat" or "much less efficient"** than they need.

Executives estimate 68% of their training is done on the job, while training managers say on-the-job methods account for only 49% of training.

This gap indicates poor alignment between the two groups, with executives most likely to be out of touch with the reality of their organization's training programs.

Inefficient training affects the entire business. Among the manufacturing executives who said their training programs are "not as efficient as they need them to be", 48% predict it will **aggravate employee turnover,** 45% believe it will **lower product/service quality,** and 43% said it would likely lead to **more workplace injuries.**

Consequences of Inefficient Training
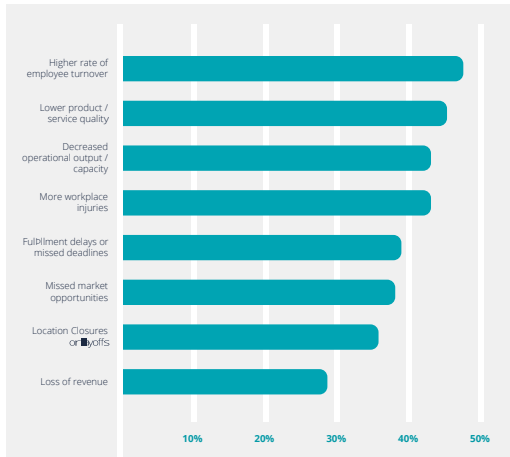
Three Major Driving Forces:

1. **The "silver wave":**
   Companies expect to lose a significant percentage of their workforce to retirement; their workforce is aging.

2. **Lack of new talent & high turnover:**
   Recruiting candidates and enticing them to stay long-term are significant challenges for the industrial market.

3. **The return of manufacturing to US soil:**
   Supply chain issues from the COVID pandemic sparked a return to US manufacturing.

Obstacles to Meeting Talent Needs

2024

2025
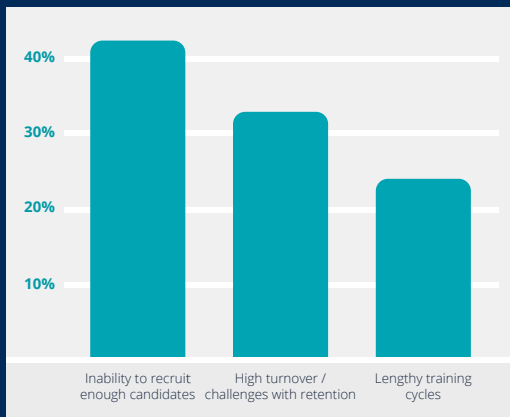
While older generations are more likely to remain with an employer for several years, millennials & Gen Z workers (the largest two working generations) tend to change jobs more frequently. Compared to tech and healthcare, the manufacturing industry is especially affected by retiring baby boomers.

Prioritizing next generation technical training is vital to attracting top talent, retaining existing team members, and outpacing the competition in 2024 - and well into the future.

Important Note:

This report refers to training as initial onboarding only. But manufacturing leaders know a technician's training never ends. With ongoing regulatory changes, evolving equipment, and new technology coming to market, both upskilling and cross-skilling are critical to sustainability of any organization. That's why it's crucial to leverage training solutions that support technicians, not only during onboarding, but for the duration of their tenure with the company.

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