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Thomas Brandt , Managing Partner – Richfield Associates

**The Serious Concern over Workforce Retirements Filling the Skills Gaps, Require Planning**

**This has been a concern for many years but not until recently has corporate America, including the Truck Equipment industry, seen the need to seriously address the issue. Companies must reinvest in its workforce as well as come up with some creative ways to retain that massive amount of company knowledge and skills that will be walking out the door as millions begin retiring in the next couple of years.**

**An analysis of 2010 US Census data reveals that during the past decade the percentage of Americans age 55 and older who are in the workforce increased from 32.4% to 40.2% . According to the US Labor Department’s Bureau of Labor Statistics, the labor force is projected to grow by 8% between 2008 and 2018 and will include nearly 12 million workers age 55 and older. The number of workers ages 16-54 is projected to grow by less than 700,000 during that same time. Data from the Pew Research Center revealed that 10,000 Baby Boomers will reach age 65 every day during the next two decades. The oldest of the country’s estimated 77 million Baby Boomers began turning 65, the traditional age for retirement – in 2011.**

**In spite of this concerning data, it has been found that many companies in the US are unprepared for the knowledge and skills gap that older retiring workers will leave. Various surveys taken with several companies indicated the loss of talented workers will pose a definite problem or potential problem for their organizations. A large percentage indicated their organizations have not done any strategic workforce planning assessments to analyze the impact of older workers retiring from their respective companies will have on them. Most companies have not even identified their company’s workforce needs for the next few years.**

**This is a concern that exists in the Manufacturing Industry and definitely requires attention and a plan. The truck equipment industry as a whole has not been proactive in any form of workforce or succession planning since many of the people working in the industry tends to have a long tenure with their company and no one thinks about them leaving. When a person does leave the organization for any reason including retirement, the need is to replace them is with an experienced and many times truck equipment industry related candidate. Industry experienced people have moved from one company to another within the truck equipment industry over the years. There has not been enough talent coming into the industry from outside so the amount of industry trained individuals is shrinking. As retirement age workers leave the truck equipment industry over the next couple of years the experienced talent pool starts to shrink as well. The result will be not enough industry experienced candidates for companies to consider hiring.**

**Planning for these talent shortages is important and needs to be addressed with more urgency than has been demonstrated in the past several years. There are a few approaches that companies can utilize to implement effective plans. One would be to bring in talented individuals from outside the industry and train them for looking ahead to future leadership. Another is to implement a succession planning program where current employees who have exceptional skills and potential to move up in the organization. The idea is to groom these talented people so that not only are they prepared to take on more responsibility and position but also have the desire to stay with the company because they are recognized and appreciated. There is another proactive approach to filling skills gaps as a result of retirements. This includes having a conversation with an employee that would be close to retirement to determine their intentions of retirement and the timing involved. If retirement is near and timing is reasonable a company can strategize as to what course of action to take in filling the gap that will be left. Alternatives can also include a professional recruiting strategy to bring an experienced person into the company allowing time for some overlapping in the position before the retirees last couple of months of employment. Whatever plan of action your company decides on to fill the skills gap, the important point is that your company has one.**

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