



Bridging the Knowledge Gap

Industry recruiters are aware of an increasing knowledge gap in the workforce between retiring baby boomers and the new recruits hired to replace them.

This article looks at why this knowledge gap exists, and how companies can bridge it to ensure their workforce is well-trained and ready for the future.

Why Is There a Gap?

Why is there such a clear gap between the knowledge of the time-served veterans of our industry and the newer millennials coming in to replace them? One of the most fundamental differences is in how these two generations of workers were trained.

Simply put, the baby boomers have been *taught* differently.

The vast majority of baby boomers learned through practical, hands-on experience. Their training was focused on gaining on-the-job skills, learning at the side of time-served workers who knew the ins and outs of the machinery and the industry. The training courses they took tended to be provided by the Instrument Society of America or their local unions, specifically designed to teach them the proper methods of working within an industrial environment.

Over the last decade or so, many of these programs have diminished—either they've transferred to other platforms or they've simply stopped being offered. To be trained in industry today, new workers have to seek out learning in different ways. Millennials tend toward learning through technology, in particular the Internet.

The current crop of young workers are remarkably adept at picking up bite-sized pieces of information from sources like YouTube, adding to their knowledge base one bite at a time. Unfortunately, a bite at a time isn't what employers need in the current economy.

Companies are looking to recruit men and women who have the necessary knowledge available now and the ability to put it to good use.

How to Bridge the Gap

Employers who are faced with a knowledge gap when recruiting new workers have to be creative in coming up with ways to build bridges. An excellent place to start is in the local community. They can work with local community colleges to develop a core curriculum suitable for new or potential employees. This provides a much-needed long-term boost to knowledge and understanding for potential new recruits; however, the more immediate need is in the short-term.

With the losses being felt due to massive baby-boomer retirement, the simple fact is that organizations don't have the luxury of time when it comes to training new recruits.

In the past, employers understood that it might take a new employee a year or two to feel comfortable in their new role; maybe three or four years before they could be considered genuinely skilled. That time doesn't exist anymore. There are simply not enough skilled—or trainable—workers to go around.

Employers today have to be on the look-out for people who have the background and natural aptitude to take the opportunity once it is presented to them. Then these recruits have to be trained through an intensive curriculum that will get them up and running within a year.

Comfortable in their role within a year, skilled in two years; the old time scales simply no longer apply.

Valin's Role

An accelerated learning schedule like this is challenging for any company, but they are not in the uncomfortable position of having to do everything themselves. The ideal solution is to partner with an organization that already has an effective training plan in place to help them speed up this knowledge transfer.

At Valin, we have learned that we need to look a little harder within the available workforce and find college graduates to bring into our organization. To speed up their adaptation process, we developed a thirteen-week training curriculum that takes new recruits through every aspect of our business, bringing them up

to speed quicker than they otherwise would be.

We understand that our industrial customers face that same challenge every time they look to recruit. To support this, we offer a deep curriculum of study that is highly flexible and can be catered to the specific needs of whichever industries our clients operate in. It's available on-demand, online, every three months, or even whenever they bring in a batch of new hires.

This blend of flexibility and the industry knowledge that our instructors bring to the curriculum means that, whatever the requirements of the individual company, we can offer tangible, experience-based instruction. For any industry feeling the pain of losing experienced and skilled workers, we offer a focused and effective way of replacing these personnel with new, well-trained workers who will be able to perform their function expertly for years to come.

Valin is the leading technical solutions provider for the energy and technology industries. For 40 years, Valin has offered personalized order management, onsite field support, comprehensive training, and applied expert engineering services utilizing automation, fluid management, precision measurement, process heating, filtration, and fluid power products.

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