

Navigating the Labor Shortage

What Foodservice Providers Need to Know





There's a Serious Labor Shortage in the U.S.

States and cities have reopened after COVID-19 shutdowns. Job vacancies are at historic highs. And millions of Americans are looking for work. Yet employers are struggling to fill available positions, leaving them with no option but to shorten their business's hours of operation and pay their staff overtime.

How bad is the labor shortage? Is it really that hard for employers—and foodservice providers—to find workers?

Let's look at the numbers from the latest DOL report.

Hard Numbers

9.3 million
job openings
across U.S.

~1 million
new jobs added in
April, but just 69,000
workers were hired.

Only 1 in 15
open positions
are being filled.

Latest Trends

Hiring Bonuses
offered for minimum wage jobs.

Wage Hikes
to attract workers.

Why Aren't Open Positions Being Filled?

With more vaccinations and less COVID restrictions, foodservice providers had high expectations for a hiring surge in May. Instead, employers are still short-staffed on chefs, line cooks, dishwashers and cashiers, a massive disappointment that raises questions about whether the recovery is on track.

So, what's stopping open positions from being filled?

3 Reasons Workers Aren't Returning to the Workforce

Pandemic Era Benefits (Unemployment)

Mainly affecting those making less than \$32,000.

Parents and Childcare Obligations

The number of women employed (or looking for work) fell by 64,000 in April.

Americans are Reevaluating Career Choices

66% of those unemployed are "seriously considering" changing their field of work.

Top 2 Challenges Caused by Labor Shortages and Their Trickledown Effects

The labor shortage doesn't discriminate. Organizations big and small from hospitality and education to healthcare and food retail, are all struggling to hire staff for their kitchens. While leadership is scrambling to fill open positions their current staff and customers are taking a hit.

Here are the top challenges caused by shortages in labor:

- 1 Burnt Out Employees
- 2 Long Wait Times are Leading to Upset Customers

These top two challenges put a trickledown effect into motion. Productivity decreases, customers stop coming back and the efficiency of your entire operation takes a hit. Leading to:

- 3 Less Assortment of Products and Goods
- 4 Can't Keep Kitchen, Storage and Front of House Areas Clean
- 5 Loss of Revenue & Sales



Aiming Your Sights on the Right Targets

Because of the trickledown effect, your best plan of attack is to focus on burnt out employees and reducing wait times for your customers. If you set the right plan and execute it well, you'll see overall operation efficiency increase and a return in profits.

Here's your action plan for mitigating burnout and reducing wait times



How to Combat Employee Burnout

Prior to the pandemic, employee burnout was so prevalent in the workplace that the World Health Organization officially added “burnout” to its international classification of diseases.

That means burnout is more than just disengaged employees, it’s a condition where workers feel chronic stress, energy depletion and cynicism at work.

Because organizations are struggling to fill open positions, their current staff is having to take on more work and pick up extra shifts which is putting employee burnout at record high numbers.

What can employers do?

First, managers need to be able recognize the signs of stress and burnout.

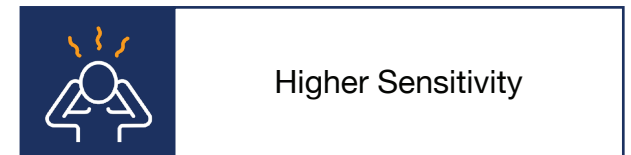
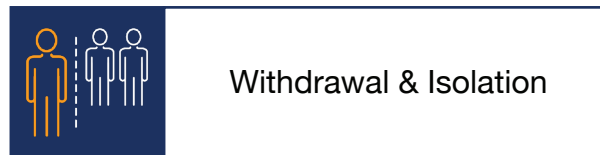
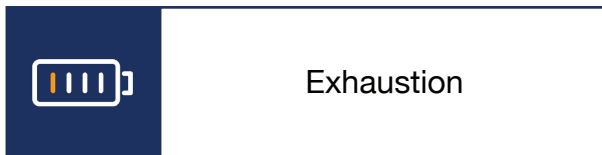
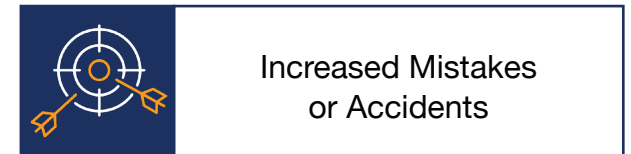
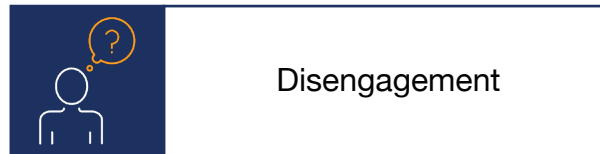
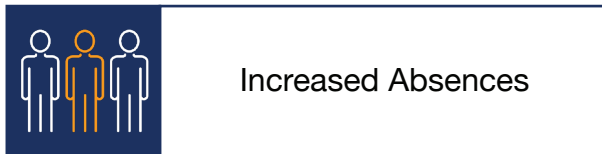
52%

of workers are burnt out, according to Indeed.



The Warning Signs of Employee Burnout

According to the World Health Organization, there are six symptoms of employee burnout.



Pro Tip: Low engagement due to burnout doesn't mean those employees don't care, it's that they've given all that they have and are running on an empty tank.

If you see team members exhibiting these signs of burnout, it's time to take action.

Traditional Methods for Mitigating Burnout

Mitigating burnout during a labor shortage is no walk in the park. Traditional methods tell employers to offer more paid time off, host teambuilding activities, and encouraging more frequent breaks, which would require employers to take an additional hit on productivity.

However, there are a few insights from traditional methods worth considering:

Emotional, Mental, and Physical Exhaustion

Take the time to ask your staff how they're doing. Based off their answers consider reevaluating their workload to see what can be delegated to other employees. (Don't put everything on your superstar workers!)

Withdrawal and Isolation

Consider inviting regular speakers and subject matter experts to educate employees on how to cope with stress or manage a busy schedule. Even if it's only once a month for 30 minutes, these sessions can help reduce employee isolation and mitigate burnout.

Disengagement and a Negative Attitude

Loop employees in on the decision-making process and genuinely ask for their input when possible. Let them know how valuable they are to your team—even the smallest gestures of appreciation go a long way to boosting morale.

**When it comes to mitigating burnout during a labor shortage
a lot of it comes down to what you can automate**



Automate Manual, Time Consuming Tasks

Kitchens are filled with everyday tasks that require a lot of time—and they're mainly centered around food preparation:

- Slicing meats
- Processing food
- Packaging meals for grab and go

If you're working with a skeleton crew and you're asking employees to serve customers—while also maintaining these essential operations—you're setting your team up for failure.

Investing in an automatic meat slicer, food processor and wrapping station can help you automate routine tasks so your employees can focus on more important things—like serving your customers.



Automatic Meat Slicer



Globe G12 Medium Duty Manual Slicer with 12" Blade

A task that used to take four employees now only takes one.

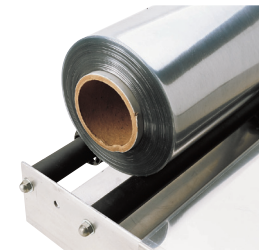
Food Processor



Robot Coupe 3 qt R2N Dice Ultra Food Processor

Produces up to 850 servings in 3 hours or less.

Food Packaging



Roller Mount Film Wrapper with Power Switch and 6"W x 15"L Hot Plate

Quickly wrap food and reduce wait times for customers.

Long Wait Times & Upset Customers

Because of the labor shortage and employee burnout, overall operations and productivity are down. Which means there's longer wait times for your customers.

People hate waiting in lines! And if you can't fulfill customer expectations within a specific time, you'll probably lose them—in today's competitive environment, there's a chance they won't come back.

Did you know: Customers are only willing to wait 14 minutes before giving up and leaving.

Businesses are losing up to
75%
of customers due to long wait times.



Communication is Always Key

Set clear expectations and be upfront with your customers if there's a longer than usual wait time. Most importantly—and we can't stress this enough—under promise and over deliver.

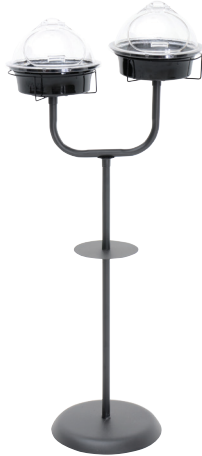
If you know it'll take 10 minutes to complete a task, tell your customers their order/request will be fulfilled in 13-15 minutes. When your customer gets through the line ~5 minutes ahead of schedule, they'll be thrilled.

Find Creative Ways to Occupy Customers

While wait times may be inevitable for your business, there are actionable steps you can take to keep customers occupied and distracted—giving the illusion of a shorter wait time.

Here are some examples:

Sampling Stands



Double Black Metal
Sampling Dome Floor Stand

Place sample stands next to lines so customers can try your assortments of foods.

Added Bonus: Did you know that sampling can increase sales by 2,000%, according to Shopify.

Signage with QR Codes



Black Metal
Sign Holder

Display QR codes so guests can view your menu or make payments. This strategy empowers customers to make decisions while aiting in line—reducing the time they'll spend at your counter.

Contact Us



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Introducing Hubert's Labor Shortage Kit

We've developed a kit of cutting-edge products to help organizations navigate the challenges of the labor shortage, empower your staff, and get back to smooth operations.

Talk to one of our experts and learn how the Labor Shortage Kit can drive employee productivity and engagement—so you can get more done with less labor.