

2022 Year-End Q&A

ATTRACTING TALENT IS THE HOTTEST GAME IN EVERY TOWN



The surging economy has been great for the Copier Channel, but it comes with a huge downside – an extreme shortage of well-qualified candidates to fill positions across the industry.

Furloughs and layoffs during the pandemic created staffing gaps, and now poaching by other tech industries has spawned wage inflation and left our industry struggling to hire.

The industry always has shown incredible resilience and an ability to adapt to changing needs, new technology and difficult times, but the pandemic created an entirely new set of challenges.

“We have been doing this for over 30 years, and we’ve never seen anything like this,” says Paul Schwartz, the founder and president of Copier Careers. “We’ve lived three business cycles in the last three years.”

Schwartz says the latest churn started in 2020 with pandemic related furloughs. Then the industry pivoted to a remote business model and accelerated into recovery. In 2021, shortage and supply chain issues created challenges. At the end of 2022, the industry finds itself in a very difficult spot — a desperate shortage of talent to fill jobs, which has created wage inflation.

“Many companies don’t have the budget to acquire the talent that they need,” Schwartz says. “For many companies their costs are fixed, their income is fixed. And this one cost item — talent — has gone through the roof for them.”

Candidates aware of their increased value are asking for more. In an [online poll](#) we conducted in July, 90 percent of the 20,963 respondents indicated they were job hunting to some extent.

But even though it is a candidates’ market, Schwartz notes that employers have begun to be more thoughtful about hiring in the waning months of 2022. “They became more discerning, because they made some bad hires when they were just looking to fill a spot.”

On the positive side, Schwartz says, the industry has a history of innovating and moving forward. He has every confidence that the industry will solve this problem as well. “This time the industry will have to adjust to a new way of finding talent in order to prosper,” he says.

Where to start? We talked with four of our top recruiters to discuss the best way to find talent and make hires in this incredibly dynamic market. Their insights and tips could help companies and candidates laser in on a successful 2023.

How competitive is the job market right now?

Perhaps the best way to describe the current market for qualified candidates is in bold type and all capital letters: **COMPETITIVE**. How competitive? Our recruiters from across the country say it's much harder than it was a year ago to find qualified candidates.

Jessica Crowley, senior vice president and Northeast regional recruiter, says she sees no sign that demand will decrease any time soon. "It hasn't let up since Q4 of last year, and it isn't getting any better," she says. "With every candidate hired by industry employers or by companies outside the channel, the pool just gets smaller and smaller."

Of course, that stiff competition for candidates has boosted what it costs to make hires. It's a growing challenge across the industry, with no end in sight. At the end of 2022, there is a lack of candidates, and that's escalating compensation across the industry.

Paul Schwartz, president of Copier Careers, says the competition is fierce. "We have more candidates telling us they were approached by another industry and that sometimes financially incentivizes a much greater opportunity."

PRO TIP: This is no time for a "wait and see" approach in recruiting or hiring. The worst thing you can do is think about the candidate market that was instead of the way it is now. With the extreme shortage of skilled people and multiple industries in the hunt, employers should be nimble and adapt to the market. Retool your hiring process for efficiency. Set clear goals and be ready to flex on salary.

How have recruiting needs and decisions changed during 2022?

Over the course of 2022, our recruiters have seen many clients move from reactive hiring — working frantically to fill immediate needs — during the first half of the year to relaxing a bit and focusing on proactive hiring in the last half of the year.

Jenna Humbert, regional recruiter for the Midwest, Southeast and Texas, says hiring needs have run the gamut, but she finds that many clients are managing to see the big picture now and look beyond their most urgent needs and plan proactively to build their teams.

"Employers are not as frantic or desperate to fill immediate vacancies now," she says. "In January and February, they were interviewing candidates and having them start the next Monday. Now they want another interview, they're waiting on background checks and having the candidate start in two weeks. With compensation so high, I see them being more cautious before taking the plunge."

Humbert and other recruiters also noted that timing is key to hiring decisions. "The right candidate has to be open to a change at the right time," she says. "The candidate must be interested, and the employer must keep the process moving and make a good offer before someone else does."

PRO TIP: At the end of 2022, many employers were trying to find balance between speed and caution in their candidate searches. Employers are carefully considering hiring needs against their ability to offer greater compensation — without devaluing their longtime employees. Finding that sweet spot in this market will require resolve, diplomacy and the patience of all parties.

Are companies recruiting to fill existing gaps or for new positions?

In early 2022, our recruiters saw the need to fill more employment gaps, but as supply chains improved, we saw more new positions open as employers began to plan for future growth.

Jean Gothberg, regional recruiter for the West Coast, Alaska and Hawaii, says there definitely has been a mixed bag of candidate searches this year, but in recent months there has been an increase in preemptive searches.

“Bosses can’t be complacent in this market! They need to recognize how hard it is to fill a vacancy and start searches early,” she says. “With every empty seat, they’re leaving money on the table.”

PRO TIP: Everyone is hiring, and every business has challenges. Larger companies can be bogged down with bureaucracy, unable to move quickly. Others can move faster but might not have competitive compensation. Smart employers understand those challenges and ask us to evaluate their hiring process. Improving process — from compensation to timing and how many interviews are too many — is critical to making great hires. We’re here to help.

Are candidates getting higher, lower or the same compensation?

Our recruiters describe the increasing compensation across the industry as “incredible.” As employers scrambled to fill vacancies, they found compensation as the best way to attract talent.

David Lind, director of recruiting and regional recruiter for the Mountain Zone, says the trend is up. “I thought what we were seeing six months ago was the peak, but I’m still seeing higher comp,” he says. “Cost of living and competition is really challenging in some markets, but if they want to hire, they have to compete.”

Lind and our other top recruiters agree that more money is not the only variable. Candidates also want to work at a company with a healthy culture, functional safeguards, comfortable perks and better work-life balance.

PRO TIP: Even though money talks, it is not the only card employers have to play. In our relatively small industry, word gets around about companies with a high turnover rate, problematic management or difficult territory. Beyond a cash incentive to make a move, many candidates point to quality-of-life issues as a top consideration in making a change.

What are most employers looking for in a new employee?

Without hesitation, our recruiters say employers are looking for loyalty and stability. How much do they value those traits? “Hiring managers will fight to get employees with those traits,” Crowley says.

“In smaller markets, employers know a fully trained experienced candidate is a unicorn, so they are looking for candidates who can learn,” Humbert notes. “They want someone who will show up every day and is willing to learn, and the company will take care of the rest.”

PRO TIP: With such a small candidate pool, employers should be open to hiring candidates with the right aptitude and be willing to train them. That is the first step in building a stable, loyal and competent team from the ground up.

What effect are counteroffers having in this tight candidate market?

In a market long on job openings and short on candidates, the temptation for some candidates seeking a new position is to leverage a counteroffer from their current employer. But our recruiters say that can be a terrible career move and is highly likely to backfire.

Lind says he always encourages candidates to engage with prospective employers in good faith, not as a negotiating tactic with their current employer.

“A raise isn’t going to solve problems like toxic company culture, a bad boss, terrible work-life balance or a monster commute,” he says. “Unless you are truly motivated to make a move, you might burn bridges with both your current and potential employer.”

Our recruiters have seen counteroffers set candidates up for trouble with their current company, because they forced the employer’s hand. If they used an offer from another company to leverage a raise, they have also burned a bridge. It’s likely that employer will pass on the candidate later when they are truly ready to make a change.

PRO TIP: Even though this is a candidate’s market, be sincere in your quest for a new position. In a tight market, nobody has time to dance with a candidate who is not really interested in making a move. Be up front with your employer about your needs. If they can’t meet them, weigh the pros and cons of staying and decide a course of action. Then stay or move on.

What are the most common reasons candidates refuse offers?

In a competitive industry, a drawn-out hiring process, low-ball offers and inadequate benefits can make good candidates walk away.

“Employers forget that candidates are in front of many companies; if they take too long between receiving a resume, arranging an interview and making an offer, the candidate will be gone,” Gothberg says. “They lose interest, they get cold feet, and sometimes they get another offer while they’re waiting.”

PRO TIP: Employers who lose their sense of urgency in their hiring processes are likely to lose great candidates. Be realistic about compensation, benefits and the work-life balance needs of prospective employees. If you are disrespectful of their time in the hiring process, it sends the wrong message about the work environment of your organization.

What are common reasons employers don’t make an offer?

Jessica Crowley: “A disconnect between expectations. In the interview, if the candidate is asking for something the employer thinks is astronomical, the company won’t make an offer.”

Jenna Humbert: “If employers see a resume with a lot of job hopping, that can be disqualifying. But often there is a good explanation for that candidate’s work history, and I’ll advocate for them. I’ve had a lot of good placements like this.”

David Lind: “References. I’ve had placements fall apart over bad references so now I ask for them up front. No one wants to get all the way through to the interview process just to disqualify a candidate over a bad reference. It’s a waste of everyone’s time.”

Jean Gothberg: “I’ve seen a fear of commitment — making the final decision on a new candidate. Some employers choke on the last step. They delay and delay until the candidate gives up — then the decision is taken out of their hands. It’s a very human reaction, I get it, but it can be frustrating.”

What's the best advice you can give industry candidates in this job market?

- **Communicate:** We want to help you. Employers want to hire you. So, let's talk!
- **Be resume and reference ready:** Make sure your resume is up to date, your work history is accurate and your references are ready. Cautious employers will check.
- **No ghosting, please:** You may have multiple options or offers and feel a bit overwhelmed. We can help you process and consider options. Disappearing from a conversation isn't good for you or your potential employer.
- **Advocate for yourself:** Tell your recruiter and tell the employer what you need or want. Be willing to listen and negotiate. Remember you are interviewing the company just as much as the company is interviewing you.
- **Do the math:** Cost-of-living can be hard to grasp. Relocating from a high-tax market to a low-tax market can make the offer seem too low. We can help you work through the math to show how much more money will be in your pocket, even if the amount on the check is lower than you expected.
- **Be reasonable:** Consider the big picture. Your offer isn't just pay; it's benefits, training, car or car allowance, perks, hours, territory, flexibility, commute, etc. If you have a concern, bring it up.

PRO TIP: Good news! Your skills are in demand, but there is always a limit to what employers can offer. Think beyond compensation and consider location, opportunities to enhance your skills, work-life balance and other perks when you consider an offer.

What's the best advice you can give industry employers in this job market?

- **Be reasonable:** Competition for qualified candidates is fierce. Your offer should be realistic in this competitive market, and don't forget to ensure work-life balance.
- **Time kills deals:** Don't leave candidates cooling their heels or they'll go somewhere else or decide they're not ready to leave at all. You will be much more successful if you keep in touch with candidates. Communicate hiccups in the process, such as a slow background check, and do your best to speed the hiring process.
- **Keep up the pace:** Don't get complacent. Even with a signed offer letter, you can't leave candidates in the wind. Especially if you have a gap between the offer and their first day – if you disappear on them, you risk having the deal fall apart.
- **Listen to the recruiter:** You may make a few hires a year, but we help close deals every week. We have seen what works and what causes offers to fall apart. We can help with every stage of your hiring process and help you identify ways to improve that process.
- **Consider an older employee:** Some retired people who left employment to live off their investments are considering "unretiring" because of inflation. These candidates have skills and knowledge that will benefit your company. Be open to talking with these industry pros and bringing them aboard. Remember, experience matters.

PRO TIP: Yes, you have a lot on your plate, but keeping a candidate engaged and excited about joining your company should be your top priority. You are the product, so sell the job and the company to candidates. Communicate clearly and keep your appointments. Anything less will work against you.

Meet our panel of experts



Jessica Crowley is the senior vice president and regional recruiter for the Northeast and parts of the Southeast. She has been proactively recruiting with Copier Careers for more than a decade and celebrated her 500th placement in 2021. Jessica received the Copier Careers Recruiting Excellence® Award for her outstanding work in 2021 and numerous honors for 2022.



Jean Gothberg is the regional recruiter for the West Coast, Alaska and Hawaii. Jean joined Copier Careers last year with previous recruiting experience for office support staff and hospitality leadership. With a can-do attitude and vigorous work-ethic, Jean is excited to help her clients grow.



Jenna Humbert is in her third year as the regional recruiter for the Midwest, Southeast and Texas. Jenna received the Copier Careers Recruiting Excellence® Award for her outstanding work in 2021 and 2022.



David Lind, SFC USA Retired, is the director of recruiting and regional recruiter for the Mountain Zone. He joined Copier Careers in 2021. Dave came to us with over 20 years of leadership, training, management and recruiting experience and hit the ground running with our Adaptive Retainer Recruiting® model. Dave was recognized several times for his exemplary recruiting in 2022.

About Us

Copier Careers® is a recruiting firm dedicated exclusively to helping Copier Channel employers find experienced service techs, copier sales reps, sales managers, service and operations managers, controllers, back-office staff and MPS/MNS experts. Learn more about our commitment to the Copier Channel at www.CopierCareers.com, or call 888-733-4868 to talk to a recruiter.

Copyright 2022, Copier Careers®. All rights reserved

CopierCareers®