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## The 2026 Service Technician Market: Why Dealers Can't Afford to Wait

By Scott Cullen

**Demand remains strong, compensation continues to rise, and the pressure is on to replace retiring techs while building the next generation of service talent.**

The office technology industry's technician workforce has long been the backbone of dealership operations. While sales teams generate revenue, service technicians ensure the equipment functions properly, customers stay satisfied, and contracts remain profitable.

Heading into 2026, dealerships nationwide face a familiar yet growing urgent challenge: hiring enough qualified technicians to keep their service departments fully staffed.

According to recruiters at Copier Careers, the hiring environment remains highly competitive for organizations trying to recruit technicians. "Service technicians are still quite demanding about their expectations," observed Jessica Crowley, managing director at Copier Careers. "They know they have the upper hand right now."

At the same time, dealerships are facing an increasing concern that's becoming hard to ignore: an aging technician workforce. Many companies now see that a large part of their field force could retire in the next few years.

### Advice for Dealers Hiring Technicians

Copier Careers recruiters offer four recommendations for dealerships trying to attract service technicians in a competitive market.

1. **Be open-minded about candidates.** Dealers may need to consider technicians with transferable skills rather than waiting for candidates who perfectly match every requirement.
2. **Understand candidate expectations.** Listening to what candidates want can help dealers present opportunities more effectively.
3. **Move quickly.** Slow hiring decisions often result in the loss of strong candidates.
4. **Treat candidates like customers.** Recruiters say dealerships should approach hiring with the same professionalism their sales teams use when pursuing new business. "You've got to show them your best side," said Schwartz. "Highlight the opportunity and demonstrate the ability for advancement."

Candidates often have multiple options in the current hiring environment, and the dealerships that present the strongest opportunity are the ones most likely to win the hire.

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As Paul Schwartz, president of Copier Careers, explains, the industry is beginning to confront a long-term workforce transition. “We talk to dealerships, and suddenly it dawns on them that their field force is edging toward retirement in totality.”

That realization is motivating many dealerships to reconsider their hiring strategies, not just to fill immediate openings but also to develop the next generation of technicians before experienced veterans exit the workforce.

## **Demand Remains High, but Hiring Moves Slowly**

One of the biggest challenges recruiters face is how slowly some hiring decisions are made after candidates are identified. “They have difficulty finding anyone to have a conversation with,” observed Crowley. “And once they identify the individuals they want to move forward with, they struggle to make that decision because they understand it’s a key role within the company.”

In a market where technicians often have multiple options, delays can quickly derail a hire. “With the current global situation causing hiring delays, they are slow to make many of these decisions,” explained Crowley. “That creates a disconnect between the candidates’ timelines and causes candidates to consider other opportunities.”

Those opportunities might be with competing dealerships or sometimes in completely different industries.

For recruiters, the speed of the hiring process often determines whether a placement succeeds. “Depending on the company we’re recruiting for, it’s really about timing— from when we submit the candidate to when they make the hiring decision,” said Schwartz.

And that dynamic isn’t unique to technicians. As Schwartz noted, the same pattern appears when dealerships recruit sales reps. “Same thing,” he said. “It’s timing.”

## **Replacing Retirees and Building the Next Generation**

Although many dealerships are hiring technicians to fill current openings, more are also preparing for future retirements. Crowley says that many dealers are now planning for retirements that could reshape their service departments.

“I have conversations with clients who contact us and say, ‘I’m looking for someone immediately, but then over the next five years I have a handful of additional technicians that I will be looking to replace as they retire,’” she revealed.

That reality is driving dealerships to think more strategically about workforce development. Instead of simply replacing technicians as they leave, some organizations are working to build bench strength by hiring younger candidates who can be trained and eventually take over those roles.

“It’s just a matter of working with those clients to find the right talent,” said Crowley, “and also working with them to be open to exploring candidates from outside the channel so that when those individuals are in a position to eventually retire, they have talent they’ve been training to take their place.”

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## OEM Certifications are Still an Asset

For many dealerships, OEM certifications remain one of the most important qualifications when evaluating technician candidates. It's still common for some clients to start conversations with Copier Careers' recruiters by asking for technicians with very specific OEM certifications. Meanwhile, another client might be willing to train them up. "It truly is a wide variety," said Schwartz.

Among dealer clients, Crowley says Canon certifications are often the most difficult to source. "Canon requires certifications, so those candidates are probably the most requested when it comes to higher-end devices."

After Canon, recruiters often see strong demand for technicians experienced with Xerox and Konica Minolta equipment.

## What Makes an Ideal Service Technician Candidate?

According to Copier Careers recruiters, the top technician candidates possess both technical skills and strong interpersonal abilities. Schwartz outlines the core characteristics:

- OEM certifications that align with the dealership's product line
- A solid track record working in the industry
- A willingness to learn new technologies and adapt to change
- Strong troubleshooting abilities
- A positive personality and customer service mindset

Candidates who demonstrate both technical expertise and a commitment to customer service are often the most attractive hires. "You can hear it in how they present themselves," said Schwartz. "They want to be in the industry, and they want to stay in the industry."

Basic experience servicing A3 and A4 devices remains a core requirement for most service technician roles. "Many dealers like to see production print experience, but fewer are able to have a tech 100% dedicated to that specialty," reported Crowley. "More often, a technician's primary focus would be production, but they would also work across the full product line."

## The Rise of the Hybrid Technician

While mechanical repair skills remain vital, the technician role has changed considerably over the past decade. The traditional "break-fix only" technician has mostly vanished, replaced by hybrid technicians who blend hardware skills with networking knowledge and wider troubleshooting abilities.

"I can't remember the last straight-up break-fix tech we placed where that's all they did," noted Schwartz. "The perfect term now is a hybrid tech. They've got roles in both worlds."

Crowley agrees that the technician role has expanded alongside changes in office technology itself.

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Another skill that dealers are increasingly asking about is networking experience. However, candidates with IT certifications tend to earn higher salaries. “Our clients would love it if technicians had networking backgrounds,” emphasized Crowley. “But typically, people with that background—CompTIA A+, Network+, and Security+ certifications—come with a higher compensation rate.”

That creates a familiar challenge for dealerships: balancing technical capabilities with budget constraints. Schwartz frames the question as a business decision. “It’s a value proposition,” he said. “What’s the cost of not having that individual there?”

Hiring a technician capable of handling both hardware and networking tasks can deliver immediate operational advantages. “By bringing someone in who can actually provide full service, it allows them to maintain their business,” said Schwartz. “And if they already have training, that’s a value add.”

## Technology and Adaptability

As office technology continues to evolve, recruiters say dealerships increasingly value technicians who are adaptable and willing to learn new tools. Adaptability has become a defining trait for technicians.

“The expectations are for technicians to be adaptable and open to constant change,” observed Crowley. “Whether that’s certifications for new models, troubleshooting networking issues, or using new diagnostic tools.”

Many technicians are now beginning to integrate artificial intelligence tools into their troubleshooting processes. At the same time, recruiters note that technicians seem more willing to work across various OEM platforms than they did in the past.

Schwartz recalls that earlier in his career, technicians were often extremely loyal to specific manufacturers. “You used to hear technicians say, ‘I will only work on Xerox,’ or ‘I’ll only work on Canon,’” he said. “It seems like there’s less of that now.”

## Demand Is Nationwide

Unlike some specialized roles concentrated around major metropolitan areas, demand for service technicians seems to be widespread throughout the country. Job orders at Copier Careers show demand in nearly every type of market. “It really is all over the place,” emphasized Crowley.

Schwartz notices a similar pattern when reviewing job orders. “The metropolitan areas just continue to generate needs,” he observed. “But the smaller metropolitan areas and rural markets are just as important.”

In smaller markets, a dealership might hire only one or two technicians at a time, but collectively, those openings make up a significant share of overall demand. “So, it evens out,” said Schwartz.

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## Looking Beyond the Industry

Because experienced technicians are difficult to find, more office technology dealerships have become increasingly open to candidates from outside the office technology industry. Recruiters frequently search for candidates in adjacent technical fields, such as HVAC, electronics repair, and point-of-sale service companies.

Even if those individuals lack experience in the office technology industry, dealers can train them on their specific equipment and ensure they get the proper certifications.

Recruiting from outside the channel requires a different approach. Instead of concentrating on the industry itself, recruiters usually focus on understanding what motivates the candidate. “I usually ask them what has them open to a new opportunity,” said Crowley. “Then based on what they say, I tailor how I present the industry and the opportunity.”

## 7 Skills Service Technicians Need in 2026

As the technician role continues to evolve, dealers are looking for more than just traditional break-fix skills. According to Copier Careers recruiters, the most valuable technicians in 2026 will blend core service abilities with adaptability and a broader knowledge of the connected office environment.

1. **OEM certifications.** For many dealers, certifications tied to specific manufacturers remain among the first things they look for, especially for higher-end equipment.
2. **Experience with A3 and A4.** Most technician roles still obviously require basic experience with core office device platforms.
3. **Production print experience.** Some dealers seek technicians who can focus on production environments or support those devices as part of a broader product lineup.
4. **Networking knowledge.** Candidates with CompTIA A+, Network+, and Security+ certifications, or similar IT skills can stand out, especially as dealers seek more hybrid capabilities in the field.
5. **Adaptability.** Technicians need to be open to constant change, whether that means new certifications, evolving troubleshooting methods, or new tools.
6. **Software and diagnostic fluency.** Although deep software expertise may still fall more on the systems engineer side, technicians increasingly use software tools and AI-assisted diagnostics in the field.
7. **Being comfortable with customer-facing communication.** Technicians usually have the most direct contact with customers, making professionalism, responsiveness, and service-oriented communication more crucial than ever.

The result is a technician profile that looks more diverse than it did just a few years ago: less strictly mechanical, more hybrid, and more connected with the overall customer experience.

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## Why Technicians Change Jobs

Unlike sales reps, technicians seldom change jobs solely for pay. When technicians think about new opportunities, stagnation often influences their decision. “If they’re not staying up to date with their training because training is very important to them,” observed Crowley. “If they feel stagnant or like they’re doing all the work to keep clients and not receiving any gratitude.”

Schwartz notes that technicians and sales teams have a natural interdependence within dealerships, whether they like it or not. “There’s always a natural tension between sales and technical teams. Technicians need to realize they wouldn’t have a role if no one sold the solution. And sales reps need to realize they couldn’t sell anything if the dealership couldn’t support it.”

That dynamic can also shape how technicians interact with customers.

When dealerships foster pride among their technicians, it can strengthen relationships with customers. “The more dealerships incentivize their technicians, the more they take pride in keeping their territory up to date,” said Schwartz. “That leads to better communication with sales when they see issues or upgrade opportunities.”

## Pay, PTO, and the Technician Shortage

Compensation for service technicians has been rising. The upward trend accelerated around 2021 as the technician shortage intensified post COVID-19. “Compared to five years ago, compensation has gone up considerably,” noted Crowley.

Schwartz agrees the increase has been substantial, though he cautions that exact figures vary widely depending on location and market conditions. “I would say it was a significant double-digit increase.”

Regional differences can be dramatic when it comes to pay. “Compensation in Alabama is very different from compensation in Manhattan, Los Angeles, or San Francisco,” noted Schwartz.

In some cases, salaries have risen unexpectedly in markets that historically paid lower wages. Crowley recently saw an example in a smaller market. “A client hired a technician at a salary rate I never thought we’d see in that part of the Midwest.”

Recruiters are also noticing occasional flexibility in how compensation packages are structured. In some cases, technicians are negotiating for additional paid time off rather than a higher base salary.

“Some technicians who have been with their current employer for a while have built up a decent amount of PTO, and that standard two weeks isn’t going to be enough,” noted Crowley. In one recent case, a technician told her he would accept an extra week of PTO instead of higher pay.

Ultimately, the market dictates compensation. “At the end of the day, the value is what someone is willing to pay,” said Schwartz.

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## The Technician Job Market in 2026

Despite the hiring challenges dealerships face, recruiters say that service technicians currently have strong career prospects. Crowley believes the gap between open positions and qualified candidates still favors technicians. “The sky is really the limit,” she emphasized. “There are so many opportunities. This is a fantastic industry.”

At the start of 2026, she added, the reality is simple. “There are more opportunities available than qualified candidates.”

For dealerships, hiring technicians will likely remain one of the most competitive aspects of workforce planning for the foreseeable future.