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THE MAGAZINE OF THE AMERICAN STAFFING ASSOCIATION

STAFFING SUCCESS:
LEADER'S EDGE
RANJINI PODDAR
Artech CEO and Co-Founder

BILLION-DOLLAR AMBITION

Ranjini Poddar leads the largest woman-owned IT staffing company in the U.S.—but she has her sights set on even bigger growth goals.


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A strong social media presence across multiple platforms can be one of your best avenues for engaging and attracting talent.

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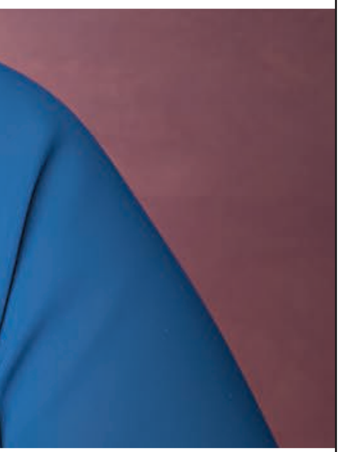

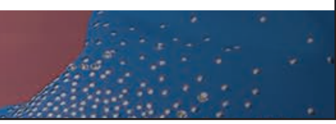

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COLUMNS

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To thrive in the digital age, firms must turn the intangible into the undeniable—where trust built on data makes tangibility the ultimate differentiator.

Tangible Success

By Richard Wahlquist, CEO

"In God we trust, all others must bring data" is a well-known quote attributed to W. Edwards Denning, a pioneer in quality control and management. It's true—many of us are most comfortable with things we can see or touch. If it's intangible, it's difficult to assess quality and value.

In this issue's cover story about the impressive career trajectory of Artech CEO Ranjini Poddar, you'll read that her journey, drive, and successes have been inspired by her need for tangibility.

In an increasingly digital world, **the concept of tangibility—making the abstract concrete and perceptible—has become a lens through which we can track the evolution and see the future of the staffing,** recruiting, and workforce solutions industry.

The Value-Add of Tangibility

As businesses and workers navigate hybrid models, exponential changes in technology, and periods of geopolitical and macroeconomic uncertainty, the ability to deliver tangible value has become the cornerstone of success for virtually all industries.

At its core, for the staffing industry, tangibility refers to the ability to transform intangible services into outcomes that clients and candidates can see, feel, and measure. Historically, this has always been an industry focus and challenge.

Unlike selling a physical product, the value-add of sourcing, screening, and assigning employees; placing candidates; and solving workforce challenges isn't always immediately apparent. This has resulted in clients selecting firms to work with based primarily on price, and that is the slippery slope on the one-way path to commoditization. **In 2025 and beyond, measurable tangibility is *the* competitive differentiator—shaping client expectations, client satisfaction, and client loyalty.**

Ranjini says Artech's track record of outpacing the market is tied in large part to creating new solutions when new client needs and growth opportunities arise. She shares that growth has always been deeply embedded in Artech's DNA, and that "it's non-negotiable" irrespective of the vagaries of economic cycles. But she also says that it's growth with accountability—in other words, measurable and tangible.

The State of Staffing

So, where are we as we enter the second quarter of 2025? First, the labor market remains dynamic despite economic headwinds. While the pace of job creation has slowed, businesses across most sectors are still hiring.

Second, historical data indicate that as the economy returns to stronger periods of growth, staffing employment tends to rebound quickly as companies prioritize agility over long-term commitments.

Third, ongoing talent imbalances continue to fuel opportunity. Despite all the reports of layoffs, in March 80% were federal jobs, according to Challenger Gray & Christmas. Skilled workers remain in short supply for roles in AI, renewable energy, health care, and other fields experiencing secular growth.

With signs of stabilization in sectors like technology, health care, and logistics as of early 2025, demand for talent is poised to rise later this year.

The Technology Advantage

In a world of uncertainty and evolving workplace norms, clients and candidates expect to work with organizations whose value is concrete. **Firms that leverage technology to deliver measurable results, enhance experiences, and solve real problems will outpace the pack.**

Industry members can look to the ASA for tools and information to use in their strategic planning on how to leverage the best technology and customer relations solutions to deepen client relationships, increase market share, and drive growth.

Don't think about tangibility as just another buzzword—think about it as the current and future currency of trust, relevance, and growth that leads to tangible success. ■

STAFFING news

INDUSTRY HEADLINES, TRENDS, AND RESEARCH

Gaining Market Share Surpasses Employee Retention as Top CEO Priority

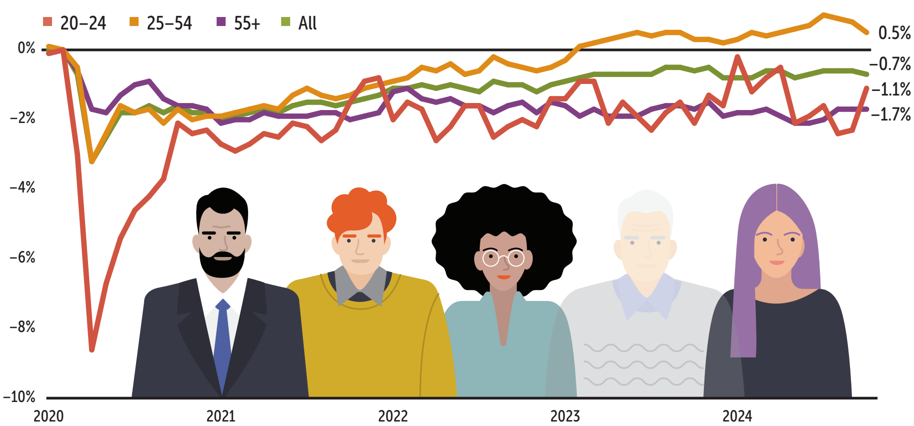
According to polling by *Chief Executive* magazine, the top priority for chief executive officers in 2025 is gaining market share. **The publication surveyed 149 CEOs, and 58% put market share at the top of their list. It was third on the list of priorities last year, at 56%.**

The next most important priority, according to this year's survey, is retaining and engaging existing employees, which was cited by 57% of respondents—followed by improving cost structure, picked by 52% of respondents. Rounding out the top five answers were achieving target profitability (47% of respondents) and recruiting new employees (40%).

When asked about their biggest challenges for the year ahead, 50% of the surveyed CEOs said rising costs (including tariffs) is their main challenge. Retaining and engaging employees again comes in second, with 39% of CEOs selecting it as a top challenge. Recruiting workers ranks at third again (38% of respondents). This is true regardless of the company's revenue category.

STAFFING stats

Older workers are more likely to **harbor concerns about ageism,** which could be a **barrier to their rejoining the workforce.**



Widening Participation Gap Between Prime Age and Older Workers

When the Covid-19 pandemic began, workers of all ages opted out of the labor force for various reasons. Over time, many gradually returned—but not workers 55 and older. ASA Workforce Monitor data show that older workers are more likely to harbor concerns about ageism, which could be a barrier to their rejoining the workforce. Read how to adapt to this trend in the "Employment Through the Ages" article at *americanstaffing.net/research/staffing-success-research-article-series.*

Work–Life Balance Surpasses Pay as Talent's Leading Motivator

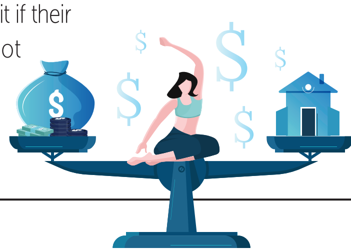
The latest Workmonitor report from Randstad shows that talent prioritizes personalization, community, and skills training, and employers need to be ready to respond. For the first time in Workmonitor's history, work–life balance is deemed more important by workers than pay. For its research, Randstad surveyed more than 26,000 workers in 35 markets across Europe, the Asia–Pacific region, and the Americas.

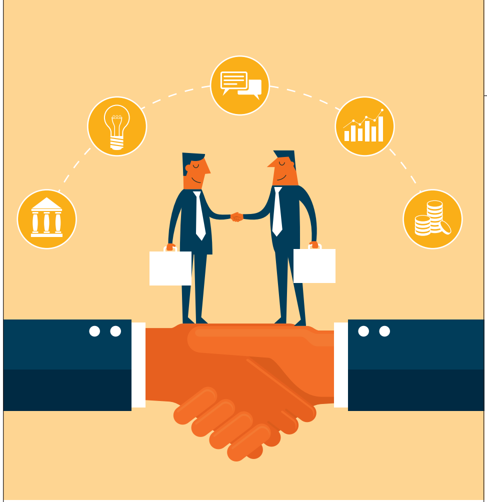
Talent increasingly expect work to align with their personal values, ambitions, and life circumstances. **When workers in the U.S. were asked which factors are most important to them, the most popular response was work–life balance (cited by 80% of respondents), followed by pay (78%), flexibility in terms of working hours (73%), and flexibility in terms of location (71%).**

About half of U.S. workers (52%) say they wouldn't accept a job with a company if its values didn't align with their own, and 33% have quit a job because they didn't agree with the viewpoints or stances of leadership.

Talent are clear they want a community—a space where they can belong, thrive, and bring their full selves to work. American workers say they want their workplace to feel like a community (84%) and that they perform better at work if they feel a sense of community with their colleagues (85%). Sixty-four percent of workers would quit a job if they did not feel they belonged; 52% say they have quit a job due to a toxic workplace.

Learning and development continues to be essential for talent as technological change accelerates, and workers increasingly prioritize skills development. U.S. workers are emphatic about training opportunities, with 75% saying that training and development is important to them in their current role or when looking for a new job. Almost half of American respondents (49%) would not accept a job that didn't offer opportunities to future-proof their skills, and 47% would quit if their employer did not provide opportunities to future-proof their skills.





Report Reveals Dramatic Shift in Staffing Landscape

A report from 24 Seven, one of the nation's largest privately held marketing, creative, and digital talent solutions firms, suggests a fundamental transformation in how organizations approach workforce solutions. The "Beyond Traditional Staffing: The New Era of Talent Solutions" report, based on responses from more than 950 management-level professionals, points to significant shifts in talent acquisition and management strategies.

The research reveals that 88% of organizations are experiencing significant difficulties filling open positions. For 39% of companies, it now takes a month or more to hire for an open role. Three-quarters of respondents (76%) say they now use freelancers, contractors, or consultants either frequently or occasionally. Notably, 40% of companies are using staffing and talent solutions firms as their primary method of recruiting and sourcing new talent. More than half of respondents (59%) rely on a mixed talent model of in-house teams and outside resources. The survey spanned multiple sectors, including marketing, creative, technology, beauty, fashion, and retail, with respondents ranging from c-suite executives to manager-level professionals.

"What we're witnessing is a dramatic evolution in how organizations think about getting work done," said Anthony Donnarumma of 24 Seven. "The traditional model is giving way to a more flexible, comprehensive approach to talent solutions. **This research confirms what we're seeing in the market—companies are seeking partners who can provide not just talent, but more robust offerings such as managed services."**

U.S. Job Seekers Embrace Career Mobility

More than half of U.S. job seekers are eager to switch industries or functions, according to a recent Express Employment Professionals survey. The Job Insights survey of more than 1,000 participants was conducted online by The Harris Poll.

Overall, 56% of respondents want to work in new industries and 52% seek new job functions, highlighting a significant trend in career mobility. The younger generations of workers are most inclined to switch functions, with 66% of Generation Z (born from 1997 to 2012), 58% of Millennials (born 1981 to 1996), 39% of Generation X (born 1965 to 1980), and 37% of Baby Boomers (born 1946 to 1964) saying they would switch careers. However, older generations have changed careers more frequently already, with 39% of Gen X and 44% of Boomers having done so multiple times.

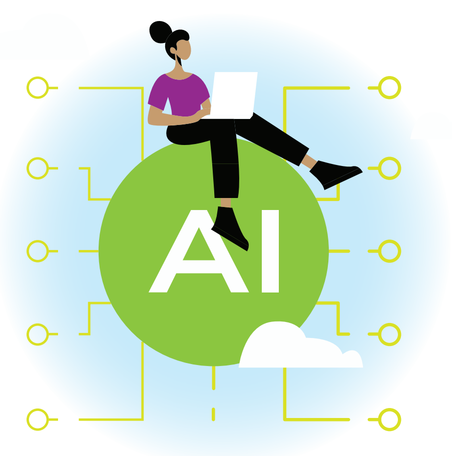
Nearly nine in 10 job seekers (87%) would switch careers if they had the resources, and more than three in four (76%) report that seeing others working in nontraditional settings (e.g., working from home, flexible hours) influences their desire to pursue similar opportunities.

Among those who have switched careers or are interested in doing so, more than half of respondents (51%) mention a desire for more flexibility. Other common reasons mentioned were lack of advancement or fulfillment (cited by 46% of respondents), inadequate compensation (31%), skills better suited for another career (28%), desire for more time off (27%), looking for a more positive work culture (26%), and transferring skills to faster-growing industries (22%).

The Most In-Demand Skills for 2025

The most recent "In-Demand Skills" report from freelancing platform Upwork highlights surging demand for artificial intelligence (AI) specializations and human-centric skills amid rapid technological change.

Job postings requiring advanced AI skills, such as generative AI modeling and AI data annotation, are growing rapidly—even as there has been a significant rise in demand for roles like career coaching and training and development.



Posts looking for expertise in generative AI modeling and AI data annotation have grown by as much as 220% year-to-year, reflecting the rapid integration of AI into industries like health care, finance, and marketing. And personal coaching roles have emerged among the fastest-growing skills on the platform, with demand increasing by 74% year-to-year. This reflects businesses' growing need for adaptability and guidance, highlighting how human-centric roles are essential to complement advanced AI capabilities in a fast-changing work landscape.

"On one hand, there's explosive demand for technical expertise in areas like AI," said Kelly Monahan of the Upwork Research Institute. "On the other, businesses are investing in coaching and human development to help their teams navigate technological change. Businesses are recognizing that the future of work isn't just about technology—it's about empowering people to leverage that technology effectively." >>>

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Report: Skills Required for U.S. Jobs Are Changing

The skills required for U.S. jobs have changed over the past three years, according to a report from Lightcast. “The Speed of Skill Change” report shows that 32% of the skills required for the average job are different in 2024 than they were in 2021, with roles in the science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) fields leading the change. Three-quarters (75%) of skills have changed for the top 25% of occupations.

Lightcast’s report uses a proprietary Skill Disruption Index to score every occupation based on how much it has changed over the past three years. It shows that the pace of change is being driven primarily by three undercurrents:

- **Generative artificial intelligence (AI)**, which is forcing new skills acquisition in technical as well as nontechnical roles. Lightcast’s research shows the number of GenAI-specific job postings has skyrocketed 15,625% over the past three years.
- **Green technology**, which is driving demand for sustainability skills even in case worker, data scientist, and supply chain management roles.
- **Cybersecurity**, which has seen steady growth in technical, managerial, and compliance roles. The demand for cybersecurity skills has even surged over 570% in biomedical roles and nearly 400% among laboratory technicians.

“Using data to quantify the scale and nature of skill change allows organizations to identify emerging skills, spot key trends, and proactively evolve their talent strategies to stay ahead of their competition,” said Cole Napper of Lightcast. “Otherwise, they may find themselves left behind, struggling to hire the right candidates or losing staff due to a lack of continuous development opportunities.”

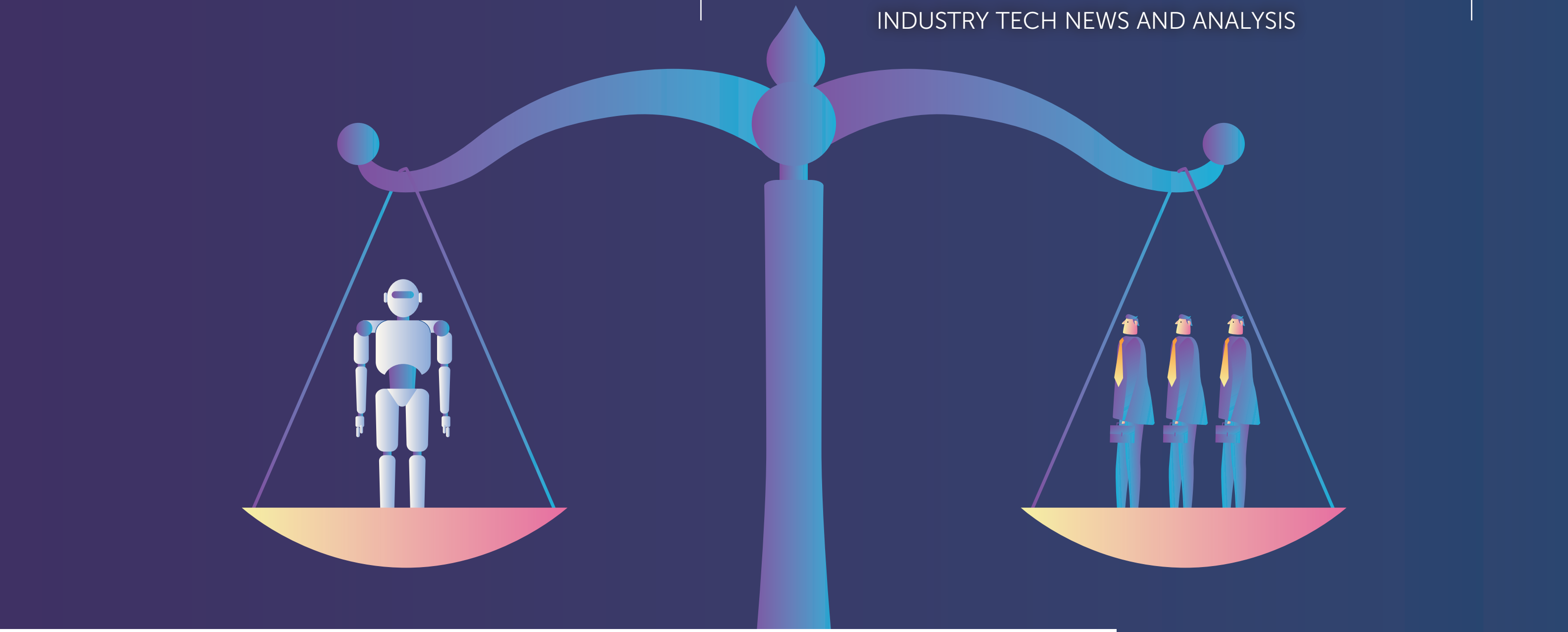
Most Firms Have Been Affected by the IT Skills Gap

To determine how the information technology skills gap is affecting employers, technology talent development company Revature released its “2025 State of IT Skills Survey Report,” based on data collected from 230 responses from IT and human resource decision makers at U.S. companies with more than 10,000 employees. The results of the survey offer clear next steps organizations can take to remain competitive and innovative in an ever-changing technological world.

The report found that 77% of organizations report being affected by the IT skills gap, with 56% noting upskilling and reskilling as the No. 1 strategy for closing this gap in 2025; 84% of decision makers are concerned about finding tech talent in 2025.

When asked about specific challenges relating to the IT skills gap, the most common responses were “finding qualified talent with the necessary skills” (71%), “IT staffing companies can’t deliver talent quickly” (57%), and “upskilling or reskilling in-house talent” (53%). Almost half of respondents (53%) said they still struggle with training.

More than six in 10 surveyed decision makers (63%) believe that generative artificial intelligence will positively affect training, and 56% believe it will help with hiring and retention in 2025; 63% of respondents plan to increase the upskilling and reskilling programs at their organization, and 60% plan to hire more employees in 2025. ■



Finding Balance: AI and Human Touch

By Jason Leverant, CSP

By thoughtfully **integrating AI while maintaining strong personal relationships,** staffing firms can enhance efficiency, improve hiring outcomes, and **continue delivering the high-touch experience that clients and candidates expect.**

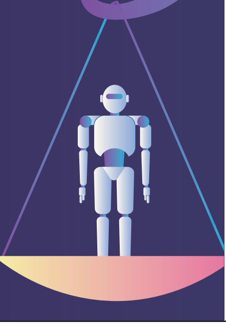
In an industry built on personal relationships, the rise of artificial intelligence (AI) in staffing presents both an exciting opportunity and a daunting challenge. On one hand, AI has the potential to streamline recruitment processes, enhance decision-making, and improve candidate matching. On the other, staffing remains a people-driven business where personal connections, trust, and human intuition play seemingly irreplaceable roles. The key to success lies not in choosing between AI and human touch, but in striking a perfect balance between the two.

The Rise of AI in Staffing

AI-powered tools are reshaping the staffing landscape in profound ways. From AI-driven applicant tracking systems (ATSs) to automated candidate sourcing and chatbots handling initial interactions, these innovations promise to boost efficiency and reduce hiring timelines. AI is also revolutionizing the sales process, by providing data-driven insights, predictive analytics, and automated outreach strategies to improve client engagement and acquisition.

AI's Role in Streamlining Recruitment

- **Automated Candidate Screening:** AI-driven software can analyze résumés, identify relevant skills, and rank candidates based on predefined criteria, significantly reducing the time recruiters spend on manual screening.
- **Enhanced Matching Algorithms:** Machine learning models analyze vast datasets to match candidates with job openings more accurately than traditional keyword-based searches.
- **AI Chatbots and Virtual Assistants:** These tools provide 24/7 support,



While AI offers undeniable benefits, **over-reliance on automation can result in a transactional, impersonal candidate experience**—something that many staffing professionals recognize as a **risk to client and candidate relationships.**

answering frequently asked questions, scheduling interviews, and keeping candidates engaged throughout the hiring process.

- **Predictive Analytics:** AI can forecast hiring needs based on market trends, historical hiring patterns, and workforce analytics, allowing staffing firms to take a proactive approach.

AI's Role in Streamlining the Sales Process

- **Automated Lead Generation and Scoring:** AI can identify potential clients by analyzing online behavior, industry trends, and past engagement, allowing sales teams to prioritize high-value prospects.
- **Predictive Client Insights:** AI-driven analytics provide deeper insights into client needs, helping staffing firms tailor their sales strategies to address specific pain points and hiring demands.
- **Personalized Outreach at Scale:** AI-powered tools can craft personalized emails, LinkedIn messages, and follow-ups, ensuring that sales teams engage clients with relevant and timely communication.
- **CRM and Sales Automation:** AI-enhanced customer relationship management (CRM) systems help sales teams track interactions, schedule follow-ups, and optimize workflows, improving efficiency and conversion rates.

While AI offers undeniable benefits, over-reliance on automation can result in a transactional, impersonal candidate experience—something that many staffing professionals recognize as a risk to client and candidate relationships.

The Irreplaceable Human Element

While AI can process information at unprecedented speed, it lacks the emotional intelligence and nuanced decision-making that human recruiters and salespeople bring to the table. The best staffing firms recognize that human intuition, experience, and empathy remain critical to successful placements and client relationships.

Where Humans Excel

- **Understanding Candidate Motivations:** Beyond résumés and skill sets, recruiters can uncover a candidate's career aspirations, company culture preferences, and long-term goals—factors AI cannot fully grasp.
- **Building Relationships With Clients and Candidates:** A personalized conversation, genuine advice, and face-to-face interactions establish trust and loyalty that technology alone cannot replicate.
- **Handling Sensitive Conversations:** Whether it's negotiating salaries, addressing career concerns, or providing interview feedback, human interaction remains essential for navigating complex discussions with professionalism and tact.
- **Assessing Soft Skills and Cultural Fit:** While AI can evaluate hard skills, it cannot effectively gauge a candidate's personality, adaptability, or alignment with a company's values.
- **Developing Client Trust and Long-Term Partnerships:** Sales professionals excel at reading between the lines, identifying unspoken client concerns, and tailoring solutions based on intuition and experience.
- **Negotiating and Closing Deals:** While AI can generate insights and automate some outreach, human salespeople are critical in handling objections, making personalized value propositions, and finalizing agreements.
- **Adapting to Real-Time Market Changes:** AI relies on past data, whereas human sales teams can adapt to sudden market shifts, new client demands, or economic fluctuations with strategic agility.

Striking the Right Balance

So how can staffing firms integrate AI without sacrificing the human touch? The key lies in leveraging AI as a support system and augmenter, rather than a replacement for human expertise.

Best Practices for AI-Human Integration

- **Use AI to Eliminate Repetitive Tasks, Not Relationships:** Automate administrative tasks such as résumé parsing, interview scheduling, and initial screening to free up recruiters' time for high-value interactions.
- **Enhance—Don't Replace—Candidate Engagement:** AI chatbots can handle basic inquiries, but humans should step in for deeper conversations, career coaching, and critical decision-making moments.
- **Personalize AI-Driven Communications:** AI can generate personalized emails and follow-ups based on candidate and client interactions, but humans should add personal touches where appropriate to maintain that personal, warm connection.
- **Train Recruiters and Salespeople to Work Alongside AI:** Equip staffing professionals with knowledge on AI tools so they can use data-driven insights to complement their instincts and expertise.
- **Monitor AI for Bias and Ethical Considerations:** AI algorithms can unintentionally reinforce biases present in historical hiring data. Regular audits and human oversight ensure fair and inclusive hiring practices.

As AI continues to evolve, its role in staffing will undoubtedly expand. However, the firms that succeed will be those that recognize AI as an enabler, rather than a replacement, for human recruiters. The future belongs to those who find the sweet spot between technological innovation and the uniquely human qualities that drive meaningful employment connections. ■

Jason Leverant, CSP, is president and chief operating officer at AtWork Group and also chair of the ASA technology taskforce. Send feedback on this article to jleverant@atwork.com.

Weathering the Wicked ICE Work Site Crackdown

By Dawn Lurie, Esq.

ICE has **increased Form I-9 inspections, unannounced visits, and work site enforcement, causing panic for employers.** Paired with other workforce disruptions and amplified criminal charges against employers, this uncertainty is necessitating a substantial and immediate onus for **staffing firms to beef up their legal compliance efforts.**

Three months into president Donald Trump's second term, immigration enforcement has intensified—surpassing the vigor of his first administration. Executive orders are swiftly transforming campaign promises into policy, and the media has already placed staffing companies in the spotlight. The forthcoming years promise heightened scrutiny, necessitating robust preparation.

ICE Is Watching

There has been a notable increase in Form I-9 inspections and unannounced visits—commonly referred to as "touches" or "taps"—by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement agents. These visits often occur without prior notice, subpoenas, or warrants, and agents have been making their presence felt. This intensified enforcement activity has created an atmosphere of uncertainty and concern among businesses and communities alike. Notably, ICE has also increased work site visits to pick up workers and is issuing Notices of Inspection. Employers receiving an NOI are required to present their Form I-9 records within three business days. Identified violations can result in substantial fines and, depending upon the circumstances, criminal charges. A common theme for these NOIs? Homeland Security Investigations are scrutinizing electronic I-9 systems, and the takeaway there is that not all vendors (even name brands) are compliant.

Even with this crackdown, the White House is still complaining about low arrest numbers. Under border czar Tom Homan, enforcement is becoming louder, broader, and more unforgiving—much like the wrath of the Wicked Witch of the West. While ICE's Homeland Security Investigations boast about taking down fugitives, sex offenders, and gang members, they're also touting work site enforcement efforts targeting random businesses in restaurants, manufacturing, food production, and retail.

For now, operations are decentralized, with 30 HSI Special Agent in Charge offices setting their own priorities. Chicago, for instance, will likely return to its heavy focus on staffing firms. ICE is also working seven days a week, with help from the U.S. Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms; Drug Enforcement Administration; Federal Bureau of Investigation; Marshals Service; and Customs and Border Protection. The message is clear: Pay no attention to the man behind the curtain—this enforcement is real.

Other Workforce Disruptions Ahead

As ICE intensifies enforcement, another workforce crisis is unfolding: the loss of legal workers. With Temporary Protected Status cancellations and the nonrenewal of parole programs for Cubans, Haitians, Nicaraguans, and Venezuelans, thousands of workers who once had valid employment authorization are losing it. Some have been legally working in the U.S. for many years, but unless litigation prevails, employers will soon be forced to terminate them—adding even more disruption to an already fragile labor market.

E-Verify and the I-9 Conundrum

Many staffing firms are considering implementing E-Verify, as it offers a layer of protection. And while it's an excellent best practice, it's no magic wand. If not paired with strong I-9 fraud detection protocols, E-Verify won't catch stolen or fraudulent List B and C documents. These IDs may pass initial verification, only to be flagged later during an ICE audit—and ICE knows this.

The staffing industry won't look the same by the end of this administration. Those who fail to adapt will face consequences, while **those who prepare now will survive—and maybe even thrive**—in this new reality.

This happens because E-Verify relies on employers to properly complete Section 2 of the I-9, a step that is frequently mishandled. The solution? Implement strong document review processes, including fraud training and quality assurance measures, to detect bad documents before they become a liability faster than a house falling from the sky.

Badging Black Hole

One of the biggest vulnerabilities for staffing agencies is the disconnect between recruiting, onboarding, badging, and client site placement. Too often, the person completing the I-9 is not the person who actually shows up for work. In high-volume industries, identity swapping happens all too easily. This problem isn't sorcery—it's just bad process management. Basic badging procedures and better coordination with end clients can eliminate a significant portion of this fraud. Even simple measures—like photo match verification at client sites—can drastically reduce risk. If the person who applied for the job isn't the same one who shows up for work, it's an explosion waiting to happen—just ask the Wizard how well that worked out for him. And for those of you using virtual (alternative remote) I-9 processes, don't get too comfortable; it is said to be on the chopping block due to related identity concerns.

Criminal Charges Are on the Table

This administration is already aggressively pursuing criminal charges against employers—even small ones. Nobody is flying under the radar. ICE is now leveraging FBI analysts in work site cases. The days of I-9 audits being just a paperwork exercise are over—we're not in Kansas anymore, Toto.

Protecting Yourself in Client Contracts

End clients are demanding more compliance assurances, but staffing agencies must tread carefully. Never agree to provide I-9s, no matter how nicely they ask. Instead, consider allowing third-party audits by a qualified compliance auditor—a compromise that doesn't put you at risk for unlawful sharing. E-Verify? Maybe—but never promise to run existing employees (it's illegal). Also, negotiate reciprocal obligations, such as requiring notification within 24 hours if the client receives a NOI or ICE visit.

What's Next?

The staffing industry won't look the same by the end of this administration. Those who fail to adapt will face consequences, while those who prepare now will survive—and maybe even thrive—in this new reality. Many companies will face audits, surprise site visits, and the forced termination of workers due to lost work authorization. It's time to click those ruby slippers and prioritize compliance—because wishful thinking won't get you home. ■

KEY TAKEAWAY

With ICE aggressively pursuing criminal charges against employers, staffing firms must strengthen compliance measures and contractual protections to navigate the intensifying enforcement landscape.

Dawn M. Lurie, Esq., is senior counsel at Seyfarth Shaw LLP. Send feedback on this article to dlurie@seyfarth.com.

This material is not intended, and should not be relied on, as legal advice. ASA members should consult with their own counsel about the legal matters presented.

WEEKLY ECONOMIC AND BUSINESS OUTLOOK

FORWARD-LOOKING

RESEARCH AND ANALYSIS

FROM THE AMERICAN STAFFING ASSOCIATION

Welcome to a New Powerful Tool for Growth-Focused Business Leaders!

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The preconference program focuses on legal and legislative updates and issues affecting the health care sector of the staffing industry. It takes place the day prior to the main conference, and you must register for the main Staffing Law & Compliance Conference in order to add the preconference program for an additional charge.

The Threat Is Real: Combatting Fraud in the Staffing Industry

Monitoring and addressing scams and fraud has become a full-time job at many staffing firms. Identity theft, phishing, unemployment insurance and workers' compensation fraud, payrolling schemes, cyberthreats, bait-and-switch scams, help desk schemes, and more are all on the rise as savvy criminals turn their attention to the staffing industry. Learn the latest on these fraud schemes and what your staffing company should be doing to prepare and protect against them. Hear from colleagues who have survived the attacks and have lessons to share, as well as experts who share resources and tips on how to keep your company out of harm's way.

Multistate Matrix: Winning the Wage Compliance Battle

Do you have offices in more than one state? This interactive presentation will address the top wage and hour compliance issues facing multistate staffing firms, including worker misclassification and failure to pay overtime, compliance with the increasing number of state pay transparency laws, liability for unpaid working time, and requirements for paid sick or family leave. Engage with a panel of experts who will walk through hypothetical fact patterns (based on recent cases and state laws) to illustrate the increasing challenges, offer best practices to mitigate the risk of costly litigation, and provide action items and strategies you need to implement at your companies.

Fortifying Your Firm: Preventing and Managing Staffing-Related Lawsuits

In the increasingly complex staffing business, lawsuits can arise from many sides: worker misclassification claims, co-employment issues, wage and hour violations, contract disputes, and more. This session will explore how to proactively prevent lawsuits against your firm by addressing common legal pitfalls; revising contracts to strengthen your defense; and strategically shifting risk to clients, insurers, and third parties when claims arise. Gain practical insights on fortifying your firm's legal compliance framework to minimize exposure and confidently navigate potential disputes.

Artificial Intelligence: Anxiety or Opportunity?

Artificial intelligence technologies continue to impact recruiting and hiring and streamline much of the employment process. Meanwhile, legislators and agencies at both the state and federal level are looking to regulate its use, creating legal risks and obligations for employers. Learn from experts which AI tools can benefit human resources and legal departments in areas like recruitment, retention, and employee engagement, as well as which legal and compliance challenges to address now, which issues are on the horizon, and how to adapt to the changes.

Building a Perfect Compliance Program

Legal compliance is complicated, and nobody's perfect, right? But in this engaging (and slightly tongue-in-cheek) presentation, employment law and staffing industry experts will build a fantasy staffing firm to illustrate the ideal compliance program: air-tight client agreements, 50-state regulatory compliance, perfect FLSA tracking, 100% litigation avoidance, state-of-the-art time tracking, policies that practically write themselves, iron-clad collections, and an agile legal team for a constantly evolving legal environment.

Are You Ready for ICE? What Every Staffing Firm Needs to Know in 2025

Immigration enforcement is making headlines daily. The administration is rolling back programs that previously provided work authorization to hundreds of thousands of employees, leading to widespread uncertainty and heightened enforcement efforts. Concerns about workplace raids, Form I-9 investigations, and the detention of individuals working unlawfully are escalating. At the same time, end clients are getting involved in the E-Verify and Form I-9 process for staffing firm workers. As enforcement intensifies, staffing companies must have a comprehensive plan to ensure compliance and preparedness.

Hotline Buzzes: Managing Temporary Employee Complaints and Investigations

Like other staffing firms, you've implemented a reporting hotline, rolled out policies, and conducted the relevant trainings. Now, the hotline is abuzz with reports. Perhaps the clients will conduct the investigations, but what happens when an investigation implicates the workers placed by your staffing firm? What obligations do you have to investigate? Who should control the investigation? And what are some best practices for handling anonymous reports? In this session, attendees will hear about these topics and more from staffing industry experts.

How to Thrive in 2025: Top Compliance Issues in the Staffing Industry

Every year, staffing firms face growing compliance challenges—and 2025 is no different. Class actions are booming, arbitration agreements are under attack, and collection and bankruptcy matters are on the rise. Learn about each of these critical compliance concerns, ways to protect your bottom line, and how to manage both operational excellence and legal compliance in today's employment and staffing landscape.

STAFFING SUCCESS:

Leader's Edge

The American Staffing Association is a community of growth-minded industry professionals who are shaping the future of the staffing industry and the world of work. This series showcases standout individuals who are at the pinnacle of leadership, agility, and vision. Do you have a Leader's Edge recommendation for ASA? Send it to success@americanstaffing.net.

BILLION-DOLLAR AMBITION

Ranjini Poddar leads the nation's largest woman-owned staffing company in the information technology sector, with more than $925 million in revenue. However, those familiar with her genius know there's no growth finish line in sight—even after she takes Artech to the billion-dollar level.

Through her bold leadership and strategic vision, Poddar has transformed Artech into a full-spectrum powerhouse—offering outcome-based deliverable projects, staffing, direct hire, and payroll services. Artech isn't just a staffing firm—it's where businesses turn for comprehensive workforce solutions.

Here's a look at Poddar's inspiring journey and at least five takeaways that drive her staffing success.

By Marlene L. Hendrickson

She describes herself as relentless. That tracks. Could you be anything but relentless to co-found, lead, and consistently grow the largest woman-owned IT staffing company in the nation? When the economy dipped and staffing sales took a hit across the industry last year, her company defied the odds—maintaining its position while others declined.

"While revenue remained steady this year, our ability to maintain strong performance in a dynamic market reflects the resilience of our business model and the strength of our client partnerships," she says.

Meet Ranjini Poddar, co-founder and chief executive officer of Morristown, NJ-based Artech LLC, an information technology staffing company that employs a global workforce of more than 11,500 professionals in the IT, engineering, and business professional sector. Her story at Artech's helm is teeming with visionary goals, leadership lessons, and what she calls clear articulation—something that may very well be the secret to her staffing success.

Her next clearly articulated goal? Taking her company to the billion-dollar revenue mark—something she talks about deliberately and factually, almost as if it has already happened. It's strategic manifestation, fueled by sharp business acumen.

Poddar has the edge growth-minded leaders crave and ambitious professionals seek. Here's a practical look at her staffing success, how she's achieved so much, and what to expect next from one of the very best in the staffing industry.

BORN INTO BUSINESS

It could be short-sighted and maybe even boring to dub Poddar an American Dream success story. Saying that wouldn't capture her passion and drive or her innate talent for business, or even do justice to her journey—on a path that has been far from linear.

Even as a small child Poddar learned about business—from an MIT graduate, no less (her father). He had attended college in the U.S. and then returned to India to work in the sugar refinery industry for several years before family circumstances took them to California when Poddar was 8 years old.

"From a fairly young age—even when I was 12 years old, through high school, and even during college—I used to help my dad do different things. He would give me his sales by customer and by product and ask me to analyze it—not something a typical 12-year-old was asked to do," Poddar recalls with a smile. "He would ask me to pay more attention to the profitability as opposed to revenue—those kinds of nuances. So, in that way, I grew up around business."

Her father was in the cast iron business, supplying materials for everyday products in the waterworks industry, like manhole covers and fire hydrants, as well as cast iron products in manufacturing and industrial environments.

Poddar would go on to attend the University of California Irvine, where she earned an undergraduate degree in information and computer systems—or something like that, she jokes. "In the dark ages, it was not called computer science, but it was basically a computer science degree," Poddar recalls. "I was really more business-oriented, so maybe I should have been an econ major, but I chose it because it seemed more tangible."

That need for tangibility—something practical, measurable, and relevant—combined with her disposition for business would continue to inspire Poddar's path. After earning her degree from UC Irvine, she stayed involved with her father's business (a postgraduate version of her 12-year-old self), consistently seeking to increase profitability and identify growth opportunities.

Then, she met the person who would become her Artech co-founder—someone who could complement her business smarts and match her passion for mission-driven results.

But the start of their extraordinary staffing success was still several years in the making.

First, they'd get married and move to the East Coast, where Poddar accepted a position with a management consulting firm. About a year later she enrolled at Yale Law School.

Poddar says her original inclination was to go to business school and earn a master's of business administration (MBA), but upon getting accepted to Yale she felt compelled to pursue the prestige and challenge of an Ivy league law school. Her spouse, Ajay Poddar, had earned an MBA in finance from the Stern School at NYU, having already completed undergraduate and graduate degrees in computer engineering and science, and was working in the IT sector as a consultant with Bell Labs. In retrospect, it was a first glimpse into a staffing arrangement and a preview of the percolating opportunity on the horizon for them.

GROWTH FROM THE START-UP

So far, there are two major takeaways that have emerged about Ranjini Poddar and her impending staffing success—and these two tangibles are what separate business leaders who are "just OK" at running a company and those who create an environment where explosive growth happens.

One: Poddar has an almost uncanny ability to sniff out and identify opportunities. Perhaps that was instilled in her throughout her childhood—always analyzing the profitability of her father's accounts and being actively charged with improving performance.

Two: Poddar welcomes a challenge that will deliver tangible results, so she can use those results toward the next challenge, and so on. Like earning a law degree from Yale. It was a challenge she wasn't necessarily expecting, but she tackled it head-on to earn her way onto Wall Street with the law firm of Sullivan & Cromwell. Poddar sees the goal but is already looking beyond achieving it. There is always a "what's next?"

In 1992, that was the question on nearly every working person's mind in the U.S., as the economy struggled to recover from a recession that had started two years earlier. Unemployment was at an all-time high—peaking at 7.8%.

"Things weren't great in 1992 as far as the U.S. economy," Poddar says, but that was the year she and her spouse (and soon-to-be business partner) carefully examined their next steps. Ajay Poddar had deep knowledge in the IT sector, had worked as a consultant in the space, and had a whole family's worth of business acumen in his corner.

> "I'm pretty relentless as far as execution is concerned. If I believe that something can be done, then I will create a model and systematically execute on it."

"We decided to start Artech at that time," Poddar explains. "We got some money from my parents and a family friend, hired a salesperson, got a little bit of office space, and opened the doors to Artech." And while it may sound simple, it wasn't, she says. Poddar was still a full-time law school student and would only help with the business when she could, with accounting tasks, for example. But the timing was good—Artech opened its doors and got established in the IT space before the impending demand.

"In the early '90s, it was before the explosive growth of IT services," Poddar recalls. "It was still the time of fax machines and getting résumés by mail. There was no email. It was a whole different world." But given the firm's scope and depth of expertise, Artech began growing its client base with companies like GE and the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey.

While working as a corporate attorney, Poddar handled mergers and aquisitions deals, securities, and a wide range of business transactions. The experience was deep, but she was already looking past the goal she'd already achieved, and it would mean putting in even longer hours. She and Ajay were now parents to a son and a daughter, and she wanted to keep growing professionally while raising her family.

At around the same time, Artech had also reached a crossroads—or at least, a strategic moment of reflection. The company's leadership decided to have a retreat, led by a consultant, and there was only one question on the agenda: How do we grow?

Poddar attended to listen and offer her thoughts—after all, she is to business strategy as a fish is to water. But what happened next surprised even her. The consultant leading the retreat turned to her and asked: "Ranjini, why don't you join Artech full time?"

Admittedly, such a move had never occurred to her, but she agreed to think about it. And, as you might expect, she really thought about it; she considered the tangibles as well as the growth opportunities, and the growth opportunities after that.

"It would mean leaving a very defined career path, having gone to a really great school and working for a top law firm—and, obviously, the personal aspects of working with your husband," Poddar says, rubbing her chin as if she was considering it all over again.

Would she miss closing deals on Wall Street and hopping on a corporate jet for business? (The corporate jet part didn't happen all that often anyway, she recalls.)

"I decided to make the jump," she says.

In a career full of smart moves and strategic decisions, it was among the best—not only for Artech, but for the entire staffing industry that would soon begin noticing the company's consistently rapid growth. Poddar is no stranger to very hard work, and "slogging it out in a very small business" that at the time had fewer than 10 employees and about $6 million in annual revenues would become one of her greatest and most rewarding challenges.

PURSUIT FOR BUSINESS

Poddar quickly put a lifetime of strategic and analytical thinking to work. She knew Artech was too small to be competitive, so to win more clients and grow she had to explore the intricacies of the staffing landscape, foster relationships in the industry, and then make growth happen.

She began joining New York-area business groups and attending meetings with the goal of going after new business. Herein lies another major takeaway from her manual of staffing success.

Three: Poddar blazes a profitable path by getting out into the opportunity universe, participating in professional groups and meetings, making strategic connections, and actively finding the business opportunities. The business is out there—but you have to go out and get it.

"I'm pretty relentless as far as execution is concerned," Poddar says. "If I believe that something can be done, then I will create a model and systematically execute on it."

She believed in 1999, when she joined the company, and strongly believes now in the power of Artech—the value it delivers, its value proposition, its core competencies, the talent it provides its clients, and the corporate employees who are part of its growth journey. All of this rolls up to yet another important takeaway.

> "We're constantly looking at how to leverage AI to improve productivity and improve speed-to-market. There is an element of speed involved in winning clients and business. The first to market to obtain the candidate will win."

Four: If growth is what you want, then make sure your vision and pathway to growth are crystal clear. Communicate what you are and who you are and make sure you deliver. Overdeliver whenever possible. And make sure you have the right people on the journey with you. Poddar will be the first to admit: Success is not a passive endeavor.

Cold-calling. Networking with area business organizations. Joining industry groups and meeting with competitors. If the contracts were out there, Artech was set on winning them. The more contracts the company acquired, the more it could leverage those contracts in its quest for landing even more business. It is, admittedly, a catch-22 situation many staffing companies with an eye on growth run into. They can't win the business because they aren't big enough yet, but they can't get big enough without winning the business.

The solution? See takeaway four above and add some extra scrappiness, which is what ultimately led to one of Artech's first big breakthrough wins.

Poddar had spent ample time in Washington, DC, exploring the federal space for business leads. Plus, at that time, Artech was small enough to take advantage of small business set-aside programs—which led to a pivotal contract with IBM Federal. It was an important foot-in-the-door win for the company.

About a year later, IBM put out a large request for proposal on its regular vendor list, including several smaller contractors like Artech. "When we got the RFP, I remember telling

Ajay: 'We're never going to win this!'" Poddar recalls with a laugh. The questions were voluminous and Artech was still trying hard at establishing that deep infrastructure the larger companies already had. But enter that extra scrappiness on top of the crystal-clear vision and deliverables, and Artech was able to give an impressive presentation that won the business.

"That was really our first large-scale enterprise customer," Poddar explains. "We were able to leverage that to be able to acquire others, and then it was systematic growth after that."

EVOLUTION EVERY DAY

It's a well-known truth that continues to be true, but especially for a growing staffing company in the IT space: Technology is ever-evolving. That also means that the skills the staffing company provides through its talent also must be constantly assessed and updated.

"It's a matter of keeping educated," Poddar says. "We feel our core competency is delivering the talent that the client needs." But skilled talent is a typical deliverable. It's also a matter of creating solutions when new client needs and growth opportunities arise, Poddar adds. Artech has grown into the services space, too—partnering with clients to implement training programs, for example.

> Every time there's technological change there's this thought that the staffing industry is going to go away. But then there is always a value that the staffing industry provides, and the industry stays, right?

Also fueling Artech's success: carefully tracking its internal tech stack and making smart updates to streamline operations and support growth goals.

Take an applicant tracking system (ATS), for example, and the introduction of artificial intelligence (AI) in the recruiting process. "We're constantly looking at how to leverage AI to improve productivity and improve speed-to-market," Poddar says. "There is an element of speed involved in winning clients and business. The first to market to obtain the candidate will win. We're also evaluating AI as far as the recruiting space is concerned."

If the AI-driven applications can reliably do what suppliers say they can do, Poddar adds, then that technology becomes a source of growth for Artech. "There's just no way a human recruiter can contact 5,000 people at the same time. It's just not feasible. If our competitor is using the technology and we're not, then we're going to be behind."

Now that Artech is one of the Top 10 largest in the IT staffing space, it has the staff and resources to test drive technology platforms, including AI tools, ATS advancements, and internal operational products—something a small start-up may not have the resources to do. Those firms are in a business stage now where Artech was back in the '90s. The strategy that worked for Poddar? Get out into the staffing community, learn from your peers, and ask questions. It will make your firm a better partner for your clients, too.

GROWTH NOW AND ALWAYS

"We never have a budget that is not a growth budget," Poddar explains, which gets to the very crux of how Artech operates, what company leaders expect from employees, and what leaders must deliver in return. Everyone is accountable and improvements are continuous.

"Growth is in our DNA. It's a non-negotiable," Poddar says. "Probably because it's in my DNA. I'm very competitive—in a healthy way." And she takes her role as seriously as she expects Artech employees to take theirs.

"This isn't a lifestyle business. I'm here to achieve something for our team—to provide our internal team with more opportunities to provide services to our clients as well as provide opportunities for our billable staff."

What's more, Poddar is very public about her business philosophy and Artech's growth goals. The bodacious billion-dollar annual revenue goal is front and center on the Artech website, which makes her accountable, too. However, the more a company grows, the more challenging it becomes to ensure every employee is on board with the direction and the strategy, which provides another takeaway.

Five: Provide employees with high-quality learning opportunities and the infrastructure and support they need to advance company goals and grow as professionals. Join them in that pursuit. Everyone plays an integral role.

"We set the vision, and we provide the opportunity to thrive," Poddar explains. "We provide the tools, support, and training. We don't stand still as an organization or as a leadership team. I am constantly learning; our leadership team is also constantly learning. I don't think any of us pretends to know it all. We provide a supportive, collaborative environment where you can achieve."

In the spirit of not standing still, what growth-focused goals are Poddar and her executive team learning about right now? It's a departure from Artech's current client profile: retail and mid-market clients.

"The sales process there is definitely different than it is for an enterprise account, which has really been our success through all these years," Poddar says. "We haven't figured it all >>>

3 QUESTIONS WITH
RANJINI PODDAR

There is so much to learn and process when spending time with Artech CEO Ranjini Poddar. Among her many recognitions and accomplishments: being appointed to the ASA board of directors in 2020.

Serving on the board has elevated her visibility as an industry leader as well as highlighted the thought leadership and value she and her fellow female board members provide—which helps tee up these three questions:

What is your view of the staffing industry as a business environment for women?

"It's a tough space—particularly in IT staffing. It's definitely a problem area, and I don't pretend to know what the solution is. But I don't feel like I'm by myself because I've always worked in fields that are very male-dominated. Being a computer science major in the '80s, being an attorney in the '90s and working for a large corporate law firm, I would be in meetings with 50 people where I was the only woman."

She may have been the only woman at work, but she had a supportive network at home that made all the difference. Poddar says she was fortunate to have her parents close by when her two children were small. Having their steady support helped maintain the trajectory of her career, which has always been a priority for her as well. She says her career and her family have been equally important, adding: "I think Artech may have been my third child."

What would ChatGPT say if asked what it's like working for Artech and Ranjini Poddar?

"I hope it would say that Artech is a place where you can thrive with the training and support you need to develop at both the personal and professional level and advance in your career.

"As far as working for me is concerned, I think my direct reports would say that I am a pretty tough boss with high expectations, but I also have high expectations of myself—and that I'm knowledgeable but at the same time willing to learn and change my opinions."

What do you enjoy doing when you take time off? How do you recharge?

"I like to hang out with friends and obviously spend time with my children, when they're available. We like to do a lot of outdoorsy things, like going hiking. My husband and I have friends who also enjoy hiking. We also love to travel."

Places like Tibet, Mongolia, and Turkey come to mind as being among her favorite excursions over the years of traveling with her Artech co-founder and spouse of 35 years, Ajay Poddar. Their next stop is Svalbard, a Norwegian archipelago located between the mainland of Norway and the North Pole.

A hike in Mongolia: Ranjini Poddar (right) and her spouse of 35 years Ajay Poddar, co-founder and executive vice president of Artech, count Ömnögovi in the Gobi Desert among their most memorable adventures.

out yet, but hopefully now we have a formula for how we can be successful in the retail, mid-market space. We are executing on the plan. I'll let you know next year if we were successful or not," she adds with a confident grin.

Given Poddar's growth track record (Artech has only ever experienced one year of contraction since it has been in business), bets are on her and the Artech team for the win.

"Recognizing that we want to expand into this space, we're going to invest in it," she explains, "but we expect the people who are leading the effort to be able to execute and deliver results. It's growth with accountability."

Poddar says Artech is pursuing this new line of business to diversify the company's client base beyond large enterprise accounts. The company already has a footprint in multiple geographies, and "we're not tapping the retail, mid-market accounts in those geographies. So, why not? Why wouldn't we tap into them when we already have the leadership, when we have a sales team in the market?"

The strategy in this new space for Artech must be different, targeted with results in mind, Poddar notes. "The sales cycle is different, the entry point is different, and the results should come in a shorter cycle."

Poddar adds that it is an opportune time to make this move into the retail, mid-market space because enterprise clients are still figuring out their spend amid a fluctuating economic landscape. Artech will use the infrastructure it already has to add to its revenue stream, she says. "This is a way to supplement and continue to grow." She notes that Artech is not taking focus away from enterprise clients but rather leveraging what it already has in place to maximize revenue potential.

So, what does success look like for this new endeavor? New clients—unlike big enterprise clients that can represent \$10-\$50 million in revenue—will be smaller, perhaps each representing half a million dollars in revenue, Poddar explains. Therefore, profitability matters.

AHEAD OF CHANGE

"Every time there's technological change there's this thought that the staffing industry is going to go away," Poddar muses. "But then there is always a value that the staffing industry provides, and the industry stays, right?"

But the staffing industry does need to stay ahead of the pace of technological change to remain relevant, she asserts. And companies must evolve to keep up with their clients' business goals.

For example, "AI is obviously a big topic," Poddar notes. It will definitely impact staffing operations, she adds, but the impact doesn't have to be negative. "It is a matter of evolving. What will be the impact and how do we evolve to keep up? Some of these tools can definitely make you faster, and hopefully better. The companies that are able to leverage them, not just from a tool perspective but from an implementation and process perspective, are the ones that are going to win."

What are the best ways for a company to learn about technological advances and the impact on staffing? The answer is varied, but the strategy is consistent: Get outside your normal day-to-day operations, connect with others, and learn.

"Staffing World is clearly a place to go and be educated," Poddar says. The ASA annual convention, which takes place each fall in different U.S. locations, is well-known for its sheer volume of sessions in various categories, including technology, as well as the industry's largest expo, where staffing professionals can immerse themselves in the latest solutions—from ATS platforms and AI applications to background checks and skills assessments.

> "You're not going to learn just being in your organization. You have to look outward in order to learn."

"You're not going to learn just being in your organization," Poddar asserts. "You have to look outward in order to learn." Continuing to learn and grow even as the industry fluctuates around you is a critical characteristic of strong leadership, she adds.

The past year hasn't been the best for the industry in terms of sales and overall penetration rate. What are the reasons behind these changes? Why the dips and plateaus? Are the changes temporary or systemic? The questions are many, but the concrete answers are few, Poddar notes. "I don't think my crystal ball is good enough to predict what will happen," she says. Even economists who study the business environment all day long are uncertain, at best.

How do growth-focused staffing companies respond as markets shift and during economic ebbs and flows? Keep providing value, Poddar says. Deepen your relationships with clients and make sure you are a strategic partner—not just a provider of staffing services.

Then, of course, we come back to the beginning—to the essence of what gives Poddar that highly sought-after leader's edge that will no doubt push Artech past the billion-dollar mark.

"Be really relentless," says Poddar. "Because the companies that consistently execute better will win."

Marlene Hendrickson is senior director of publishing and marketing for ASA. Send feedback on this article or make recommendations for future Leader's Edge interviews by emailing success@americanstaffing.net. Engage with ASA on social media—go to *americanstaffing.net/social.*

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WHAT 2025 HAS IN STORE FOR STAFFING

While legislative gridlock in Congress may limit new laws, executive actions and state-led initiatives are poised to drive significant changes in 2025. From DEI policies and immigration enforcement to AI regulations and worker classification, staffing leaders need to stay ahead of these evolving trends to remain compliant and competitive. Here's a look at eight key legal and regulatory developments shaping the industry this year.

By Adam Stone

As the legal and regulatory landscape unfolds in the coming year, staffing firms face a higher-than-usual level of complexity.

On the federal level, "you have a very, very minuscule margin in the House of Representatives," says Toby Malara, Esq., vice president of government relations at ASA. Congress may not be able to move new laws, but the White House has shown a readiness to rewrite policy with executive orders and through other means.

At the state level, "many state legislatures have reset. They have had elections and they've got new members coming in, and all the bills have been wiped clean," Malara says. In addition to new legislative agendas, "you're also going to have a number of state legislatures that will look to push back on everything the administration does for the next two years."

There will be a lot of legal and regulatory activity going on, in potentially a lot of different places. Here are some topics staffing leaders should be tracking as they try to keep pace with the changes.

Is DEI…DOA?

Staffing firms have leaned heavily into the goals of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) by ensuring a level playing field in their own organizations and supporting clients' ambitions to do the same. Now president Donald Trump has demanded a report on "how to deal with or investigate potential illegal DEI arrangements in the private sector," Malara says.

No one knows what that means. "There is a lot of uncertainty still over what constitutes 'illegal DEI' as used throughout the executive orders," says Ben Ebbink, Esq., a partner at Fisher & Phillips LLP. What new rules could the administration write that would impact private employers? What laws might emerge to somehow limit DEI efforts? Right now it's anyone's guess.

The administration's initial DEI prohibitions affect only federal government and federal contractors. That alone could affect some staffing firms. "We are likely to see a decreased demand for DEI training and consultation from federal agencies and federal contractors, so this could impact staffing firms that provide those types of services," Ebbink says. >>>

At the federal level...**the Trump administration will likely take away regulations, rather than add more...**But state-level action will need close watching.

Meanwhile, staffing executives can look to calm the fears of clients, some of whom may have an impulse to shut down DEI simply out of caution. "Have conversations with them to make sure that they don't overreact," Malara says. "We don't know what exactly is going to come out of the White House, if anything."

In the interim, some states may look for legislative ways to push back against the anti-DEI agenda—further complicating the situation. Until the dust settles, "staffing firms are just going to have to stay on top of it, and have conversations with their clients," Malara says.

Immigration Enforcement

Increased immigration enforcement will likely mean more work site audits. Staffing firms can be proactive here by ensuring their own operations are running correctly. "They need to make sure that all of their ducks are in a row with regard to how they do the I-9 process," Malara says.

The I-9 verifies an individual's ability to work legally in the United States. "There's going to be a lot more scrutiny on that in this administration," says Joe D'Andrea, Esq., partner at Squire Patton Boggs. "And the fines are now higher. So people should really make sure that they are in compliance with this."

There's also an opportunity here for staffing firms: They can deepen relationships by demonstrating their expertise. "They are going to want to communicate to their clients, to make sure they understand that this is going to be an issue that affects them, too," Malara says.

Meanwhile, the media often paints staffing as a leading source of illegal labor. "To say that the industry has a problem with that is just wrong," Malara says. Leaders can work with ASA to polish the reputation of the industry as a whole, communicating, for example, staffing's high usage rates for E-Verify.

Tax Credits Expiring

Set to expire at the end of the year are tax credits that were part of the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act of 2017, and others passed under the first Trump administration. In staffing, "there is a lot of angst about what would happen if they were to expire," Malara says.

Those cuts and deductions have given staffing "capital to do things like invest in technology and invest in their employees—whether it's through training, increased salaries, or just allowing them to keep people on as they're trying to work through the downturn," he says.

There's some cause for optimism here. "There's going to be tremendous pressure to extend those tax cuts," Ebbink says. "This is going to be a big priority both for the Republicans and for various segments of the business community."

Staffing executives should look to ASA for insights as they watch the situation unfold. "And as we get further into the year, you may need to look at contingency plans in case this does go away," Ebbink says. "If, for whatever political reason, this isn't coming together, you're going to want to plan accordingly as we get closer to expiration."

Laws Around AI

Staffing is eager to put artificial intelligence (AI) to work, to help streamline internal processes. Several states have raised yellow flags, looking to write laws that ensure AI is used safely and responsibly.

Emerging state laws "have been focused on trying to make sure that these AI programs do not lead to discriminatory results, which we as an industry are 100% behind," Malara says. But it's complicated. Some proposed laws require an annual software audit. Staffing firms say that falls to the software makers, who in turn say that responsibility belongs to the end user—in this case, staffing.

At the federal level, it may be a moot point. The Trump administration will likely take away regulations, rather than add more, D'Andrea says. But state-level action will need close watching.

"It depends on where you are going to be hiring from—where you are going to be advertising these jobs," he says. In Nebraska or Iowa, there's less

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concern. But if you're doing business in California, New York, or Massachusetts, increased regulation remains a real possibility. Depending on your geographic footprint, "you are going to have to follow these developments closely and make sure you're doing what you need to do to comply."

Pay Transparency Laws

Pay transparency is about fairness. "You have to put in a realistic range of salary" when you write a job ad, Malara says. Legislative efforts also call for realism. "You can't say the pay is between $30,000 and $180,000 a year; that's worthless."

For staffing firms, this comes into play when a specific job is on offer. Of course, even then salaries can vary. A local church won't pay as much for an accountant as, say, Morgan Stanley.

Laws around this aim to ensure employers don't offer higher pay to white males, for example. The effort to mandate transparency "is for females and for minorities, to make sure that they are on an even playing field," Malara says. At the federal level, under Trump, "this may not be something on their short list of items to take care."

But states continue to press forward. "We've seen a number of states pass these laws in recent years, and that trend will continue," Ebbink says. Staffing firms can look to ASA to help track that activity, to ensure they remain in compliance with emerging requirements.

Health Care-Specific Concerns

During Covid, nurses' pay went up. Then the pandemic dissipated and pay rates dropped. But for long-term care facilities and nursing homes, temporary nurses' pay is still very high. In some cases, "these facilities are looking for the government to come in and basically set wage caps, where you cap how much a nurse can make," Malara says.

A variety of other laws also are percolating in this arena. "They want laws that would ban noncompete agreements…and a series of bills have been introduced (and some have been enacted into law) that ban the use of conversion fees altogether," he says. Without those fees, staffing firms "become, in essence, a free placement service."

While legislative efforts here seem to be cooling, they will continue to unfold in some states if only because of "legislative inertia," Ebbink says. States that have started down the path will likely continue.

Staffing firms can be proactive here, by spelling out for clients and lawmakers exactly how much profit (i.e., not much) the industry makes placing nurses. "I've heard legislators tell me: *I know that you're paying this nurse $75 an hour and you're charging the nursing home $150 an hour. That means you're making $75 an hour on this nurse.* Nope. And it's nowhere near that," Malara says.

Worker Classification

Who's an employee? Who's a contractor? It matters to staffing—especially when clients look to hire via online platforms, where they take on employees but classify them as independent actors.

"The misclassification of workers as independent contractors is a huge problem. It creates an unlevel playing field for staffing firms," Malara says. The employer of an independent contractor "doesn't have to pay payroll tax. They don't have to contribute to the unemployment insurance."

That makes staffing rates look high by comparison, he says, and ASA believes "enforcement needs to be at the forefront of state and federal government efforts."

But the Trump administration highly favors gig work, D'Andrea says, and may well look to ease the restrictions on who can be called a contractor.

Staffing can and should drive the narrative here. Firms need to tell clients: "There's a lot of value in having staffing agencies assist them," he says. By hiring through a staffing agency, "there's less liability. If you have a 1099 contractor, and this person really is an employee, now you alone bear the responsibility. You bear the brunt of making sure that their payroll was done, their deductions were done. Whereas if you have a staffing agency, you have a built-in layer of expertise."

That's worth a lot—especially amid the changing tides.

The Wildcard Factor

The opening lesson of Trump 2.0 appears to be: Expect the unexpected. Unpredictably is the order of the day.

In this environment, staffing executives "need to pay attention to things that are going to happen quickly. They need to have their ears perked up and be able to move and pivot quickly," D'Andrea says.

A team effort can help here. "Staffing firms have to stay in touch with ASA and their other associations—whether it's their local chamber of commerce or the International Franchise Association," Malara says. In a fast-changing environment, "your business trade association is going to be really helpful."

Adam Stone, a freelance writer based in Annapolis, MD, is a regular contributor to *Staffing Success.* Send feedback on this article to success@americanstaffing.net. Engage with ASA on social media—go to *americanstaffing.net/social.*

"The misclassification of workers as independent contractors is a huge problem. It creates an unlevel playing field for staffing firms."

—Toby Malara, Esq., American Staffing Association

FORECASTING STAFFING DEMAND:

The METRICS

The staffing penetration rate has steadily declined postpandemic, reaching levels not seen since the aftermath of the Great Recession. But key labor market indicators provide valuable insight into staffing employment trends, and understanding these metrics and their impact will be crucial for staffing firms as they strategize for growth in 2025 and beyond.

EXCLUSIVE INDUSTRY RESEARCH & DATA

This issue's research-focused article evaluates measures of staffing demand via labor market indicators. As the industry's research and data leader, ASA reports on timely industry data in every issue of *Staffing Success.*

That MATTER

By Max Aldrich

Since the hiring spree following the pandemic, staffing firms of all size and sector have been shouldering the burden of diminishing demand for their services. While the prepandemic staffing penetration rate averaged around 2.0%, it has gradually declined to 1.59% as of February 2025. As more jobs are created and total nonfarm payrolls increase, the staffing industry's share of those jobs has been dwindling. Excluding the pandemic recession, the last time the penetration rate was this low was in October of 2010, when the labor market was still reeling from the Great Recession. >>>

While, thankfully, the economy is not nearly in the same dire straits as back then (and in many ways has proven quite robust), on a macro level staffing demand remains largely a product of labor market conditions. Therefore, certain job market indicators are more closely correlated with staffing employment than others. As the industry strategizes to drive growth in 2025 and beyond, analyzing these indicators and their impacts on staffing employment can provide valuable insights for staffing firms.

Job Market Gauges

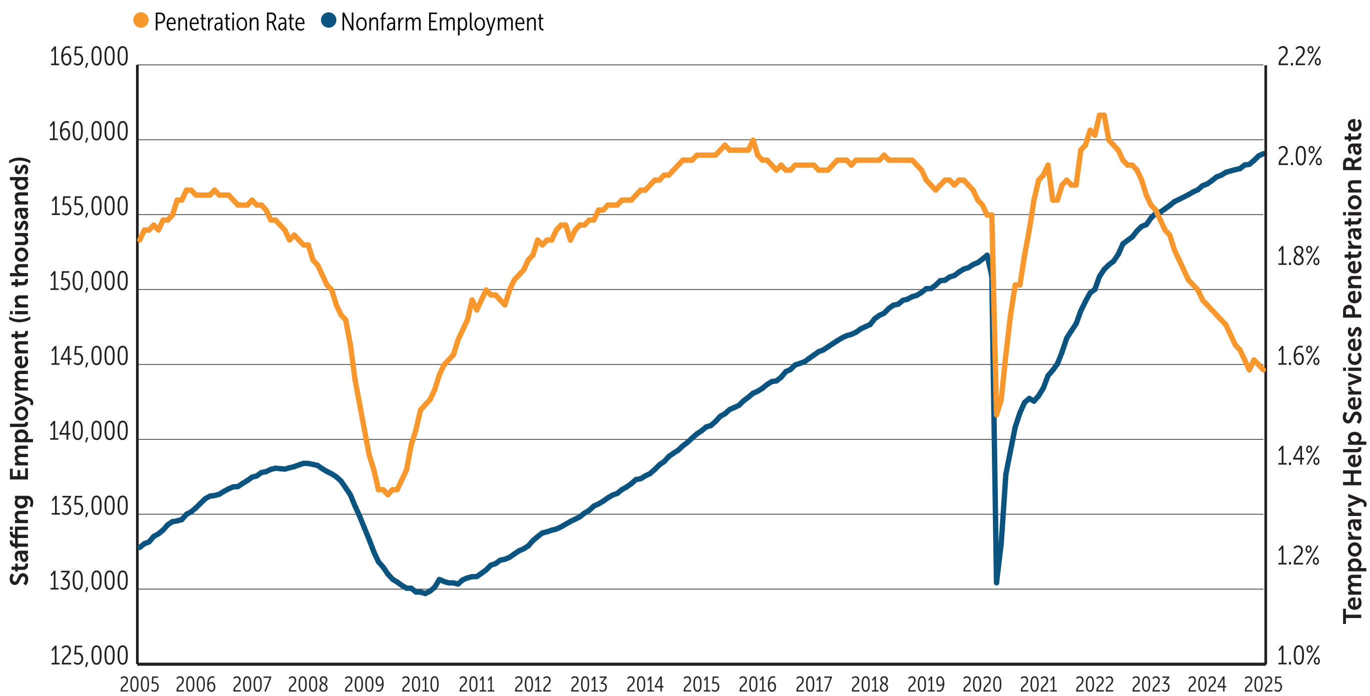
Several labor market indicators are positively correlated with staffing employment and therefore influence the momentum of staffing demand. The ASA research department dug into data from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics and identified the following indicators as significant determinants of staffing demand: the monthly change in total job openings, hires, and quits; as well as the labor leverage ratio and the ratio of job openings per unemployed persons.

Indexing these variables against total employment in the temporary help services sector revealed the relative strength of these indicators on staffing employment. The following numbers (known in statistics as R^2) should be understood as a measure of the explanatory power an indicator has on influencing staffing employment. For example, since the quits rate has an R^2 of 0.5658, 56.6% of the variation in the staffing employment dataset is explained by fluctuations in the rate of growth in the total quits rate. For the R^2 values of other indicators, see the table below.

INDICATOR	R^2
HIRES RATE	0.2458
QUITS RATE	0.5658
LABOR LEVERAGE RATIO	0.6129
VACANCY-UNEMPLOYMENT RATIO	0.7388

Astute readers might observe that among these indicators, the two ratios have the highest R^2 (and thus greater explanatory power). The labor leverage ratio is the proportion of worker-initiated quits to employer-initiated layoffs, a measure of the balance of power between the two within the labor market. The vacancy-unemployment ratio is similar in that it is the proportion of job openings

Staffing Penetration Diverging From Growth in Total Employment



Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics

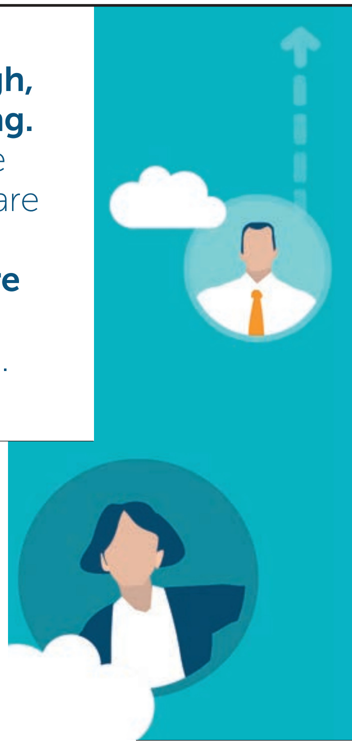
for every job seeker in the labor market. Both ratios capture other indicators in their formulas, making them more useful tools for predicting employment dynamics and staffing demand.

In detail, why do these indicators matter as measures of staffing demand? When the labor leverage ratio is high, labor churn is liquid and free flowing. When the vacancy ratio is high, there are more open positions than there are workers to fill them. Employees who quit must be replaced when leverage is tilted toward workers, and when job openings outweigh unemployment there is the need to source scarce talent. Both conditions describe a tight labor market and are favorable to staffing, as exemplified during the Great Resignation in 2022. The recession in staffing demand is, in large part, due to the downward movement in these indicators since then (see the Labor Market Indicators chart on page 35).

Causes of Fluctuating Indicators

Labor churn is an integral aspect of not just the job market, but of the staffing industry in particular. At any given time, most workers hired by employers are replacements for employees who have departed (according to the National Bureau

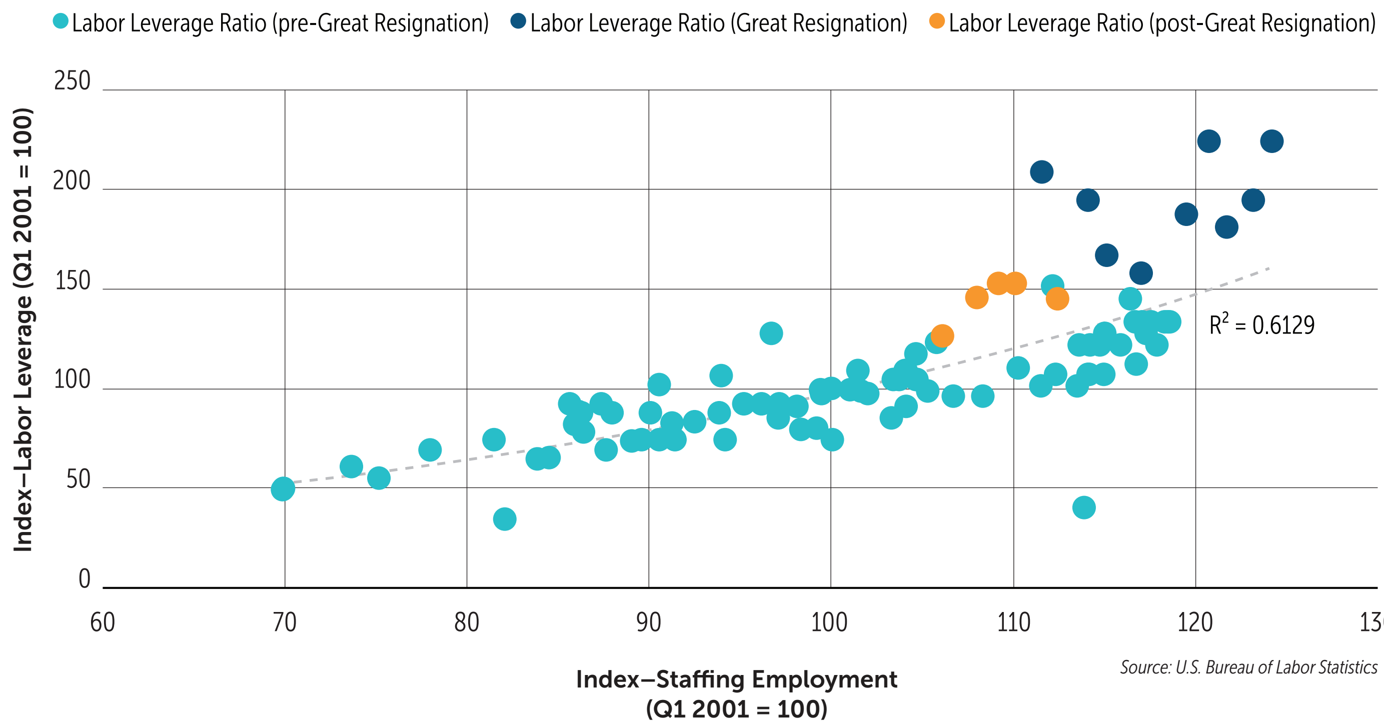
When the labor leverage ratio is high, labor churn is liquid and free flowing. When the vacancy ratio is high, there are more open positions than there are workers to fill them...Both conditions describe a **tight labor market and are favorable to staffing** as exemplified during the Great Resignation in 2022.



of Economic Research). Therefore, a great proportion of opportunity for staffing placements is dependent on turnover.

The rate of churn itself is determined by mobility costs (how easy it is for workers to leave and for employers to re-hire). High average wages will therefore deter employers from hiring due to employment costs, but a high *variance* of wages will encourage workers to quit as they see more opportunities to hop to jobs that offer more compensation. High employment costs can therefore be both a challenge for the staffing industry, by limiting client demand, but also a sign that underlying dynamics of supply and demand are tilted toward their favor

Strong Positive Correlation Between Labor Leverage and Staffing Employment



Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics

Labor churn is an integral aspect of not just the job market, but of the staffing industry in particular. At any given time, most workers hired by employers are replacements for employees who have departed...Therefore, a great **proportion of opportunity for staffing placements is dependent on turnover.**

as labor (the service staffing companies sell) is scarce enough to push wages upward.

This is supported by running another statistical regression, this time for indexed quarterly average nominal wage growth. Since 2001, changes in the labor leverage ratio explained 34% of the variance in average wage growth (R^2=0.3429), with the vacancy-unemployment ratio accounting for just over half at 54% (R^2=0.5442). As labor leverage and vacancy ratios increase, they cause upward pressure on wage growth; worker attrition follows as more attractive employment opportunities abound, and finally, demand for staffing services increases as businesses seek to refill lost headcount.

Market Smoke Signals

Now that we've established an understanding of how labor market indicators impact staffing demand, what signals should staffing companies look out for in the years ahead? Pessimistic sentiment has kept workers stuck in place at their jobs and discouraged businesses from hiring. The gains in worker and employer sentiment in the fourth quarter of 2024 following the election have since eroded considerably (the ZipRecruiter Job Seeker Confidence Index rose six points from the third to fourth quarter of 2024, only to shed four points in the first quarter or 2025). Low confidence is a sign of a weaker labor market; thus, labor leverage and the vacancy ratio are unlikely to slow their decent or experience upticks in the near term.

However, even if the economy had improving sentiment, challenges would remain. Elevated interest rates and economic uncertainty are headwinds against hiring decisions, which could limit gains by the staffing industry in 2025. Restrictive trade and immigration policies favored by the new administration have the potential to increase employment costs for businesses, limiting the

Strong Positive Correlation Between Vacancy Ratio and Staffing Employment

Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics

feasibility of private firms to hire. Constraining the supply of labor via stricter immigration policy (such as mass deportations) would undoubtedly have a tightening effect on the job market. While improving labor leverage by increasing the scarcity of labor, it would also provide more upward pressure on wage and price inflation—increasing employment costs and dampening economic activity by lowering aggregate demand for goods and services. Similarly, consensus among economists holds that tariff hikes will likewise create inflationary pressure.

The Federal Reserve has made it clear that they will continue sticking to "wait and see" what impact government policy has on the economy and price levels before considering any additional rate cuts. Consequently, interest rates will remain elevated and companies will struggle to borrow to add headcount, decreasing labor demand.

Key Insights for Staffing

Out of all indicators that positively impact staffing employment, labor leverage and vacancy-unemployment ratio are two of the most important. These indicators have fallen sharply since their peak in 2022, which helps explain the staffing industry's decline relative to other sectors in the economy.

Labor churn will play a large role in generating staffing demand. Churn increases when mobility costs are low (low average wages and high wage variance). Employment cost growth remains high but is decelerating, and, situationally, high wages can represent strong fundamental labor market dynamics favorable to staffing.

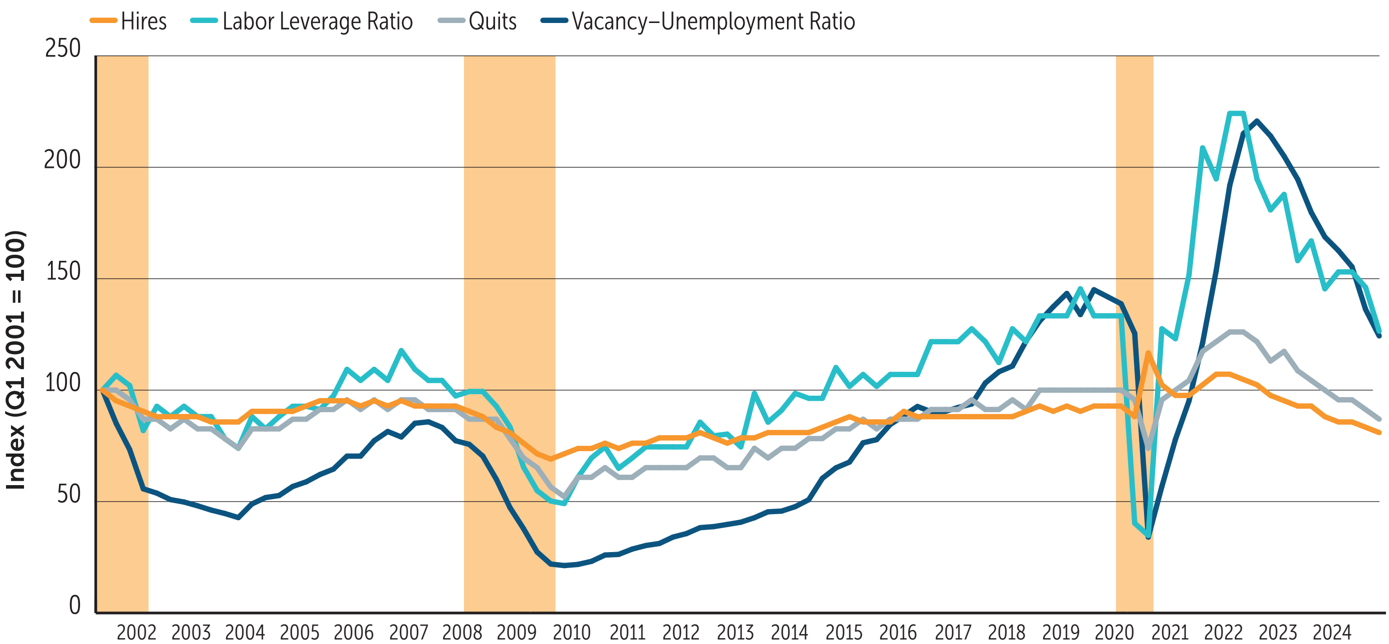
Economic uncertainty is likely to slow the staffing's industry recovery in 2025. Uncertainty is directly leading to interest rates holding higher for longer as the Federal Reserve continues the fight against inflation, meaning borrowing costs will prevent companies from expanding headcount. ■

Max Aldrich is research coordinator at ASA. Send feedback on this article to success@americanstaffing.net. Engage with ASA on social media—go to *americanstaffing.net/social*.

GET MORE INSIGHTS: NEW ECONOMIC AND STAFFING FORECAST

With mounting economic uncertainty, staffing companies need valuable data insights to navigate the dynamic landscape of the industry with confidence and foresight. Get a staffing-specific outlook on the economy and the labor market from the ASA research team during a new monthly, members-only webinar series: the ASA Economic and Staffing Forecast. Visit *americanstaffing.net/webinars* to learn more and register for the next one.

Labor Market Indicators



Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics

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THE 'DAY-ONE' LIST ADVANTAGE: WHY RELATIONSHIPS MATTER

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ClearlyRated helps B2B service providers maximize service quality and amplify the voices of their most loyal clients. The 2025 Staffing Buyer Insights Report (Client Edition) is based on a survey of more than 500 staffing buyers and identifies 10 key trends that can guide staffing firm leaders. For a copy of the report, scan the QR code to the right. Visit *clearlyrated.com* to learn more.

New research suggests that staffing firms should focus on deepening relationships with existing clients, rather than expanding client bases, to increase their sales and thrive in a challenging labor market. With ongoing workforce shifts and technological advancements like AI shaping the industry, firms that establish themselves as low-risk, knowledgeable, and communicative partners will be best positioned for long-term success.

By Glenn Cook

As the staffing industry continues to deal with a difficult labor market, the temptation for firms is to pursue new business by diversifying their client base, but new research says that may not be the best course of action.

The reason: Almost two-thirds of hiring managers have a "day-one" list that they use when looking for temporary staffing services. And, according to research by ClearlyRated, those vendors get the business more than 90% of the time.

"It's really hard to break through with new business if you're just another firm doing the same thing that a hundred other staffing firms can do," says Eric Gregg, ClearlyRated's founder and customer experience strategist. "You have to stand out in understanding what your clients need and how to help them solve their problems."

Developing deeper relationships with existing clients, Gregg believes, will help staffing firms that have been forced to weather a steady series of temporary employment declines that have occurred over the past two-plus years. Since a postpandemic hiring surge ended in 2022, the number of temporary staffing hires has dropped to its lowest level since 2014.

"If you have really strong relationships with your customers, you end up finding out who's cutting edge, who's leaning in, who wants to do more," Gregg says. "Then you can look at your own strategy and path as a company and align it to what they need. That's when it becomes a real partnership."

Janette Marx, chief executive officer at Airswift, agrees. Her company, a global solutions provider that supports science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) professionals looking for jobs in the engineering and technology sectors, works with executives in her industry to "understand the drivers and challenges they face and how we can help."

"In our vision for the company, the No. 1 piece is to stay true to our core—our core markets, the core customers we serve—and go deep with them," Marx says. "We want to be sure we are at the table with them, being invited to their events, running into them in their circles, and networking in the same areas. You need to be part of the industry you're in so you can position your company as the expert."

SHOW OFF YOUR EXPERTISE

Gregg got the idea for the ClearlyRated research while working on the 2025 Staffing Buyer Insights Report. He had seen a Google survey of the B2B sector that showed more than 80% of buyers have a day-one vendor list that they use in purchasing more than 90% of the time.

"If you have really strong relationships with your customers, you end up finding out **who's cutting edge, who's leaning in, who wants to do more...**Then you can look at your own strategy and path as a company and align it to what they need. **That's when it becomes a real partnership."**

—Eric Gregg, ClearlyRated

"I was blown away by this, and I wondered if it meant the same for the staffing industry, so we built it into our research this past year," he says. For the staffing industry, ClearlyRated's data "showed that almost two-thirds of the time, they already have someone in mind when a need arises—and when it comes to making a decision, 93% of the time they use that day-one list."

The primary takeaway, Gregg says, is the data shows that "overcoming that day-one list is very hard" when trying to attract new business.

"Your biggest account isn't likely to be a brand-new account," he says. "Typically, it's a relationship built over time, and that says to me the largest growth opportunities really are within existing accounts that you have cultivated and nurtured."

While new business is attractive, Gregg advises staffing companies to "pick four or five areas where you can really be the firm that clients want and find a way to go deeper into those spaces."

"If you're an expert and the firm that a business looks to in order to do it better than everyone else, then you're going to win," he says. "The cool thing about staffing is that there are opportunities to be that firm 100 different times in 100 different places with 100 different skill sets."

Marx says Airswift has "really deep relationships" with several clients that call with questions before they invest in new markets. "They ask, 'What would it take for you to open in this country? How would you design the workforce? What percentage would be experts? What will the local workforce look like?' We have that level of partnership," she says.

Other sectors in the staffing industry have been impacted more than Airswift because of the "shortage of talent in STEM skills and the need for engineers," Marx says. With more than 1,000 employees in 60 offices worldwide, the Houston-based company has 9,000 contractors, one-third of whom are expatriates sent to sites around the world.

"It can be a bit more complicated because we are searching the globe and mobilizing people to different countries," she says. "There's a level of complexity that creates a greater and steadier demand for the services that we have."

That being said, Marx notes that her company also has invested in research for clients that goes beyond hiring talent.

"When there's a very defined, specific skill set that is needed, we make every effort to get to know the specific experts in the area and then do a full white paper and a talent map of where those people are all over the world," she says. "We want to help our clients understand where they can get the talent from, what the price point is for it, and how easy or difficult it is to mobilize it."

"It's working side-by-side with our clients to help them make decisions that are much broader than just 'How do I hire?'"

COMMUNICATE FOR A GREAT TALENT EXPERIENCE

At Medix, a health care and life sciences staffing company that ClearlyRated has worked with since 2014, industry experts have been added to the firm's team who "clearly and convincingly speak the language of our clients in a way we hadn't before," says Mike Ceretto, senior vice president for people and performance.

"We're doing everything we can not only to find new clients, but also help current clients find opportunities," says Ceretto, whose Chicago-based company has 23 offices and 550 employees in 45 states. "The only way you can do that is by making sure our clients and our talent have a great experience."

Always critical, ongoing communication with clients is even more important in an uncertain landscape, Gregg says.

"Poor communication has such a negative influence on somebody's experience," says Gregg. "We've read tens of thousands of surveys over the years and, by far, the No. 1 thing that people either are happy about or complain about is communication. You can fix so much—especially in today's day and age, because you can hop on a call or see someone face to face with the click of a button. But you have to make that investment of time and effort."

Adding experts with industry experience to the Medix team has improved the company's communications skills, Ceretto says, "opening the doors" to new clients and deepening relationships with existing ones.

"Just the fact that you're sitting across from somebody that actually understands what some of the problems are before they have to tell you is worth a ton in the business world," he says. "We're not just getting customer feedback that we're sharing across the spectrum of our business. We're putting ourselves at the center of the community, and that has tremendous value for us and for our clients."

The information sharing between clients and Medix teams has proven invaluable, Ceretto says. "In our sector, businesses think they're unicorns and their problems are different than everyone else, but usually there's a 75% to 80% overlap—so you don't have to start from scratch," he says. "We let our clients know that many of the same themes can work, but you have to localize them to your community."

Ceretto says many of Medix's talent transitions from temporary to permanent, and they will be more receptive to the company if they transition into management positions where they have to work with a firm from the hiring side.

"Certainly in the health care field our industry has a churn, and we want to make sure we're putting people in roles that they want so that they stick, because many of them will go into roles where they're hiring. We want them to know us as a company that does right by its talent and also helps the client meet its goals."

PROVE YOU'RE THE LEAST RISKY OPTION

Even though staffing experts project that hiring numbers will increase overall in 2025, the industry continues to face an uncertain labor market subject to political shifts and rapid changes in technology—especially artificial intelligence (AI).

Gregg says navigating the uncertainty that AI presents, both in terms of placing staff and working with clients, will be key to maintaining the deep relationships the company has worked to cultivate.

"Technology is only going to accelerate the changes in staffing that we're seeing now, but it's much more credible when your company can go into a client meeting and say, 'We're working with three, five, a dozen companies just like you. Here's what they said about the experience. Here are some challenges we found,'" Gregg says. "That level of expertise just adds to your credibility."

Ceretto says AI is "disrupting the work we're currently doing and the work we're going to do." "We're trying to understand this landscape because of the change we know is coming and how to navigate it," he says. "We want to be fast followers and be able to communicate what is happening to our clients and how it can and will affect them."

Medix's approach to technology is part of what Gregg describes as "de-risking."

"If you are uncertain about the overall economic environment you're in, you can't afford to make mistakes," Gregg says. "You can't just be seen as the best staffing firm. If it's you and three other staffing firms that a prospective client is looking at, they need to see you as the best fit and also the least risky option; [you can accomplish this] by showing them that you're the expert."

Gregg continues: "You need to show [the prospective client] that your skill sets help you look not just at the immediate problem, but beyond that. They help you look around the corner and in a dozen places to help [the prospective client] find a solution. There's value in that, and people will pay for it. But they have to believe you're actually doing it, and you actually have to do it." ■

Glenn Cook is a professional writer who has covered a wide range of business and education topics. He also is a prolific photojournalist, having created award-winning article and photography packages for national publications.

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Casting a Wider **Social Media Net**

By Tom Erb, CSP

Social media is no longer just for scrolling—**it's a powerful recruiting tool.** If you're not leveraging these platforms, you're missing out on top candidates. Here's how to **tap into social media to supercharge your recruiting strategy.**

A recent survey found that almost half (46%) of Generation Z has found a job opportunity on TikTok. Another discovered that a whopping 92% of Gen Z turns to TikTok for career advice, while 76% look to Instagram for job opportunities and career information. Are you using these platforms to actively recruit for talent, or are you like most staffing firms that still rely heavily on job board applicants?

If you aren't active on these and other social media platforms, you are missing out on a huge opportunity to engage with and recruit great talent. And, depending on the positions and level of experience you are seeking, certain social media sites are a veritable gold mine for sourcing candidates. Here are four ways to leverage social media to turbocharge your recruiting efforts.

Go Where Your Competition Isn't

If you were going fishing, would you go to the pond that is overrun with other anglers? Of course not—not even if it is the most popular and overstocked pond in your area. Instead, you'd look for water that has lots of fish but little competition. The same is true with recruiting. The default for almost everyone is to throw a job posting on a big job board and hope for the best. Instead, look for where your

> The default for almost everyone is to **throw a job posting on a big job board** and hope for the best. Instead, look for where **your prospective talent hangs out, and your competition doesn't.**

prospective talent hangs out, and your competition doesn't. I mentioned that 92% of Gen Z goes to TikTok for career advice, but did you know that less than a quarter of employers recruit on that platform? Now that sounds like an ideal fishing spot.

Target Your Audience

Depending on the positions you are seeking to fill, some social media platforms are much more relevant than others. Pew Research conducted a study in 2024 that showed there is a vast difference in social media sites used based on a variety of demographics including compensation, educational level, and geographic area. For instance, if you are trying to fill an executive role needing a college degree and making over $100,000 in a suburb of a major city, your best bet is, not surprisingly, LinkedIn. If you are working on an entry-level customer service position in a rural market, the study shows Instagram and Pinterest (yes, Pinterest!) are stronger recruiting avenues.

Now that doesn't mean you should completely ignore the other avenues. LinkedIn may only be used by 12% of high school graduates, but there is also a lot less competition in that space, so you are likely to have the fishing spot to yourself.

Give Them What They Want

If potential candidates are looking to social media for job search and career advice, then why not get it from you? Whether it is LinkedIn, TikTok, Instagram, or other platforms, you have an opportunity to provide valuable information that positions your firm as an expert in recruiting and, ultimately, a resource that can help them find their next job. Videos, articles, infographics, and other posts can cover a wide range of subjects that appeal to your prospective talent, including tips on interviewing, résumés, conducting a job search, ways to be more attractive to employers, how to ask for a raise or promotion, ways to upskill, and other topics of value.

Don't Forget the Big Dogs

You may have noticed that I haven't yet mentioned two of the most popular social media sites: Facebook and YouTube. Over 70% of U.S. adults are on Facebook, and almost 90% utilize YouTube. While both are used primarily for things other than job seeking and career advice, they are still viable platforms for educating, engaging, and attracting talent.

Recruiting on social media isn't new. Both Facebook and LinkedIn have been around for more than 20 years. But the social media space is constantly evolving with different platforms emerging, new features introduced, and changing user habits. Having a strong social media presence across multiple platforms should be viewed as more than just an obligation where you feel like you need to do something because everyone else does. When integrated into your overall recruiting strategy, it can be one of your best avenues for engaging and attracting talent. ■

Tom Erb, CSP, is president of Tallann Resources, a national consulting and training firm specializing in the staffing and recruiting industry. As a consultant, trainer, and speaker, Erb has helped hundreds of companies create and execute sales and recruiting strategies to grow their business. He is the author of *Winning the Staffing Sales Game: The Definitive Game Plan for Sales Success in the Staffing Industry.* Learn more at *tallanresources.com.* Follow him on X @TomErb_Tallann.

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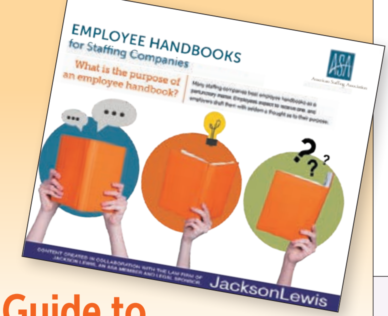

New Guide to Employee Handbooks for Staffing Companies: Get Your Copy Today

Many staffing companies treat employee handbooks as a perfunctory matter: Employees expect to receive one, and employers draft them with seldom a thought as to their purpose. But employee handbooks are a great source of communication with employees about basic workplace policies as well as the company's history, mission statements, and culture. Handbooks are also a forum to advertise the benefits of working for the company and serve an important legal compliance function. Download your copy of a new ASA Employee Handbooks for Staffing Companies guide, which offers practical tips for drafting a handbook, typical policies to include in the handbook, an overview of important labor laws, and more. Visit *americanstaffing.net/resources* to get your copy.

Share Your Expertise at Staffing World or Present an ASA Webinar

The ASA call for subject matter experts is currently open. Do you have insights that are essential to the staffing, recruiting, or workforce solutions industry that you'd like to share with the ASA community? Submit your proposal today for your chance to present an ASA webinar or speak at Staffing World®, the ASA annual convention and expo.

Staffing World 2025 takes place Oct. 6–8 in Orlando, and slots are available for Speed Talks (10-minute talks on topics important to the industry). Proposals are due May 31.

ASA webinars (60-minute presentations on a topic important to the industry) take place virtually, usually on Tuesdays and Thursdays. Proposals are accepted throughout the year.

For more information and to start your submission, visit *americanstaffing.net/presenters*.

Take Advantage of Onboarding Courses on ASA Learn

Looking to enhance your new-hire process and your team's knowledge of the staffing industry? Need to train new hires or offer refresher courses to seasoned team members? ASA has developed a program of onboarding courses specifically designed for staffing, recruiting, and workforce solutions professionals. You can purchase and assign courses to your team and track their progress using the ASA learning management system, ASA Learn. The online course modules include "Introduction to the Staffing Industry," "Fundamentals of Sales," and "Fundamentals of Recruiting." Modules are available as a full set or a la carte. To learn more, visit *learn.americanstaffing.net*.

ASA LEARN

Why Should You Attend the ASA Staffing Law & Compliance Conference?

Navigating compliance in 2025 means preparing for a wave of new regulations, heightened enforcement, and emerging risks that could impact your business. The 2025 ASA Staffing Law & Compliance Conference, May 8–9 in Washington, DC, will give you the exact insights and strategies, from top legal experts, you need to protect your firm and stay ahead. Plus, you'll have the opportunity to

1. Connect with top experts in employment law, human resources, risk management, recruiting, and related legislation and compliance.
2. Meet with leading providers of business products and services designed to protect your businesses and streamline operations.
3. Learn about the policy changes in place and how to prepare for the changes ahead under the new administration and Congress.
4. Earn valuable CE hours and CLE hours to maintain your certifications and hone your competitive edge in the marketplace.

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Get Technology Tips in the ASA Staffing Tech Center

ASA and Talent Tech Labs conducted an industry-wide survey to understand how staffing firms are leveraging talent acquisition technology—as well as how satisfied they are with specific tools and suppliers. Take a look at the results at *americanstaffing.net/techcenter* for help benchmarking your own firm's use of technology against your peers and mapping out your firm's technology roadmap.

New ASA Webinar Series: Economic and Staffing Forecast

A new member-only benefit, the ASA Economic and Staffing Forecast is a monthly webinar series that gives attendees a staffing-specific outlook on the labor market and the policy implications of U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics and other pertinent data. The ASA research team shares expert analysis to help you navigate the dynamic landscape of the staffing industry with confidence and foresight, powered by its cutting-edge data forecast model. Attendees receive valuable analysis and projections on key indicators, including

- **GDP Components:** Stay ahead of the curve on economic activity, and how it will affect demand for staffing services.
- **Inflation:** Understand the drivers behind worker compensation, bill rates, and other such operating costs facing your firm.
- **Labor Market Forecast:** Keep up with the latest trends in labor market activity and the opportunities for staffing services.
- **Staffing Employment Forecast:** See how trends within the economy affect employment and sales in the staffing industry.

To learn more and to register, visit *americanstaffing.net/webinars.*

MEMBER **sound off**

INDUSTRY TRENDS AND PERSPECTIVES

Growth in Action: Strategies for Success

The question posed to ASA members this issue: **What is one strategy your firm is executing this year that will lead to growth?**

Bradley Block
Chief Vision Officer,
Equiliem

At Equiliem, focusing on the experience we bring to relationships is crucial. We build loyalty and consistency and increase referrals and network-ability. Ultimately, we add new clients, allow further penetration into existing accounts, and expand our talent pools to support increased demand.

Jeanette Carroll
Chief Operating Officer,
Witlon Enterprises Co.

We regularly update our internal processes to enable our staff to work smarter, not harder. It sounds like a cliché, but we've found that integrating specific processes for onboarding, payroll processing, HR, benefits management, and operations not only strengthens efficiency, but provides structure to our staff, which allows us to see a reduction in costs due to errors and poor time management. These processes have also, interestingly, had the effect of increasing the value of accountability and account ownership, which flows through to our clients in a positive way. This snowball effect has increased our referrals from existing clients, which grows our business.

Mark Hampton
Chief Operating Officer,
ProJob Family of Cos.

In 2025, our concentration will be on investing in key personnel for our business development team. Finding the right internal players with experience in building a strong pipeline on top of the base of business we already have is critical to hitting our top- and bottom-line goals. These team members will be focused on expanding our core areas of service. With the strength of talent we have seen over the last few months that is available, we're extremely optimistic about reaching our targets.

"Finding the right internal players with experience in building a strong pipeline on top of the base of business we already have is critical to **hitting our top- and bottom-line goals."**

—Mark Hampton, ProJob Family of Cos.

Brady Pittz
President,
Leapros Inc.

We've partnered with a third-party learning and development company to make deep investments in training throughout our organization. We are proud of our processes and see them as a differentiator, but, like many growing companies, we need to move the training plan from individual minds and inboxes to drive consistency and build organizational knowledge. This should support our ability to set expectations, gain commitments, and execute internally in a manner which meets our goals of providing a quality and consistent client and candidate experience.

Jennifer Quinton
Vice President,
Integrity Staffing
Group LLC

This year, we are intensifying our sales efforts for increased growth by strengthening community engagement, expanding partnerships, and cross-selling all services offered to add additional value. Our targeted local sales approach in each market will position us for sustainable growth and more market share. We are looking forward to a fantastic 2025!

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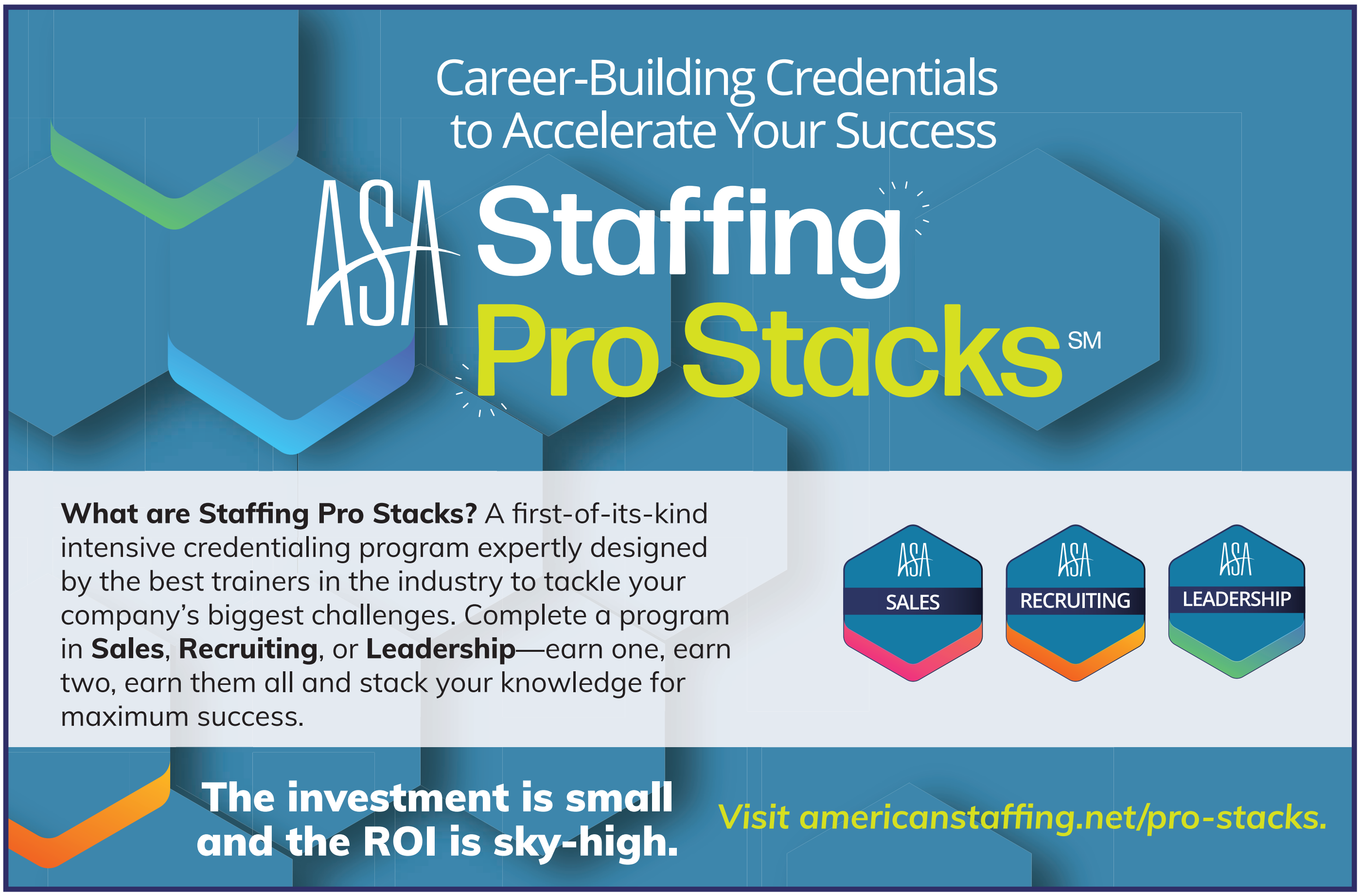
Best practices, legal compliance updates, technology, how-tos, marketing, analysis and trends, and more—if there's a topic important to staffing firms and staffing professionals, you'll likely find it covered in the hundreds of ASA webinars and recorded sessions. Visit *americanstaffing.net/webinars* to see upcoming and on-demand programs.



Being an ASA member isn't just a "good" thing or the "right" thing; it's *the* thing that fuels our growth as business leaders and advances our industry.

We Grow and Win Together

By Janette Marx, Chair

The first quarter of this year has flown by and we, as members of the most influential trade association representing the staffing industry, have been busy.

Our ASA legal team and its network of lobbyists and advocates, for example, have been proactively meeting with officials representing the new administration, asking questions, and getting the answers we need. These important discussions and answers will be front and center at the upcoming ASA Staffing Law and Compliance Conference, May 8–9 in Washington, DC.

The nation's leading legal experts with deep staffing industry experience will lead can't-miss sessions on topics like building a perfect compliance program, adopting compliant AI practices, and much more. Plus, the afternoon before the conference begins, ASA is offering a preconference program focused on health care staffing. Visit *staffinglawconference.net* for details and to register. I look forward to seeing you in Washington, DC.

Growth Inspiration

This issue of our ASA member magazine debuts an impressive new series—*Staffing Success:* Leader's Edge. It's impressive because it showcases the very best, growth-focused leaders in our industry. This gets to some of the most important benefits of ASA membership: learning from each other, sharing ideas, collaborating, and winning together.

The amazing person on this issue's cover is Ranjini Poddar, co-founder and chief executive officer of Artech—one of the nation's largest IT staffing companies. She also serves on the ASA board of directors. Her story and perspectives include several takeaways, including one in particular that really resonates with me, and that is getting outside our daily operations to learn.

Our association provides so many learning opportunities, including weekly webinars, certification courses, and more. **Also coming up soon is THRIVE Virtual on May 20, presented by the ASA women in leadership interest group.** This fully online learning and networking event is designed for emerging and well-established women leaders who come together to learn strategies and make connections that will elevate their careers. (Go to *americanstaffing.net/thrive* for details.)

Big Announcements

In March, the ASA research team rolled out a new member benefit: the monthly ASA Staffing & Economic Forecast. In a 30-minute online presentation, we get a staffing-specific outlook on the labor market and the policy implications of the data.

ASA researchers share expert analysis to help us navigate the dynamic landscape of our industry with confidence and foresight, using a cutting-edge data forecast model. This new offering is the perfect addition to the already powerful collection of data-focused resources ASA provides, including the ASA Workforce Monitor® survey, weekly ASA Staffing Index, annual Staffing Industry Playbook, quarterly ASA State of the Industry webinars, and more. If you haven't browsed all the industry and economic data and analysis we can access as ASA members, visit *americanstaffing.net/research.*

Finally, I am excited to announce that our opening keynote speaker at Staffing World® this year will be the most decorated female Olympic swimmer ever—Katie Ledecky. She will inspire, energize, and share her lessons learned about how to double-down on tough goals and win. Visit *staffingworld.net* for details and to register.

I look forward to seeing you at Staffing World, Oct. 6–8 at the beautiful Gaylord Palms in Orlando, FL. It could be called the learning epicenter of our industry; let's learn, grow, and win together. ■

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