

Tackling staff shortages

34 solutions for employers



Introduction

Many employers are assiduously looking for staff, as demand outstrips supply. There is not a single industry left that is not faced with staff shortages. While attracting sufficient new staff is important, this applies even more strongly to retaining new staff. For this is currently a much bigger challenge for many employers than it used to be. In the past 10 years, the number of workers changing jobs has doubled.

Some creativity and flexibility is required to get a grip on the tight labour market as an employer. Sometimes, concessions need to be made. This means that employers must not just look for the highly experienced all-rounder or that they must consider what they could change in their organisations to hold on to employees with an even more critical eye. Because a lot more might be done than was originally thought possible. And a lot is already being done. Many employers are adjusting the working conditions on offer and reassess job requirements more often, for example.

We at the UWV are noting an increasing need for a perspective for action: specific solutions to be able to fill those vacancies after all. This publication is based on the knowledge and experience within the UWV, the knowledge within the various industries, studies consulted, and, naturally, the practical experiences of the employees. This resulted in a selection of 34 solutions employees may use to counter or reduce staff shortages, divided over three strategies: tapping new talent, organising the work differently, and having staff become more loyal and committed.

The solutions presented are of a very practical nature, have already been used by other employers, and may bring substantial results.

This does not mean that every solution is suitable for every organisation. A solution that is attractive to and easily introduced by one organisation, may be the total opposite for another. The industry concerned, the total number of employees, and the shop floor culture all affect suitability. This publication therefore provides the opportunity to consider, as an employer, which solutions are fitting. In addition, it provides points of reference for subsequent concrete action.

The solutions offered do require investments in time, money, and creativity. Support may be sometimes be needed. The UWV and the municipal authorities can play a facilitating role. For example, some of the solutions refer to (free) advice from the employer service desk or the training and employment helpdesk, a joint endeavour by the UWV, the municipalities, and educational and social partners in the region. Industry organisations and training funds, too, can render advice and often also offer subsidies.

Solutions usually also require a lot of cooperation from or adjustments by existing staff, such as coaching and training new colleagues, learning to work with technology, and following training courses. The successful implementation of solutions is therefore impossible without involving the existing staff: what do they feel is important and what improvements do they suggest? The solution may be less complex than you think.



3 tips employers can immediately start working with

Before we present all solutions, this page provides 3 tips that may be of interest to every employer facing staff shortages. Additional recruitment efforts or properly reconsidering the job listing or job requirements may get that vacancy filled after all.

Make use of referral recruitment

Referral recruitment is recruitment via the network of existing employees. This encourages the employees of a company to find and recommend suitable candidates via their own social network. This recruitment method is based on the idea that the existing employees are likely to know people who may be a good match for the organisation.

Employees are in most cases rewarded for recommending suitable candidates. Such rewards can take various forms. The most common one is a financial bonus. Other options include public recognition, additional leave days, or a physical present.

The recruitment costs of referral recruitment are often lower than those of other methods. Moreover, the likelihood of a new employee being a good match is higher. An additional benefit is that the employees become (even) more involved with the organisation, thus increasing company loyalty.

Adjust job requirements

As noted, employers increasingly often adjust their job requirements. Such adjustment is necessary to continue looking when the ideal candidate cannot be found. Letting go of superfluous or (unnecessarily) strict requirements leads to more, and surprising, candidates.

A lot is possible by broadening the knowledge and skills requirement or reducing focus on work experience and certificates. Candidates may exist who, at first, only just fail to meet the requirements but are still suitable for the job (in time).

In addition, candidates from other sectors or who left a slightly different job may be a good fit. Often, these candidates bring in different expertise as well. For some positions, candidates could follow additional training courses to obtain the lacking knowledge and skills, or learn them from other employees once they're employed.



Draw up a smart job listing

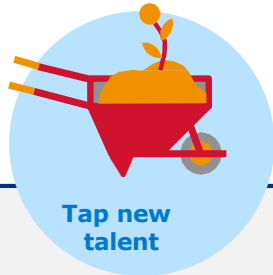
Employers often receive too few applications after placing the job listing. Proper consideration of the text of a job listing and smart composition may already lead to more responses.














Transparency and clarity are very important, for example. Draw up a text which is easy to read and provide an overview of what the organisation has to offer, including with regard to employment conditions. According to the Indeed job search engine, stating the wage in the job listing results in 45% more applications on average. A great many vacancies do not list the wage (or just state "competitive wage"). Providing a clear description of the desired job level, too, is a clear plus. A phrase like "secondary/higher vocational education" can be sufficiently unclear to decrease interest.

Other tips include making sure that the text is also easily readable on mobile phones, does not contain clichés, and jibes with the target audience. More items to take account of when drafting a job listing are available [here](#).










34 solutions for employers

Click a solution to go to the right page.















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Multiple strategies possible

The solutions are divided over three strategies: tapping new talent, organising the work differently, and having staff become more loyal and committed. The solutions usually follow on from each other and can be easily combined. Organising the work differently, for example, may result in the work becoming more attractive, thus increasing the commitment of existing staff. It may also lead to new opportunities within the organisation for new talent, who were not initially considered.



Tap new talent

Someone with years of experience who is an immediate fit within the organisation, often does not exist. However, there may be alternative candidates who could do the work or decrease the load, such as jobseekers on a benefit, people from other industries, asylum permit holders, youths, foreign workers, people with an occupational disability, or pensioners. They may not always be immediately deployable, but they will be with additional coaching or some training.

This sometimes requires a critical review of the recruitment methods deployed. By adopting a broader view of competencies, other candidates could be recruited. Candidates who had initially not entered the picture - but who could be extremely suitable.



Organise work differently

The work might still get done by shifting tasks and thereby creating new positions, by tackling administrative burdens, and by deploying technological solutions.

Employees may actually be willing to work more hours, but only once certain things are arranged. In another situation, moving away from only hiring people on a full-time basis may provide a solution. Perhaps a position can be filled by two people working part-time, or someone else within the organisation can work another job for a few hours.

Cooperation with other employers in the same field or needing the same positions filled may provide a solution, for example through renting out and borrowing staff or the exchange of knowledge.



Inspire loyalty and commitment

It is not only important to recruit talent: so is retaining it. In fact, this may be more important than ever. Continuing to inspire the loyalty and commitment of staff is therefore extremely important. You can achieve this by being an attractive employer and investing in what employees really feel to be important.

This may be training opportunities, attention to work capacity and workload, a good atmosphere and culture, or the availability of certain facilities. Or it could just be paying attention to individual needs by way of consultations between managers and employees. A satisfied employee is also a strong ambassador for recruiting new staff and an absolute precondition for creating a strong "employer brand".



Tap new talent

Recruiting differently and casting the net widely



Low-key introduction

Employers could open their doors to interested persons even before the application procedure starts. This can easily be done by inviting them to an (online) initial meeting after people have expressed their interest in the organisation, for example via the employer's website.

Or a tour or open day can be organised, allowing interested persons to talk with their possible new colleagues on the site. This allows jobseekers to find out if the job is really something that suits them. This may make them less reticent to actually apply for the job. Moreover, the jobseekers in this way obtain a better view of the actual work and the organisation's culture, reducing the likelihood of them leaving the job after a short time only.

Check:

- Job fairs are organised throughout the country to allow employers and jobseekers to meet each other in an informal way. Contact the regional [employer service desk](#).
- NS for example uses a [train simulator](#) to make people familiar with the job and to get them excited.



Interest students

Employers could interest students to come work for them upon finishing their study programme.

Students may enter the picture as soon as they started their studies. This can take several forms. For example, employers may invite students to open days or field trips. In addition, a sufficient number of solid internship positions are required to learn the trade. Offering students a part-time job next to their studies is another option to bind them to you.

The **educational system** itself can also be involved. Organisations or their employees could provide guest lectures at schools, for example. Or students could work on projects with employees or follow training courses. This provides students with a better picture of what "the actual work" is really about. Such activities are more likely to excite younger people than written information (like leaflets).

Some employers try to bind students to their organisation by (partially) paying their study costs. In such cases, the employers may attach the condition that the starters do stay in their employment for a few years. Companies could also bind the recently graduated to them using trainee programmes, which will allow them to acquire the required extra knowledge and subsequently move on within the organisation.

Check:

- [The Ministry of Defence](#) pays the study costs (study deal) of future defence staff. This applies to studies at various levels: secondary and tertiary vocational, as well as academic.



Look at skills

The traditional recruitment and selection method is often focused on the diploma someone has and the number of years of experience on the job, but people often have more knowledge and skills than expressed by their CV.

In this tight labour market, the ideal match between jobseeker and employer is usually not obtained by focussing on diplomas and experience only.

By also considering other skills people have acquired over their career, demand and supply can often be linked up after all. A skill-focused approach makes it easier for people to come in **from other industries and professions**. Additional coaching or schooling may still be required in this case.

Employers are often already broadening their horizon. Seven out of ten employers already hire staff who do not fully meet the job requirements to fill vacancies (UWV employer survey). Employers mostly drop the relevant work experience requirement.

Check:

- The UWV [Skills Dashboard](#) provides insight into "tasks and soft skills" for over 200 professions, including jobs with good prospects. The Skills Dashboard is frequently updated.
- The [SER](#) website provides more information on a skill-focused labour market, including best practices by employers.



Tap new talent

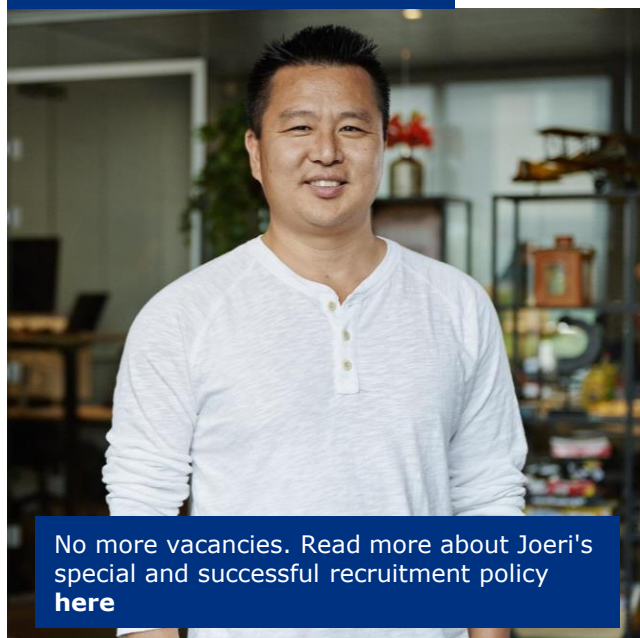
Recruiting differently and casting the net widely



Focus on talent, less on position

Some companies have stopped using job listings and job profiles and only focus on someone's talents, ambition, and personal characteristics. An employer can invite an applicant who has not submitted a CV or motivation letter for an interview (open application). The focus is, then, on that person's talents and the future role that person could play within the organisation, and not on vacancies and their associated job requirements. Job applicants are able to indicate what they bring to the table in a meeting or during an open day.

In the words of the employer



No more vacancies. Read more about Joeri's special and successful recruitment policy [here](#)

This brings in talents who on the basis of a predefined position and job listing might have just failed the cut.



Recruitment via Open Hiring®

In addition to focusing on skills or recruitment not tailored to a specific vacancy, employers may also use "Open Hiring". This goes a bit further still. Even though job vacancies exist under the Open Hiring model, there is **no selection process**. Whenever a position opens up and the recruitment process starts, the next person on the list of candidates who applied gets their turn. This means that the candidate immediately starts working, without first having to have an initial meeting. Anyone interested can show what they can do on the actual job.

22% of employers see opportunities for using Open Hiring or have used it in 2022 (UWV employer survey). The method is most often used in the catering, transport and logistics, and construction sectors. Options also exist for employers in different industries.

Check:

- Interested in Open Hiring? The [Start Foundation](#) introduced this concept in the Netherlands and cooperates with the UWV. Employers can register via Start Foundation or contact the regional [employer service desk](#). A [leaflet](#) is also available.



Recruitment in other regions

Some vacancies are more difficult to fill in one region than they are in another. In such cases, recruiting staff in another region may be a solution. As it has become more common for office jobs to be worked from home, candidates may be more willing to accept a job at an organisation located further out of their own town or region. In order to draw in these candidates, it is important that employers provide facilities to allow employees to partly work from home (see [Facilitate staff](#)).

In the words of the employer



Read more about how HR adviser Simone used Open Hiring in the catering sector [here](#)



Tap new talent

Recruiting differently and casting the net widely



Recruitment abroad

The Netherlands feature one of the tighter labour markets in Europe. Even though it is not always easy to recruit staff abroad, it is possible. In 2022, 9% of employers with vacancies that were difficult to fill found their solution abroad (UWV employer survey). There are many examples of successful recruitment abroad, including cooks from Spain, seasonal workers from Eastern Europe, and construction workers from Italy.

In the words of the employer



Read about how Joris and his company found their solution across the border [here](#)

Residents of the European Union (EU), the European Economic Area (EEA), and Switzerland can start working in the Netherlands without needing a work permit. However, equal treatment and payment are important.

UWV EURES can provide support with recruiting suitable candidates from within Europe. EURES is a European network active in all EEA countries and Switzerland, and features a European CV and job bank. In addition, EURES informs, renders advice, and participates in (online) job fairs. If desired, EURES can recruit on a per-project basis.

Check:

- Read [more](#) about finding staff in Europe and the available support, the [5 steps](#) employers should keep in mind, and [various tips](#) for increasing the odds of success.
- [GrensMatch](#) is a EURES initiative to increase labour mobility in Europe and the border regions. It allows employers and jobseekers to get into contact.
- CV databases tailored to specific industries also exist. [Seasonalwork.NL](#) links up supply and demand in agriculture and horticulture, for example. The site lists CVs of jobseekers throughout Europe and job listings of Dutch companies.



Recruit older employees (55+)

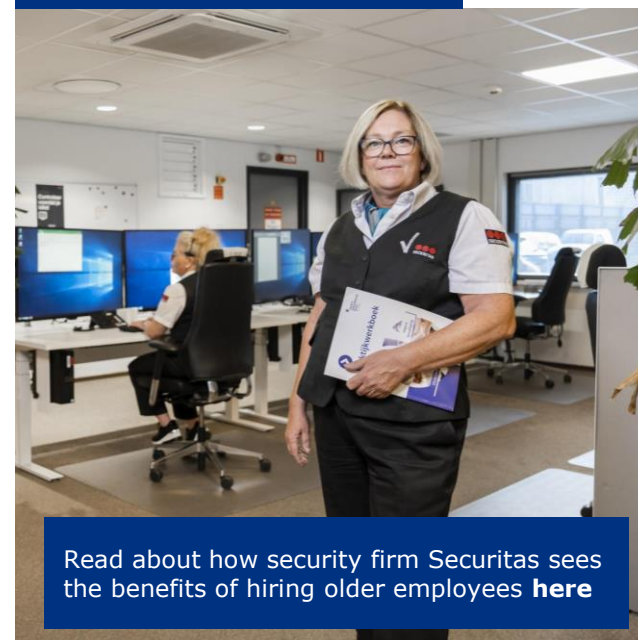
The share of people aged 55 and over in active employment has risen sharply over the past few years due to the continued ageing of the workforce. Employers are increasingly valuing older employees. They are less likely to change jobs,

can often continue working for years to come, and are flexible, as their children require less care or have left the home already. In addition to being deployed in shortage occupations, older employees can also work other duties, focused more on coaching and the transfer of knowledge and less on physical work ([apprentice-journeyman-master structure](#)). These employees often have specialised knowledge and a lot of experience.

Check:

- Read about the [subsidies and schemes](#) available for hiring employees aged 55 and over.

In the words of the employer



Read about how security firm Securitas sees the benefits of hiring older employees [here](#)



Tap new talent Use the full potential



Deploy pensioners

Employers may ask people to continue working even after they retire, or to help out, for instance to replace sick staff members or when there is a need for experienced workers. It may also be worth it to employers to recruit pensioners outside the organisation. This group is often still very active and in some cases wishes to keep on working (part-time). The number of people who continue working after reaching state pension age has increased in the past few years.

In addition to gaining knowledge, experience, and additional capacity, employers gain further benefits:

- Employers do not have to pay employee insurance premiums, like WW and WIA.
- No transition payment has to be paid upon discharge.
- Moreover, the period during which an employee is entitled to continued wage payment when sick is a lot shorter for pensioners. As per 1 July 2023, this period is 6 weeks, as opposed to 2 years for other employees.



Deploy persons with an occupational impairment

Deploying persons with an occupational impairment may provide a solution. Such persons may have a physical, psychological, or intellectual impairment. People with an occupational impairment can be directly employed by an employer, sometimes after having been provided additional schooling or coaching. **Secondment** is an option, as well: the candidate works for an employer but the coaching and

staffing are arranged by an occupational workshop, rehabilitation firm, or intermediary (via the municipality).

The employers pays a fee for the work performed. Such secondment can take place on an individual basis or as a group. Secondment ideally serves as a leg up to a regular job. At the same time, it allows for a way out if the work proves too much.

Check:

- Employers can post job listings via the UWV or actively look for Wajong benefit recipients or other candidates via the Kandidatenverkenner.
- Various subsidies and schemes exist for employers hiring people receiving benefits under the Participation Act or Wajong. The municipalities and/or UWV provide support.
- The free Inclusive Work Organisation Company Advice (BIA) is used to chart whether tasks can be divested from overqualified employees, in order to bundle them into a new set of tasks. Contact the regional employer service desk should you be interested.
- In this video, Groningen UMC shows how it gets all the work done and is able to employ 70 Wajong benefit recipients.

Persons with an occupational impairment may also take over the simpler tasks from people working a more specialised job, especially in times of a tight labour market (Job carving and job creation).



Deploy asylum permit holders

Refugees having asylum status are allowed to work in the Netherlands. This group includes persons with experience in professions in great demand in the Netherlands, such as technicians and healthcare workers. However, in practice, it is difficult for them to find a job, for instance due to personal issues or because of limited mastery of the language. But also because their diploma is not being recognised or because their network is limited.

Various ways exist to contact asylum permit holders: via the COA, the municipal authorities, the Refugee Council, or other social organisations. In addition, the new **civic integration system** allows for civic integration programme participants to combine language training with work (dual programme). This aids the civic integration process. Municipalities can conclude relevant agreements with the persons involved, including employers.

Check:

- Various training programme initiatives exist which provide asylum permit holders with great prospects of finding a job upon completion, for example as programmers or electricians.
- Another great example is that of the Dutch Cardiological Centres, which tackle a lack of echocardiographers by training asylum permit holders on the job and offering them employment.
- The Refugee Council has more information and tips for employers.



Tap new talent Schooling



Talent within the own organisation

Talent may be "hidden" within the existing workforce. **Training or retraining** existing staff may be a way to find suitable staff for shortage occupations. This does not have to be limited to permanent employees: also consider training temporary workers. Investing in the schooling of flexible workers can be a way of making them, too, loyal to the company.

Following a full educational programme might not be necessary: obtaining an extra certificate or gaining experience may already form the solution. It may be easier to recruit new staff for the positions left by those employees who take up a new position after training. Offering employees this opportunity also allows them to develop and advance their career within the company (Encourage learning and development). Employees may also be able to combine the new position with their old job (Combine jobs and tasks).

Check:

- The Training and employment helpdesk can advise employers about training and developing staff.
- The SLIM scheme allows SMEs to apply for subsidies to promote employee learning and development.



Train new staff internally

Training staff within the own organisation is a way to bridge the gap between supply and demand on the labour market.

Various options exist. **Work-study programmes**, for example, allow students to start working within the organisation. Often, they will become employees upon completing their education. In some sectors, it is wise to first set up a preliminary programme, as the step to a full work-study programme is too big. This programme allows jobseekers to experience what it is like to pursue studies (again) in addition to working, and to become familiar with the work in practice.

Many options are available in cooperation with the UWV or the municipalities. The UWV often collaborates with employers, temp and secondment agencies and training providers to train the unemployed. Training initiatives exist in various industries and regions, for example educating people to become fitters, cooks, nurses, decorators, or customer service employees. Employers are closely involved in the recruitment.

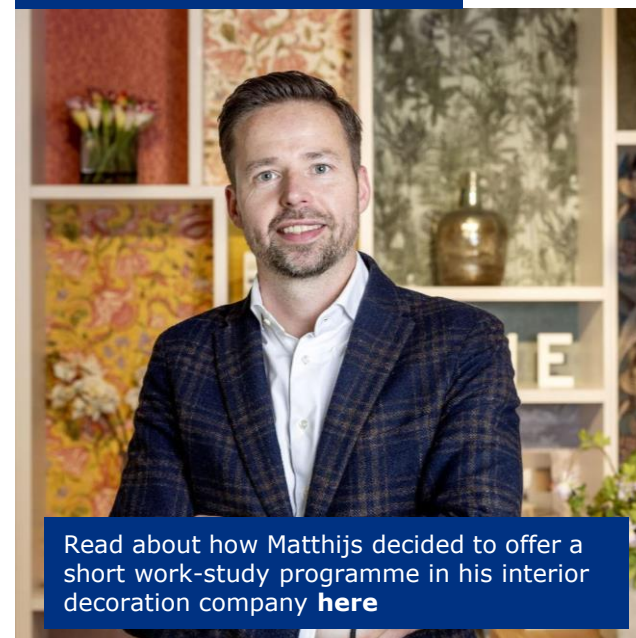
Companies may also start their own company training programme or **company school**. Many companies in the technical industry do so, for example. This allows new staff to gain specific knowledge and skills that link up to the needs of the company. At the same time, the company school may help existing staff keep their knowledge and skills up to date (Encourage learning and development). A company school may deploy trainers already employed with the company, but could also hire trainers from regional education centres.

Even though a company school may form a significant investment (in particular for smaller companies), it may lead to improved inflow and the development of existing employees. Companies that face similar shortages sometimes jointly set up a company school.

Check:

- This short video explains how the UWV can help employers offer a work-study programme. Also check out these 4 steps an employer can follow to set up a work-study programme.

In the words of the employer



Read about how Matthijs decided to offer a short work-study programme in his interior decoration company [here](#)



Organise work differently

Take a different look at tasks and positions



Job carving and job creation

Bundling the simple tasks from multiple positions to create new positions is also called 'job carving'. Using this method means that persons working specialist shortage occupations no longer need to perform simple tasks. Examples include qualified construction workers who spend a lot of time transporting construction materials and cleaning the site. Or unburdening nurses and care workers by removing tasks not related to the provision of care.

These removed tasks can be bundled to make up a new position, which can be filled by people with a labour market disadvantage. Depending on the tasks concerned, persons of various backgrounds can take up the newly created positions.

In 2022, 25% of employers experiencing vacancies that are difficult to fill organised the work differently or adjusted the **range of duties**, allowing for hiring someone who initially did not fully meet the job requirements (UWV employer survey).

Check:

- Living room staff provide support to qualified staff in care or nursing homes.
- By way of a free Inclusive Work Organisation Company Advice (BIA), specially trained advisers inter alia chart the job carving opportunities. Employers may ask for free advice via a regional employer service desk.



Combine jobs and tasks

A shortage of staff can be tackled by **multi-deployability** of the workforce. This may require additional training or having an employee first become familiar with another task. This method makes it possible to have staff in relatively quiet departments relieve colleagues in very busy departments. Workforce flexibility thus increases.

In addition, **combined jobs** can be created, meaning one employee works two different jobs. Combining jobs is possible both within the organisation and in cooperation with other organisations (in other industries). This may form a solid option for employers to fill a (part-time) vacancy after all, using someone from within the existing workforce.

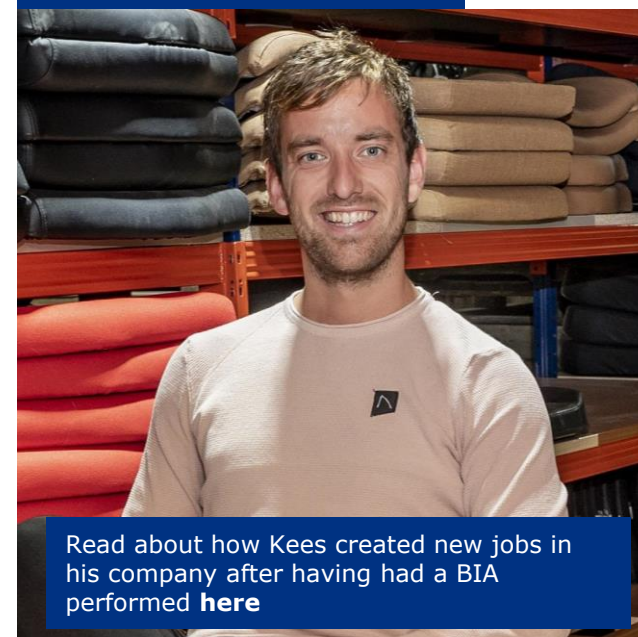
Employees working additional tasks or a combined job can, in turn, work more hours a week if their current position limits their deployability. The work may also become interesting to workers from related sectors who would not normally enter the picture. At the same time, the various departments or organisations automatically become more closely linked.

Performing different tasks or combining two jobs also provides employees with room to develop in a different field and increases variety within the work (Encourage learning and development). Being given additional tasks does however need to benefit the employees and not result in increased work pressure.

Check:

- An example of a sector where combined jobs can easily be created is childcare. One in ten employees in this sector combines two jobs. Childcare educational staff may, for example, also work in the office for a couple of hours or as a teaching assistant at a school. Teaching assistants could for example also work at after-school care facilities.

In the words of the employer



Read about how Kees created new jobs in his company after having had a BIA performed [here](#)



Organise work differently

Take a different look at tasks and positions



Allow for working more hours

Well over one in ten part-time workers in the Netherlands wish to work more hours and are immediately available to do so (fourth quarter of 2022). This is sometimes easy to organise, by offering employees a contract for more hours, so more work can be done with the same number of people. Employees may also increase their **financial independence** when working more hours.

However, this is not always that easy. Employees do always not know exactly how much they would gain from working more hours or they fear problematic schedules, for example. Increasing contract hours is often desired but not talked about at all, with employers thinking employees are unwilling. Just raising the topic for discussion may already prove fruitful.

Sometimes, the workload is concentrated in certain moments of the day, as is the case in the healthcare or cleaning sectors. In such cases, the challenge is to organise the work in such a way that longer shifts are possible. Moreover, by increasing the number of hours, the work becomes more attractive to (some) jobseekers. Combined jobs could provide a solution here (Combine jobs and tasks).

Check:

- The Working hours calculator provides employees with insight into the effect of working more or fewer hours on their income.
- Part-time work is prevalent in the healthcare, education, and childcare sectors. Stichting het Potentieel Pakken provides counsel to organisations and industries and offers knowledge and experience on increasing working hours.



Be open to part-time agreements

On the other hand, some people want to work fewer hours. In addition, there are groups who may be more willing to apply if they do not have to work a full-time job, increasing the pool of available candidates. Examples include parents caring for (young) children, the increasing number of informal caregivers in the Netherlands, or freelancers who are available for one or two days a week in addition to running their own company. Full-time jobs form the standard in certain sectors. Allowing for part-time agreements may be a way to recruit from new target groups or to bind staff to the organisation.

In the education sector, for instance, hybrid teachers are being deployed to tackle the shortage of teachers for technical courses. They combine their work as a teacher with freelance work or another job as employee (Combine jobs and tasks). This also enriches the educational sector with practical experience.

Students, too, could help out with certain tasks. This provides them with a good opportunity to get to know the organisation better, while the employer can try and gain their loyalty (Interest students).

In case of physically or mentally stressful work, allowing for an additional day off may also help keeping employees in good health (Attention to vitality).



Job sharing

Just like how one employee can combine two jobs, one position can also be filled by two part-time employees. This is referred to as job sharing. It provides a solid solution if it is impossible to find one person meeting all the job requirements or if that person is unable or unwilling to work a full-time job. After all, two employees could complement each other well.

If an employee wishes to work fewer hours due to circumstances but does wish to keep their position, for instance, part of their tasks could be taken over by someone else in the organisation or performed by a newly recruited worker. They are jointly responsible for the split position. Job carving and job creation, too, may result in job sharing opportunities.



Organise work differently

Take a different look at tasks and positions



Apprentice-journeyman-master structure

In the modern apprentice-journeyman-master system, the "apprentice" shadows an experienced professional (the "master") and learns the trade by watching, practising, and taking over tasks. After a while, the organisation will have a new professional ("journeyman"), who in turn can become a "master". In a sense, this combination already exists as the block or day release system in secondary vocational education.

Having colleagues with and without experience work together can be beneficial in multiple ways: it offers youths or lateral entry candidates the opportunity to learn the trade and allows experienced colleagues to develop by taking on the "master" role. Ideally, the younger colleagues take over the physically heavier work, allowing the more experienced staff to keep working for longer.

Check:

- Subsidies to compensate the coaching are available for employers offering practical or work experience placements.

Within organisations, the apprentice-journeyman-master structure is often translated into experience levels, like **junior and senior**. Whenever a vacancy cannot be filled, employers will recruit juniors who still require coaching or education.

Developing a traineeship to fill future vacancies is also an option. This, too, has people obtaining the skills to take on the position no suitable candidates could initially be found for. However, this may require a change in the organisation's structure and the capacity to coach existing staff.



Cooperation with respect to staff

When staff shortages become a more long-term issue, organisations may start competing for the talent that is still available. However, cooperation between organisations requiring similar staff may in the end be more productive, especially for smaller organisations that have fewer recruitment options.

Check:

- Employer service desks have an extensive employer network at their disposal and are able to bring employers into contact with each other.
- Cooperation is also possible with respect to traineeships, as offered by the four major cities, Civiel 360, and the talent region. Participants become familiar and gain experience with the various affiliated organisations.
- Stichting Customer Service Valley is a cooperative venture of the government, the business sector, and the educational system in the field of training, knowledge sharing, and innovation within and professionalisation of the customer service sector.

In addition to developing joint training programmes (Train new staff internally), cooperation can be used to offer **career advancement**, allowing staff members to remain available to the sector or profession. Clear career paths are provided in this way, making the work more attractive to employees.

The renting out and hiring of employees between organisations may also help meeting employee peak demand. Finally, it provides employees with development opportunities (Encourage learning and development).

In the words of the employer



Read about how the Ministry of Defence cooperates with the business sector to exchange staff **here**



Organise work differently

Ease the workload



Deploy technology

Technology is often considered a solution for staff shortages. Robots, for example, could unburden humans, make their work less complex, or even (partially) take over. Examples include the car industry or distribution centres, which have been largely robotised. Though skilled workers like IT professionals and maintenance mechanics are still required, fewer people are involved with direct production. Such a major investment will be too big a step for some companies.

In restaurants, people increasingly often place their order from a digital menu using their own phone and a QR system. As a result, fewer waiting staff - of which there is a major shortage - is required. Cleaning services deploy sensors able to monitor office and toilet usage. This means cleaners don't have to follow a routine but are able to see whether or not a space needs cleaning.

There are also **technological tools** available to support employees having difficulties seeing, hearing, performing heavy labour, concentrating, or with their energy balance. Examples include read-out glasses for the visually impaired, voice recognition for the hearing-impaired, smart glasses providing instructions when working, or an energy management dashboard providing insight into your energy balance so you can monitor your own limits.

Check:

- A study by the UWV shows that technology may bring added value to the work floor for people with an occupational impairment. More information is available on [Technologie voor Inclusie](#).
- There are several [examples](#) of technology which can help counter healthcare staff shortages or increasing the time available for patients.



Tackle administrative burden

In some sectors, professionals indicate they spend too much time on administrative duties. This often results in increased work pressure, decreased work satisfaction, and an increased likelihood of employees going on sick leave or switching to a less stressful profession. In addition, less time is available for the **essential core tasks**.

In such cases, it is wise to check if the administrative burden can be lessened. For the less time required for administrative duties, the more time employees have for the "real work" they are trained to do. In the healthcare sector, the administrative burden and the question of how to decrease it are a regularly recurring topic. But options to decrease the administrative burden can also be looked at in other industries.

However, administration can definitely be important to a certain extent and improve quality. Simply removing administrative duties is therefore not always an option.

Offering people with a labour market disadvantage the opportunity to take over certain tasks is also an option ([Job carving and job creation](#)).

Check:

- Many good examples are available on [\(Ont\)regel de Zorg](#): from reducing time recording by using standard hours or fixed per-client amounts to making software packages easier to use.

In the words of the employer



Read more about how steel company Metafors uses technology to support employees [here](#)



Inspire loyalty and commitment

Good employment practices



Attention to vitality

It is important for employees to remain fit and healthy in their work until they retire. Both physically and mentally, and both at work and in their private lives. Encouraging employees to actively work on their vitality affects both their physical and their mental health. Which in turn impact their long-term deployability.

Focusing attention on health thus helps keeping employees available. The focus is increasingly shifting to prevention: keeping people from falling ill or becoming unfit for work. Sports or stress reduction programmes, for example, may contribute in this respect.

Employers may also consider performing regular career checks, which involve checking, together with the employee, if the work will not become overly burdensome in the next few years. Other examples include encouraging healthy eating (for example, during shift work) and providing room for relaxation at work.

Check:

- Positive health is used to promote vitality.
- How to prevent sickness absence as much as possible? Here are three tips.
- Many industries feature vitality programmes, including the construction industry and the municipalities.

However, simply allowing the **discussion** regarding vitality between employees and superiors may just be the most important thing. Is the employee feeling alright? What could help?



Decrease physical strain

Physically heavy work impedes the long-term deployability of staff. Work can be physically heavy due to the intensity, repetition and/or duration of the actions. Depending on the work, various options are available to reduce physical strain. Examples include:

- Varying tasks / implement task rotation;
- Using tools to lift heavier products;
- Facilitating employees to vary between sitting and standing while working;
- Organising the workplace in an ergonomically responsible way or reducing the necessity to take unnatural positions;
- Shorter work weeks or fewer (variation in) night and weekend shifts (e.g. by more efficient work schedules);
- Longer breaks or other work hour adaptations;
- Fitness facilities / physiotherapy at work.



Attention to work hours and schedules

Many employees have a need for a sound balance between work and private life. This balance may differ for each employee and their stage of life. Employees appreciate it when work hours

can vary to fit their changing needs. This may take the form of slowly decreasing work hours when nearing pension age or of having a fixed day off even when working irregular shifts. But also of being allowed to leave just a bit earlier to be able to pick up the children. And yet other persons are mainly interested in getting more certainty that they have enough work each month and thus sufficient income.

The key point is that employees really appreciate it if they are able to influence their work hours and schedule.

In the words of the employer



Read healthcare director Kees' story about investing in vitality and decreasing work pressure **here**



Inspire loyalty and commitment

Good employment practices



Attention to satisfied and committed employees

In order to ensure loyalty to the organisation, it is essential to have employees who are satisfied and committed. A few examples of how employers can pay attention to this aspect are listed below.

A repeated (anonymous) **satisfaction survey** can help find out how employees feel. Upon its conclusion, the survey provides a basis for making any problems subject of discussion or for policy adjustments.

A good talk: individual meetings can be held with employees to find out how they are doing and what their needs are. The talks could be about personal issues, their current role on the work floor, development opportunities, or things they need some extra help with. The meetings can be held with a director, superior, or HR.

By allowing employees to **have a say** in work processes, it may become clear what employees feel are the real challenges. Employers should then actively do something with the suggestions provided.

Even when employees experience **autonomy** in their work, this is important for their commitment, motivation, and satisfaction. In addition, autonomy helps to increase the long-term deployability of employees.

When employees leave the company, it is useful to have an **exit meeting**. Not only does this result in a friendlier farewell between employer and employee, it also provides insight into employee satisfaction within the organisation and the possible points for improvement.

Check:

- Younger persons often stay with an organisation for a relatively shorter period and may have other wishes concerning work. Read [9 tips](#) about how to be and remain an attractive employer for this group [here](#).



Ease the workload

An overly high workload can result in physical and psychological complaints, causing people to be unable to properly perform their work. In time, this may result in (long-term) sickness absence or even employees leaving. In order to tackle high workloads, it is important to know their cause. Such as:

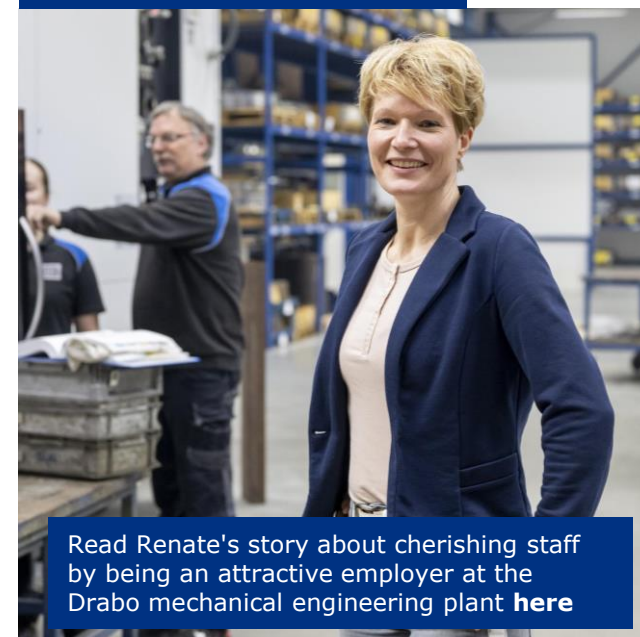
- The amount and pacing of the work;
- Work hours and rest periods;
- Contact with colleagues or external parties;
- Emotionally exhausting work;
- Work-life balance. For example, consider paying more attention to informal carers. At least one in five employees in the Netherlands provides care to dependant loved ones.

The solution for easing the workload differs per organisation and person. Making the issue a topic for discussion is important, as is involving employees in finding the solution. Absence due to an overly high workload is often also related to a lack of autonomy in the job.

Check:

- Employers can use the SZW's [Workload self-inspection tool](#) to obtain an indication of what can be done to ease the workload.

In the words of the employer



Read Renate's story about cherishing staff by being an attractive employer at the Drabo mechanical engineering plant [here](#)



Inspire loyalty and commitment

Good employment practices



Solid employment conditions

Solid employment conditions not only help recruit staff, but also help retain them. While one way to help retain staff is to offer a higher salary, there are also other ways of ensuring employee loyalty. Examples include offering a permanent contract more quickly (important for getting a mortgage), providing certainty about the number of hours to be worked, offering a good pension package, paying overtime allowance, or offering flexible work hours (fitting in with the private situation).

Possible fringe benefits include a 13-month payment, a company car or bike, insurance, bonuses, or profit distribution. Some employers also offer longer parental leave or help pay off a student loan. The wishes may of course differ for each company or employee. Many employers already provide their employees with a certain **freedom of choice**.

Check:

- Companies can also help employees pay for making their house more sustainable. They may for example make a budget or loan available for fitting solar panels or a heat pump.



Facilitate staff

Employers can offer all sorts of facilities to ensure company loyalty. They can for instance make it

easier or cheaper for employees to arrive at the work site. In the case of commuter traffic, this mainly takes the form of a travel and accommodation allowance, free parking close to the work site, being established close to a station, or offering shuttle services making it easier to travel to remote work sites.

Working from home has become a permanent fixture since the corona crisis. When employers allow for (partially) working from home, new employees could also be found in another region. It also allows current employees to move to another region without having to find a new job (for example because house prices are lower in another region).



Support in case of financial trouble

A survey by the Nibud has shown that three in five companies employ workers facing financial trouble. This may cause them to not feel quite right in themselves, be less productive, or even fall ill. When an employee has financial issues or debts, this generally is not immediately evident. Employers may receive signals, such as receiving many requests to work longer hours, high sickness absence levels, concentration issues, or an employee borrowing money from colleagues.

When **signalling** possible problems, it is best to talk with the employee concerned and then refer them to proper assistance.

If an employee is on the border of not being able to make ends meet, employers may also help out directly. For example, by contributing to energy costs.

Check:

- The Nibud helps out employers in dealing with employees who are in financial trouble. It has made a signalling map and discussion manual available to employers.
- HR professionals or superiors may learn more about dealing with cases of financial trouble via this e-learning module.

In the words of the employer



Read about how Bring at work temp agency helps out employees with debts **here**



Inspire loyalty and commitment

Good employment practices



Encourage learning and development

A "learning organisation" is an organisation which has created a climate where employees are able to constantly continue to develop themselves. Learning has become a matter of course and the employer has a facilitating and encouraging role to play. The organisation thus responds to changes in the environment and the work. Employees are able to develop themselves further, increase their deployability within the organisation, and improve their own career prospects. It is also a way to express appreciation towards them.

One way of promoting learning and development is by offering **training opportunities**.

Training may take all sorts of forms, befitting how people learn. It may range from providing short training courses to offering multi-year educational programmes. Employers can facilitate this by making budgets available, allowing for schooling during work hours, or by providing specific training or career advice.

Over half the employers in the Netherlands provide training offerings to **retain staff** (UWV employer survey).

The wider development of general competences may also help ensure company loyalty. Employers could, for example, organise an overview of training options, allowing employees to choose for themselves in which areas they would like to develop.

However, learning and development consists of more than simply following a training course. People are constantly learning when performing their work.

You could for instance encourage this by, in consultation, giving staff **new tasks** that promote their development and motivation (learning by doing) and by giving them leeway in how to perform those tasks. Learning can also take the form of being provided with explanations or coaching by colleagues who are more experienced in a certain field. In contrast, other employees could train to become teachers at an internal company school and thereby become more motivated (Train new staff internally).

An example of "learning by doing" is having ambitious employees (partially) take over a position that has become temporarily available due to, for example, sickness absence or maternity leave. The position that person leaves behind could in turn be temporarily taken by someone else in the organisation who would profit from it.

Check:

- Employers could reach out to an R&D fund for their own industry to obtain specific information about training and development.
- The Training and employment helpdesk supports and advises employers in the field of learning and development. Employers could also reach out to a regional employer service desk for information and advice on schooling.
- The SER has provided an overview of existing schemes for lifelong learning.

Employees can also develop at **another organisation**. This may in particular provide a solution for smaller organisations unable to offer their employees many other tasks except for their own job.

To still provide them with sufficient challenges while at the same time keeping them within the organisation, they could start working for another organisation or project one day per week (Cooperation with respect to staff). This may, vice versa, also allow for getting new talent join the organisation. Moreover, the employees will bring back the knowledge and skills they have gained, to then make use of it within their own organisation.

Many employees attach great importance to growth opportunities. Employers may give them prospects for the future by offering clear **career paths**. It is also important for employees to be aware of their own career development and learn to take **control themselves**. This allows employees to advance their career in the way they prefer. They should discuss their wishes and who or what is required to make these wishes come true with the employer.

Check:

- The SER gives SME employers practical guidelines on how to increase employee control in a guidebook.
- Employers may set up APL (accreditation of prior learning) programmes for their employees. The APL programme is used to establish what knowledge and experience someone has obtained in practice (but with respect to which they have not obtained an accredited diploma). This allows employees to show what they have to offer, and at which level.



Inspire loyalty and commitment

Good employment practices



Pay attention to atmosphere and culture

Fostering employee loyalty to the company may also be achieved by providing a good work atmosphere and displaying trust in employees. It is up to the people who make up the company to determine what a good atmosphere entails: how do they wish to treat each other? What do they feel is important to do together? What makes people feel at ease? Employees often really appreciate trust and a certain level of autonomy.

It is important for employers to support this process and to set a good example. Ways to (further) improve the company atmosphere are often easy to introduce and not too expensive. For example, discuss when to meet with others in the workplace. Allow for ways to make feedback the topic of discussion, pay attention to offering a pleasant and clean workplace, and invest in employee "quality time". This could involve company trips or rooms allowing for pleasant conversation and possibly providing for some activities like darts, table football, or table tennis. Meeting each other in the office, instead of only working from home, may also help.



Solid onboarding

It is important for new employees to feel at home within the organisation as soon as possible. The term "onboarding" is sometimes used for this process.

This is composed of all activities used to have new employees become familiar with the culture of the organisation and their job.

An onboarding programme is a script for new employees and starts at the time of recruiting new staff. Onboarding is not a short, one-off activity to welcome new employees, but is an essential process requiring time and attention. It is about more than just the actual work but also expressly considers social aspects. These include clear mutual agreements on expectations, a solid introduction to networks, the regular exchange of experiences, discussing the culture of the organisation, and, where necessary, providing a mentor.

Check:

- A few useful tips on how organisations can properly welcome new employees are provided [here](#).



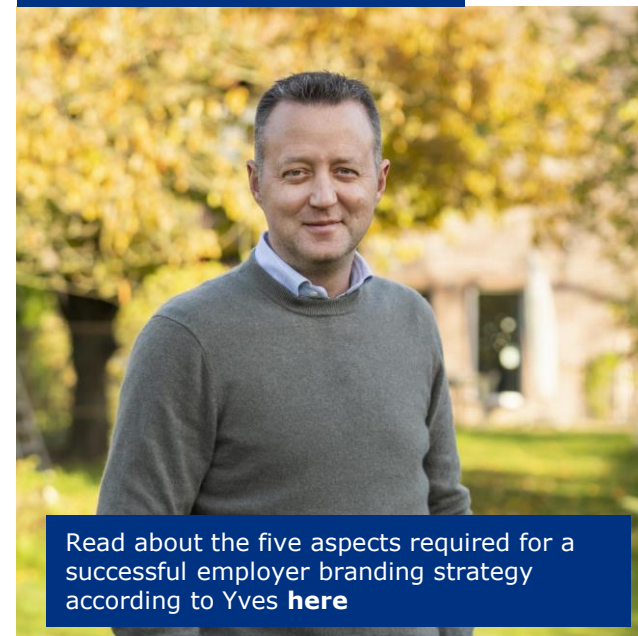
Employer branding

Employer branding is about the perception of your organisation as an employer. A strong employer brand helps find and recruit new employees but is also important for retaining existing staff. However, the employer brand displayed by the company must be in line with what the staff experiences.

So the first step is to determine what the own employees think is important and appreciate about the company. Do these values distinguish the organisation from others?

Next, an employer identity can be formed. To promote this identity, various (online) means of communication are often used, such as on a "working for" page or on social media. Current staff may also act as ambassadors.

In the words of the expert



Read about the five aspects required for a successful employer branding strategy according to Yves [here](#)

Publication

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