

## 2021 E-COMMERCE FULFILLMENT STAFFING TRENDS

**Whether you are a traditional retail distribution center, a third-party warehousing operation, a manufacturer dropshipping product direct to consumer, or an e-commerce fulfillment center, these 5 trends will need to be top of mind to ensure operational excellence, employee engagement and customer satisfaction!**

### 1. Forecasting Customer Demand

Never has it been more crucial for an operation to have accurate forecasting. The pandemic exposed weaknesses in the supply chain around visibility to inventory and how that lack of visibility impacted operations when customer demand spiked. As technology has improved and in some ways been accelerated by the pandemic, the ability to forecast peaks and valleys in customer demand is attainable. This can have an enormous impact on workforce management which ultimately will have a positive impact on the cost of labor. Armed with this data, an operation will be better equipped to increase or decrease headcount to satisfy customer demand levels.

### 2. Technology Connectivity

All points of the supply chain **MUST** talk to each other to avoid the breakdown we saw during the pandemic. From point of sale, to picking and packing, to inventory management, order fulfillment and of course shipping, these systems need to be in sync to achieve accurate forecasts, drive cost efficiencies and ultimately deliver to the customer on time. AS it relates to staffing and workforce management, companies need to be looking at forward thinking agencies to partner with; those that have the capital, technology investments and human resources to satisfy your company's growing needs for talent in your distribution operations.

### 3. Workforce Partnerships vs. Automation

It is no secret that our current industrial labor market is stretched thin, with variables like declining participation rates (due to Government support and health concerns), unemployment rates on the downward slope, and undesirability of distribution work. Again, accelerated by the pandemic and a stretched labor market, automation is on the radar of most organizations with distribution or fulfillment operations. The question remains, what is the ROI timeline for a major automation capital investment? Exposure to risk like this in times of uncertainty is ill-advised. So, what is the happy medium that doesn't over-extend a company financially? Staffing workforce partnerships must be a main cog in the wheel, and you can hedge against the labor market by automating certain processes while at the same time increasing efficiency.

### 4. Pay, Incentives, Shift Times, Culture & Work Environment

ALL this matters! Employees that are looking for work in the industrial sector have choices, and quite a few of them depending on where they live. Pay rates, incentive programs, and desirable shift times get talent to the door; Culture and Work Environment keep them! It is important to know what your current and future employees are looking for in a job/career. And it is equally important to know what your "neighbor" is offering new employees as well! Strategic workforce partnerships with reputable staffing agencies with a local presence can give you insights into all of this. The best companies don't just advise, but help you build a plan around attracting, hiring, and retaining top talent.

### 5. Leadership vs. Management

Does your company have managers or leaders? The answer to this question could give you insight into whether you retain or turnover top talent! Leadership team has commonly referred to "upper management" but in the distribution/fulfillment world this needs to encompass your department heads, your area managers, your line supervisors, and anyone on the floor with responsibility for another employee or group of employees. As the adage goes, and countless exit surveys confirm this, employees don't leave companies, they leave managers. Invest in your leadership team!