

## Chris's Corner: It's a tough labor market

Over the past few years, I have had the occasion to hire new employees.

Typically what I am looking for is a person interested in becoming a service technician for our company.

People capable of doing the job aren't readily available and typically have to be trained. We generally are seeking individuals with some educational background or work history, where some mechanical or electrical skills would be evident.

Twenty years ago, people meeting this fundamental requirement were easy to find, today, not so much.

If you find such a person, chances are that they are older, wiser and mature, with a good employment history. Their starting rate is often more than this business can afford and they aren't going to be that much more productive, more quickly than an inexperienced person.

It takes on the job training to learn our work process, our customer's businesses and unique requirements. Familiarity with product lines and basic repairs don't come easy.

Through a combination of on the job training, online training and factory school training, it is hoped that we are capable of developing an individual that, when called upon, is capable of servicing the full line of food equipment that our customers ask us to do.

The best candidate available is often far too expensive to invest in because to become a moderately capable technician can take three to five years. It is just a reality of what we do.

In the old days, we were able to easily find young adults with vocational training, natural mechanical inclination, whether from their general interest in the area or coming from a family tradition, such as farming, where mechanical aptitude was a fact of life.

Finding, young people meeting these criteria are fewer and farther between than they used to be. Today the trend is to go to college rather than getting a skill or a trade. Those with the right attitude and aptitude are hard to find.

I have encouraged both of my sons, not to come into the family business per se, but to explore the idea of a vocational trade. I am of the opinion, that if the trend I see now continues, plumbers, welders, electricians, etc. will be a prized commodity and will be making more than their college educated peers. It is simply a matter of supply and demand.

In my business, we always get our person; it just takes more patience to find the right person for the job. That is what is most important. I don't think people understand or appreciate the unique personality and skill set it takes in today's high tech world to be a food equipment technician. I sure do and I count my blessing each and every day for the good fortune I have in the people I work with.