KEEP TECHS

FIND TECHNICIANS IN A SHORTAGE

Job boards are the most crowded place to look. Build a pipeline instead.

WHAT YOU'RE UP AGAINST

In the AGC and NCCER 2025 Workforce Survey, 92% of construction firms said they had trouble filling positions. Electricians were reported hard to find by 77% of the firms that employ them. The most-cited reasons were candidates lacking skills or qualifications (57%), new hires failing to show up or quitting soon after starting (48%), and lacking required credentials such as a license or clean background check (41%). That survey covers construction broadly, but home service owners will recognize the problem.

STOP WAITING UNTIL YOU'RE DESPERATE

Most shops start recruiting when someone quits. By then, you're under pressure and likely to settle. Recruit all year, and keep a list of people you'd hire if you could. Have coffee with a good tech who isn't looking. Stay in touch with people you passed on last year.

FISH WHERE OTHERS DON'T

Your own team. Referrals from good techs tend to bring in good techs. Pay a real bonus, half at hire and half after a set period.

Your suppliers. Your counter rep knows who's unhappy, who's reliable and who just moved to town.

Trade schools and community colleges. Show up in person. Offer to teach a class or host a shop tour. Have your younger techs do the talking.

High schools. Career days and shop classes pay off slowly, but very few competitors are there.

The military. Veterans bring discipline and often mechanical experience. BLS notes that military electrical experience may qualify someone for a shorter electrical apprenticeship.

Adjacent trades. Appliance repair, auto, maintenance and facilities workers already know how to diagnose and use tools.

Former employees. People who left on good terms may be ready to come back.

GROW YOUR OWN

Plumber and electrician apprenticeships commonly run four or five years, with about 2,000 hours of paid training each year, according to BLS. That's a long runway, and it's the most dependable supply you'll ever have. Start with helpers who show up on time and want to learn. Pay for schooling and tie advancement to their progress. Ask your state apprenticeship agency or a trade association what programs you can join.

WRITE AN AD PEOPLE WILL READ

Lead with what's in it for them. Say what they'll earn, in a realistic range. Describe the truck, the schedule, the on-call rotation and the path to move up. "Competitive pay and great team" says nothing. Include photos of your actual people. Some states require a pay range in job postings, so check yours.

BE FAST

Good candidates have choices. Respond within a day. Make the application short and mobile-friendly. Aim to go from first contact to an offer within a week or so. A candidate who's left waiting often takes the first offer that arrives.

INTERVIEW FOR WHAT YOU CAN'T TEACH

You can teach someone to braze. It's much harder to teach someone to show up on time and be kind to a stranger.

- Ask for a time they fixed something that went wrong for a customer.
- Ask what frustrated them at their last job.

- Have them explain something technical in plain English.
- Do a practical test for experienced techs.
- Check the driving record, licenses and certifications as allowed by law, and call references.

Apply the same process to every candidate, and ask an employment attorney to review your application and background-check steps.

SELL THE JOB HONESTLY

Tell them what's hard. On-call, attics and long days in peak season should come as no surprise. Early quits are expensive. Honest previews help keep the people who stay. Then deliver a great first 90 days, because recruitment doesn't end at the offer letter.

Sources: AGC and NCCER 2025 Workforce Survey; BLS Occupational Outlook Handbook.

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BEST PRACTICES: HIRING AND KEEPING GOOD TECHS

MAKE IT A HABIT

What good looks like

> You know your turnover rate and why people leave.

> Every new tech has a 90-day plan and a mentor.

> Pay, growth and recognition are clear and written down.

The habits

1. Hire for attitude and teach the trade, with a clear path from helper to lead.
2. Plan the first 90 days: ride-alongs, checklists and weekly check-ins.
3. Hold stay interviews with your best people before they think about leaving.
4. Make pay plans simple enough to explain on one page.

5. Use a fair scorecard, and coach before you correct.
6. Remove the frustrations that make techs quit, such as bad routes, missing parts and chaotic days.

Signs it's time to get help

- You lose more than one in five techs a year.
- New hires quit in the first few months.
- Techs complain about routes, callbacks or the office.

How one shop did it: Barron Heating AC Electrical & Plumbing (Ferndale, Washington). Built its own 15-week technician school with classroom, lab and field time, and takes six students per class. Nearly 40 graduates, retention above 90%, every graduate passing the NATE and EPA exams, and warranty callbacks reportedly cut in half. Contracting Business, July 15, 2026

Where we fit: We don't place techs. ProCall Field helps with what makes them stay: organized days, fair scorecards and training.

More on hiring and keeping good techs