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Contacts:

[Katie Juhl](#), ABA, (202) 789-0300 x130

[Kent Van Amburg](#), ASB, (609) 937-1519

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ABA, ASB Release New Study on Recruitment Trends and Best Practices in Commercial Baking

WASHINGTON, DC – The American Bakers Association (ABA) and the American Society of Baking (ASB) today released their joint study, *2021 Workforce Gap in U.S. Commercial Baking: Recruitment Trends & Best Practices*. Conducted in October 2021 by Cypress Research, the study assesses challenges and best practices for workforce recruitment in the U.S. commercial baking industry.

An update to 2016's, [Workforce Gap in U.S. Commercial Baking: Trends, Challenges and Solutions](#), the 2021 findings help baking employers better understand the current recruitment trends for hourly, skilled production employees and how they have changed in the past five years. The study also explores new in-depth industry data on the recruitment of drivers and hourly, unskilled production employees.

Expanding Recruitment Strategies

The top five recruitment challenges for commercial baking employers have not changed in the last five years. Identifying talent pools and building awareness about baking manufacturing careers have remained primary recruitment challenges for hourly skilled and unskilled production positions. However, baking employers have expanded their portfolio of recruitment strategies to address these challenges. In comparison to 2016, there has been a significant increase in companies using formal employee referral programs, social media channels, and virtual or in-person local career fairs to attract hourly, skilled production employees.

Baking employers are also seeking to reach new audiences who may not be aware of baking manufacturing careers. This outreach includes second chance workers who are being introduced to baking careers at growing rates. The number of baking companies with some or considerable focus on recruiting second chance workers has increased from 38% in 2016 to 78% in 2021.

Growing Branding and Culture

Baking employers are investing in strategies to foster a positive work environment and culture. Most companies reported implementing these strategies in several ways, including via internal company websites or social media channels to connect employees and encourage collaboration and teamwork. In addition, baking employers are growing awareness of their brands and the workplace cultures they foster by hosting company-specific career fairs, both in-person and virtual. In 2016, only 28% of companies were doing so, while in 2021, that has increased to 69%.

Efforts to generate awareness of company brands and baking manufacturing career opportunities have also strengthened the partnerships employers have forged with an array of educational, non-profit, and government organizations. The number of baking employers who have developed relationships with state employment agencies, two-year technical colleges, and local vocational high school programs has increased since 2016.

“The baking industry has been dedicated to introducing Americans across the country to rewarding baking manufacturing careers,” said Robb MacKie, ABA President and CEO. “Our industry’s most important ingredient is our workforce and this study gives baking employers new insights to grow this community of 800,000 essential employees.”

“We have seen baking companies adapt and innovate their strategies to find the most effective ways to reach candidates,” said Kent Van Amburg, ASB Executive Director. “As the industry continues to face extraordinary workforce challenges, developing research like this is a critical step in equipping companies with tools they need to support their recruitment and retention efforts.”

The *2021 Workforce Gap in U.S. Commercial Baking: Recruitment Trends & Best Practices* study was produced jointly by the American Bakers Association and the American Society of Baking, in conjunction with Cypress Research, as a resource for ABA and ASB Members.

The key findings are downloadable here. ABA members can obtain the full study by contacting Christina Donnelly at cdonnelly@americanbakers.org. ASB members can obtain the full study by contacting Kent Van Amburg at kvanamburg@asbe.org. Press can obtain the full study by contacting Katie Juhl at kjuhl@americanbakers.org.

About ABA

The American Bakers Association (ABA) is the Washington D.C.-based voice of the wholesale baking industry. Since 1897, ABA has represented the interests of bakers before the U.S. Congress, federal agencies, and international regulatory authorities. ABA advocates on behalf of more than 1,000 baking facilities and baking company suppliers. ABA members produce bread, rolls, cookies, crackers, bagels, sweet goods, tortillas and many other wholesome, nutritious, baked products for America’s families. The baking industry generates more than \$153 billion in economic activity annually and employs more than 799,500 highly skilled people. www.americanbakers.org

About ASB

The American Society of Baking is a community of baking industry professionals who have joined together to provide continuing education, networking opportunities and professional development. The members include commercial bakers, engineers, food technologists and the suppliers of equipment, ingredients, and services in the grain-based food industry.

Colleagues share knowledge, encourage and promote skill development and create resources that advance the industry and its workforce. The Society’s mission is to facilitate this interaction by promoting personal growth and professional development through education and collaboration. It is

through the interactions and contributions of our members that we foster mutually meaningful business relationships. Our education process is accomplished through the presentation of technical papers at our Annual Conference and MarketPlace, which is held the first week of March in Chicago.

About Cypress Research

Cypress Research is celebrating twenty years of partnership with a diverse range of clients in the U.S. food processing industry, including ingredient and equipment manufacturers, national trade associations and industry trade media. Our team leverages in-depth knowledge of the structure and context of businesses in the food industry to provide rich, data-driven insights into issues driving grain-based foods and other industry sectors. We specialize in industry-level trends, company brand positioning research, and identifying and monitoring KPIs of organizations' customer and employee experiences. Together with our clients, Cypress Research is here to inspire industry and company growth through insights.