

The Cause of Electrical Labor Shortages within Central California

Conclusion

In the Central California region, a majority of current electricians that were interviewed have experienced a prominent labor shortage with the exception of The International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers. IBEW attributes a possible electrical labor shortage to areas of construction that are more specialty. While teachers in the electrical industry have ranged from not experiencing any changes in enrollment status to experiencing the largest enrollment with 25-50 students. Students in the electrical trade program are mostly aware of the labor shortage with some outliers. Almost all students who answered were drawn into the industry due to familial pull, and had background knowledge of the industry. No students reported enrolling due to exposure from high school, and/or influence from high school staff. As for high school students, trades in the form of elective classes have recently been added to course catalogs in the Central California region. A majority of high school students have taken elective classes offered such as construction, welding, wood, and engineering design that are now being offered to students which shows that students are interested. While students are participating in these elective courses, they are not considering entering the workforce, nor are they aware about apprenticeship/trade school options. These courses are rather new, and are voluntary elective programs that are not required for a student to graduate. Although trade teachers and even members of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers reported high enrollment of students; in retrospect, 25-50 students enrolling in the program is considerably low in comparison to enrollment of community and four year colleges. It is clear there is a noticeable labor shortage, and lack of young individuals entering the trade. The root problem seems to stem from primary schools, and the push for students to attend four year colleges starting as early as elementary school, and persisting into high school where college counselors, spokespersons, and mandatory classes are provided for students leaving students unaware of opportunities and benefits within the trades.

Methodology

The research conducted was predominantly qualitative research. While there are past theories on this topic, new information was explored rather than testing past theories. This qualitative research was collected through primary sources in forms of previously published journals. Secondary sources are another form of research that were used that included newspapers and interviews.

Questions for current electrician / IBEW member

1. What made you first want to get into the electric industry? Prior to entering the industry, what was your perspective on working in the construction industry? Working specifically as an electrician?
2. How and/or why did you choose this career path?
3. What is/are the reason(s) you continue to work within the industry as an electrician?
4. What do you consider to be some of the negative aspects working in the industry?
5. Are you aware of the labor shortage within the industry, specifically electricians? How did you become aware of this if so?
6. If you answered yes to the above question, Why do you believe there is a labor shortage within this field?
7. What do you think should be done about the labor shortage that could benefit the industry?

Questionnaire for trade student

1. What made you want to get into the industry?
2. Did you have background knowledge prior to enrolling as a student?
3. Are you aware of a labor shortage within the industry?
4. Are you aware of the labor shortage within the industry, specifically electricians? How did you become aware of this if so?

Questionnaire for electrical trade teachers:

1. How did your career in the electrical trade begin?
2. What led to you becoming a teacher in the trade industry?
3. Do you believe there is a labor shortage within the industry, and if so, why do you think the labor shortage exists? specifically electricians? How did you become aware of this if so?
4. f you answered yes to the above question, Why do you believe there is a labor shortage within this field?
5. What do you think should be done about the labor shortage that could benefit the industry?
6. Do you see enrollment rates in the electrical trade program improving or declining?
7. What is the general attitude of students enrolling the program(expand) -proactive in choosing their profession, or reacting to the need to start working?

Questionnaire for current high school students:

1. What are your plans after high school?
2. Did your high school offer these programs to the student? wood , auto, metal, and welding. Have you ever had programs at your school that include trades such as welding, electrical, mechanical, and/ or wood work?
3. Do you know what trade schools are? If so, have you ever thought of going into a trade school?
4. Has anyone ever come and talked to you about these options?

Labor shortages within various trades in the construction industry have become a prominent issue throughout the world dating back to 2011. The negative effects due to lack of manpower affect construction personnel ranging from general contractors to manufacturers who are finding themselves struggling as many subcontractors are having to turn down work, which in turn affects general contractors timelines in projects- extending durations, and increasing costs. There has been general research done that has provided some insight, suggesting the root cause be attributed to the baby-boomer generation retiring, or a general lack of interest in the industry. This research paper focused on labor shortages within the electrical trade in Central California. By narrowing the parameters of research, less general, and more beneficial root causes will be uncovered. The objective of this research paper is to identify specific causes which in turn could lead to answers that will benefit members of the construction industry, trade schools, and electrical workers

Key Words: Labor, Trades, Shortage, Electrical Workers, Construction



If you had programs at your high school that include trades such as welding, electrical, mechanical, and/or wood work, have you participated in any of them?



112 responses

