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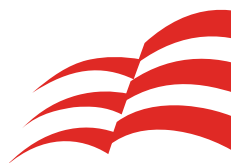
FINDING AND TRAINING TALENT IN THE RESTORATION INDUSTRY



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Introduction

According to Employment Background Investigations, recruiters are struggling with a lack of qualified and skilled professionals in the restoration industry with the current job market. Finding talent that is both experienced and willing to respond to the round-the-clock needs is tricky. Many firms are now seeking those who may be inexperienced but bring the right personality and work ethic for customer service. Training programs are plentiful in restoration, and the right firms know how to utilize best-in-class training programs to create a talent pool instead of wringing dry ones out. This paper will focus on what restoration companies look for when hiring and their resources in training restoration-focused employees and technicians.

Raw talent that is carefully groomed and nurtured holds the **key to success.**



Finding Trained Talent

Despite a deficit in talent, there are specialized resources for experienced job seekers and restoration HR teams. Specialized recruiting firms are now available for restoration professionals, vetting top talent, and confirming all required certifications. They focus on connecting restorers, laborers, estimators, project managers, and other vital roles with restoration companies. Unlike job boards, these firms screen and vet the candidates for you beforehand.

Restoration Personnel Source is a recruiting firm that covers both the United States and Canada. Employers can search for estimators, project managers, business developers, and other related roles.

OPS Staffing specializes in water restoration, fire restoration, disaster restoration, and insurance restoration industries.

Questpro.com focuses on insurance and risk management staffing.

Laborocity.com claims to use newer technologies in its vetting and hiring process, such as AI-enhanced pre-screening and machine learning outcomes.

Hiring a Restoration Technician

The work of a restoration technician takes a lot of technical skill and know-how. Still, while restoration firms look for experience, there are particular and important skills one can't acquire from training. According to Zippia, a career research organization, the top two most common skills found on a restoration technician's resume in 2020 were "Customer Service" and "Communication." The ability to communicate effectively with supervisors, co-workers, and customers to provide excellent customer service is in high demand. The best potential restoration technicians have strong soft skills (communication skills and work ethic), and they may have direct experience in the field. While a company with the right tools can train anyone willing to learn, customer service and communication are more difficult to teach.



Training Restoration Technicians

The most popular education source for certifications in the restoration industry is the Institute of Inspection Cleaning and Restoration Certification (IICRC), a non-profit organization for the Inspection, Cleaning and Restoration Industries. Since its beginnings in 1972, the IICRC has evolved into a global organization with more than 60,000 active certified technicians and over 6,000 certified firms worldwide. The scope and training provided by the IICRC have made it a leading industry standard; many resources on “Hiring a Restoration Crew” suggest asking the firm if they are IICRC certified. An IICRC-certified firm must provide education and training, leading to certification, for technicians.

Another leading source of certifications within the restoration and remediation industry is the Restoration Industry Association (RIA), a trade association of cleaning and restoration professionals offering education and training, technical support, and several certifications for technicians.

RIA oversees a variety of advanced restoration certification programs – Fire Loss Specialist (FLS), Water Loss Specialist (WLS), Content Loss Specialist (CLS), and Environmental Restoration Specialist (ECS). They also offer advanced programs, such as the Certified Mold Professional (CMP) Advanced Certification program. The CMP Certification emphasizes the interrelatedness of building systems and the predominance of situations where indoor environmental quality is impacted by multiple problems or contaminants. There is also the option of becoming a Certified Restorer (CR) through the RIA master certification program.

Investing in certifications through sources like RIA and IICRC for your restoration technicians ensures that your teams will always have the most up-to-date, safety-forward skills and best practices put forward in their work, improving outcomes for both the clients and the firm at large. Going above and beyond the minimum of required credentials lets the quality of your firm’s work speak for itself before the job even starts.



TECHNICIAN CERTIFICATIONS:

- **AMRT:** Applied Microbial Remediation Technician
- **ASD:** Applied Structural Drying Technician
- **BMT:** Building Moisture Thermography
- **CCMT:** Commercial Carpet Maintenance Technician
- **CCT:** Carpet Cleaning Technician
- **CDS:** Commercial Drying Specialist
- **CRT:** Color Repair Technician
- **FCT:** Floor Care (Hard Surfaces) Technician
- **FSRT:** Fire and Smoke Restoration Technician
- **HCT:** House Cleaning Technician
- **HST:** Health and Safety Technician
- **SSI:** Introduction to Substrate and Subfloor Inspection
- **LCT:** Leather Cleaning Technician
- **OCT:** Odor Control Technician
- **RCT:** Rug Cleaning Technician
- **RFI:** Resilient Floor Inspector
- **RFMT:** Resilient Flooring Maintenance Technician
- **RRT:** Carpet Repair and Reinstallation Technician
- **SCI:** Senior Carpet Inspector
- **SMT:** Stone, Masonry and Ceramic Tile Cleaning Technician
- **TCST:** Trauma and Crime Scene Technician
- **UFT:** Upholstery and Fabric Technician
- **WFMT:** Wood Floor Maintenance Technician
- **WLFi:** Wood and Laminate Flooring Inspector
- **WRT:** Water Damage Restoration Technician

What Roles are Specific to Restoration Firms

The roles within restoration companies are dependent on the size of the organization and the services they provide. Larger, full-service firms usually have more positions than smaller ones, including dispatchers, engineers, marketing teams, etc. A restoration firm's services also tend to fall into three main divisions: Restoration, Environmental and Construction. Given the nature of the restoration industry, these divisions must work together to ensure performance is by the book, and project delivery is completed to the highest standards.



RESTORATION

All positions within this division focus on returning properties to pre-damage condition. They remove residues or odors, repairing damage while preserving undamaged components. A restoration technician assesses damage, identifies what can be saved, and clears out material that cannot be salvaged. Roles within the “restoration” division are commonly required to hold certificates in specialized areas, like those from IICRC or RIA. Restoration technicians are also detailed and careful, as disasters often cause structural damage or expose hazardous materials such as black mold or asbestos.



ENVIRONMENTAL

In a larger view, the “environmental” division encompasses all things Environmental, Health, and Safety (EHS). Working with restoration and construction crews, these team members help mitigate dangerous and hazardous exposures by providing guidance and hands-on techniques on proper handling, removal, and disposal of materials. All positions within this division strictly adhere to the laws, regulations, and guidelines of EHS oversight: OSHA, HIPAA, EPA, CDC, and others.



CONSTRUCTION

Those within the “construction” division of this industry are contractors, project directors, project managers, and tradespeople that help assess and rebuild properties. These are your plumbers, carpenters, masons, electricians, drywallers, painters, etc. Construction crews without restoration experience are often employed once an area is remediated to expedite the rebuilding process. As mentioned earlier, the three divisions must work together in the restoration industry. It's likely this division will have restoration and environmental experience and certification in addition to their trade, or have experience working with restoration and EHS crews on other projects.

Internal Training Programs

While training is only one facet of the on-boarding process for new hires, it is a crucial and continuous process for all staff throughout employment, both on- and off-site, to teach, reteach, update, and stay informed. On-site training provides hands-on, technical knowledge, including operation of technologies and heavy machinery, job-site safety, proper removal or installation of components during restoration and construction, and environmental, safety, and health training. Off-site training tends to focus on educational courses and the inner workings of the company: HR meetings, certification courses, CPR training, and informational lectures and seminars. Both styles of training work in tandem to round out the necessary knowledge and updates employees need.

Typically, an IICRC-certified organization can conduct technical training internally if the resources are available. Otherwise, a local trainer can come to the company to hold the courses. The same goes for OSHA training. An individual within the organization who possesses an OSHA Trainer Card has the ability to conduct instructional classes, or a local OSHA representative can step in. EHS departments typically maintain a standard of retraining and updating employees on EHS-relevant matters every two years.

UNFORESEEN DISASTERS CAN HAPPEN AT ANY TIME, AND THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC REMINDED PEOPLE THAT NEW DISASTERS CAN LEAVE BUSINESSES AND PEOPLE UNPREPARED. AS THE INDUSTRY OBTAINS NEW KNOWLEDGE, TECHNOLOGIES, AND INFORMATION, NEW AND IMPROVED TRAINING AND PRACTICE METHODS ARE IMPLEMENTED INTO THE WORKPLACE.



How are Licenses Renewed/Updated

IICRC certifications must be renewed annually, while RIA certifications are renewed every three years. Restoration firms regularly check with local administrations and programs for the specifics of their certification and license renewal requirements. OSHA-10 and -30 cards do not technically expire in their validity and do not require classes to be retaken, but it is crucial to renew and update training. OSHA changes its standards frequently. It benefits both the restoration firm and client to have technicians with updated training, as workplace and individual safety measures are reassured. Stale safety knowledge can be just as dangerous as not receiving OSHA training at all.

Those in the administrative roles of human resources, safety management, and training are typically in charge of reminding employees, and the company as a whole, when expiration dates are nearing and assisting with scheduling the correct recertifications. State and local laws allow for fines, business closures, and other reprimands if the required credentials are not kept up to date. The consequences can be severe, even detrimental to a company's continuance. It is crucial that everyone be aware of expiration dates and when renewal fees are due to avoid any unwanted penalties.

Investing in a Growth-Mindset

When potential employees or existing employees are willing to learn and grow, how do restoration firms invest in them? They offer well-rounded training and incentives upon hire, covering certification costs and providing hands-on training. When new hires stay with the job for over six months post-certification, companies offer retention bonuses and further training necessary for advancement while performing annual or bi-annual evaluations to sharpen their skills. Technicians, and all employees in general, always feel they have a mentor. With the increase in natural disasters and aging buildings, there is a significant growth in the demand of restoration services in our present and our future. Given the right tools and training, talented individuals will continue to accelerate in the restoration business.





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