



# THE FLEXIBILITY REPORT

Engaging and Empowering Sweden's new generation of shift workers

A study from Quinyx, the workforce management expert

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# FOREWORD

FROM ERIK FJELLBORG, CEO AND FOUNDER – QUINYX

It's no exaggeration to say that the blue-collar and service industry workforce is the beating heart of the economy – the manual and service workers powering industries, keeping food on the shelves, transporting goods and keeping our hospitals running.

Yet Swedish businesses are facing a perfect storm that threatens to restrict access to this vital segment of the workforce and put the brakes on economic growth and productivity.

While the demand for these workers in Sweden continues to grow, dissatisfaction and low levels of engagement mean that many employers struggle to recruit and retain them.

Meanwhile, the nature of the workers who are powering Sweden's economy is changing rapidly. The rise of the service sector means that 'traditional' blue-collar roles are just one element of this increasingly diverse workforce. And as new technologies emerge, certain manual tasks are becoming automated, meaning employers must find a way to recruit and equip workers with a new 21st century skills.

We don't claim to have the silver bullet for firms facing this looming staff shortage crisis. But we do know - from first-hand experience that there are some effective levers for employers to improve worker satisfaction, increase productivity and reduce churn.

In Sweden, it has never been more important for employers to do all they can to attract, engage and retain blue-collars and shift workers - by offering greater flexibility, better up-skilling opportunities, and developing more attractive and formalized career paths.

This has the potential to enhance the productivity and happiness of the workers who are the driving force of the Swedish economy.



# A WORKFORCE WITH CHALLENGES

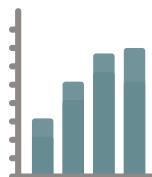
**68%**

of employers in Sweden with flexible workers, irregular scheduled workers and shift workers struggle to recruit these workers



**19%**

The dip in business growth that staff shortages can cause



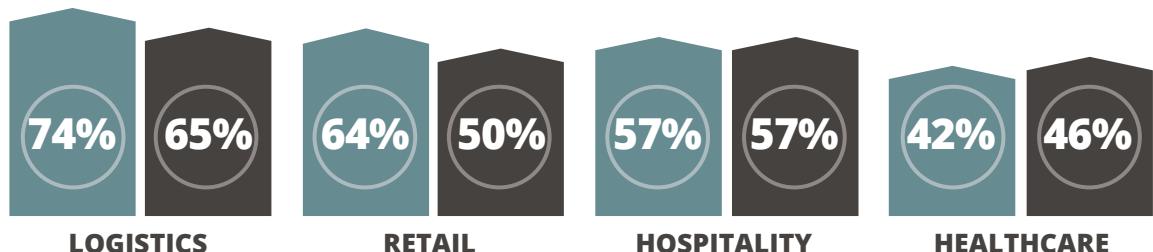
**17%**

The dip in productivity that staff shortages can cause



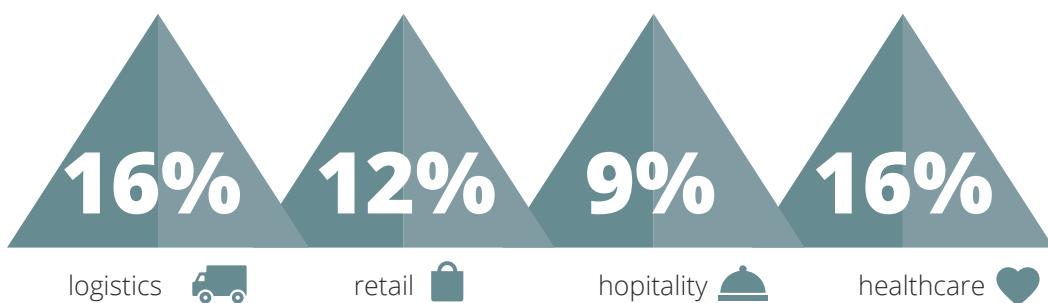
Despite their continued importance to the economy, employers report challenges when it comes to both recruiting and retaining this vital segment of their workforce. Recruitment and retention issues were found to be more acute in industries such as Logistics, Retail and Hospitality.

- Struggle to recruit
- Struggle to retain



Statistics are calculated across the Nordics, rather than Sweden as an individual nation.

Employers told us that skills shortages, resulting from poor retention and recruitment of manual and elementary service workers, result in a drop in business growth.



Employers also estimate that these skills gaps result in an



dip in productivity.

## OTHER INTERESTING STATS:

The average tenure for flexible workers, irregular scheduled workers and shift workers in businesses in Sweden is

**5 YEARS  
2 MONTHS**

**46%**

The average percentage of flexible workers, irregular scheduled workers and shift workers hired, that require upskilling once inside an organisation

The impact a lack of skills in flexible workers, irregular scheduled workers and shift workers has on a business

**34%**

Having to outsource production

**26%**

Increased workload for other staff

**26%**

Increased operating costs

# HOW CAN EMPLOYERS OFFSET THIS STAFF SHORTAGE?

There are some levers at their disposal to help them attract and retain manual and elementary service occupations in a more restricted labour market.

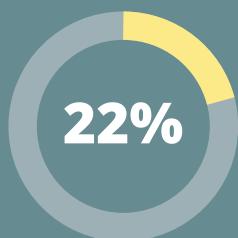
To explore these levers, we asked employers about the biggest grievances among these workers and the main reasons why they quit their jobs.

There is a long way to go, but our research suggests that there is appetite from employers to make meaningful changes within their businesses and become more attractive for people who fuel business each and every day.

## Reasons why flexible workers, irregular scheduled workers and shift workers left companies



**Unsociable hours & lack of flexibility**



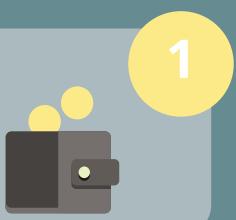
**Low pay**



**Lack of career progression**

## INCREASED PAY

We know that increasing pay can be difficult for businesses working to tight margins, but it is within their power to positively influence some of these other factors.



## FLEXIBILITY

Using technology to offer greater flexibility or help staff navigate unsocial hours can be easy-to-implement and cost-effective. And, taking some simple steps to support workers as they work their way up the career ladder can also help employers manage their talent pipeline for other segments of their workforce.



of shift workers and blue-collar workers currently work under flexible conditions



of workers don't have this option



of employers recognise the importance of flexibility for this group



with over a quarter (28%) recognising that it is very important

# RECOMMENDATIONS

Kitchen workers, cleaners, lorry drivers store assistants and warehouse workers are all an important part of the Swedish workforce as a whole – and will continue to be in the future.

Due to staff shortage, employers of these workers in Sweden should – and can – take steps to protect themselves from staff shortages and retention issues in the future, and build a happier, more productive workforce.

So, what can employers do to look after their pipeline of these workers for the years to come?

## CREATE AND COMMUNICATE CAREER OPPORTUNITIES

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**When asked to identify one of the largest obstacles to engaging with workers in manual and elementary service role**

One quarter of employers said these workers viewed their work as a job, rather than a career

**26%**

And stated, work is not as engaging as it might be in other roles.

**32%**

But these very workers are a brilliant asset for employers looking to find ways to future-proof their talent pipelines across their organisation. Their experience and understanding of the day-to-day operations of a company can be invaluable when given the support and opportunity to move up the ranks.

To realise this benefit, employers need to invest more in this segment of their workforce – giving them the training and upskilling opportunities required to improve career progression. It is also important that employers communicate what's on offer – ensuring that workers understand what's theirs for the taking.

## LEAN ON TECHNOLOGY

The blue-collar and shift workers section of the workforce can often be large and disparate, meaning that traditional methods of staff engagement - face-to-face team meetings, training sessions or socials – can be difficult to execute.

The good news is that our employer survey uncovered some smart uses of technology that can make up the miles when it comes to engaging and retaining these workers. Some options include using online training modules to help staff upskill from afar or using apps/online platforms to communicate faster and more effectively.

### Best uses of technology

- ▶ Online training modules to help staff upskill
- ▶ Apps to communicate faster and more effectively

## BE FLEXIBLE...

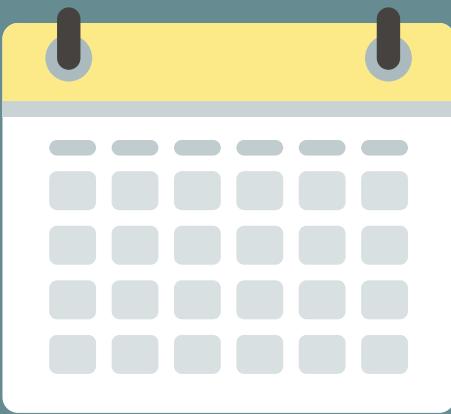
Flexibility remains key to attracting, engaging and retaining workers. Although flexible working has become more prevalent across all segments of the workforce in recent years, more can always be done.

For workers in manual and elementary service roles in particular, offering more flexibility when it comes to swapping shift work or greater visibility of staffing schedules can make a huge difference to job satisfaction.

## ...ABOUT FLEXIBILITY

flexibility will mean different things for different workers. As we've seen, no workforce is a homogeneous group – but one made up of workers with all types of experience and backgrounds. This means that groups – something that employers should take note of.

A one-size-fits-all strategy for flexibility won't work. Instead, employers should find ways to give their workers a voice and a choice, delivering the type of flexibility that would work best for them. It is only by starting a conversation with their employees that employers can find this out.



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