

Industry Insights for Equipment Dealerships

Prepared for dealership
leaders across Canada by



Introduction

The equipment industry is evolving.

Dealerships today are not just managing sales and service schedules. You are hiring in a competitive labour market, training people who could potentially leave, and leading teams with new expectations around communication, culture, and support.

This report brings together real insights from professionals who work closely with equipment dealerships across Canada. It includes recruiting expertise from **Wilson Wong**, Founder of Equip Hire and Modern People Solutions. Wilson has led HR and recruiting for some of the largest equipment dealerships in North America and now supports dealers across Canada in hiring technicians, leaders, and corporate staff.

You will also hear from **Arlen Motz**, a leadership consultant who works with owners and managers across the agriculture and dealership world to strengthen communication, culture, and team performance.

For benefits strategy, this report draws on guidance from **Colin Ferguson**, a Senior Benefits Consultant with Quinn Advisory Group, who helps employers design competitive, sustainable plans that support recruitment and retention.

This is a practical guide designed to help you hire better, lead better, and keep your best people.

The Technician Shortage and Cost of Turnover

The number one challenge facing dealerships today is finding and keeping qualified technicians.

What The Numbers Show

Over the next 10 years in Canada:

- 26,500 technician roles will need to be filled
- 16,400 of those positions are from retirements or turnover
- Only 26,100 new workers are expected to enter the trades
- In North America, this technician gap contributes to more than 2.4 billion dollars in lost revenue every year

Why This Hurts Dealerships

Most dealerships compete for the same people using the same approach: job ads, signing bonuses, and matching wages. But turnover is what hurts the most.

Replacing one technician can cost around half of their annual salary when you include:

- Recruiting and interviewing time
- Training and onboarding
- Lower productivity while they learn
- Mistakes, rework, and customer delays
- Impact on culture and morale

Turnover is not just a staffing problem. It is a profitability problem.

What Successful Dealerships Do Differently

Some dealerships are attracting talent faster and keeping people longer. They are not doing it through higher wages alone.

They Build Relationships Before Hiring is Urgent

- Hosting lunch-and-learns at trade schools like Olds College
- Offering pre-apprenticeships to high school students through programs like Careers
- Inviting students to tour the shop and shadow technicians

They Grow Talent From Within

- Promoting wash bay employees into apprentices
- Offering tool allowances and paid certification support
- Creating career paths to roles like lead tech or shop foreman

They Take Onboarding Seriously

Dealerships with the lowest turnover usually have clear onboarding plans with:

- A daily schedule for the first week
- A mentor or “work buddy”
- A checklist of key tasks and systems
- Check-ins during the first 90 days
- Time to ask questions and actually learn the job

People stay where they feel guided, supported, and not left to figure it out on their own.

Leadership and Culture

Insights from Arlen Motz of Agribusiness Mindset

Culture does not come from BBQs or staff lunches. It comes from leadership: how leaders listen, communicate, and handle pressure.

Common Leadership Gaps

1. Lack of curiosity

Leaders often assume employees are the problem instead of asking:

- What part of this issue might I be contributing to
- What am I not seeing or not willing to hear

2. Telling instead of showing

Leadership is not about authority. It is about modeling behaviour.

- Owning mistakes
- Treating employees with respect
- Following through on commitments

3. Avoiding or mishandling conflict

Many dealerships either ignore conflict or let it build until it explodes. Healthy conflict means addressing issues clearly and respectfully while also taking responsibility.

Why It Matters

When leadership avoids feedback or hard conversations, trust disappears. When leaders listen, communicate, and stay consistent, culture becomes stronger and turnover decreases.

Workforce Shifts and Training Pressure

Generational Changes in the Workforce

It comes down to different generations having different expectations.

Baby Boomers and Gen X

- Are loyal, tend to stay long term
- Value stability and consistency

Millennials

- Average tenure is 5 to 7 years
- Expect purpose, growth, and flexibility

Gen Z

- Turnover rate is around three times higher than older generations
- Want feedback, clarity, mentorship, and mental health support
- Leave quickly if they do not feel supported

Why Training is Becoming Harder

- It takes around five years to fully train a technician
- Equipment technology is advancing faster than people are being trained
- Many technicians leave shortly after training to accept slightly higher wages elsewhere
- This creates hesitation to invest in training, and increases wage pressure across the industry

Why Benefits Matter More Than Ever

Insights from Colin Ferguson of Quinn Advisory Group

Benefits used to be a checkbox. Today, they influence whether someone applies, stays, or leaves.

RBC Research Shows:

- 54 percent of employees aged 55 to 65 would switch jobs for better benefits
- 73 percent of employees aged 18 to 34 would do the same

Why Benefits Carry More Weight Now:

- Cost of living and inflation are rising
- Employees want financial security, not just an hourly wage
- Mental health support matters to younger employees and parents
- Older workers care about retirement, savings, and stability
- Technicians talk to each other about which employers support them best

Beyond Basic Benefits

A basic health and dental plan is no longer competitive on its own. Employees want to feel like the company is investing in their future, not just paying them for today.

Benefits Influence:

- **Attraction** - candidates choose employers who support their families and financial well-being
- **Retention** - people stay when they feel valued and secure
- **Culture** - when benefits include mental health and wellness, people feel safer being honest about stress instead of hiding it

Smarter Benefits and Stronger Culture

How Dealerships Can Use Benefits to Stand Out

Instead of offering a standard “health and dental package,” the dealerships who stand out are building benefits that feel personal and long-term.

What This Looks Like:

- Rewarding years of service with retirement plans or tenure-based perks
- Reviewing and benchmarking benefits every one to two years
- Communicating wages and benefits separately so employees actually understand the full value
- Using DPSPs (Deferred Profit Sharing Plans) to let employees share in company profits
- Giving small flexible allocations that employees can use where they need it most:
 - Health spending account
 - Wellness account
 - RRSP contribution
 - Tool allowance

Culture That Goes Beyond Pizza Lunches

A positive culture is not built through social events alone. It shows up in how people are treated daily.

Strong Dealership Cultures Often Include:

- Sharing real employee stories and career growth, not generic marketing quotes
- Celebrating long-term employees and community involvement
- Giving employees space to ask questions or speak up
- Following through on promises, even the small ones

Final Thoughts & Next Steps

The industry is changing, but your biggest advantage will always be your people. Dealerships that invest in trust, training, and long-term support are the ones that keep talent, serve customers well, and stay profitable.

You do not need a perfect plan to begin. Small changes make a real difference when you help new hires feel supported, give people room to grow, and lead in a way others want to follow.

Ready to take the next step?

Hiring or HR Support:

Contact **Wilson Wong** at wilson@mpeoplesolutions.com

Leadership Guidance and Coaching:

Contact **Arlen Motz** at info@arlenmotz.com

Employee Benefits Strategy and Planning:

Contact **Colin Ferguson** at colin@quinnadvisory.ca

Want To Make Hiring Easier Right Away?

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