



PHOTOGRAPHS COURTESY OF AUTOBELL CARWASH

Strategies for Labor Shortage

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Some washes nurture and honor employees.

WHEN IT COMES TO DEALING WITH TODAY'S LABOR CRUNCH, CARWASH OWNERS ACROSS THE COUNTRY ARE FEELING THE PAIN OF DEALING WITH THE REALITIES OF TODAY'S DWINDLING SUPPLY OF WORKERS.

John Lynch of Dolly's Car Wash in Ellicott City, Maryland, an exterior-only tunnel wash (choice of touchless or cloth), with self-service bays with vacuums, is frustrated with his current labor situation.

When asked what innovations he is trying to handle the problem, he says "It's something I'm struggling with. I wish I had some answers or creative ideas and I just don't. I wish I could invent robots that would solve the problem."

"My biggest challenge is keeping this

place properly staffed – we have a staff of about twelve to fifteen people – and we have to get the employees, train them, and then keep them trained."

Lynch employs high school students – "A lot of them have never been employed before and don't know much about working yet." He also has some college students and retired adults.

In the carwash industry, "location, location, location" is crucial in terms of availability of a competent workforce.

Henry Weinschenk of Express Carwash, has been in the carwash business since 1979. He owns two full-service carwashes in Charlottesville and Hampton, Virginia, and he sees firsthand the difference location can make. His Charlottesville carwash suffers from a lack of

enthusiastic employees – they used to be able to hire a lot of local college students but now, he says "there are over 300 restaurants in Charlottesville. Outside of New York, we must win the prize for the number of restaurants. College students would rather be waiters or bartenders where they can make real money. And kids are different now – their families are richer and they are more spoiled. We offer scholarships to local college students, but few people apply for them."

His core staff – supervisors and managers – tend to be older, permanent employees. For the line workers, "we have an elaborate system of incentives. We don't allow tipping, but customers are given a quality control card to check off whether they are satisfied with