Opening the door to great talent

Employers are inadvertently contributing to their own talent shortages and holding many workers back.

Between 2000 and 2020, workers Skilled Through Alternative Routes (STARs) lost access to 7.4 million jobs that historically opened pathways to upward mobility. We identify 30 jobs to reverse this trend and help employers overcome talent shortages.

Over two decades, doors closed to STARs

Historically, STARs have achieved upward mobility by moving from low-wage entry level jobs to higher-wage Gateway and Destination jobs. Our research shows that STARs’ share of these jobs has declined over the past 20 years.

A problem of exclusion.

STARs are doing jobs they are not eligible to apply for.

Employers may believe that a four-year degree is a non-negotiable prerequisite for their jobs, but the truth is many STARs currently work in those very jobs. For example, 28% of Business Operations and Management specialists are STARs right now, proving they have the skills to fill those roles. And yet, in 2021, 88% of job postings for those roles required a degree, unnecessarily screening out qualified STARs. Imagine the talent employers could access if they simply removed the degree requirement from their job descriptions.

These lost opportunities for STARs are missed opportunities for employers too.

The U.S. labor market added 17.2 million new Gateway and Destination jobs over the past two decades. If employers hired as they traditionally do, STARs should have filled 9.2 million of those jobs. In fact, they only filled 1.8 million of them. For all workers—10 million jobs—requirements to supplement lost opportunities for STARs.

STARs did not have access to these jobs because employers set their own minimum qualifications. This demonstrates that many upward opportunities are missed when employers set unreasonably high entry requirements that do not reflect the on-the-job skills needed to perform those jobs.

To learn more about how and why you should hire STARs, visit opportunitatwork.org today.

Download the report to see all 30 jobs.