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Special Report

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Jonathan Gordon, Fire & Industrial Marketing Manager at Nightstick, highlights how precision-engineered illumination helps firefighters lead successful operations

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Solving the technician training dilemma

William Chaney, CEO at ServiceTrade, shares insights from the 2025 Technician Insights Report on workforce shortages and retention strategies for fire protection businesses

The fire protection industry is experiencing a critical shortage of skilled technicians. Estimates suggest that 14–20% more technicians are needed to meet current demand, and an aging workforce magnifies the problem—26% of experienced professionals are nearing retirement. Compounding this challenge, the industry itself continues to grow at about 4.1% annually, further increasing the need for qualified labor.

ServiceTrade's 2025 Technician Insights Report surveyed 650 fire and mechanical service technicians to learn more about their daily frustrations, priorities, and job expectations. According to the survey, technicians value clear scheduling, efficient workflows, and career development opportunities. They also want reduced paperwork, better communication with customers, and tools that enable them to do their jobs effectively.

In this interview, William Chaney offers actionable insights into how businesses can navigate these workforce issues. By adopting the recommendations revealed in the research—such as providing more training programs, embracing technology, and focusing on retention—fire protection companies can stay competitive in a growing industry.

Can you introduce yourself and ServiceTrade's role in the fire protection industry?

I'm William Chaney, CEO of ServiceTrade. For over a decade, our company has focused on helping commercial service contractors, especially in fire and life safety, solve operational and workforce challenges. We offer a technology platform that includes mobile applications for technicians, scheduling tools for office staff, and integrations to streamline compliance paperwork. The overall goal is to reduce busywork and empower businesses to be more profitable while delivering great service. Fire protection is core to our mission. We closely collaborate with customers to refine the software and make sure it addresses the everyday problems that technicians and office staff encounter.

What were the biggest takeaways from the 2025 Technician Insights Report that fire protection business owners need to know?

One takeaway is the depth of the skilled labor shortage. The data confirms what many in the industry feel—that hiring and retaining good technicians is an ongoing hurdle. Another key point is the aging workforce. With a large percentage of experienced techs on track to retire soon, companies can't just rely on the status quo. They have to cultivate new talent.

Third, technicians highlighted their frustration with administrative tasks. They want more time spent on the hands-on work that drew them to this field. For owners, that means rethinking processes to eliminate or automate repetitive jobs. Lastly, many



> **"Young workers often look for purpose-driven careers. Fire protection offers the chance to be part of something that genuinely keeps people safe."**

technicians are looking for training and advancement opportunities. A significant portion of our survey participants indicated they'd stay longer at a company that invests in their professional development.

With hiring being the industry's top challenge, what do technicians say would make them more likely to stay in their jobs?

They pointed to several things. Work-life balance was a recurring theme—technicians want predictable schedules and fewer last-minute disruptions. They also value competitive pay, but that's just one piece of the puzzle. Many respondents emphasized more structured career paths and employer-sponsored training. They want to refine their skills and see clear advancement opportunities.

At the same time, technicians consistently mentioned the importance of a supportive environment. Employers who invest in tools, scheduling software, and strong communication channels generally have happier teams. People tend to stay where they feel effective and recognized for their contributions.

How do inefficiencies like paperwork, scheduling issues and miscommunication affect fire protection technicians' job satisfaction?

They take away from a tech's core motivation—fixing and preventing fire safety problems. The survey shows that nearly half of the technicians are frustrated by communication challenges, especially around scheduling or last-minute changes. If a worker arrives at a jobsite only to realize they have incomplete notes or missing parts, it's not just unproductive—it's demoralizing.

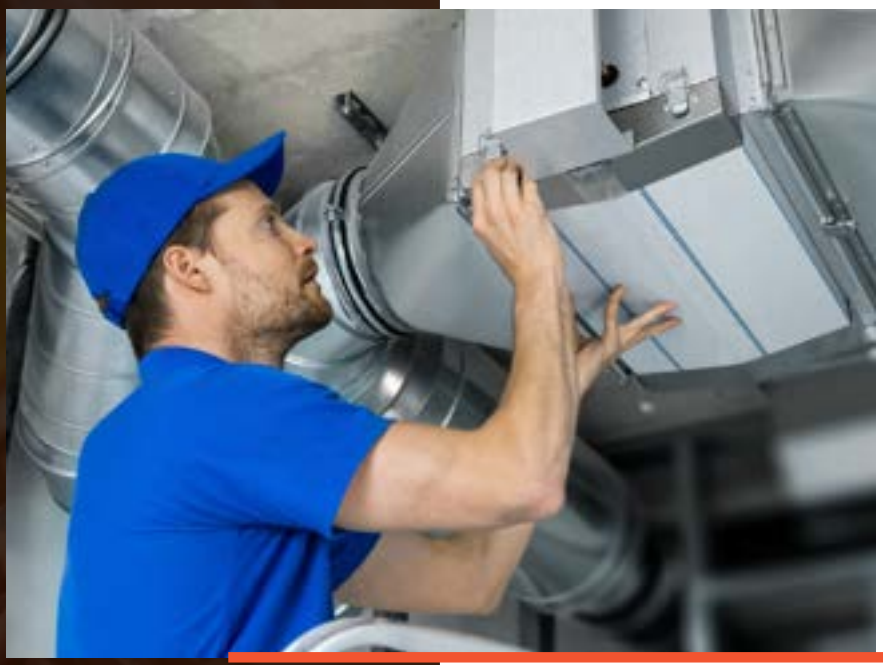
Inefficiencies hurt morale, can push top performers to look elsewhere, and ultimately hinder a company's ability to deliver top-quality service.

What steps can fire protection companies take to improve technician retention and morale?

First, acknowledge that many of these problems are solvable with better processes. Streamline scheduling by planning out preventative maintenance visits well in advance. That stability means technicians know where they're ▸

going and what tools or information they need. Second, embrace clear communication—from daily job assignments to training updates—using mobile apps or other platforms so everybody stays on the same page.

Recognition is another big factor. Technicians want management to see their hard work and reward it, not just financially but with genuine appreciation, regular check-ins, and a path for promotion. Finally, investing in training goes a long way. Offering internal workshops or covering the cost of external certifications tells your team you're invested in their future. It's a powerful retention strategy.



How can technology help fire protection businesses streamline operations and keep technicians engaged?

Well-implemented technology can smooth out almost every friction point. Scheduling software gives technicians a clear picture of their day or week, cutting down on the phone calls needed to confirm locations or tasks. Mobile applications let them pull up the full service history of a device or building on the spot, so they don't waste time scouring paperwork or calling the office.

> **"With a large percentage of experienced techs on track to retire soon, companies can't just rely on the status quo."**

The workforce is aging - how should fire protection companies prepare for this?

They should capture and transfer knowledge before those seasoned pros leave. One effective approach is pairing newer hires with senior technicians in structured mentorships. Not only does this help the newcomers learn specialized skills, but it fosters a sense of legacy—those retiring can feel good about passing on their expertise.

Another useful strategy is building partnerships with local trade schools. Offer internships or entry-level roles that let students earn while they learn. Emphasize the relatively short time it takes to become fully qualified, compared to traditional four-year degrees. Combine that with a stable career path and competitive pay, and it becomes an appealing option for many young people.

What role does training and professional development play in building a strong, reliable technician workforce?

It's huge for both retention and service quality. From the survey, around 30% of respondents said they want additional employer-sponsored training. That includes apprenticeships, continuing education for code updates, and specialized certifications from bodies like the National Institute for Certification in Engineering Technologies (NICET) or OSHA.

The immediate benefit is more skilled technicians who perform better in the field, but the intangible benefit is trust. When workers see that their employer invests in their development, loyalty goes up. They're also more likely to recommend the company to peers, which can help with recruiting.

How do you see the fire protection workforce evolving, and what should companies do to stay competitive?

To remain competitive, businesses should focus on four key areas:

1. Support technicians' professional goals: Provide clear career paths, from entry-level to advanced roles.
2. Leverage technology: Streamline scheduling, inspection workflows, and customer communication. A robust platform can increase technician field performance by 50% and reduce administrative burdens by 12%.
3. Recognize and reward effort: Financial compensation is important, but so is giving credit where it's due. Showing genuine appreciation fosters loyalty.
4. Active recruitment and training: Partner with trade schools, sponsor apprenticeship programs, and fund professional certifications.

By embracing these strategies companies can stand out as employers of choice, retain more profitable customers, and keep their operations agile in a dynamic sector. ■