Factories' hiring woes seen likely to continue

The Associated Press

The struggle among manufacturers to fill open jobs is likely to continue because of the shrinking labor pool and growing need for workers with high-tech skills.

Those are conclusions in a report this month from the National Association of Manufacturers; the NAM is a trade group for manufacturers that includes thousands of small businesses.

The report written by NAM chief economist Chad Moutray noted that in a survey in March manufacturers said their inability to attract and retain talent was their biggest concern, as it was for the previous two and a half years. A quarter of those surveyed said they've had to turn down new business opportunities because they didn't have the staffers they needed to fulfill the contracts.

There were 477,000 job openings in manufacturing companies in February, up from 436,000 a year earlier, according to the Labor Department. That represented nearly 7.5 percent of the total number of openings in the private sector. It was down moderately from the more than half a million openings in August that Moutray cited in his report.

The greatest number of job openings were in some of the biggest manufacturing subsectors: transportation equipment, chemicals, computer and electronics products, and machinery. Those industries accounted for nearly two-thirds of the openings, according to Moutray. But while those industries turn out staples like cars and cleaning products, their job openings tend to be high-tech.

"The manufacturing sectors that are generating the most job openings have tended to be highly technical in nature, requiring specialized and advanced training," the report says. The workers that manufacturers are trying to recruit are also being sought by other companies as well as the government and universities; that contributes to the manufacturing sector's struggles.

The report was based on data collected in 2018.

NRC GROUP MOVES BASE FROM LI TO HOUSTON

BY KEN SCHACHTER
kenneth.schachter@newsday.com

NRC Group Holdings Corp., a global provider of environmental cleanup services to the oil industry, has moved its headquarters from Great River to Houston, according to government filings.

The move follows a series of acquisitions, a public stock listing and recent executive turnover.

NRC, with 1,564 employees worldwide as of Dec. 31, did not immediately respond to requests for comment. It was unclear how many Long Island employees would be affected by the revised status of the Great River facility.

Shares of NRC Group rose 0.36 percent to $8.46 at the close of trading Monday.

In March 2012, J.F. Lehman & Co., a Manhattan private equity firm, acquired Great River-based National Response Corp., founded in 1992. In May 2015, J.F. Lehman acquired a controlling interest in another environmental services company, Houston-based Sprint Energy Services LP.

The two acquisitions were merged under the National Response Corp. umbrella and sold to Wilson, Wyoming-based shell company Hennessy Capital Acquisition Corp. III for $662.5 million in cash and stock in a transaction announced in June.

When that deal was announced, a Hennessy spokesman said NRC's headquarters would remain in Great River.

After the sale closed, Hennessy changed its name to NRC Group Holdings and the company began trading on the NYSE American exchange under the symbol NRCG.

In February, the company announced that Paul Taveira, president of NRC Group Holdings, had resigned from all positions with the company as part of "ongoing efforts to further integrate the business and drive operational efficiencies."

On Friday the company announced it had appointed Brad Dugas as senior vice president, waste disposal services, following the resignation on April 8 of Robert V. Nelson III as president of waste disposal services.

NRC Group, which has worked on cleanup efforts such as the BP Deepwater Horizon oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico in 2010, also provides environmental and cleanup services to industrial, marine and rail transportation customers.

NRC Group was listing its "principal executive offices" as 3500 Sunrise Hwy., Great River, on Securities and Exchange Commission filings as recently as February, but in March switched to Houston. The company, however, used a "New York" dateline on a recent news release.

In the quarter ended Dec. 31, NRC reported revenue increased 15 percent to $107.3 million compared with the prior year's period. Net loss was $45.8 million, or $1.83 per share, compared with net income of $7.7 million, or 35 cents per share in the previous year. Excluding one-time deal-related costs, however, net income was $2.2 million, or 9 cents per share in the December quarter.

Damianos Realty honored at awards dinner

BY DAYSI CALAVIA-ROBERTSON
daysi.calavia-robertson@newsday.com


ALEXANDRA E. DAMIANOS

Damianos Realty Group of Smithtown reinvented this commercial building on Motor Parkway in Islandia.

Commercial real estate brokerage Damianos Realty Group of Smithtown took a Long Island building that looked like "it could've doubled as a set for 'Miami Vice' " and turned it into a luxe office space. As a result, the firm took home the developer of the year award at the 24th annual Long Island Real Estate Dinner last week.

The event was hosted by the Association for a Better Long Island and the Commercial Industrial Brokers Society at the Heritage Club at Bethpage.

Damianos Realty earned the award for its "purchase, renovation and successful reinvention" of a commercial building at 1377 Motor Pkwy. in Islandia, said Kyle Strober, executive director of the Association for a Better Long Island.

The company invested some $12 million in renovations in the 170,00-square-foot building, transforming it from a nearly vacant office center into a structure that is now about 96 percent leased.

X. Cristofer Damianos, principal at Damianos Realty, said he appreciated the recognition from his peers.

"When we started the project, the walls were painted in awful neon pinks and greens, there were 70-foot-high palm trees and an old waterfall in the lobby that made everything smell musty."

Also at the Wednesday dinner, two commercial real estate brokerages shared the "most ingenious deal of the year" award. The honor was presented to Scott Berfas and Jack O'Connor, of Newmark Knight Frank, and David Pennetta and Kyle Burkhardt, of Cushman & Wakefield, for the $12 million sale of a 43,600-square-foot industrial property in Melville.

The four worked on the deal for 336 S. Service Rd. between buyer Haugland Group and seller Harvest Real Estate Services. Strober said the brokers were able to revamp the site, turning an industrial warehouse into office space.

"The Haugland Group, whose business is mostly west of Long Island, was considering leaving the region for New Jersey," he said. "But this reimagination of the space convinced the company to stay here."