State of the Market Report

Recruiting and Retaining Gen Z Technicians



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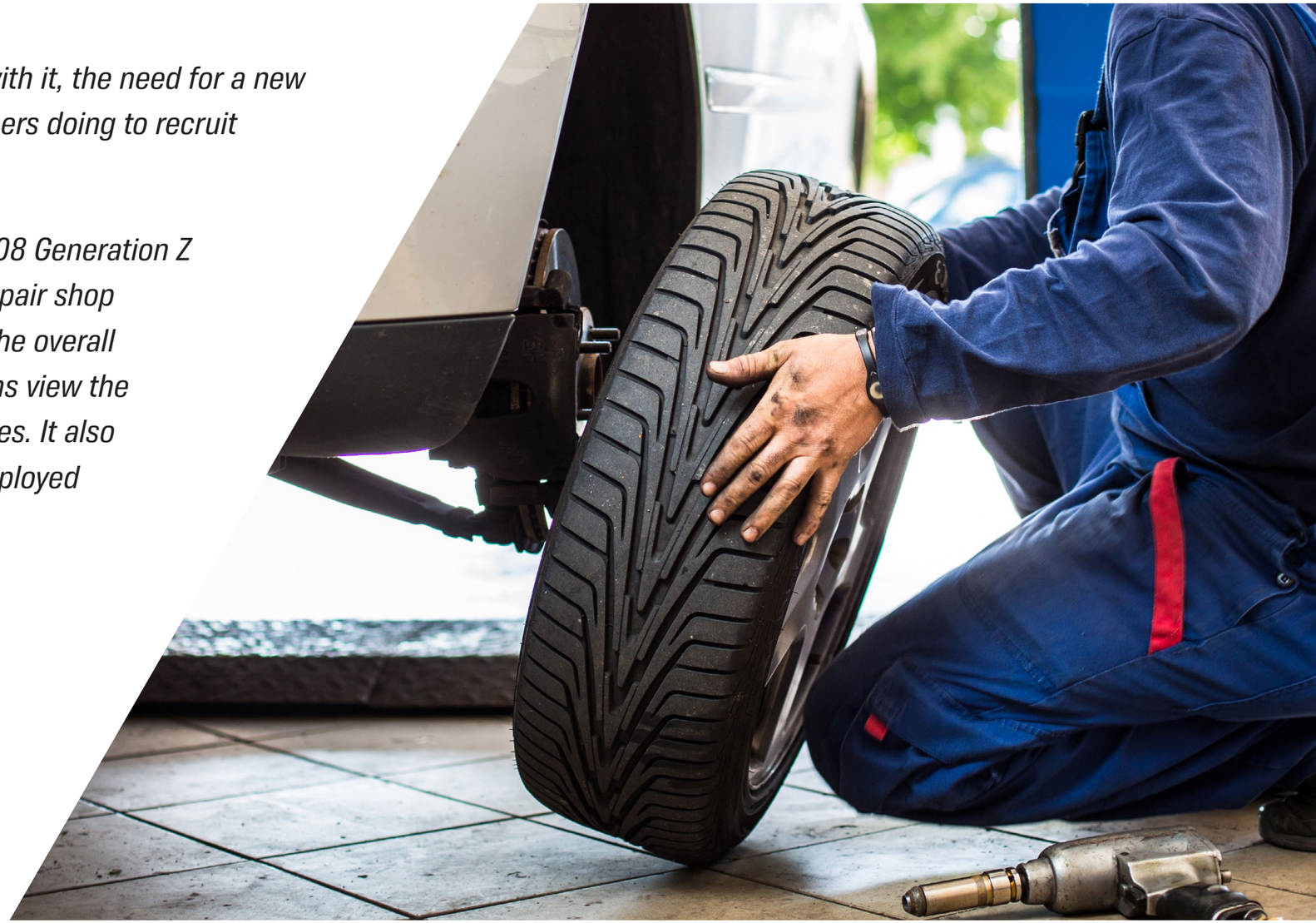


Introduction

The automotive industry is undergoing rapid change, and with it, the need for a new generation of technicians is increasing. What are shop owners doing to recruit young talent, and how effective are their efforts?

In May of 2025, Endeavor Business Intelligence surveyed 308 Generation Z automobile technicians (ages 18-28) and 300 automotive repair shop owners in partnership with AutoZone. This study captures the overall atmosphere of how both shop owners and Gen Z technicians view the current state of the industry and their current responsibilities. It also examines the recruitment and retention methods being employed and their effectiveness.

This survey reveals the differences and similarities about how shop owners and Gen Z technicians view training opportunities, pay, shop recruiting and retention, service areas, technology, and job satisfaction.



Gen Z, the Up-and-Coming Generation

Gen Z is commonly referred to as the “tool belt generation.” This nickname is attributed to many Gen Zers choosing to skip the traditional college route, opting for trade schools or entering the workforce immediately after high school. This study finds those statements to be accurate, and with a high job satisfaction rate — 92% of Gen Z technicians responded that they were either very satisfied or extremely satisfied in their current role.

Shop owners value loyalty in their employees, and despite Gen Z technicians being in the early stages of their careers, the data is encouraging. Gen Z employees are staying in the industry, gaining knowledge while doing so, and proving to be more marketable to shop owners. Sixty-eight percent of Gen Z technician respondents reported that they have worked in the industry for three years or more.



Transitioning Away from an Aging Workforce

Many automotive industry leaders have been reaching the age of retirement. As this trend continues, the need to hire new personnel in shops is evident. The data also reflects an aging population of shop owners, with 58% of those surveyed being over the age of 50, and 35% older than 60.

Shops must prepare for the transition ahead. The age gap between those recruiting and the Gen Z technicians being recruited is posing a challenge. When shop owners were asked about the largest internal challenges they faced while growing their business, 48% responded that attracting younger technicians (aged 18-29) was very or extremely challenging. Shop owners ranked both attracting younger technicians and replacing an aging workforce higher than almost all other possible responses, signifying that these issues are on their minds.

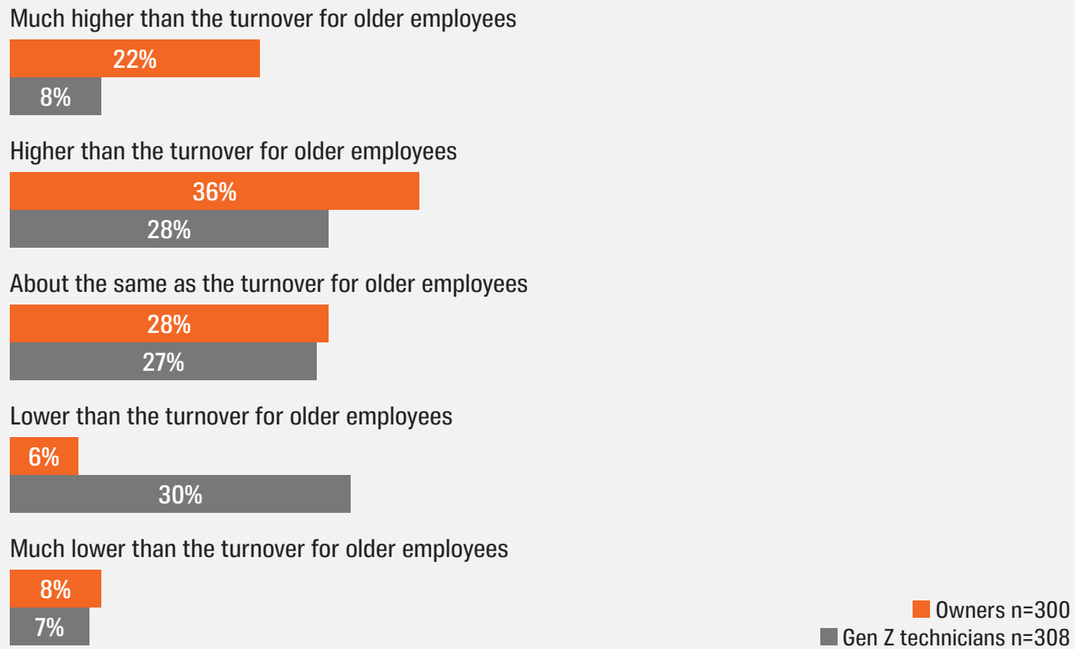


Shop Owner Recruitment and Retention Methods

The industry is ready for the new generation of technicians. Data shows that shop owners are focused on offering opportunities for training and competitive pay. The top training methods shop owners reported were on-site, hands-on, and workshops. Seventy percent of shop owners also reported offering training opportunities to attract new technicians to their shops. These responses align well with what Gen Z technicians are requesting from employers. With the ongoing evolution of the industry, training and education will become increasingly important for employees, particularly those in Gen Z.

Retention continues to be a sore subject in the industry. Most shop owners do not view Gen Z technicians as being as loyal as other generations. Fifty-eight percent reported that they felt like the turnover rate for Gen Z technicians was higher or much higher than that of technicians from older generations. When Gen Z respondents were asked the same question, the distribution was much more even, indicating that Gen Z feels they are as loyal as any other generation.

At your shop, do you feel like the turnover rate for technicians under 29 years old is...



Digital Platforms Open the Door to Gen Z Technicians

As the world continues to become more digital, the data shows that shops can recruit Gen Zers by increasing their online presence. Websites and job search engines are two of the most common ways Gen Z technicians find jobs. The data shows it can pay off to advertise online and on media platforms like LinkedIn and Glassdoor to attract younger talent. In order to stay relevant, shop owners need to explore recruiting strategies outside their comfort zone.

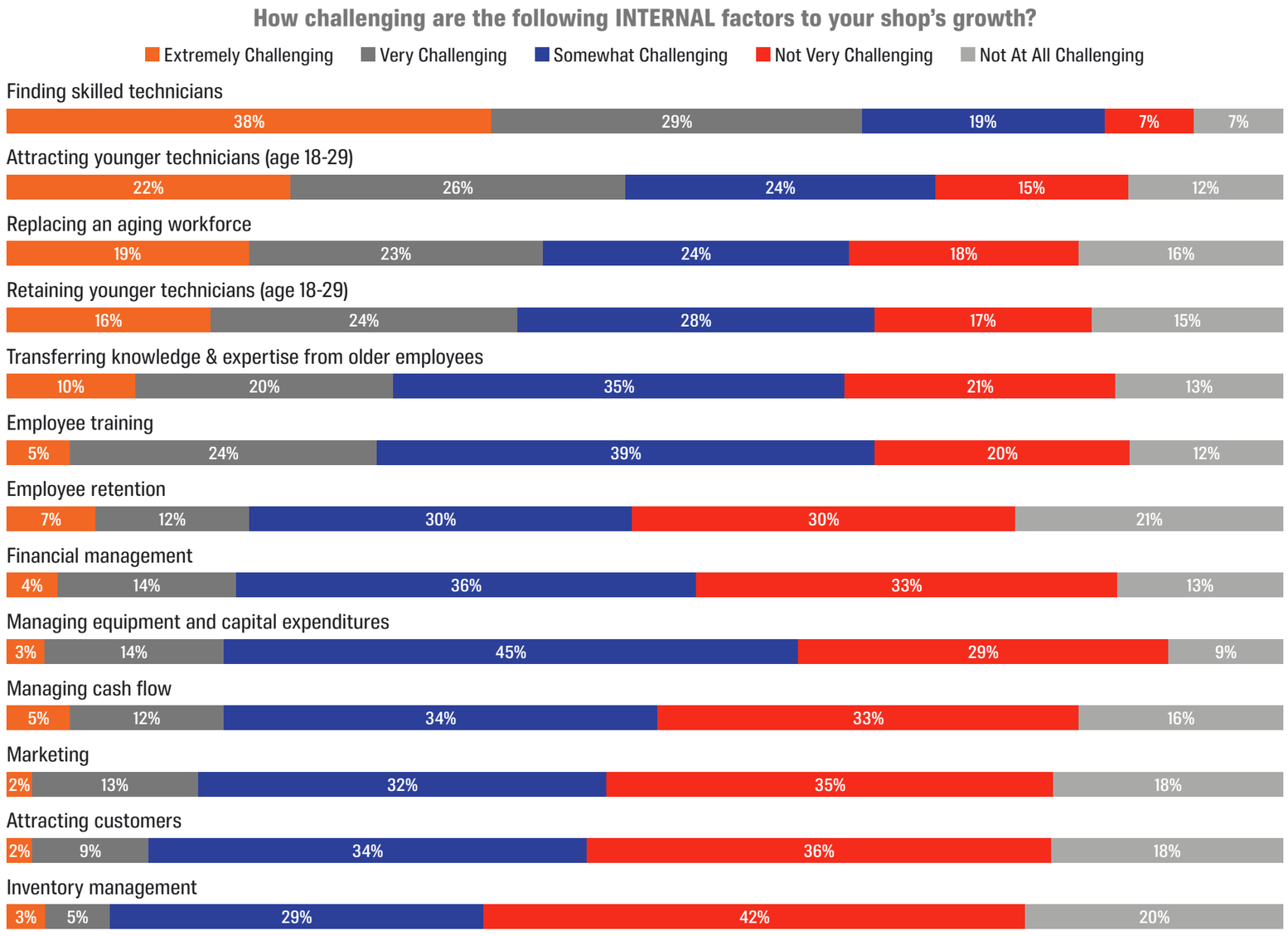


Current Gen Z Recruiting and Retention Trends

Shop Owner Recruiting Challenges

The automotive industry has changed significantly over the last few decades, and hiring experienced technicians is becoming difficult. Two of the top three challenges reported by shop owners for internal growth are listed as “attracting young technicians” and “replacing an aging workforce.” Two other internal challenges that owners ranked as very or extremely challenging were finding skilled technicians (67%) and retaining skilled technicians (40%). Shop owners are struggling to hire and retain technicians from Gen Z and are also having issues transferring localized knowledge from senior to apprentice technicians.

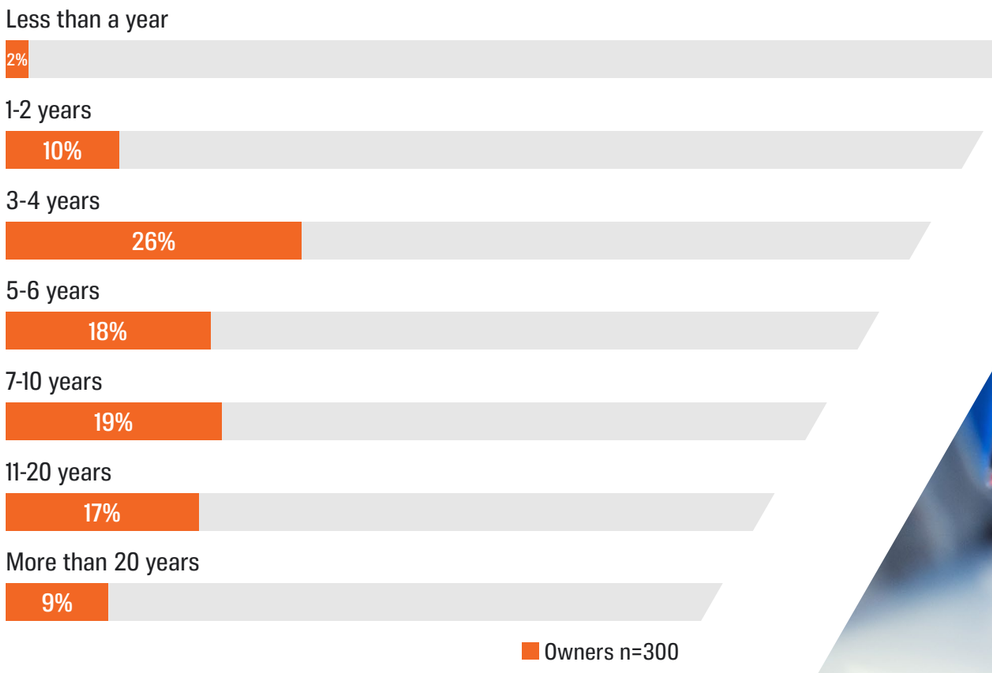




Owners n=300

Gen Z technicians should be assured that there is some job security in the automotive field. Sixty-three percent of shop owners reported that, on average, their technicians have stayed with their shop for at least five years, with 45% reporting that their technicians have stayed with the shop for at least seven years. This is promising news for Gen Z technicians entering the automotive workforce, as 82% of Gen Z technicians surveyed cited job security as a top reason for selecting a place of employment.

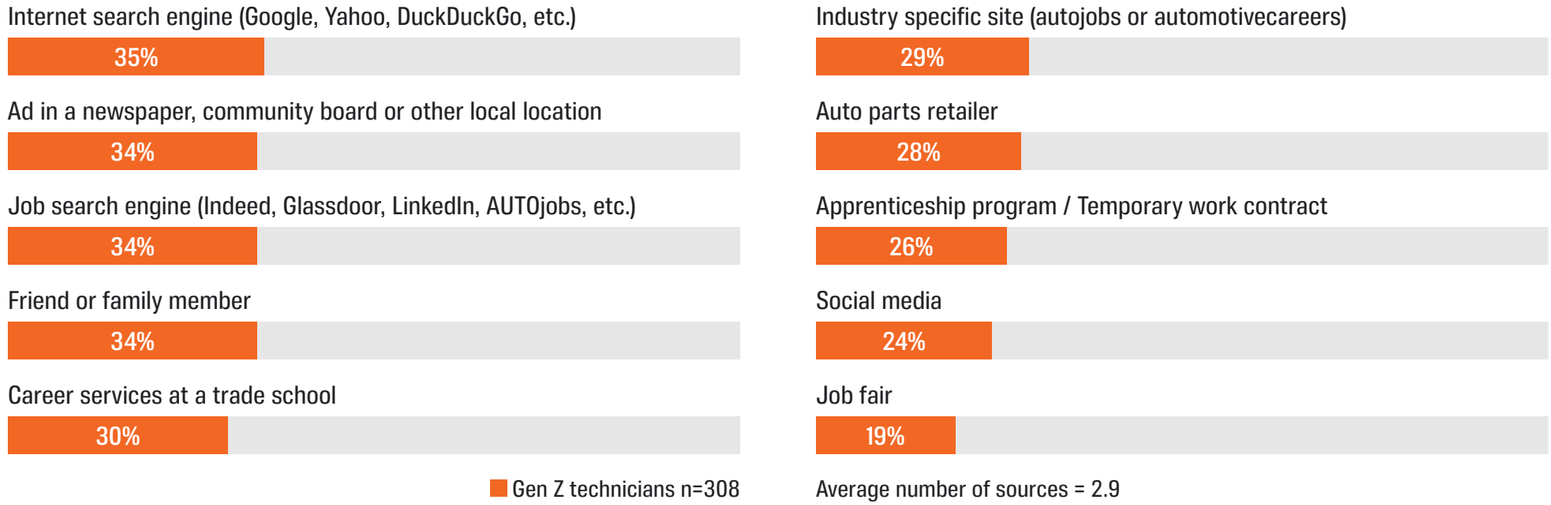
On average, roughly how long do technicians stay with your shop?





While searching for jobs in the field, Gen Z technicians took a few different approaches. Thirty-five percent of Gen Z technicians found their current role through an internet search engine, and 34% found their role on a job search engine, such as Indeed or Glassdoor. Some are still using traditional methods to find jobs, with 34% reporting that they found their current position through a local posting or newspaper advertisement. Another 34% found their current job through a friend or family member. Shop owners currently feel more comfortable recruiting new technicians with traditional methods, but as Gen Z technicians continue to grow in demand, advertising new positions online could make the difference in finding top talent.

Where did you learn about your current job?



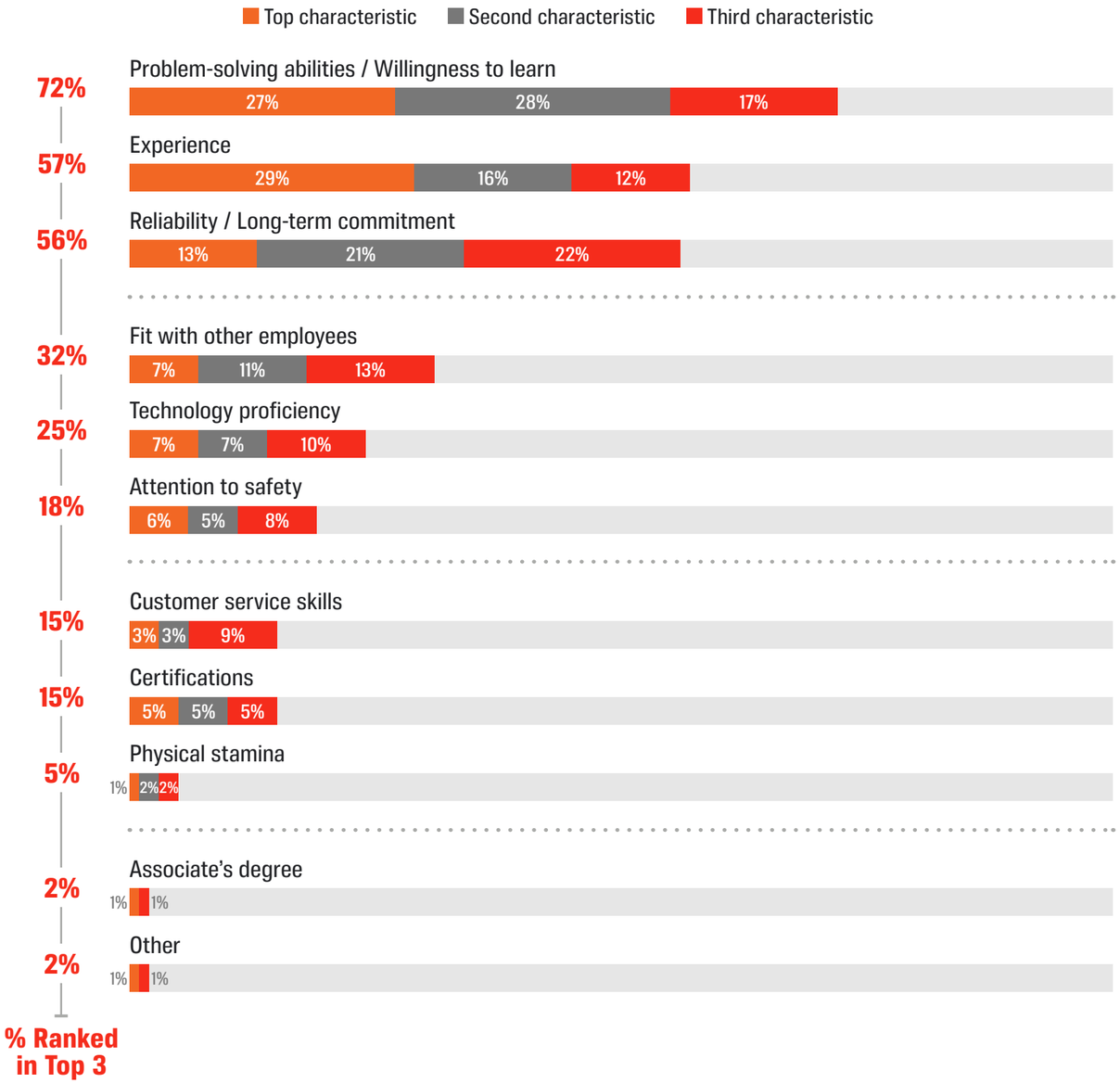


Gen Z Technician Skills

There is noticeable overlap between the skills that shop owners value and the abilities Gen Z technicians bring to the table. Gen Z has proven to be very hands-on, reporting that they enjoy learning technical content, which makes them ideal hiring candidates for automotive repair shop owners. When Gen Z technicians were asked why they chose their career paths, their responses reflected an interest in technical content and the automotive industry.

When shop owners were asked to name the top three characteristics they look for when recruiting new technicians, their responses aligned closely with the interests of Gen Z. Shop owners most frequently selected "problem-solving ability," with 72% placing it in their top three. "Experience" followed closely at 57%, while 56% focus on "reliability and long-term commitment." Gen Z technicians, as shown in their responses, are passionate about the industry, have the potential to be long-term and loyal employees, and value training and acquiring specialized skills (see page 10). Incoming Gen Z technicians should have a long-term path in the industry, as well as an advantage when transitioning into a technical environment.

Thinking about hiring new technicians, what are the TOP THREE characteristics that you look for in prospective technicians?

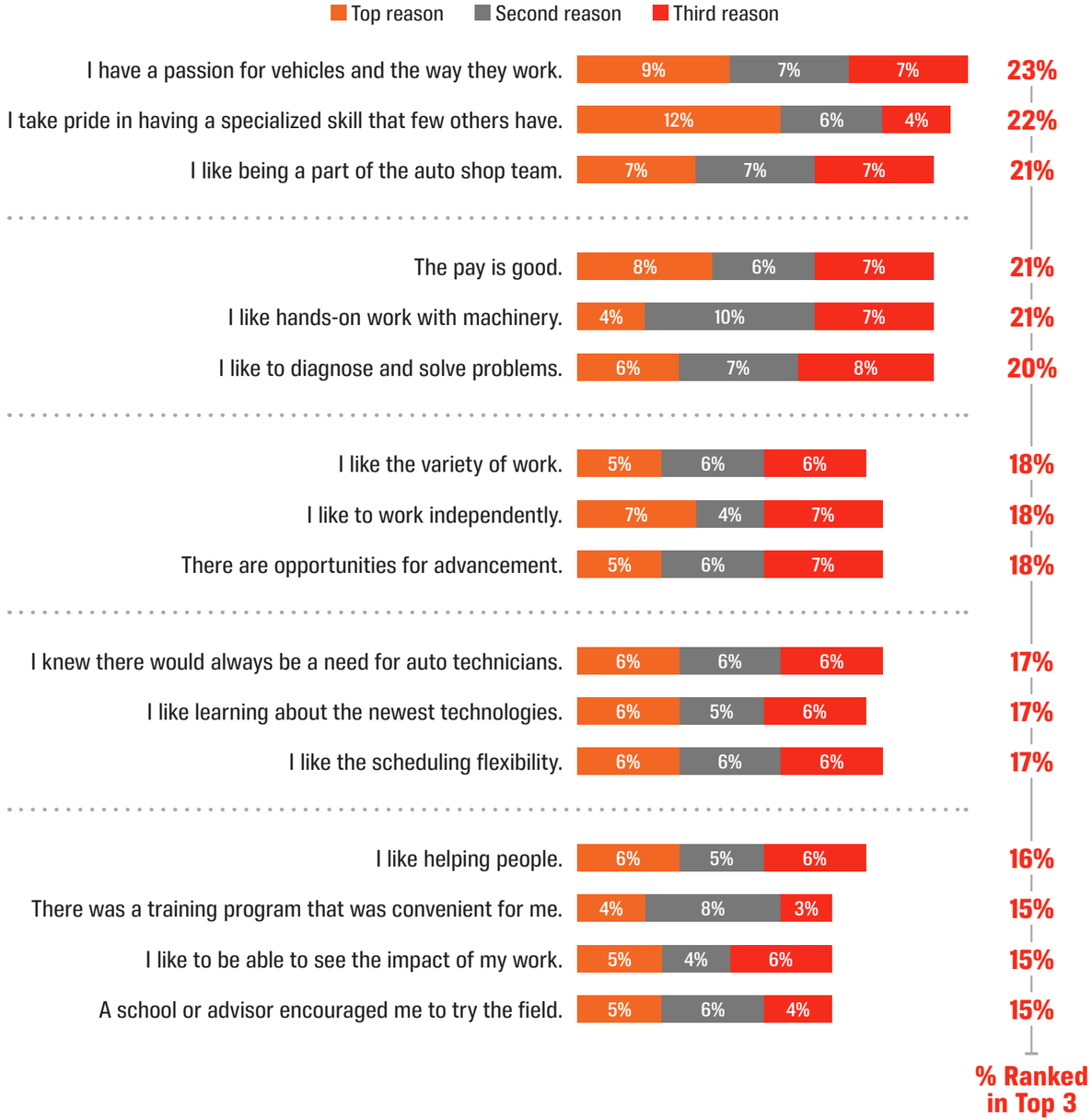


Gen Z technicians are energetic and driven, traits that are valuable in the industry. Twenty-three percent of technicians reported that their passion for vehicles and learning the details of how they operate was one of their top three reasons why they became automotive technicians. Twenty-two percent of Gen Z technicians reported that knowing a specialized skill was another top motivator as well. This data shows there is a strong correlation between training offered in the current work environment and Gen Z's core values and strengths.

Gen Z technicians notice that shop owners are trying to create an environment that is welcoming to technicians and encourages long-term job retention in the shop. Twenty-one percent of technicians reported that fair pay scales and a team-based environment were top reasons for becoming an automotive technician. Gen Z technicians are hopeful that shops will not only pay them a decent wage, but also offer a positive team-like environment. Shop owners should note that Gen Z technicians like working in a social environment where people are friendly.



What were the TOP 3 reasons you decided to become an auto technician?



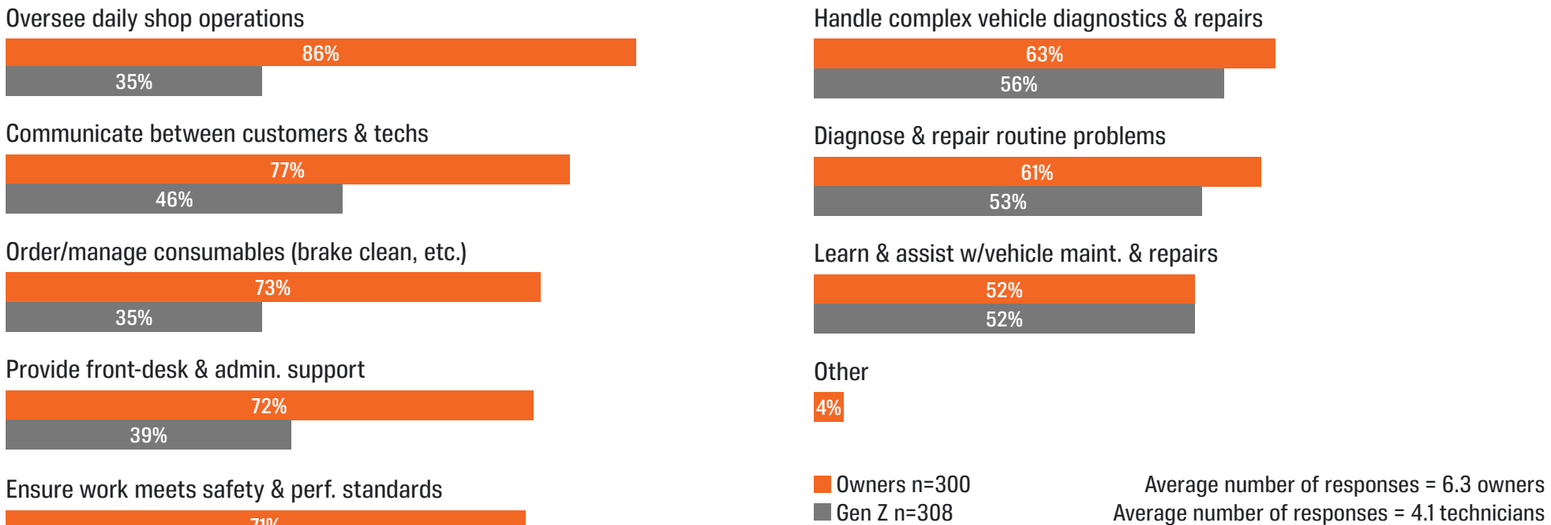
Shop Owner and Gen Z Technician Tasks

Shop Owners and Gen Z Technician Job Functions

As they continue searching for new technicians, shop owners are filling in the gaps by multitasking at work. Shop owners were asked to select which functions they perform daily in their shop. Out of the nine possible selections, owners selected an average of six tasks. Some tasks fit into everyday owner responsibilities, such as “overseeing daily operations” or “communicating between customers and technicians.” However, data also shows that shop owners are spending a significant amount of time working on customer cars as well. Shop owners are doing far more than just managing daily operations; they are active in the repair process. Owners reported that 52% assist with vehicle maintenance, 61% diagnose and repair routine problems, and 63% perform complex diagnostics. This highlights the hands-on role many owners play in day-to-day shop work.



Which of the following functions do you perform on a DAILY BASIS within your shop?

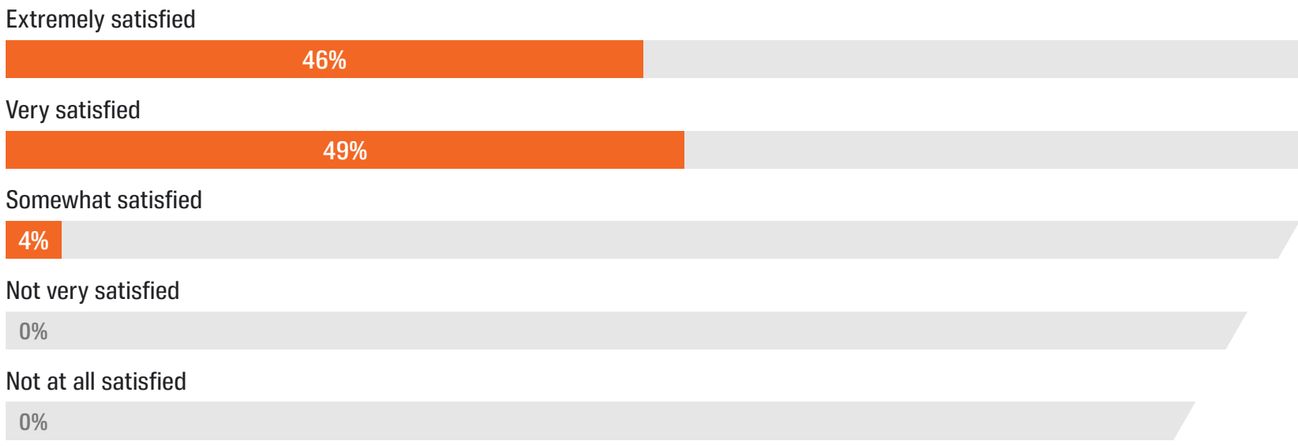


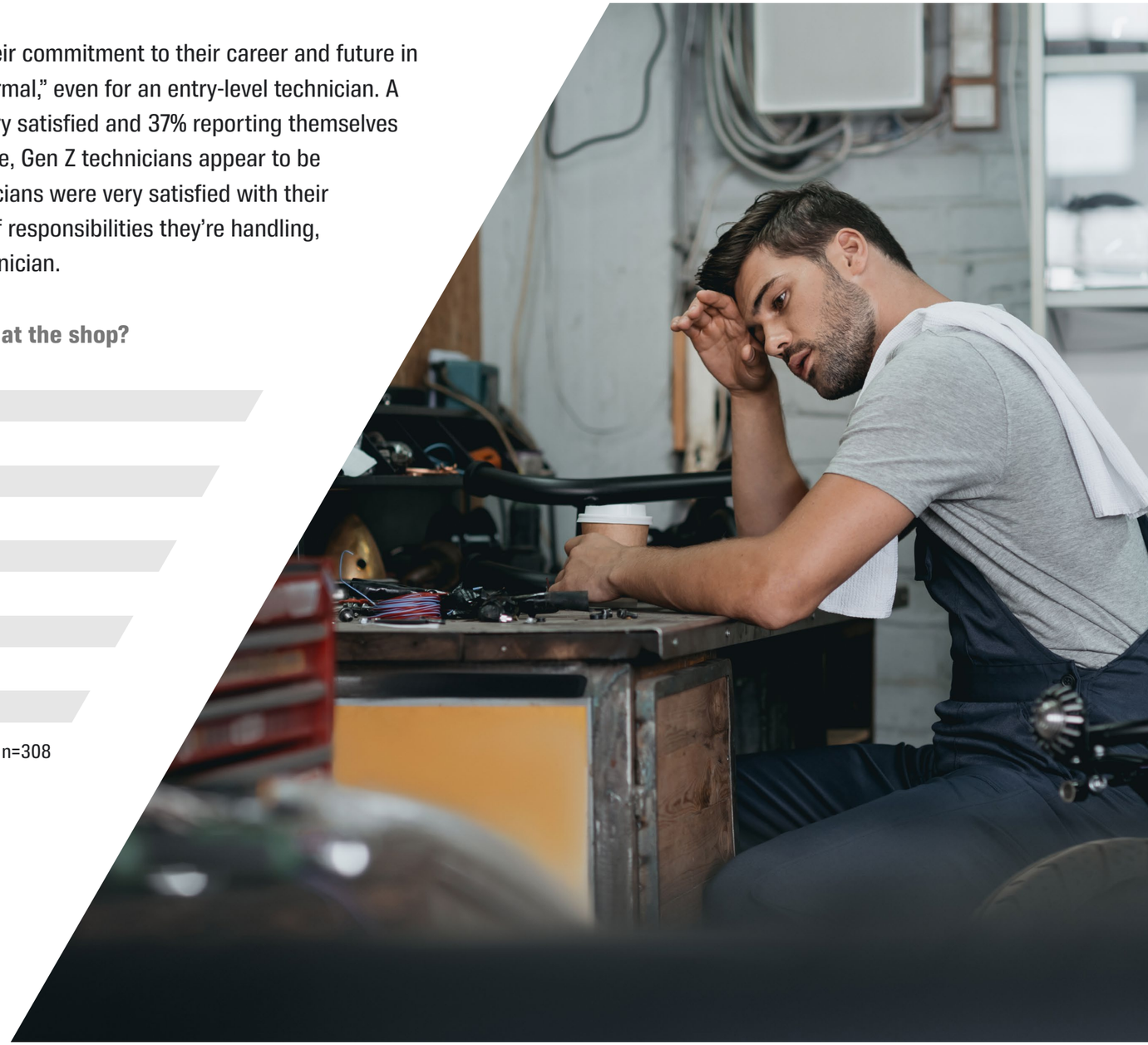
Gen Z technicians are also taking on extra responsibilities in the shop. When Gen Z technicians were asked the same questions as shop owners about job functions, they responded that they are performing an average of four functions in the shop at any given time. This is a significant amount of responsibility for a technician with limited tenure in the shop. Gen Z technicians are also completing tasks not defined under the role of “technician.” Forty-six percent of Gen Z technicians reported communicating between customers and other technicians, while 44% were responsible for ordering and managing parts inventory. Thirty-nine percent also reported providing front desk or administrative support. Gen Z is ready to take on extra tasks and continue expanding their current skill sets, including tasks that fall outside the general definition of their roles.

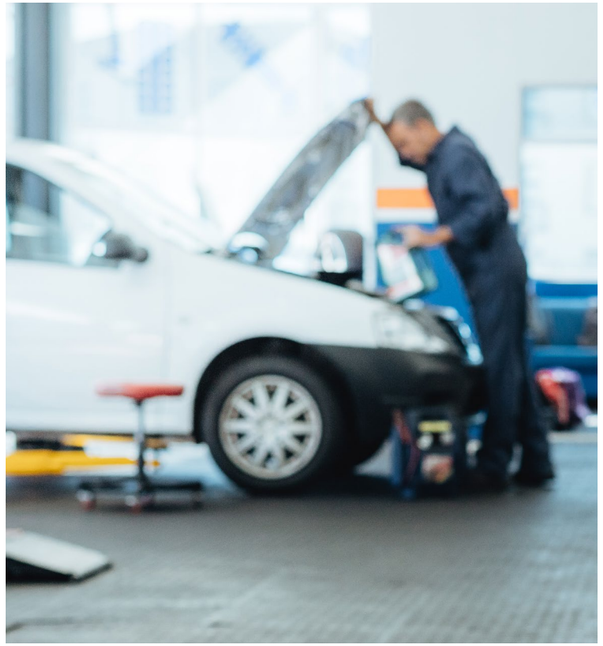
Gen Z Technician Responsibilities and Satisfaction

With 73% of Gen Z technicians working full time in their current shop, there is no doubt in their commitment to their career and future in the industry. Multitasking and assisting in other capacities within the shop is considered "normal," even for an entry-level technician. A majority of Gen Z technicians express strong job satisfaction, with 55% reporting they are very satisfied and 37% reporting themselves extremely satisfied in their current roles. In addition to being satisfied with their career choice, Gen Z technicians appear to be content with their responsibilities in their day-to-day jobs. Forty-nine percent of Gen Z technicians were very satisfied with their current job responsibilities, while 46% were extremely satisfied with them. Given the range of responsibilities they're handling, it's clear that Gen Z technicians are overall happy with their career choice of automotive technician.

Overall, how satisfied are you with your work assignment (skill area that you perform) at the shop?







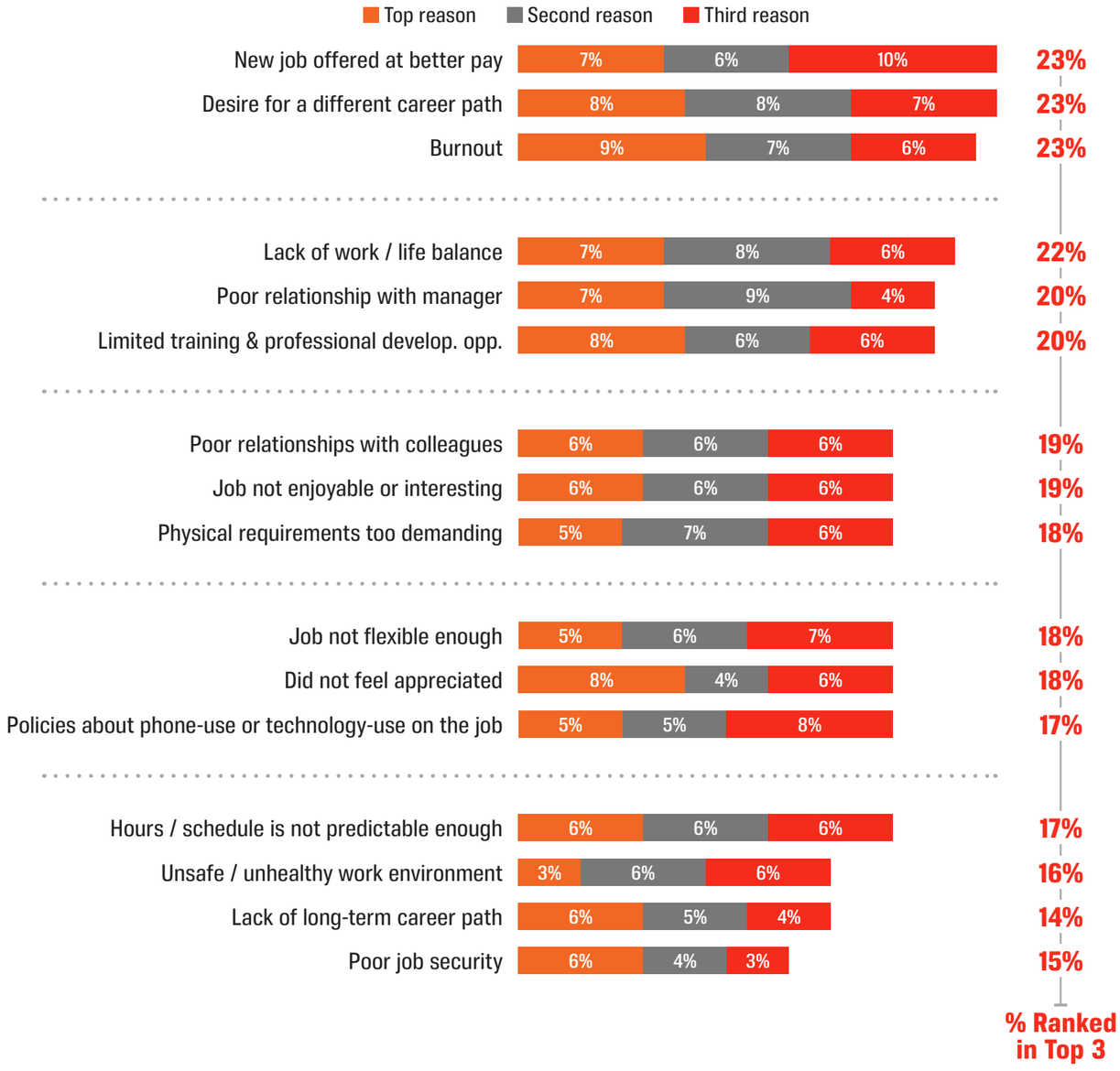
Gen Z Technician Stress and Burnout

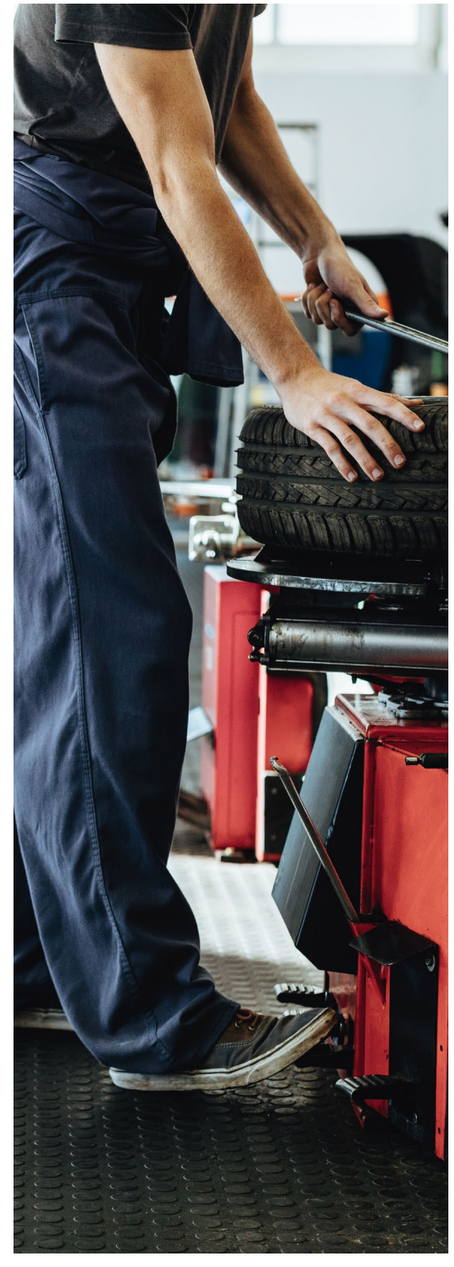
While this data may seem compelling and positive, many young technicians do struggle with burnout. The top three reported challenges that Gen Z technicians face are dealing with difficult customers, high stress levels, and long working hours. All three top challenges were not necessarily related to technical content or ability, but directly to the environment of their workplace. And while only 23% of Gen Z technicians reported burnout as a reason they see technicians leave the shop, it was still tied for the top response, which warrants mentioning.

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Reasons Gen Z Technicians Leave a Shop

What are the TOP THREE reasons that other technicians your age leave their shop?





Reasons Owners Believe Technicians Leave a Shop

What are the TOP THREE reasons that technicians leave your shop?

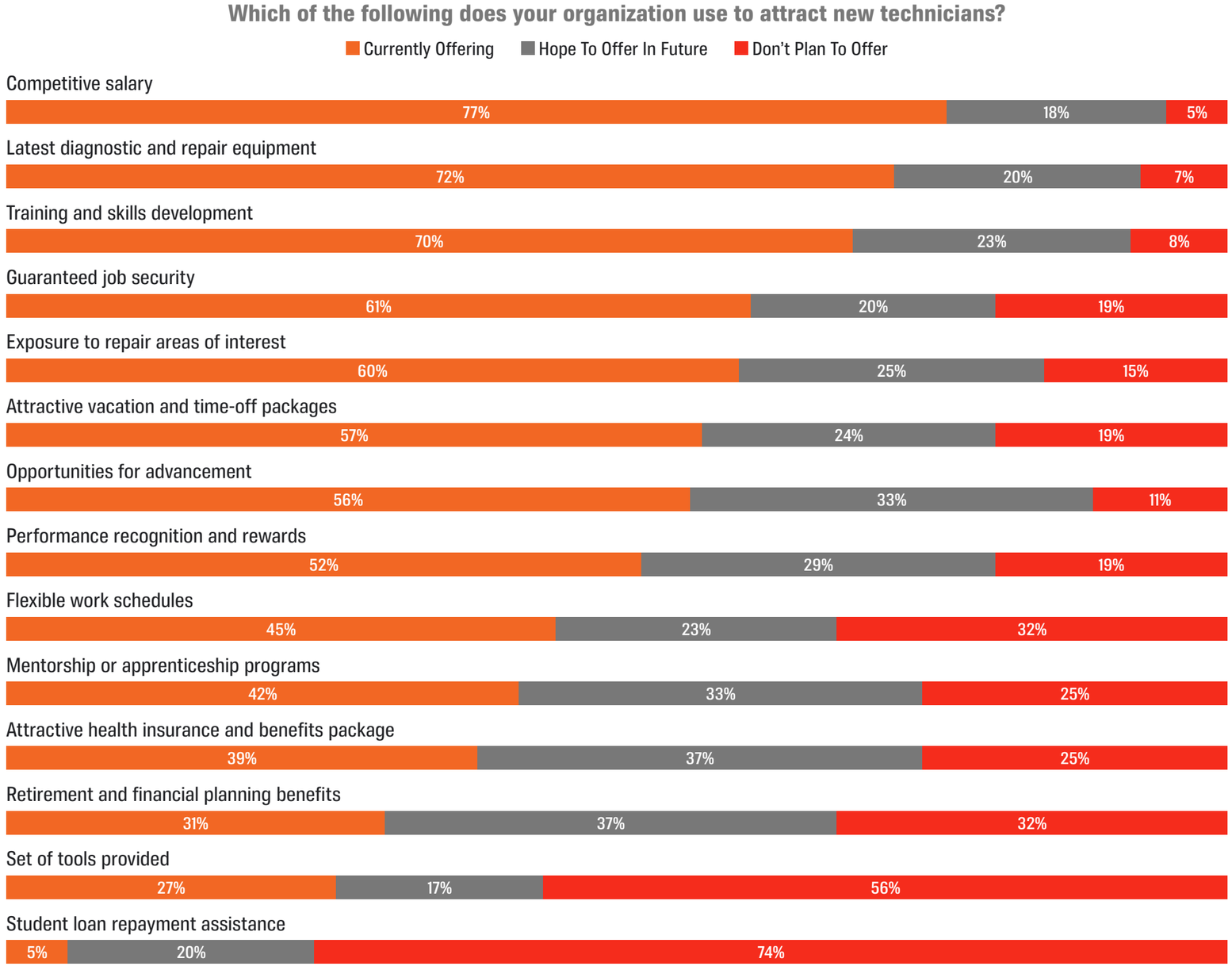




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Opportunities such as flexible work schedules are not as readily available in the automotive industry, and many shops appear unwilling to change their policies. When shops were asked what they currently offered or planned to offer to attract new technicians, benefits such as flexible work hours did not receive the most positive response. Only 45% of shops reported offering flexible work hours, and 32% reported that they were not considering exploring the option further. Lack of flexibility from employers does play a part in technician satisfaction. A more flexible work environment could help shops attract top Gen Z talent.



Shop Owner and Gen Z Technician Survey Conclusions

The automotive industry is continuing to shift into the future by adopting new features and cutting-edge technologies. Gen Z is going to be the leading generation in the workforce in the coming decades, and the automotive industry is no exception. Shop owners are currently using recruiting and retention techniques that Gen Z technicians particularly value, such as multi-faceted training opportunities. There is some room for improvement, as Gen Z technicians are overwhelmed, and many shops remain understaffed.

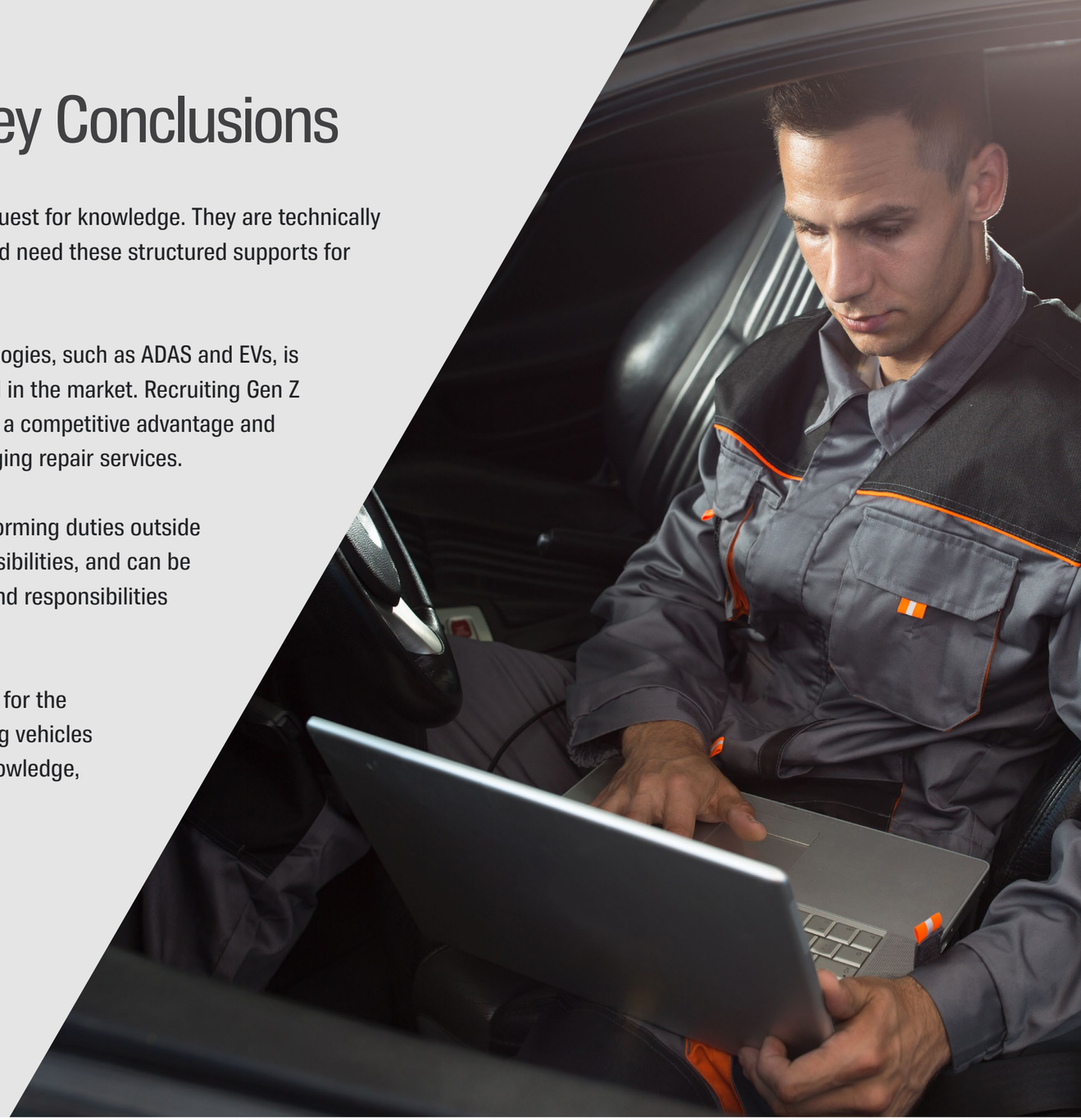
The need for technicians has never been greater, and employees at all levels are performing a multitude of tasks that require a variety of skill sets. Shop owners in this environment may struggle to recruit new, young, and skilled talent. Shop owners must consider the following when creating a recruitment and retention strategy:

Gen Z technicians have a quest for knowledge. They are technically oriented, crave training, and need these structured supports for success.

Servicing emerging technologies, such as ADAS and EVs, is currently underrepresented in the market. Recruiting Gen Z technicians can give shops a competitive advantage and help them break into emerging repair services.

Gen Z technicians are performing duties outside of their defined job responsibilities, and can be leveraged for other roles and responsibilities in the shop.

There is a growing passion for the industry, including servicing vehicles and gaining specialized knowledge, among Gen Z technicians.



Following these considerations can assist shop owners in their recruitment process for young talent, as well as help retain Gen Z technicians in the long term.

About AutoZone

AutoZone is the leading provider of automotive parts with over 7,000 stores and growing. With a vast and growing distribution network, AutoZone makes it easy for shops to get the parts they need quickly. We've made significant investments to improve parts availability and expand our late-model and import coverage across all business lines. Our dedicated Commercial Service Team is focused on supporting customers to help them keep bays turning.



In May of 2025, AutoZone's research partners, Endeavor Business Intelligence and Ratchet+Wrench, surveyed 300 Gen Z automobile technicians and 300 automotive repair shop owners. All technicians surveyed identified "technician" as their primary job responsibility. All shop owners and managers responded from independent, non-franchised repair shops. Every shop owner surveyed was also required to have seven or fewer locations.

About The Survey