

Skilled Trades Are Running Out of Time: Women Are the Missing Workforce and Many Leave Before Employers Know Why

Ahead of International Women's Day, Boost LD introduces tools to help contractors retain skilled tradeswomen and cut preventable turnover.

NEW YORK, NY, UNITED STATES, March 3, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- North America's skilled trades face a workforce crisis: millions of experienced workers are nearing retirement, and there are not enough skilled people ready to replace them. At the same time, demand for construction, infrastructure, and manufacturing remains high. Women are still dramatically underrepresented on job sites — and many who enter the trades leave long before employers understand why.

To mark International Women's Day, trades training specialist and author Manja Horner is urging trades business owners to treat women as a critical part of the workforce solution. Through [Boost LD](#), her training and Fractional HR company, Horner is launching [The Only Woman on Site](#), a practical guide that gives blue-collar women tools to set boundaries, speak up, and lead on site without being labeled "difficult."



Manja Horner, Author of *Pass The Torch - A Rallying Call to Rescue The Future of Trades*

"Recruitment campaigns won't save you if every woman you hire quietly quits within a year," said Horner, founder of Boost LD and a third-generation tradesperson. "We have a historic opportunity to bring more women into the trades, but if owners don't improve communication and leadership on site, they'll lose the workers they need most."

A LOOMING RETIREMENT WAVE

In her forthcoming book 'Pass The Torch', Horner outlines the scale of the problem: across the United States and Canada, roughly one in five skilled trades workers is over age 55, with an

estimated 2-3 million skilled trades and manufacturing roles in the U.S. projected to go unfilled by 2033. These retirements represent not just headcount leaving, but decades of expertise that often has never been documented.

“We are watching a generation of master tradespeople walk off site with a lifetime of knowledge still in their heads,” Horner said. “If we don’t capture it, and if we don’t have a stable workforce ready to receive it, that knowledge is gone.”

Apprenticeship enrolment has increased, yet completion rates remain low - especially among women - while mid-career leaders are stretched thin.

WOMEN ARE AN UNTAPPED TALENT POOL

Women remain a small minority on most skilled trades crews. Research and employer surveys show that when women enter the trades, they frequently encounter unclear expectations, isolation, long hours, and communication breakdown on site.

“Women tell me they love the work and are proud of what they build,” Horner said. “But they’re exhausted by having to prove themselves daily and by job sites where no one has been trained to lead mixed crews.”

Studies consistently cite jobsite culture, harassment, and communication challenges as key reasons women leave, even when wages and opportunities are strong.

“Every time a woman leaves, owners absorb the cost of recruiting, onboarding, training, lost productivity, and morale impact,” Horner said. “Across multiple crews and years, that becomes a serious financial problem.”

A PRACTICAL GUIDE FOR THE REALITY ON SITE

The Only Woman on Site was developed through conversations with women across electrical, plumbing, construction, manufacturing, and other trades. It is a communication guide built for real job sites.

Inside, women find:

- Scripted phrases for situations where they are talked over or dismissed.
- Frameworks to raise safety concerns and advocate for themselves without escalating conflict.
- Guidance that helps leaders recognize confident communication as an asset.

“Our goal is to give women tools they can use tomorrow morning,” Horner said. “At the same time, owners need to understand that if communication doesn’t change, women will keep leaving.”

ASSERTIVE COMMUNICATION TRAINING FOR BLUE-COLLAR WOMEN

Alongside the guide, Boost LD is introducing [Assertive Communications for Blue Collar Women](#), a skills-based course that helps women speak confidently on site without being labeled as difficult.

The training focuses on:

- Understanding jobsite dynamics so women can choose the right approach.
- Practicing real-world scenarios — from toolbox talks to client walk-throughs.
- Building shared language supervisors can recognize and support.

“When women have the language to speak up and leaders have the skills to respond constructively, knowledge can actually be passed down,” Horner said.

A CALL TO ACTION FOR TRADES OWNERS

Horner argues that solving the skilled labour shortage requires more than recruitment campaigns. Companies that retain experienced workers — including women entering the trades — will be better positioned to maintain productivity and transfer knowledge as retirements accelerate.

“The companies that figure out retention will outperform the ones that don’t,” Horner said. “This isn’t about optics. It’s about workforce stability.”

To support that effort, Boost LD has developed practical tools and training focused on communication, leadership, and knowledge transfer inside skilled trades organizations.

About Boost LD

Boost LD is a woman-owned, WBE-certified training and consulting company serving skilled trades organizations across North America. Founded by third-generation tradesperson and educator Manja Horner, Boost LD designs practical, job-ready training programs for women in the trades, along with knowledge capture and leadership development systems that help companies reduce turnover, train faster, and protect critical expertise. For more information about The Only Woman on Site, visit www.boostld.com/women-in-trades

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