

# Empower your ground handlers to work smarter



How IoT can help  
manage the industry's  
skilled worker shortage





## Where have all the skilled GSE workers gone?

The airline industry is getting back to work, but as air traffic numbers are returning with increasing COVID vaccination rates, airlines are struggling to acquire the staff needed to service growing air travel demands. Ground service equipment (GSE) operations have been particularly hard hit leaving many wondering — where have all the skilled GSE workers gone?

Despite a [USD 54 billion bailout](#) by the federal government amidst the pandemic to retain staff, the aviation industry still amassed a large number of retirements or voluntary separations as a result of the Covid pandemic. [Airlines of America president Nicholas E. Calio said](#), "Airlines were surprised to discover the extent to which many workers who had taken leave or voluntary separation did not want to return to work in the airline industry." The [airline group estimates](#) 50,000 employees took early retirement or voluntary separation packages, while 100,000 more accepted unpaid leave of absences. With so many skilled workers now gone, the recruitment environment in aviation has turned turbulent with many airlines now working furiously to acquire new, skilled staff.





## Weathering the storm, at a cost

The skills shortage is not only affecting airlines, with 73% of US businesses [experiencing difficulties](#) in attracting new staff. This tight labor market has created a perfect storm for the aviation industry; employees now have their pick of jobs, wages, and career opportunities across multiple industries, and are aware of it.

This high demand for skilled workers has resulted in airlines having to dip deeper into their pockets by paying premiums. For example, [Spirit Airlines](#) has increased ramp agents' wages by 30%, as well as offering graduation bonuses and reimbursement of tuition costs.

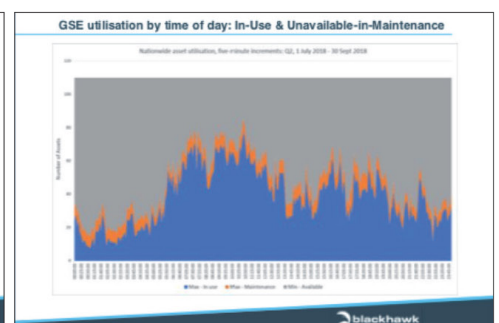
Using monetary incentives to increase talent acquisition and employee retention is one method of weathering the storm but this approach is not sufficient on its own or sustainable long-term. Pandemic-battered airlines can't continue to erode their margins with increases to operational expenses such as GSE staffing.

Airlines are considering different strategies to handle their staffing shortages and implement the right tools to empower their existing GSE staff to better manage equipment regardless of air traffic demands. Furthermore, recruiting skilled workers back is only part of the challenge. Airlines also need to retain the staff they have, while improving safety and efficiency.



## Give ground handlers the mobile tools they need to work smarter and be more aware

When air traffic increases there is an intensified pressure on airline GSE staff to achieve efficiencies, communicate effectively, heighten below-wing situational awareness, and optimize equipment availability. When teams are short-staffed, this requirement is difficult to manage without the right tools in place and can lead to overwhelming pressure on available team members, amounting to staff burnout or attrition. Avoiding such outcomes comes down to two strategies: hiring and retaining more staff and/or implementing the right technology stack. With the aviation skills shortage in no way set to subside, airlines need to start considering the latter to better manage GSE staff pressures and avoid turnover.



***GSE IoT SaaS solutions such as [Blackhawk Aviation](#) offer airlines and their ground handlers a management tool to streamline GSE servicing and reduce operational costs by up to 25%.***

# Reduce the costs of GSE operations with Blackhawk.io

[Blackhawk Aviation](#) enables airline GSE staff to meet air traffic demand. It offers both staff, team leaders and management a comprehensive overview of GSE assets allowing everyone to work efficiently, communicate effectively, heighten situational awareness, and optimize equipment availability.

## Here's how it works:

- **Real-time visibility:** wireless telemetry (IoT) devices help GSE handlers and operations managers to understand where assets are, what status they are in, if they are available and if they need servicing. It enables key metrics to be gathered automatically and made available, such as engine runtime for servicing, productivity and utilization time, fuel consumption, speeding or safety violations, geofence area alerts, and operator identification.
- **Communication: mobile applications** help teams to coordinate efficiently and provide timely updates of job statuses and work completed.
- **Decision-making speed:** real-time data accelerates the sharing of key GSE information offering updates as well as breakdown notifications.

Blackhawk.io helps airlines improve equipment maintenance enabling more uptime and availability while reducing running costs and enhancing turnaround efficiency. With a clearer view of equipment lifecycle stages, airlines can quickly understand and deliberate on equipment use cases, selling assets as required to support costs in employee acquisition or training.

*Now is the time to modernize and transform GSE operations not only for efficiency, cost savings and safety, but to help GSE workers work smarter and more effectively. In doing so you'll not only have more success in employee acquisition but retention.*

For more information on the [Blackhawk Aviation solution](#) please join us at the [GHI Conference](#) in Miami, Florida, **29-31 March**. Our sales team will be situated at stand E32 and available as needed to discuss how Blackhawk Aviation can help your airline streamline GSE management.

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one of the  
team.**

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