TBG TRENDS

NAVIGATING INSTABILITY

How AEC & Manufacturing Must Adapt to Thrive

Insights By

David Darby

SVP, Production

TBG TRENDS

NAVIGATING INSTABILITY

HOW AEC & MANUFACTURING MUST ADAPT TO THRIVE

A profound regional realignment is underway in U.S. manufacturing. For more than a decade, large-scale production has been steadily moving South, and the divide is now clear: design and engineering hubs remain concentrated in the Northeast, while production is anchored in states like Alabama, Georgia, Texas, and the Carolinas. Lower-cost land, cheaper electricity, right-to-work laws, fast permitting, and affordable housing make these regions business-friendly in ways the industrial Northeast can't always match.

Today, nearly half of new manufacturing jobs are emerging in smaller urban counties across the South and Mountain West. For Manufacturing firms, that means demand for production facility planning in cost-advantaged regions is surging, while high-end design and engineering talent remains clustered in Boston, New York, and other northern metros. The result: a two-speed market that requires nuanced, geographically tailored hiring strategies.

This industry's geographic divide is strategic. Clients need different hiring approaches depending on where they're operating. In the South, production demands speed and flexibility; in the Northeast, design talent requires long-term investment and retention. Bridging those realities is where firms gain an edge.

TARIFFS: THE WILD CARD

Tariffs may have faded from the headlines, but their impact on hiring and planning is very real. Economists estimate that the 2025 tariff package could cost the U.S. 250,000–309,000 jobs and cut GDP by up to 0.4%. For industries reliant on imports material costs and project timelines are increasingly difficult to predict.

In today's climate, predictability is a competitive advantage. Forward-looking firms are embedding flexibility into hiring and capital planning, treating agile staffing models — temp-to-perm, project-based contracts, and cross-functional teams — as essential tools rather than fallback options.

THE RISE OF TEMP-TO-PERM

Within manufacturing, TBG's Darby has seen a growing openness to temp-to-perm hiring models, especially in the South. While temporary roles have long existed in the industry, employers are now using them to "trial run" candidates before committing to full-time hires. This approach helps companies evaluate effort, adaptability, and cultural fit in a market where clients are more cautious and less willing to commit upfront.

The shift also reflects a broader pendulum swing: in today's employer-leaning market, firms want to see candidates prove themselves before making long-term commitments. For candidates, this means flexibility and resilience matter as much as skill sets when entering new opportunities.

In today's market, there's as much convincing on both sides as there is evaluating. Clients are wary of candidates who've jumped roles in recent years, while candidates are cautious about leaving stability for volatility. Our role is to bridge that gap — to show clients why a candidate brings long-term value, and to show candidates why the right client is worth the move.

WHY SELECT FIRMS ARE STILL HIRING

Despite volatility, not all firms are pulling back. Strategic AEC companies, those with strong leadership benches, diversified pipelines, and management depth, continue to hire aggressively. The boom years of 2021–22 saw many new entrants rise and fall, but established firms with stability and client trust are holding their ground.

For candidates, this moment represents an opportunity to trade up into stability. Moving to a well-capitalized, strategically managed firm can provide both short-term security and long-term career upside. For clients, projecting a steady hand, consistent growth, visible leadership, and an intentional culture, is a powerful differentiator in attracting and retaining talent.

THE STAFFING EQUATION

Three forces now define the Manufacturing staffing landscape:

- Geographic labor shifts between northern design hubs and southern production centers.
- Policy-driven volatility around tariffs and supply chains.
- Market segmentation between firms with stability versus those chasing cyclical highs.

For employers, success means building adaptable talent pipelines that balance near-term needs with long-term resilience. For candidates, it means aligning with firms that can withstand disruption and offer growth beyond the cycle.

At TBG, we're seeing firsthand how clients and candidates alike are adjusting to these shifts and how the right staffing strategy can transform instability into a competitive advantage.

ABOUT DAVID DARBY
AND THE BACHRACH GROUP

David Darby serves as Senior Vice President of Production for TBG's Atlantic Region, overseeing the firm's AEC business nationally. Based in New Jersey, Darby first launched and grew the state's office, where he led multiple verticals including Construction, Architecture, Engineering, Manufacturing, Finance/Accounting, and Corporate Services. Today, he partners with clients throughout the Atlantic market to design and execute staffing strategies that address both immediate hiring needs and long-term workforce planning. A graduate of Hofstra University with a BBA in Finance and a minor in Mathematics, Darby also competed as a Division I football player. He brings that same discipline and drive to his work at TBG, where his focus remains on building lasting client partnerships rooted in service and results.

The Bachrach Group (TBG) has been a leader in workforce solutions for over 50 years, combining the resources of a national firm with the personalized touch of a boutique agency. Headquartered in New York City with offices nationwide, TBG offers a wide range of services, including staffing, executive search, payrolling, HR management, consulting, and technology solutions. Our commitment to client satisfaction, strong candidate relationships, and industry-specific expertise drives our success. Recognized as the "Largest Staffing Agency" by Crain's New York Business, TBG is dedicated to providing innovative solutions that meet your immediate and future needs, ensuring organizational success.

TBG TRENDS

NAVIGATING INSTABILITY

HOW AEC & MANUFACTURING MUST ADAPT TO THRIVE

Insights By

Dave Darby

SVP, Production

BachrachGroup.com