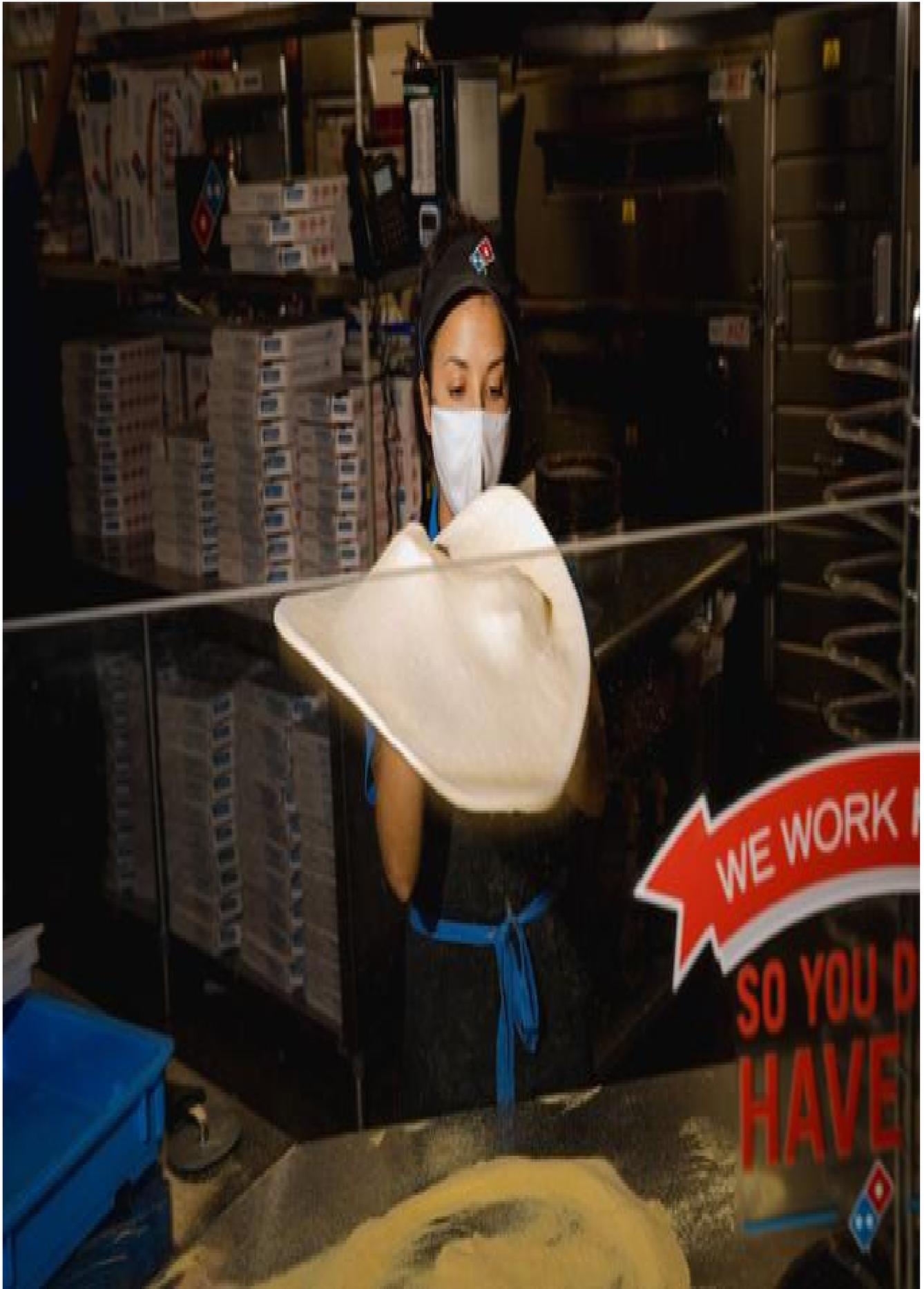


Desperate for Workers, Companies Try Help-Wanted Ads on TV; In tight labor market, Domino's, FedEx look for hires through national TV spots; Dunkin' recruits using social-media influencers

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FULL TEXT



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An employee at a Domino's in Seattle. The pizza chain is running a TV recruitment ad that touts how an entry-level job at Domino's can lead to owning a franchise. PHOTO: Jovelle Tamayo for The Wall Street Journal

Domino's Pizza Inc. began airing a new television commercial several weeks ago, but the ad isn't peddling pizza. The Ann Arbor, Mich.-based company is trying to recruit workers.

The ad, which touts how an entry-level job at Domino's can lead to owning a franchise, comes as businesses across the country have ramped up recruitment ads amid a tight job market.

"If you want to make money and have fun while doing it, you won't find a better opportunity than your local Domino's," says Lolly Jones, a 27-year-old, Oregon-based Domino's franchise owner, in the commercial.

The tight labor market that developed during the Covid-19 pandemic has forced companies to pull out all the stops to gin up applications, including raising salaries, offering signing bonuses and allowing more flexible hours.

Many are also increasing their spending on help-wanted ads, with some even embracing pricey national TV ads—a tactic that isn't typically used for recruiting efforts—while others turn to social-media platforms such as TikTok and Instagram.

Some companies running recruitment ads on TV, including Domino's and auto-repair chain Safelite Group Inc., said they had never used TV ads for that purpose before the pandemic, but had to think outside the box to address staff shortages that were weighing on their businesses.

At this point, the cost of not filling open jobs far outweighs the cost of doing TV ads, said Joe Shaker Jr., president of Shaker Recruitment Marketing.

Domino's, which shortened store hours because of staffing shortages, reported weaker than expected fourth-quarter sales last week, a decline it attributed in part to a shortage of delivery drivers caused by the Omicron variant. Stores and franchises are having to do a lot of things to address the headwinds, said Kate Trumbull, Domino's senior vice president of brand.

Domino's said it was spending more on recruitment advertising, but declined to provide figures.

Safelite said it has found TV advertising to be an effective tool in reaching job seekers. Its campaign, which includes TV and online ads running on Instagram and TikTok, has helped boost Safelite's job application pool by 50% since the ad campaign began in June, the company said.

One of Safelite's TV spots features a montage of employees saying the company offers many different opportunities for advancement. Christina Pletnewski, its vice president of customer experience, said the TV ads allowed the company to better showcase its "personality and our sense of team."

FedEx Corp. last year started running a TV commercial called "Careers: My Work." The ad, which ran during expensive programming such as National Football League games, says FedEx employees help deliver significant things like the Vince Lombardi Trophy, vaccines, and water to places dealing with disasters. The spot concludes by saying that FedEx has many open positions.

"The company operates in a competitive market for talent," said Jenny Robertson, FedEx's senior vice president of integrated marketing. FedEx declined to disclose how much it spent on its recruitment ad effort, but media-measurement firm iSpot.tv estimates FedEx has spent roughly \$24 million to air its TV ad as of last month.

"We believe the campaign has been successful," Ms. Robertson said. In December, FedEx said it fielded 111,000 applications in one week for hourly positions, higher than any week in its history.

Louis Naviasky, the chief executive of Bayard Advertising, a New York ad agency that specializes in recruitment marketing, said Bayard's clients spent nearly 60% more on recruitment ads last year than they did in 2019, the last full year before the pandemic.

The growth in spending comes as the number of job openings in the U.S. far exceeds the number of unemployed workers. "79% of employers report having difficulty filling all their open positions," said Maggie Hulce, senior vice president of enterprise at Indeed, a jobs site.

The labor crunch and the flood of companies trying to coax job seekers has caused many to rethink their approach and find different ways to break through the clutter of help wanted-ads, recruiting ad experts said.

Sandwich chain Subway, which also cut store operating hours because of personnel shortages, is running ads across social-media platforms such as Meta Platforms Inc.'s Instagram, Snap Inc.'s Snapchat and ByteDance Ltd.'s TikTok to lure job seekers. Milford, Conn.-based Subway began its help-wanted campaign in May, in what it

said was one of its largest recruitment ad efforts ever. The company said it has seen an increase in the number of job applications completed in its online job portal since the ad effort began.

Dunkin', the doughnut chain owned by Inspire Brands Inc., enlisted the help of social-media influencer Charli D'Amelio to help it lure in applicants last year, as part of a franchisee-led initiative to hire roughly 20,000 new employees.

In a TikTok video that was labeled as paid programming, Ms. D'Amelio, who has over 130 million followers on the platform, interviewed a Dunkin' employee about his career at the restaurant. The video was part of a series of interviews that different celebrities—including TV personality Maria Menounos, who was once a Dunkin' staff member—did with employees of the doughnut chain on TikTok and Instagram.

Write to Suzanne Vranica at suzanne.vranica@wsj.com

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Credit: By Suzanne Vranica

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