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LABOUR SHORTAGE IN AMERICA: PRE- AND POST-COVID ANALYSIS

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on the food service industry in America, causing both short and long-term labor shortages. Prior to the pandemic, the industry was already experiencing difficulties attracting and retaining skilled workers due to the low wages and long working hours. However, the pandemic has aggravated this challenge as many employees were either laid off or chose to leave the industry due to health and safety concerns.

Additionally, the implementation of social distancing guidelines and increased sanitation measures has made it more difficult for restaurants to operate at full capacity, further exacerbating the labor shortage. Many businesses have had to reduce their hours or close temporarily due to the lack of staff.

There are various examples of labor shortages in America's food service industry during COVID-19:

1. **Reduced Capacity and Increased Demand:** During the pandemic, most restaurants had to reduce their capacity due to government mandates and social distancing guidelines. However, the demand for food delivery and pickup orders increased significantly, often overwhelming the available workforce.

2. **Fear of Infection:** The fear of getting infected with COVID-19 made many food service workers reluctant to work on-site, leading to staff shortages.

3. **Unemployment Benefits:** The American Rescue Plan Act provided enhanced unemployment benefits that made it financially more feasible for some workers to stay home rather than working in the restaurant industry.

4. **Short-Term Employees:** Many restaurants also struggled to retain staff because they had a higher percentage of short-term employees who were working for a temporary period or part-time.

Post-COVID, the situation remains challenging for the food industry as they compete with other industries that offer higher pay and better benefits. The industry must adapt to the changing landscape by offering better pay, flexible schedules, and career advancement opportunities to attract and retain workers.

Overall, addressing the labor shortage in the food service industry requires a multi-faceted approach that includes policy changes, technological advancements, and industry-wide collaboration.