

San Jose restaurants have tough time hiring workers

By [Stephanie Lam](#) | July 19, 2021



Sameer Shah, co-owner of Voyager Craft Coffee, makes a drink at the shop's Santa Clara location on July 17. Photo by Stephanie Lam.

Some San Jose restaurants are having a difficult time hiring employees, despite the state [easing coronavirus restrictions](#).

Ronald DeVries, owner of [Pizza Bocca Lupo](#) in San Pedro Square Market, said he's noticed fewer applicants applying for jobs at the restaurant. Rather than seeing 20 applicants a month as in pre-pandemic times, the owner says he now sees four in that timespan.

"Some staff have to work overtime, but they want those extra hours and it's OK for them," DeVries told San José Spotlight. "But I need to jump in more frequently to help out, and I don't have as much wiggle room or flexibility."

In order to fill up vacancies in the restaurant, DeVries said he reached out to former employees and friends.

"(I) was able to get some of them back to work part-time and help where I need extra hours," DeVries said.

DeVries isn't alone in his struggle to find workers. Monique Melchor, director of career guidance center **work2future** in San Jose, said most Santa Clara County residents are not eager to apply for jobs in the retail and restaurant industries.

"Before (the pandemic), if we had those jobs and those types of opportunities people would be interested," Melchor said. "Now they're kind of semi-interested."

Melchor said the fear of contracting COVID-19 can be a determining factor in whether or not people want to work in jobs that require them to be there in-person. She said as a result, more people are coming to the center and searching for remote work.

"I guess people are waiting to see if they can get a better opportunity, or a remote job," Melchor said. "(People are) being very picky about what it is they are going into."

More than 50% of San Jose's job losses during the pandemic occurred in the leisure and hospitality sector, according to **previous comments** from **Greater Downtown San Jose Economic Recovery Task Force** member Brendan Rawson. City data shows that the leisure and hospitality sector lost 43,600 jobs from February 2020 to March 2021. And even with recent local efforts to **get employees back to work**, some businesses are still dealing with a shortage of workers.

Sameer Shah, co-owner of **Voyager Craft Coffee** in San Jose and Santa Clara, said his cafes experienced a shortage of workers in April.

"Usually when we post an ad we typically get 100 applications," Shah said. "In the spring we were getting maybe a dozen, a crazy shortfall."

Like DeVries, Shah and other employees took on extra shifts and responsibilities to fill the vacancies.

"It was really stressful," Shah said. "We don't often get stressed... but we were just trying to get over that hump, it was getting busier and we were playing catch up the whole time."

In the past few months, Shah said his cafes have seen increases in the number of applicants. He understands people are still hesitant to work, and as a result, the cafes still enforce precautions such as wearing masks and maintaining social distancing.

"I think this gave employees a perspective on how we were still treating (COVID-19)," Shah said. "I think with that confidence, a lot of people applied."

Learn more about work2future, [click here](#).

Contact Stephanie Lam at stephanielam.c@gmail.com or follow @StephCLam on Twitter

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