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Examen : BTS Management des Unités Commerciales Épreuve orale de langue vivante étrangère : ANGLAIS (LV1)	

As joblessness falls, skilled workers might be hard to find

Are America's employers at risk of running out of skilled people to hire?

The U.S. economy has become a seemingly perpetual job-generating machine, having steadily added workers for nearly eight years. Even with the unemployment rate now at 3.7 percent – its lowest point since 1969 – hiring hasn't stalled. So far this year, job growth has averaged a robust 208,000 a month, up from a pace of 182,000 for all of 2017.

The trend has defied the predictions of most economists. Many have long warned that as hiring surged and unemployment fell, the pool of potential hires would shrink and trigger a bidding war that would ignite wage gains.

It hasn't happened. Many people are still being hired each month. And pay raises, though rising, remain modest

"Every single time that we predict job growth is going to start slowing and wage growth is going to start picking up in recent years, we haven't gotten that right," said Martha Gimbel, research director for the jobs listing site *Indeed*. "There's no knowing where we're going, but it shows no sign of slowing."

In July, America's employers posted a record 6.9 million job openings, which actually exceeded the number of unemployed people. The abundance of openings suggests that companies expect to keep hiring.

Even the Trump administration, for all its brash* public confidence, acknowledges uncertainty about how much further unemployment can fall.

"It's a tricky question, because I don't think we know," Larry Kudlow, the president's top economic adviser, told reporters Friday.

At some point, many employers will likely feel they're running out of skilled workers to hire.

Adapted from *The Washington Post*, October 6th, 2018

* brash: *impertinent*