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# Temp work

News - Feature



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## Demand for temporary workers and consultants is on the rise

By Noa Glouberman

As the economy recovers from the recession, a new trend in employment is emerging. Rather than hiring additional full-time staff, more and more businesses are bringing in "temporary" workers on an as-needed basis.

According to a recent survey conducted by CareerBuilder, 34% of hiring managers said that they will recruit contract or temporary workers in 2011. That number is up 4% since last year and 6% from 2009. And, south of the border, research done by the Human Capital Institute – the global association for talent management and new economy leadership – shows a third of the

American workforce is currently composed of contractors, freelancers, free agents, contingent workers or temps.

"Yes, temporary work is on the rise," confirmed Bodil Geyer, COO of Swim Recruiting in Vancouver, which specializes in providing permanent and contract recruitment services in IT, engineering, finance and accounting, human resources, administration and sales and marketing.

"Until the economy has totally recovered people will use more temporary staffing to augment the need to get work done. The workload has increased with the economic recovery but companies are still reticent to hire a full-time resource until a full rebound has happened."

"We have seen an uptick in demand for temporary professionals," echoed Robert Half Canada Inc. president Kathryn Bolt. "Many firms cut their staff levels deeply during the economic downturn, which has resulted in the need to bring in additional resources at the first sign of improving business demand."

Bolt also said that, besides keeping pace with rising workloads, "temporary assignments help employers take advantage of the availability of experienced workers currently in the job market," not to mention allows companies to "access specialized expertise not available internally."

And even though the term "temp work" conjures up images of secretarial duties or database entry, both Radu and Geyer say that different types of temporary positions are available to people who possess a wide variety of skills and experience levels.

"Temporary or 'term' employment can be for any level of professional, from reception, administration, HR, operations ... to finance and accounting positions. These jobs are [typically] paid hourly and include remittances to the government in the form of taxes, EI and CPP," Geyer explained. "Freelance or 'contract' work, on the other hand, refers to consultants who are generally incorporated and ... don't have taxes or CRA remittances taken off by us or the employer."

In fact, despite the absence of vacation pay and health coverage – benefits that are associated with being a full-time staff member at a company – there are many upsides to being a temporary or contract employee. According to Sandra Miles, president and CEO of Miles Employment Group in Vancouver, temporary work is advantageous in that it provides:

- a bridge to full-time employment, as there is often large potential for temporary work to eventually turn into a full-time position;
- an opportunity to "try before you buy" if you're entering a new field, position or company;
- a solution for retirees that don't want to quit work altogether;
- a breakaway from routine that gives you the variety and flexibility to work when you want; and
- a great way to learn about the employment landscape when you're new to a city or returning to the workforce.

"Temporary workers are exposed to a broad cross-section of companies, affording them opportunities to learn new skills, enhance existing ones and maintain or attain new certifications and licensing," added Bolt. "It also allows professionals to work in diverse business environments and positions and expand their network."

However, warned Geyer, it is important to bear in mind the difference between doing temporary work and working as a freelance consultant or contractor.

"Generally, the benefits of temporary work are not as great as being a contractor," she told the Employment Paper. "Temps usually are in-between jobs, making money while searching for a permanent employment opportunity. Although gaining experience in different work environments can be good and flexible, it is better to have a permanent job if possible. Contractors – the more senior, incorporated people – have far more advantages, including variety, much more money and more interesting projects."

Bolt sees one downside to being a consultant: "If working from home, it can be difficult to separate personal life from business. And, while this allows consultants more time for themselves, they need to be disciplined to make sure they work on schedule and create and adhere to their own work parameters."

While all sorts of companies in a broad range of industries and sectors rely on temporary workers to round out their full-time workforce and add manpower and expertise where and when needed, Geyer said that "larger companies, Crown corporations and governments in general hire more contractors and temps."

Added Bolt: "We've seen demand in areas such as general accounting, tax accounting, financial analysis, customer service and information technology specialties like desktop support, applications development, help desk, web development and network systems/administration."

But how can you access these jobs? While it is possible to search for them and apply on your own (as a freelancer or consultant, you may find yourself doing this more often), recruitment agencies can be a big help in placing temporary workers.

"Recruitment agencies place qualified candidates with companies that need temporary staffing support, and are often aware of positions not directly advertised," advised Miles. "Our consultants work as a team with candidates to help individuals achieve career goals. Candidates are guided through the application and testing process to ensure a temporary job position that will suit the candidate best."

"Working with a specialized staffing service enables job seekers to focus on their projects and to not have to worry about the administrative aspects," agreed Bolt. "Staffing firms typically are well-connected in the industry they serve and can ... be your eyes and ears in the job search and provide insight into current trends you might not find anywhere else."

"The best thing to do is work with a staffing firm specializing in your field," she added. "These firms can guide you through the process and help you find rewarding positions."

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