

# Temporary jobs a good first step to full-time position

BY DEREK SANKEY, POSTMEDIA NEWS JANUARY 5, 2011



At this time of year, many people think of the retail sector when they think of temporary, seasonal help. But even in that sector, temporary positions can lead to permanent jobs. Chris Taylor, vice-president of human resources for Future Shop, says about 20 to 25 per cent of seasonal workers at its Quebec stores are kept on into the new year.

**Photograph by:** Don MacKinnon, Postmedia News

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CALGARY - When the pace of work in the mining sector picked up earlier this year, John Scott turned to temporary workers at his head office to help meet the surge in demand. When contracts kept coming in, those temporary employees quickly turned into permanent hires.

"We had a boom this summer and I brought in eight (temporary) workers and, out of the eight, I had six that I put on permanently," says Scott, director of human resources and safety for Procon Mining and Tunneling.

"When the workforce in the field goes up, our workforce here grows."

Temporary workers, or temp workers, are increasingly being used to help companies navigate through the economic recovery and many of them are finding it's only a matter of time before they find permanent, full-time positions, say recruiters.

"It's a really great way to manage through the upswing," says Sandra Miles, president of Miles Employment Group.

"Temporary help is a great option for companies coming out of the recession when they're unsure as to the benchmarks of permanent staff requirements."

While temp workers are mostly used in entry-level positions, such as payroll clerks and administration, Miles says there is an increasing trend to use "interim managers" - high-level lingo for the same temporary type of position in more senior roles - to help companies get a footing before making a longer-term commitment to hire.

"We're noticing an increase in higher-level positions," says Miles.

Scott, for example, recently turned to a temp agency to hire an engineer in the field for a few months. "It's hard to draw an engineer in from another job for a six-month stint, so we'll phone a (temp) agency," he says.

Scott is using a temporary-to-permanent strategy right now for a lot of the new hires in his head office. For an industry as cyclical in nature as mining and natural resources, it helps provide some stability in the long run, while meeting the short-term demands of the increased work.

"We went through a recession like everybody else and reduced our workforce here at the corporate office," says Scott. "After the recession, that's when things started building again and that's when we went into temp-to-perm."

Miles says companies in all industries are still taking a cautious hiring approach, but temp work is an ideal solution to set the stage for future permanent hiring if the economy continues to improve or even stabilize heading into 2011.

"You can only sit back with a skeleton staff for so long," she says.

Many temp workers are younger adults re-entering the workforce for one reason or another - many have had young children and are coming back to work or perhaps returning from a long period of travel or locating to a new city - but retirees are also a growing segment of the temp workforce.

"(Retirees) have had strong careers and they want to utilize their skills and stay engaged with people," says Miles. "It's a great way to do that without having the commitment of a full-time job."

At this time of year, many people think of the retail sector when they think of temporary, seasonal help. But even in that sector, temporary positions can lead to permanent jobs.

Chris Taylor, vice-president of human resources for Future Shop, says about 20 to 25 per cent of seasonal workers at its Quebec stores are kept on into the new year. "We're constantly on the lookout for great talent as they come in," he says.

It's an opportunity for employees to shine, to see if there is a fit between the worker and the corporate culture, and acts as a "try-before-you-buy" period for employers and employees alike, says Miles.

There are typically no benefits for temp workers, but the pay is usually comparable to permanent hires in terms of base wage, while these positions offer much more flexibility and variety.

The trick is to approach any type of temporary work as if it's a full-time job.

"It really needs to be treated as you would treat any job search," says Miles. "It's also really important to go in with a very open, flexible mind. Adaptability is really important."

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