

Vacation Coverage: Temps Make Business Sense : HRVoice.org

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By Sandra Miles

With the arrival of the spring and summer seasons, employees are planning and booking vacation times. Often office calendars fill up with overlapping vacations, leaving businesses and HR managers grappling with limited resources. A sound, strategic solution that is used by 81 per cent of companies worldwide (ciett.org) is the use of temporary staff. Utilizing temporary staff during peak vacation months can be an effective way to fill those gaps in staffing and to continue functioning at full capacity.

The benefits of temporary staff are manifold. Temporary workers allow businesses to scale up the workforce on an as-needed basis such as peak vacation times. This flexibility allows the employer to skip the financial and time commitment of a permanent hire. With many businesses still weary to make a permanent hire commitment in a recovering economy, temporary staff is an even more viable solution. In fact, supporting statistics show that one of the fastest growing job opportunities over the past year has been through temporary or contract work (Statistics Canada).



Another benefit of temporary workers is the potential to find top talent for permanent positions. Firms are essentially able to 'preview' an employee to

see whether or not he or she is the right fit for the position and the company. Temporary jobs are held for varied amounts of time, but the average tenure of temporary employees ranges from three to four months. This timeframe enables managers to assess the performance and fit of the temp. If the assessment is strong, the company is able to move the temporary worker into a permanent position. In a 2011 CareerBuilder survey, 31 per cent of small businesses planning to hire contract or temporary workers expected to transition some temporary staff into full-time, permanent employees.

On the flipside, temporary work has several advantages for employees, including flexibility, the ability to learn about a particular industry, and opportunities for full-time employment down the line.

Despite these benefits, there still remains a misconception that temporary workers can only fill clerical or administrative positions. Temporary support in these areas is common; however temporary staff are now being considered for mid and even senior-level positions. The increase of temporary workers in higher positions is a result of the diverse skill set these employees offer. Whether administration, accounting and finance, IT, industrial, or a project management position, temporary workers can satisfy a wide range of staffing needs. Mores so, they have the past experience, depth, training and skill set to perform highly on the job.

There are several important considerations when looking to hire temporary staff. Once the extent of staffing needs is established, ensure that a clear job description is created for the position(s). It is best that everyone be on the same page about expectations and duties from the beginning of the recruitment phase. Job descriptions should include responsibilities, tasks, expectations, hours of work, and necessary experience.

Another consideration when looking to hire temporary staff is working with a staffing agency. Working with a staffing agency can be an extremely cost-effective and time-saving solution because

of the pre-existing relationships agencies have with available, professionally-screened and qualified temporary workers. The agency handles the entire employee on-boarding, payroll processing, government remittances, WCB and T4 processing.

Beyond being cost-effective, staffing agencies can help delineate the line between temporary and permanent staff to avoid legal issues. To ensure a smooth working relationship with the agency, make sure the agency's approach and culture aligns with the company's.

Think of temporary staff as spokes of a company. While upper-level staff are the nucleus, temporary staff are the spokes that move in and out of the picture as staffing needs shift. With staff double-booking vacation times during peak seasons, businesses can consider temporary staff as an effective solution to keeping your business moving forward.

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