

Tapping into the Talent of Temps

By Sandra Miles



IN A RECOVERING ECONOMY, COMPANIES must discover new ways to strategically build a competitive edge. HR practices and employee management have become the focal point of this changing strategy. As Kinko's cofounder Paul Orfalea once said, "Everyone has good machines. Our coworkers are the only tie-breakers for us". To bolster a new employee strategy, more and more companies are turning to the use of temporary workers. Temps act as an effective HR strategy and can allow companies to move ahead of competitors.

The use of temporary workers may not be a revolutionary HR practice; however, how these employees are being implemented into teams is a new strategy. Temps are increasingly offering a diverse skill set which makes them a high-performing add-on to any team. As a result, the company view and treatment of temps is also shifting. Temps are now being viewed as an integral part of an overall team structure, not just a supplemental fix.

Statistics show that the use of temps by organizations is growing, with over 80 per cent of companies worldwide employing temps (CIETT). In Canada, one of the fastest growing job opportunities over the past year has been through temporary or contract work (Statistics Canada). In the U.S., \$7.9 billion of the staffing industry's \$61.4 billion in sales in 2009 were generated from temporary and contract staffing (American Staffing Association).

Temp workers along with freelancers, consultants, and independent contractors make up a significant part of the North American workforce. The benefits of temp work make it an attractive option for many individuals. Highly-skilled workers often prefer the flexibility and opportunities to expand work experience that comes with non-traditional employment.

For organizations, the benefits of using temps are plentiful. Temps allow businesses to scale the workforce on an as-needed basis. The perfect example is the arrival of the summer months which has companies scrambling to cover employees booking vacation times. The flexibility of temps allows the employer to skip the financial and time commitment of a permanent hire, a commitment which many employers are still wary to do in a recovering economy. Temporary workers are a viable solution that enables employers to bridge the gap.

Additionally, using temps allows organizations to essentially 'preview' an employee before they are in a position to make a permanent hire. With the average tenure of temps being three to four months, hiring managers are able to assess the performance and fit of the temp. 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.

Most significantly, temporary workers are going beyond the assumed clerical or administrative roles. While temp support in these areas is common; temps are now being considered for mid and even senior-level positions. The increase of temps in higher positions is a result of the diverse skill set these employees offer. Whether administration, accounting & finance, IT, industrial, or a project management position, temps 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.

When looking to hire temporary staff, there are several considerations. One important consideration that cannot be missed is how the company will recruit and hire the most qualified temporary worker for an open position. Working with a staffing agency can be an extremely cost-effective and time-saving solution for this consideration 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, select an agency's whose approach and culture aligns with the company's.

Given the diverse skill set and flexibility that temporary workers offer, the view of this sector of the workforce is shifting. Organizations are considering and treating temps more as members of an overall team to build on existing strong human capital. 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. **P**

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