

In my early years as a Human Resources Manager I quickly learned there were some very important considerations to be made before choosing a temporary help company (now known as staffing firms). My first call for help was almost comedic. The manufacturing department manager said he needed someone to fill in for a vacationing assistant. Wanting to impress this department head, I let him know I'd handle it.

I proceeded to dig through the pile of business cards I collected from all those account reps who "just stopped by" to introduce themselves. I now wished I had paid more attention. Not knowing which one to call, I proceeded to the trusty yellow pages. Needless to say, that wasn't all that helpful either.

Very often, choosing a temporary help service is just that; a last-minute phone call to fill an absence or to get help in a crisis. However, I have since learned, taking a more strategic approach to choosing a temp service can actually be very valuable. Not only can you minimize costs, but also you may be able to find temporary employees who are far more productive for the tasks at hand.

Perhaps you can benefit from my experience. First understand your company's need for temporary employees. The three major reasons for using temps to augment your staff are:

1. Temporary employees are used to address normal fluctuations in a company's workflow. In order to save money, companies keep staff levels low and use temps to handle the excess work. Examples of this include hiring temps for large mailings, unexpected orders, or time-sensitive projects.
2. A second major use of temps is as contingency workers to fill positions that are temporarily vacant. This helps a firm to avoid overworking permanent employees and can reduce the need to shuffle job responsibilities.
3. A third use of temps is as a source for permanent employees. Businesses will often hire temps to fill a new opening in the company. If the person is good at the job, the company arranges with the temp service to hire the person on a permanent basis.

Next you must determine the type of firm

that can best handle your type of temporary help need. This should be based on the staffing company's ability to locate, evaluate and manage those needed for your positions. Temporary work has broadened since its inception to include a wide range of fields and industries. Clerical and office positions continue to be the largest segment of all temp jobs. These positions commonly include administrative assistants, customer service representatives, general office clerks, filing clerks, receptionists, typists, word processing operators, and data entry clerks.

The second largest category is industrial workers, such as shipping/receiving and assembly line work. This category also includes day labor workers hired for jobs such as jobsite cleanup, construction helpers, and general labor.

A third category consists of technical workers such as computer programmers, analysts, or engineers, and professional workers in the accounting, legal, medical, sales and marketing, and management areas.

Many staffing companies specialize in industry specific positions such as accounting, medical, inventory, and technical. Staffing companies will tell you what their specialties are and they also should tell you when they are not able to help you find the right person.

Most staffing companies use newspaper advertisements, job fairs, and word of mouth to recruit candidates. National firms may attract greater numbers of candidates due to the brand name but smaller local firms are often equally well known within their region.

There are much greater differences, how-

ever, in how firms screen candidates before hiring. Some firms use computer testing to evaluate candidates, while others supplement this with psychological evaluations or personal interviews to select temps for the right jobs. If you need a temp with specific skills, computer matches are usually adequate, but personal interviews can help ensure that workers are better suited for your needs.

If you require background checks and drug screening make certain your staffing firm meets your requirements.

Staffing companies may also provide a variety of different benefits to their employees while they are working on temp assignments. Be certain to ask about these provisions.

As you can see, there are a lot of considerations that should be given when selecting an outside firm to supplement your hiring needs. The best advice I can give is take time to select and evaluate the right company before the need arises. It will pay off when the panicked call comes from the manager in need of a temp.

Hello... Women at Work!

By Nancy L. Ihasz



About the Author



Nancy L. Ihasz, Business Consultant to Mary K. Thomas Staffing, has 30 years experience in Human Resources and Staffing. She specializes in recruiting and staffing, start up employment projects, and sales and customer service training. She co-founded a successful regional

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