

FEATURE

Temp-to-Perm: Best Hiring May Be Least Expected

By Joanne Grady

A company is facing a short-term project that needs extra help.

Family leaves are placing a strain on company resources.

Unexpected employee departures have left a company scrambling for workers.

These three examples are some of the reasons that businesses hire temporary workers, or temps, to supplement their work force.

Most businesses using temporary staff for short-term purposes may not realize, however, that hiring temporary workers permanently may be one of their best investments they can make for both long-term and short-term staffing solutions.

In 2004, administrative staffing was a \$70 billion industry in the U.S., with \$63 billion of that going to temporary services and \$7 billion to permanent staffing.

Administrative work force placement often starts with temporary assignments, as these positions are seen as somewhat transitory, impermanent and invariably lower wage than other positions. Yet administrative staffers are often the heart



Joanne Grady

and soul of any business as they are often the engine driving the entire company forward.

Successful business leaders are the ones who put time, effort and resources into identifying the right person for their staffing needs.

Because it is not an exact science and one that can take some time to get right, there are a few simple guidelines to follow when considering hiring a temporary worker and how to make that decision work the best for you, your employees and for the success of the company.

Why Hire a Temp?

There are many reasons why a

company hires temporary workers.

The company may have long- or short-term projects that need attention and can't be staffed by another full-time employee. Another pair of experienced hands may be all it takes to complete the project in half the time it would take the full-time staff.

Family leave, sick leave and other personal matters also impact the efficacy of the full-time staff.

Another reason is that companies often want to take their time during a hiring process and will sign on a temp while going through this.

On the flip side, temping is a great way for job candidates to prove themselves if they want to be considered for the job. Temps may very well be the best candidates who have built up experience with the company and the trust of managers, and have proven themselves in a short period of time.

The economics also work in favor of the company because it has invested in training the temp worker for the open position without bearing the burden of adding him or her to its payroll, as the staffing service takes care of paying temps and all their benefits.

It also gives companies the opportunity to weed out potential

WOMEN'S BUSINESS

BOSTON

Covering Massachusetts, New Hampshire and Rhode Island

November 2005

THE PROFESSIONAL AND BUSINESS WOMAN'S JOURNAL

employees who would not be a good fit if their skill set is not up to par for the job.

Temp to Hire

The current trend is that one-third of temporary workers are being transitioned into permanent positions. This means that companies are using temporary assignments to find good candidates, invest in their training and test their job skills.

Additionally, if a company is hesitant to add head count to its staff, hiring a temp is an easy way to avoid this complication while getting the job done.

Often candidates who seek a temporary position are looking for a full-time position and use their assignments as a way to earn money while they are looking for a job. Consequently, most of them are receptive to first trying a temp position, then having the option to apply for a full-time position if it is available.

Temps are not, however, guaranteed a job as they must go through the requisite interview process that sometimes takes one and two meetings with those in charge of hiring.

Business Benefits

There are significant benefits for companies to support a temp-to-permanent method. First, they are not paying the temp directly, so from a cash flow perspective the staffing service bears the burden of this expense during the trial period.

Second, since so much of a successful hiring decision depends upon matching the right personality to the right corporate culture, a temp-to-perm conversion satisfies both these requirements.

Both parties know exactly what

they are getting into during the course of the temporary assignment, which is considered a trial period where the candidate gets to experience the company, its workers and the job's responsibilities.

As well, the company has a chance to see firsthand the candidate's work ethic and skill level. This period of time can be somewhat of an "insurance policy" to make sure that the right person is hired for the right position.

Temps' Benefits

Temping provides an opportunity to earn an income while conducting a job search. As long as the temp candidate is clear with the prospective employer, oftentimes they are allowed to continue to interview during this temp-to-perm timeframe. Therefore, they are not missing out on any open positions.

Temps who want to be brought on full time must inform their placement consultant of their desire. Once the "green light" is given, the temp must continue to demonstrate a solid work ethic, a high level of enthusiasm and a willingness to learn.

By being proactive and asking for additional responsibilities and by producing quality work, they will set themselves apart as a strong candidate for the permanent position. The performance during that time period will be the strongest asset in proving that they would be a valuable addition to the company's team.

Temp Timetables

If you are considering embarking on a temporary assignment to learn more about a certain industry, bear in mind that the length of assignments varies widely depending on the need.

They can be as short as one day or run for several months.

Most long-term temporary assignments run from one to three months, plenty of time to make an impression and get your foot in the door for consideration for a permanent position. Also, most temp services do not charge a placement fee after three months of temping.

Staffing Solutions

There is a significant trend in companies utilizing the temp-to-perm model to fill vacancies. Currently, it is the preferred model because it makes sense from a managerial and economic standpoint. Human resource departments and others in charge of hiring understand that temp-to-perm is a smart hiring option.

The best way for a company to start the process of hiring a temp who could be a permanent employee someday is to establish a strong relationship with a staffing service. The service will know best the company's needs, its culture and the types of candidates who would be most successful at the firm.

Transitioning into a permanent position after temping may be another good way for those who are returning to the work force. They can quickly gain valuable experience and training while learning about a certain company. Having an open mind and being flexible are also two attributes that will serve these candidates well.

Joanne Grady is president and founder of Abbott Personnel Consulting Services Inc., a work force placement agency in Boston celebrating its 20th year in business.