

Overcoming Obstacles

How Businesses Use Staffing Strategically

If you think that temps are best used as fill-ins for vacationing employees, think again! Savvy executives are discovering that temporaries (and staffing services) can be used to solve some of their toughest business challenges. From easing the pain of layoffs to turning around under-productive departments and even driving revenue growth, staffing is proving to be an extremely valuable strategic tool.

Want to see how other companies are using staffing services to their advantage? Here are three real-life case studies...

Case Study #1: **Low-budget, Mistake free hiring**

The Challenge:

Hire 30 people on a strict budget and ensure no bad hires.

Background:

Thanks to a facilities expansion, an electronics manufacturer needed to hire thirty new employees, including a Buyer, a Production



Supervisor, and a large number of Customer Service Reps and Production Laborers.

As policy, all new hires were required to submit to extensive evaluation, which consisted of background checks, drug screening, and skills testing. The manufacturer had just one HR representative, who was responsible for managing all these tasks while adhering to strict budgetary limitations.

The Solution:

The electronics manufacturer turned to a staffing service for assistance. The staffing service analyzed the situation and with the HR manager developed the following process:

1. **Pre-employment walk-throughs**

To minimize the chance of hiring mistakes and reduce the cost of the evaluation process, a pre-employment “walk-through” was created for the CSR and Production Laborer candidates. These walk-throughs allowed the manufacturer to interview each candidate, and showcase the facility and the job duties first hand. Only those people who passed the interview and expressed sincere interest in the job duties would complete the more extensive (and costly) background checks.

2. **Outsource recruiting activities**

To expedite the hiring process, and minimize recruiting costs, the staffing firm took over responsibility for developing display advertising, administering paperwork, developing job descriptions, conducting pre-employment drug screening, criminal background checks, application appraisals, pre-screening, processing, interviewing, testing, reference checking and making candidate recommendations.

3. **Use temporary, temp-to-hire, and direct hire services.**

To get the new facility staffed as quickly as possible, temporary employees were first hired while the search was conducted for full-time hires. To reduce the chances of bad hires, temp-to-hire services were used, which allowed the manufacturer to test some candidates on-the-job before committing to a hiring decision. And finally, some candidates were hired on a contingency fee basis, which eliminated up-front recruiting costs and provided the manufacturer with a 30-day satisfaction guarantee.

The Results:

By working closely with the manufacturer, the staffing service was able to successfully fill all openings within the manufacturer's time schedule and budgetary constraints. Other benefits included:

- By outsourcing recruitment and shifting overhead expenses, the manufacturer was able to reduce overtime and training expenses and lower their average cost per hire.
- By eliminating the burden of most of the hiring activities, key staff could focus on the more critical tasks, and productivity improved.
- By using a structured hiring process, the electronics manufacturer was able to ensure legal hiring practices were followed and prevent bad hires.



**Case Study #2:
Recovering From Layoffs**

The Challenge:

Keep low performing employees out of the workforce.

Background:

In September 2001, a box manufacturer had to downsize due to the faltering economy. Their layoff targeted employees who were failing to meet performance expectations. By Spring 2002, business began to improve with significant increases forecast for the summer months.

The company had a dilemma. As a union shop, the manufacturer had a one-year obligation to bring back union employees who were laid-off. While they needed to add staff, they did not want to re-hire their poor performers. To the contrary, their goal was to upgrade their workforce by hiring employees with more skills than those they had employed in the past. To compound the challenge, they also had an obligation to give the union the first shot at filling all job openings.

The Solution:

1. **Fill the workforce gap with interns.**
2. **Payroll the interns through a staffing service.**

The HR manager contacted the union and said they had never done this before, but they wanted to open up summer positions to students and payroll them through a staffing service. The union had no objection. Of the six openings available, the union could only fill two positions, so the HR manager went to a staffing service to fill the remaining four positions.

The Results:

The students provided the additional resources the manufacturer needed to meet the summer workload. Once September arrived, the manufacturer no longer had an obligation to bring back undesirable employees. Through a creative approach to staffing, the company was able to find a way to abide by its union obligations and still upgrade their staff.

Also, once the union experienced the benefit of working with a staffing vendor, they agreed to allow other temp-to-hire orders to be filled by the staffing firm. As an added benefit to the union, supplementing the labor pool with qualified temporaries reduced the chance of further layoffs to union members.



Case Study #3: Curing a "cancerous" department

The Challenge:

Restore productivity and morale in a low-performing department.

Background:

A pharmaceutical manufacturer had a need for a temporary administrative assistant due to a medical disability. The problem wasn't finding someone with the right skill set, but finding someone who could survive in a dysfunctional department.

In placing the request for a temporary, the company's HR Manager noted that the department was "cancerous" and filled with many difficult personalities. According to the HR Manager, the workers preferred to gossip rather than work, the department was not very productive, and they had already experienced a high turnover in temporaries. Because of past staffing problems, the workload was piling up, and they could not afford to waste more time locating the right person through trial and error.

The Solution:

- 1. Behavioral profiling of the position.**
- 2. Behavioral hiring of the employee.**

Before initiating a candidate search, the staffing service first developed a behavioral profile of

the troublesome department. They asked detailed questions to better understand the work environment and the traits of the kind of person who could succeed in this environment. Using the profile information, the staffing firm conducted an in-depth search and identified a candidate who was used to working hard, was capable of turning out a high volume of work, and who was pleasant, but not chatty.

The Results:

The temporary proved to be an example for the department. She worked diligently and with little chatter. The HR Manager let the staffing service know that the department had begun to turn around. The manager felt this was a result of the temporary employee's example. Some specific benefits included:

- Productivity in this once-troubled department was at an all time high.
- Unproductive gossip was cut back to a minimum.
- The company saved money by eliminating turnover and increasing productivity.
- And to no one's surprise, the company offered the temporary a permanent job...they weren't going to let go of such a valuable employee.

Lessons:

Running a business is not an easy task. But as these three case studies show, many tough challenges can be solved through the strategic use of staffing, and more specifically, by developing a good working relationship with a high quality staffing firm. When you're looking to improve productivity, control costs or manage growth, look to your staffing partner to find the solutions you seek!