

Staffing: An Integral Part of Successful Workforce Strategies

by Vicki Spencer

The staffing industry may have started out as the answer to a temporary need, but today, their solutions are becoming an indispensable part of successful workforce strategies.

As businesses continually look for ways to maximize productivity and employee engagement while maintaining a lean, cost-effective work structure, staffing firms are stepping up with viable solutions. Employers are realizing there is more to staffing than just short-term workers—it may just be the secret to long-term competitive advantage!

Extensive Recruiting Expertise

When you partner with a staffing firm, the first benefit you will realize is the depth of recruiting expertise which immediately becomes yours. Sourcing, recruiting, screening and hiring talent is their core business—it's what they do every day and what they do best.

A staffing firm already has the resources and tools in place to rapidly identify and deliver the skilled talent you're seeking. So, you can stay focused on your business without getting bogged down by all of the activities involved in recruiting, advertising, screening and weeding through candidates to find the right person.

Access to Unseen Talent

Anyone can scour a job board looking for available candidates, but the only pool of talent you will be considering are those who are actively promoting themselves online, and even that is time consuming. Staffing companies can give you a real advantage in this process for several reasons.

One, they know the local area and the people who live and work in your community. A good staffing firm is always building relationships with the people around them, whether they are happily employed, anticipating a job change, between jobs or new to the area. Those relationships translate into deep reservoirs of talent that are not necessarily visible on job boards. Not to mention, some of the most sought-after talent in the market are already employed. But, that's no obstacle when you have a well-connected staffing firm presenting them with the right opportunity at the right time.

Second, working through a staffing firm gives you the benefit of candidate referrals—a goldmine of hidden talent. Birds of a feather flock together, so when staffing companies have high-performing candidates with specific skills or industry experience, they are able to identify other top performers in their profession since they tend to run in the same circles.

And third, your search for talent is supported by industry best practices and the most relevant recruiting tools. Recent research shows workers have definite preferences in the media they use to job search and connect with potential employers. If your business does not have a strong presence in those places, you won't reach them at all. Frankly, many businesses don't have the time or resources to make sure they are attracting talent on all of those different levels; that's where staffing companies can be a real value.

Some of the most reputable staffing firms have innovative sourcing tools that employ a mix of social media, mobile recruiting tools, text job alerts, career blogs and local networking to garner the most robust selection of talent in the area and attract them to your opportunities.

Adjust Your Workforce to Meet Business Demands

Another key advantage to engaging a staffing firm is the flexibility it presents amid changing seasons of business. While permanent employees are fixed costs for an organization, staffing companies offer you the advantage of variable resources which can be scaled up or down as demands change. So, when peak seasons of business hit, time-sensitive projects pop up or employees take sick time, vacation or maternity leave, productivity remains unchanged. And, during slower periods of business, you're able to reduce staff and related costs without the threat of downsizing your permanent workforce.

Reduce the Risks Associated with Hiring

When you are ready to add permanent talent to your workforce, the process of identifying the right candidate for the job can be daunting. What if a candidate interviews well, but their ability to perform well on the job is a whole different story? From a financial, as well as a time and resources perspective, making a poor hire is costly. One way to avoid that risk is to solicit the support of a staffing company with a rigorous talent selection process that prescreens, assesses, interviews, reference checks, background checks, drug screens and validates a candidate's credentials.

Staffing companies such as Spherion also have hiring checkpoints that take the candidate matching process to an even greater level—examining the factors that ensure the candidate is an ideal match for the job, the manager they will report to, and the company as a whole. These are the kind of value adds you will experience when you work with a staffing company with these types of tools and hiring practices in place.

In addition to talent selection tools, a staffing company can give you the option to 'try before you buy' with a temp-to-hire solution. It's an ideal concept for employers because it allows you to preview a candidate's on-the-job performance before making a permanent hiring decision. And, the candidate is able to gauge if the opportunity is right for them as well. When both parties agree, you've just eliminated the potential risk and positioned your company to make an outstanding hire.

Work within the Boundaries of the Affordable Care Act

The new health care law is high on the radar of every organization. Although the employer mandate requiring large employers to offer health insurance to all full-time equivalent employees has been delayed until January 2015, employers need to understand what the Affordable Care Act (ACA) means for their businesses. Staffing companies are assisting in the process by educating local businesses on the new law and providing ways they can stay within its boundaries to avoid significant penalties.

Under the ACA, businesses with 50 full-time employees are considered "large employers" and will be subject to the rules and added administrative burdens imposed by the new law. In determining whether businesses hit the 50 full-time employee trigger, the flexible talent they use generally will not count

towards that total since those individuals generally remain the common law employees of the staffing company (and not the businesses). Staffing firms can also offer services to track the new ACA full-time employee criterion that applies a 30-hours-per-week standard, which will allow staffing firms either (i) to treat employees as part time and not covered by the ACA, or (ii) to offer those employees medical coverage. In those cases, businesses do not have to worry about the administration or penalties of ever-changing hours that some segments of their workforce may require.

Stay in Touch with Trends Impacting the Workforce

Here's an advantage you may not even be aware of that can make a big difference in your ability to attract, manage and retain top performers. A good staffing partner will not only provide the talent you need to operate productively, they will also keep you abreast of workforce trends and insights that will make you more attractive to top talent and help you retain your company's best performers. The Emerging Workforce® Study is a great example of the kind of intuitive research staffing companies can provide an employer. This particular study has been tracking the beliefs, changes and trends of the U.S. workforce for 15 years, honing in on what workers say keeps them engaged, productive and satisfied—and what factors motivate them to move on.

If you thought staffing firms were just a source for temps, think again. The industry's most respected, forward-thinking companies have integrated staffing into their workforce strategies, and they are reaping its benefits on a daily basis. From recruiting expertise, expanded talent pools, flexible labor structures and risk-free hiring, to complying with the standards of the ACA and staying in tune with today's workforce—staffing firms are giving companies the competitive edge they need to build a high-performing workforce that will keep them at the top of their industry.

Local Spherion owners David and Larry Miller and their team have been serving the recruiting and staffing needs of Polk County for 27 years. Founded in 1946, Spherion is a \$2 billion national workforce leader with a distinct local focus. To learn more about the benefits of staffing or how Spherion can help you, contact Mike Carew at 863 860-8200 or visit them online at www.spherion.com.