

We have met with a number of individuals who have never had to partner with a staffing firm before and are unsure of what a staffing firm is all about and what they should expect. We will try and answer some of these questions in this blog.

A staffing firm is a company that serves two clients: individuals seeking employment and companies seeking employees. When partnering with a staffing firm you need to do your due diligence and make sure the staffing firm is a reputable firm. Ask friends, co-workers, family, and your former HR representative for recommendations. Most staffing firms have thorough screening processes that include: pre-screening, completed applications, face-to-face interviews, references checks, and skills evaluations. Positions can range from C.E.O. to laborer. Typically, staffing firms offer three types of employment: project/supplemental/temporary, temp-to-hire, and direct placement.

Supplemental or temporary staffing are projects that can last a couple of hours to several years. Companies will hire a staffing firm to help find employees to cover vacations, medical leaves, or to meet high workloads. These types of projects are great for individuals seeking employment for a number of reasons:

- It provides a source of income while seeking a regular, full-time opportunity.
- The staffing firm can act as a job reference and resume builder to fill gaps in your employment history while between jobs.
- Companies often call staffing firms to fill immediate needs. So, you could find employment fast.
- Temporary work allows you to accept assignments that meet your availability.
- Many companies hire their internal staff from the 'temporary' employees. The temporary employees have already been trained and assimilated to the environment.
- The temporary position can provide you with great networking opportunities. Meeting people in your industry and developing some good job leads through this interaction.
- You can gain experience in a new field. You may have the skills to do the job, but lack the experience. Sometimes a staffing firm can help you gain that much needed experience. Or it may be an industry or career you had not thought of previously.
- Many staffing firms provide access to benefits.
- Staffing firms have access to job leads that are not advertised.
- 2.5 million people a day are employed in the staffing industry. (American Staffing Association)

Temp-to-Hire (or what we call First-to-Hire) is when a company has an internal need and would like to "try before they buy". Recruiting, screening, testing, training and hiring an employee is expensive. Many companies want to make sure the individual they are hiring has the skills they say they do and have the personality that will be a good match in their environment. A temp-to-hire, is a temporary project with a set time period that the employee would be on the project at the client before the client would hire that employee internally. If the client or employee felt that this arrangement would not work out long term...the project would end and the staffing firm would find another employee for the company, while assigning the employee to a different project that would better fit their goals.

A temp-to-hire includes all of the benefits that a temporary project offers plus it allows you the opportunity to try a company before committing to a full-time, internal position. It is difficult to interpret a company based on one or two interviews. The goal is to find a position that is a long term career move and a temp-to-hire allows you the chance to see the day-to-day operation and make sure that the position accomplishes your career goals and meets the criteria you have established.

- 8 out of 10 employers feel that staffing firms offer a good way to find people who can become internal employees. (American Staffing Association)
- 72% of temporary workers obtain an internal position while working through a staffing firm. (American Staffing Association)

Direct placement occurs when a staffing firm is engaged to match a candidate's skills with a specific job opportunity and the candidate is hired directly by the client company. They are never employed by the staffing firm. Companies may hire the staffing firm to do this to eliminate the time and expense to conduct a job search. They may not have the internal staff to sort through all of the resumes they receive. The hiring company usually interviews several candidates from those presented and makes the decision on who will best fit their needs. The staffing firm will present the job offer to the candidate who is then hired directly by the client company.

What is a staffing firm looking for when you meet with them?

- They will take note of your appearance, personality & attitude.
- Make sure you decide in advance whether you are open to working temporary projects, open to temp-to-hire and want only direct hire placements.
- Be honest.
- Be on time and follow up. When assigned to a project keep the staffing firm informed of any concerns or positive events.
- Turn your cell phone off when interviewing.
- Be prepared to answer questions like; "Tell me about yourself", "How would your supervisor describe you", and "Give me an example of...".
- They will want to hear about your successes and specific examples to support those successes.
- They will look at your employment history. Make sure your employment dates are accurate. Be prepared to explain any gaps in your work history.
- Keep your staffing company informed of any changes in your contact information or your availability.

As you can see there are numerous benefits to partnering with a staffing firm. Again, do your research to make sure you are working with one that will represent you properly and is respected in the community.

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