



## Temporary Staffing Growth Flexibility Critical for Employers, Workers

By Mark S. Elwood

According to U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, the U.S. staffing/temporary help industry is growing faster and adding more jobs than just about any other industry today. Surprised? Most people are.

While many might still think of temporary agencies as someone to call when the receptionist is sick and can't come to work, the use of temporary staffing has become a key strategic initiative for many businesses. This translates into the staffing industry becoming big business itself, providing an average of nearly three million temporary or contract workers daily, with total sales of \$81.9 billion in 2005.

### Business drivers

One key word describes the driving force behind the tremendous growth of the staffing industry: flexibility. Businesses not only want flexibility in managing their workforce, it has become a competitive necessity. Companies can use temporary workers in short-term roles to fill in for absent employees, allowing key tasks to be completed with little or no interruption of day-to-day business. However, many businesses also use temporary workers as a long-term business strategy, allowing for increasing or reducing their workforces quickly in order to meet changing business demands.

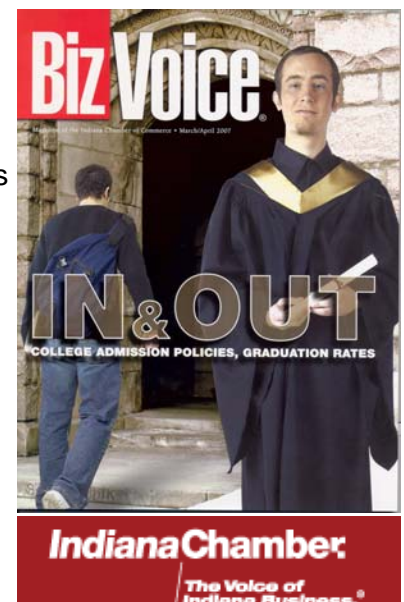
Businesses also use temporary agencies to have access to a pool of talent that might not otherwise be available to them. The practice of "temp-to-hire" is currently on the rise as companies see the benefit of hiring a worker who has already been exposed to company culture and expectations of the job.

The use of temporary workers is not industry or skill specific. Businesses from manufacturing to professional services to information technology rely on temporary agencies to help meet workforce needs. The largest requested skill for temporaries today is office/clerical, with industrial being second in demand.

### Attraction of temporary work

Flexibility is not an attraction just to the companies that use temporary workers, but is also appealing to many job seekers. Many years ago, people turned to working as temporaries primarily when they were between jobs or for summer work. Now, working as a temporary is actually a career choice for many, due to a desire for flexible work arrangements. Employees who work as temporaries can often select their work times, locations and choice of assignments.

But flexibility is not the only reason for working as a temporary. The opportunity to build new skills and job experience attracts many workers to temporary work. In a recent survey of temporary workers conducted by the American Staffing Association, more than 88% felt that the experience of working as a temporary made them more employable due to developing new skills, sharpening current skills and having on-the-job experience. Approximately 40% also said that working as a temporary employee helped raise their level of self-confidence and improved their work habits.



March/April 2007

In addition to developing new skills, many workers choose temporary agencies in order to obtain permanent jobs. The possibility of finding permanent work is the number one reason given for working as a temporary by the participants in the ASA survey. And just as temp-to-hire arrangements allow an employer to assess a prospective employee, temp-to-hire also allows workers to evaluate whether the employer has the culture, environment and type of work that the worker desires.

### **Recruiting quality temporary workers**

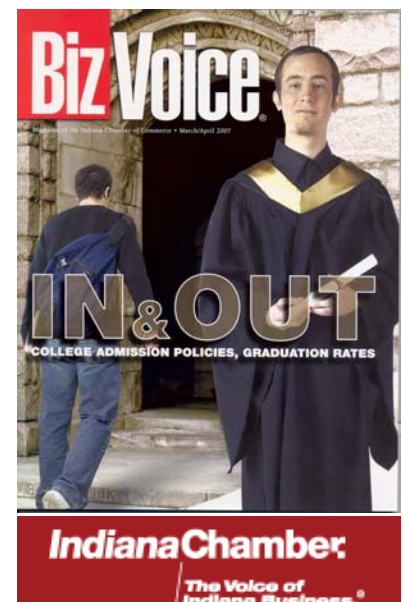
While there are many attractions to working as a temporary employee, agencies do face challenges in finding quality temporary workers. Temporary agencies must continually and proactively recruit, tapping into as many resources as possible to find the right employees.

These resources include some of the more traditional methods such as Internet postings and newspaper advertisements, as well as other avenues such as trade associations, schools and churches. As the demand for temporary help continues to grow, the challenge of finding the number of qualified temporary workers to meet customer needs will also increase greatly.

### **Future growth**

Projections remain strong for the temporary services industry. The Bureau of Labor Statistics forecasts that over the next decade, employment services will rank first in the number of jobs created and third in growth rate of all industries. Companies will continue to enjoy the benefits of having a flexible workforce to meet changing business needs. The key challenge for temporary agencies will be finding the right talent to meet the demands, but the best agencies will always find ways to meet the needs of the business partners they serve.

**Author: Mark S. Elwood is CEO of Columbus-based Elwood Staff Services Inc., the largest independent provider of industrial and clerical staffing solutions in Indiana. Connie Whisner, a director for Elwood Staffing, assisted with the article. Elwood can be contacted at (812) 372-6200 or [www.elwoodstaffing.com](http://www.elwoodstaffing.com)**



March/April 2007