

Temp-to-Hire

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Introduction

One of the largest employers in the United States today is an employment agency. An employment agency is an agency whose business is to find jobs for people seeking them or to find people to fill jobs that are open. These jobs range from temporary assignments to full-time and permanent positions.

Many people turn to these agencies to assist them in their respective job searches. Many employers who also rely heavily on temps to carry a major part of the required day-to-day workload. These agencies have expanded from clerical office support to include industrial, financial, technical, design, medical, dental, and most other career fields. Job seekers need to research which agencies best meet their needs. In most, if not all, cases fees to register with these services are paid by the employers or companies that use them.

Types of Employment Agencies

Temporary Employment Agencies - Traditionally assigns short-term tasks, usually clerical, data entry, and/or administrative in nature to a variety of companies, on the agency's payroll.

Permanent Employment Agencies - Provides initial screening of full-time career ready candidates before referring out to employer for on-site interviews. Agency is paid by the company only if the candidate referred is hired. Some agencies specialize in certain industries or professional fields.

Executive Search Firms - Screens middle to upper level management career candidates for referral to companies seeking highly experienced and/or specialized talent. Not typically used by entry level college graduates.

Staffing Services - Agencies that do temp, temp-to-hire, and/or leasing of employees for companies that do not want the immediate responsibility of payroll, taxes, liability, worker's compensation and benefits of the employee it needs.

Types of Employment Categories

Independent Contractor/Freelancer - Worker contracts directly with employer for a defined project/task; worker is self-employed and is therefore responsible for his/her own furnishings such as the computer/software and/or office equipment and supplies needed to do the work. Salaries are usually higher because the company is not paying a retirement and/or benefit plan. Most college students do not have the level of skill or experience right out of college to negotiate for this type of employment.

Subcontractor - Worker contracts services to a contract house or job shop that marks up the fees and assigns worker to a company for a defined project. Worker is self-employed.

Job Sharing or Job Pairing - Both are part-time options that allow flexibility to employee while not losing important retirement and benefit options. In the first case, the worker shares the same job. In the second case, the worker has separate responsibilities and workloads.

Leased Employee - Company selects the employee they want, but hires a Staffing Service to handle the payroll, taxes, liability, worker's compensation and some form of benefit program to save money.

Pros and Cons of Employment Agencies

Pros

Temp-to-perm is always possible. If the client company likes you, they can always arrange to buy your contract from the agency that sent you there.

You are not committed to the job. You're not facing a 5+ year commitment with an unknown employer. You're not facing any commitment beyond what you agree to when you accept an assignment whether it's three days, three weeks, or three months.

You will have the flexibility to schedule your own hours to allow you to take the time needed to tend to your personal affairs without having the weight of a department or company on your shoulders. Just make sure the company you are temping with knows you might have such a need.

You will earn while you learn. You can earn extra income while searching for a job that fits.

Cons

An assignment might end abruptly. Work is not guaranteed. It is challenging to catch on quickly. Management changes, canceled contracts, declining sales or any number of reasons may contribute to the end of your assignment. Economic conditions may dictate supply of job and supply of employees.

The benefits for temps are not usually as good as those given to permanent employees. Temps may not have the opportunity to connect with coworkers.

Locating Employment Agencies

Go online and using a search engine, type in keywords "employment agencies" to get a listing of various agencies.

Some popular employment agencies and their websites include:

- ✦ OfficeTeam: www.officeteam.com
- ✦ Accountemps: www.accountemps.com
- ✦ Culver Personnel Services, Inc.: www.culvercareers.com
- ✦ Kelly Services: www.kelleysservices.com
- ✦ Lab Support: www.labsupport.com
- ✦ Manpower: www.manpower.com
- ✦ Robert Half: www.roberthalf.com
- ✦ Snelling: www.snelling.com
- ✦ Volt: www.volt.com

Choosing Employment Agencies

It is essential to screen agencies carefully before signing contractual agreements. Some agencies may pressure you into assignments that are either inappropriate to your background and interests, or lead you into pathways further from your long-term goals. Here's what and how to investigate:

Agency Reputation. How long has the agency been in business? Does the agency hold membership in professional organizations such as the American Staffing Association (ASA)? How many officers does it have? Is it local, statewide, national, or international?

Longevity is probably a good sign. A local firm might offer more individual attention. A larger firm may provide more resources and opportunities that give you more options down the road. Get recommendations from current "temps" as well as from clients' companies.

Agency Specialties/Training Programs. What types of business and/or career specialties does it serve? Does the firm offer individualized training programs?

Try to choose firms that have the types of assignments in career fields or industries that best match your academic background, experience and future career interests. Some firms provide computer software training courses or tutorials that enhance your skills and help you stay in touch with changes in various industries.



Agency Screening/Matching Process. What tests, if any, are used to assess skills and qualifications? Will the employment counsel, or be available to me during the interview or matching process? Do I get to choose the preferred length of assignment?

Testing and other screening tools ensure that you and the assignments are an appropriate match for your background. You want to be comfortable in either the work assigned or the employers you are referred out to. For example, will you be expected to take on assignments that last only one or two weeks when you prefer longer commitments of three to six weeks?

Agency Benefits/Compensation. How and what will I get paid? What benefits does your agency offer?

Look for companies that are prompt with paychecks and those that provide benefits other than wages, e.g., paid lunch hours, vacation, or group medical insurance. As for wage rates, be sure to compare those of several companies. Rates will vary by location, skill level, and experience.

Contractual Understandings. Does the agency object if you register with other agencies? How easy is it to discontinue an inappropriate or dissatisfactory assignment? What is their policy if you accept a permanent job from a client?

It's usually a good idea to register with more than one agency. Make sure this is ok. Find out process if referrals or assignments don't work out.

The Employment Agency "Interview"

The agency IS an employer. Approach with preparation and do not treat casually. Here are a few tips on how to prepare for the interview:

Arrive promptly with a professional, grammatically error-free resume with an attached page of references.

Complete application forms neatly and accurately. This builds trust and credibility to what you say you know and can do.

Dress appropriately. Handle yourself with self-confidence using an appropriate and assertive style that tells your story on how you can see your strengths and goals.

Be available and reachable. Many temporary services have a quick turn-around on employer requests. If they can't reach you, they will offer the opportunity to someone else. Make sure your voicemail has a professional message on it.

Be flexible and open. Don't be so restrictive in what you will take or you risk having very few possibilities open to you.

Don't forget that while the employment agency is interviewing you, you are interviewing them. How were you greeted and treated throughout the interview? Does the recruiter understand your skills and interests?

Tips for Converting to a Career Employee

Be personable, adaptable, and enthusiastic. Know that not all tasks will be exciting, challenging, and totally thrilling. Don't start giving advice and suggestions right off the bat until you know the ropes and personalities of the office. Look, listen, and learn from those around you.

Do more than what is expected. Take the extra steps to make sure that the assignment or project is done according to the supervisor's expectations. Check out assumptions for how things get done.

Show initiative. Ask questions regarding the business and where it is headed. Read up on the company products and services. Find out its organizational chart and compare with the informal channel of communication. Introduce yourself to those around you in a friendly and professional way. Let people know your abilities and background during break or lunch times, without bragging.

Never bad mouth a past supervisor or colleague. Keep gossip to a minimum. Stay out of office politics if possible. Keep conversations positive and professional.

Follow through in an organized and timely fashion. Keep supervisors informed on how things are progressing for you. Ask for clarification and help as needed. Demonstrate your resourcefulness by taking advantage of the resources and information available to you on-site.

Keep learning. Take evening classes through continuing education or extension programs at the local area community college or universities.

