

S STAFFING

Ramp Up With Outsourced Professionals



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When you see the next ad or direct mail piece offering you project management services, don't throw it out. Outsourcing of projects may just be the most creative solution to your production needs.

Especially now, in the wake of the recent down—or right—sizings, outsourcing makes perfect sense when you need special expertise or are temporarily

short of staff. You can bring an experienced professional to work on your site under your direction or an expert or team of experts to take over discreet projects and produce them independently on- or off-site. In either case, you get the job done—on time. The company's headcount is not affected; but even more important, you can protect your existing staff from becoming overextended.

During the past years, contracting has become an acceptable, even desirable way of working for many qualified professionals. Some of these independent contractors choose to work as freelancers and have set themselves up in a business mode that supports contract work on- and off-site. Others chose to work on a contract basis temporarily for a variety of reasons.

You may already have a bulging Rolodex of contractors but if you don't, it may make sense to interview and cultivate contractors now so that you know them and their work when an acute need arises. Some managers make it a point to interview several such contract professionals every month on a non-committal basis. The benefits are that they know where to find the talent when they need it, and they keep themselves abreast of new strategies and production techniques.

Another important resource for contract talent is a trusted placement agency. It is simply good management to get to know your account manager per-

sonally. Ask him/her to meet you at your office to become acquainted with your working environment and special needs. Your account manager will then become a highly responsive resource for excellent talent, especially when you are in a hurry. The agency can recruit for special skills to match your specific requirements and find expert help at reasonable fees. Generally, they have access to a large pool of pre-qualified candidates. The agency interviews them, checks references and manages the financial and administrative details of the placement. For these services, it is the candidate who pays the agency a portion of the placement fee, not you.

If you have contractors work onsite, here are the tools they will need from you.

- Financial and departmental approval, including signed POs;
- Efficient working space for onsite work;
- Reliable communications, especially if the contractor works off-site;
- A written outline of the goals, deliverables and deadlines;
- Access to all necessary materials and contacts;
- A schedule and directions for regular reviews and reporting;
- Reasonable warning and explanation when changes occur; and
- The willingness to deal promptly with the contractor or placement agency if the performance does not meet standards or expectations.

Well-managed and thoughtful outsourcing is a cost-effective way to supplement talent, relieve stress, provide timely execution of projects and programs, and bring products and services to market. Outsourcing project management is not only a creative but also a smart solution to managing today's tightly controlled resources.

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