

Ten Ways to Get the Most from Temporary Workers

Why bring in temporary workers if you're not going to get a full day's worth of work out of them? Obviously, if you've hired a temp, you need some extra help. To make sure the temps you've hired really *are* helpful during your company's crunch time or can efficiently fill in while a staff member is on leave, take the following advice:

1. Planning pays off. Before work starts, contact your personnel department or a representative from a temporary employment agency and explain your needs. The experts can help find the right person for the job, but they need to know specific criteria so that they can send qualified candidates to do the work. Read [How Can You Ensure That the Temp You Hire Has the Skills Your Company Needs?](#) for advice on finding the best candidate for the position.

2. Ask your employees. First, solicit suggestions from your staff on how and where temporary workers should be used. Second, ask employees for recommendations for temp job candidates. Third, if a recommendation pays off, consider giving an appropriate reward. For more advice, read [The Most Appropriate Jobs for Temporary Workers](#).

3. Communicate. Tell your employees what's going on. Even the most secure employees may feel threatened if they suddenly see a new face in the next cubicle. Let your staff know beforehand why you are bringing in temporary help and what they will be doing. Get them excited about the extra help.

4. Be prepared. Allocate workspace and round up a phone, computer, and other office supplies the temporary worker might need before he or she arrives. Otherwise you'll pay good money for the temp to sit around and watch you set up shop.

5. Who's the boss? Assign someone to meet the temporary worker at the door. Have that person introduce the temporary worker to the person who will oversee their work and to other temps and full-time workers who will be working with them or are in adjacent spaces. Clearly

establish whom, and how, they should ask for help or advice. Also, let the temporary worker know who is supposed to give him or her direction, work, and feedback.

6. Be specific. Tell new temporary workers exactly what you want done, and be clear about work rules, office routines, daily starting and quitting times, and the length of the assignment.

7. Set reasonable objectives. Don't expect a temporary receptionist to know everyone's name within five minutes, or a file clerk to immediately understand all the peculiarities of your system. Be realistic, but challenging, about what a newcomer can accomplish.

8. Give feedback. Ask a supervisor to check in with the temporary worker to evaluate their progress and answer any questions. Even the simplest instructions can be misunderstood, so follow up to make sure things are moving along smoothly. It costs less to correct mistakes early on than it does to write off a whole day's efforts because of a simple miscommunication.

9. Show some respect. Treat temporary workers the way you'd want to be treated. Even if they will be with you for only a short period of time, they should be treated like other members of the team. Once they get involved in the work, solicit their feedback and listen to their suggestions. Newcomers (especially temps who have worked at several firms) have experience in different environments. They can bring a fresh perspective, and their views are often quite revealing.

10. Temp-to-perm? If you are using temporary workers as a means of identifying potential employees, let them know what your plans are. That information could be the extra incentive necessary to motivate superior performance, and it could help you spot a valuable new addition to your team.

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