

Curing a 'cancerous' environment

Here's how one business solved a difficult problem with the strategic use of staffing services.

If you think that temporary workers are best used as fill-ins for vacationing employees, think again! Savvy executives are discovering that staffing services can be used to solve some of their toughest business challenges.

From easing the pain of layoffs to turning around under-productive departments and even driving revenue growth, staffing is proving to be an extremely valuable strategic tool. In this series, we take a look at how three real-life companies have used staffing services to their advantage. This month, a pharmaceutical manufacturer struggles with turnover in a dysfunctional department.



Case Study #3: Turning around an under-performing department

The Challenge:

Restore productivity and morale in a low-performing department.

Background:

A pharmaceutical manufacturer had a need for a temporary administrative assistant due to a medical disability. The problem wasn't finding someone with the right skill set, but finding someone who could survive in a dysfunctional department.

In placing the request for a temporary, the company's HR Manager noted that the department was "cancerous" and filled with many difficult personalities. According to the HR Manager, the workers preferred to gossip rather than work, the department was not very productive, and they had already experienced high turnover in temporaries. Because of past staffing problems, the workload was piling up, and they could not afford to waste more time locating the right person through trial and error.

The Solution:

1. Behavioral profiling of the position.
2. Behavioral hiring of the employee.

Before initiating a candidate search, the staffing

company first developed a behavioral profile of the troublesome department. They asked detailed questions to better understand the work environment and the traits of the kind of person who could succeed in this environment. Using the profile information, the staffing firm conducted an in-depth search and identified a candidate who was used to working hard, was capable of turning out a high volume of work, and who was pleasant, but not chatty.

The Results:

The temporary proved to be an example for the department. She worked diligently and with little chatter. The HR Manager let the staffing service know that the department had begun to turn around as a result of the temporary employee's example. Some specific benefits included:

- Productivity in this once-troubled department was at an all-time high.
- Unproductive gossip was cut back to a minimum.
- The company saved money by eliminating turnover and increasing productivity.
- And to no one's surprise, the company offered the temporary a permanent job...they weren't going to let go of such a valuable employee!