

Five Misleading Myths About Getting A Job Through a Staffing Company

From Cheryl Ferguson December 12, 2009

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I've talked to half a dozen college grads recently that are still unemployed six months after graduating. Frustrated, they are not exactly sure what they want to do for a living, but they do know they "want to do something interesting," "they don't want to be pigeonholed," and most certainly "don't want to register with a staffing company."

Staffing companies offer candidates, from administrative assistants to CEOs, the opportunity to gain access to companies in one of two ways: on a temporary or temporary to hire basis on assignments that can last anywhere from one day to six months or longer; or on a full-time basis. According to the American Staffing Association's website, more than 90% of companies in the US use staffing firms, and 40% of employees looking for their first job or who are reentering the job market have done so by working with a staffing company.

So let's take a look at some of the most common and very misleading myths:

Myth #1: I only want a "real" job, not a temporary job.

Reality: The jobs available through staffing companies are "real" jobs at companies like: Amazon, Continental Airlines, Freddie Mac, Hearst Publications, Microsoft, PG &E, RBC Dain Rauscher, Suntron, Sony, Starbucks, and Visa. These companies develop budgets to hire a set number of full-time employees on an annual basis, and include in that budget a substantial amount of money that can be used to hire temporary staff throughout the year to handle the ebb and flow of business. When the time comes for the company to open up the temporary position as full-time, you are perfectly positioned to interview for the full-time job.

Myth #2: The jobs available through staffing companies are low paying jobs.

Reality: This is simply not so. As a recent college grad you will most likely be offered assignments commensurate with your experience, which is entry level. It is up to you to decide how to leverage that opportunity so that you can take your career to the next level. One college grad I worked with was able to parlay his experience planning events in his junior and senior years at college into an entry level job paying \$12/hr plus benefits, at a special events company that had a Fortune 100 company as one of its clients. At the end of two and a half years, he left that company to become an Account Executive at a major branding design firm. In this new position he had access to senior level management at Fortune 1000 companies.

Here are just some of the opportunities offered by staffing companies who have open positions:

- Regional Sales Director for a Major Retailer Full-time position with a six figure salary
- Employee Relations Coordinator for a Fortune 100 Company 43K
- Merchant Analyst for Leading Internet Retailer Long term temporary assignment at \$25/hr

- Recruiting Coordinator Three month temporary assignment at \$14/hr

- Bi-Lingual (German/English) Customer Service Rep Temporary to hire position at \$14/hr.
- Marketing Specialist for a Fortune 100 Company Long term temporary assignment, rate of pay DOE depends on experience)
- Accountant for a local construction company Full time position paying \$55-60k

Myth #3: Staffing companies only work with entry level, administrative type candidates.

Reality: Twenty years ago it may have been the case that temporary agencies only worked with entry level candidates. Today, specialty firms that place professional, managerial and technical staffing candidates, and even agencies that are more general in nature, work with companies that offer opportunities for candidates who are looking to get their foot in the door or change industries.

Case in point: a couple of years ago I worked for a staffing company that placed a Rhodes Scholar in his first full-time job at a major internet retailer, two Ph.D.s making the switch from academia to the "real world" at a much higher rate of pay than they had been making in academia, and a seasoned patent paralegal interested in leaving a law firm and going into industry.

Myth #4: Assignments only last a couple of weeks at a time at the most.

Reality: It depends upon the assignment. Assignments can last anywhere from one day, to a couple of weeks, to nine months. If you do a good job, like the company and the company is pleased with your efforts, you can be hired full-time. The beauty of working with a staffing company is that you get exposed to a variety of companies, positions and opportunities that you may never otherwise have been privy to. It's the easiest way to find out what you like about different companies in a very short period of time. After three or four long-term assignments, you'll have a much better idea of what you're looking for in terms of company culture, the type of boss that you work best with, and the type of work you enjoy doing.

Myth #5: The temporary jobs available through staffing companies don't offer benefits.

Reality: Not necessarily true. Depending on the staffing company, the varieties of benefits available to employees are just like "real" company benefits including: direct deposit, holiday, medical/dental, employee referral bonuses and 401K benefits.

Not only have staffing companies evolved into a highly professionalized industry, they offer a career entry point no one should pass up. If you find yourself unemployed and unclear about your prospects after graduation, consider a staffing company as you would your university placement center you really can't afford to pass on a resource that just might land you the job you want or at least a clearly marked path to it.

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