



General Job Search Strategies

Working with a Staffing Agency

Staffing agencies are hired by organizations to assist in identifying and hiring new employees, and are considered to be “third-party recruiters.” The National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE) defines third-party recruiters, as “agencies, organizations, or individuals recruiting candidates for temporary, part-time, or full-time employment opportunities other than for their own needs.” Because third-party recruiters are often hired by small companies in need of staff, seeking assistance from a staffing agency can be a rewarding – and typically free - step in your job search.

Benefits of Working with a Staffing Agency

Staffing agencies offer flexibility. Not all recent graduates plan to pursue a career after graduation. Some plan to attend graduate or professional school. Others may not be ready to commit to a nine-to-five job. Regardless, for most recent graduates some type of income will be required to pay the bills and maintain their life style. Staffing agencies offer the flexibility of earning an income without requiring a commitment to long-term employment or a full-time work schedule. You can work full-time or part-time, work five days a week or fewer. It depends on the work placements for which you qualify and choose to accept.

Those who are ready to enter the workforce may be unsure of their desired career path. A staffing agency can provide exposure to a variety of industries and companies that you otherwise might not have considered. Perhaps you haven’t been exposed to a professional work environment or developed the full array of workplace skills required by companies hiring for regular, full-time positions. If so, because of the the variety of jobs, professional environments and opportunities for which they are seeking candidates, working with a staffing agency is ideal. After several assignments you’ll likely be more familiar with workplace etiquette and have clearer career goals.

Your placement may lead to permanent employment. According to the American Staffing Association, about three quarters of temporary and contract employee's move on to permanent jobs. Such assignments allow you to get your foot in the door so both you and the employer can determine if there's a good fit. If the employer is impressed with your performance and the position becomes permanent, you are more likely to receive the job offer than an unknown applicant.

Professional training. Some staffing agencies offer training programs to maximize readiness for job assignments. Training may cover use of computer programs (e.g., PowerPoint, Excel) or other topics. With each placement you'll likely obtain training on the job, which will further increase your marketability to employers.

There are three main categories of job placement in the staffing industry, they include:

- Temporary or contract, when you work for the staffing agency's client on a short-term basis.
- Temp-to-perm or temp-to-hire occurs when you work for the staffing agency's client for a period of time in order for you and the client to determine if you are a good fit for the company based on your skills, performance, interests, etc. If there is a match the client would extend an offer of employment to you.
- Direct hire or permanent placement occurs when you are recruited by the staffing agency and then hired by its client.

How do I Select an Agency?

1. Most staffing agencies specialize in providing candidates for one or more of the following occupational areas: office administration, industrial, technical, information technology, scientific, health care, and managerial positions. Before you commit to working with an agency, check to make sure the employers served by that agency typically have positions that correspond with your interests and qualifications. Which firm is likely to offer opportunities related to your skills, knowledge areas, and education? You can identify staffing agencies by using the recommended directories:

<https://americanstaffing.net/job-seekers/>
2. You will want to research the firms you are considering contacting. Ask your career advisor, family, friends, and professional contacts what they know about the particular agency. Visit the American Staffing Association's website <http://americanstaffing.net/> to determine whether the agency is a member. ASA members pledge to adhere to a code of ethics and good practices. Also, ASA members do not charge job seekers when they place them with employers.
3. Pay attention to the treatment you receive during each interaction you have with the staffing agency. Upon your initial visit, are the individuals you meet with professional and pleasant? What type of impression do you get from the office environment? How responsive are they to your requests?
4. It's good to let the agency know what type of opportunity you're seeking. Tell the agency's recruiter where you'd like to work, what you'd like to gain from a work placement, your ideal schedule, and perhaps share your short-term and long-term career goals.
5. Be patient. There's no guarantee a staffing agency will have a job waiting for you. Often it takes awhile to identify an employer that could utilize your skills. Touch base with the staffing agency once a week to reiterate your interest and availability. After awhile, if you're not getting the feedback you expect, consider trying a different agency.

Are there Questions I Should Ask the Staffing Agency?

Below are some general questions you may want to ask.

1. How often are jobs available for someone in my field? Confirm that the agency is working with clients that have actual job openings. Sometimes an agency may only want to add your name to a candidate pool in order to attract more employers, or they may just be collecting resumes for future opportunities.
2. How will my information and materials be used? The agency should advise you that your material will not be shared outside their organization. The exception is when the agency shares your information with their client for a potential placement.
3. Will I be treated equally and fairly? As long as you are qualified for the job, a staffing agency must not discriminate by withholding your resume.
4. Am I responsible for any fees? Before you make an agreement or sign a contract, ask if you are responsible for any fees.

It is best to view third-party recruiters as supplemental job search resources. Don't expect them to find employment for you. Instead, continue to apply directly to employer postings and pursue networking leads. If you revise your resume, send the staffing recruiter a new one.