

Contingent Workforce Offers Flexibility

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For most of the 20th century, the American workforce was composed of full-time employees who received long-term benefits. However, in the last few years, a contingent workforce of independent contractors; leased employees; and part-time, seasonal and temporary workers has emerged.

Companies have embraced the concept of the contingent work force largely because of cost savings. Furthermore, a contingent work force can provide flexibility using qualified workers who may be interested in a full-time position.

Would you like to work September through May and have the summer off? Or does working on an individual project basis appeal to you so you can spend time with your family or travel? These opportunities are possible when you work as part of a contingent work force.

What is a contingent workforce? These are groups of employees with varying levels of expertise who work based on a short, long or indefinite basis. Today, contingent workers represent 20 percent of the U.S. work force. Companies are looking to hire contingent workers in areas such as administrative, production, accounting and finance, legal, health care and technical, as well as mid-to-high level management positions. According to an article in the May 23 issue of Business Week, the contingent concept will drive the employment industry to \$200 billion annually by 2010.

As potential employees look at the need for balance between family and career, working differently is a requirement. Employers are answering that call by finding creative ways to get the work done and are offering more options than ever before. Flexible schedules, job sharing, working a variety of part-time hours and project-based work are some of the benefits this concept provides. Another advantage of the contingent work force is that it allows the employee to be exposed to a variety of industries and companies.

Employees who work in a contingent capacity will often receive their benefits—health insurance, retirement planning, holiday pay and bonuses through the employment firm that places them.

The contingent concept affords the employer the ability to expand and contract its work force quickly and efficiently as workload dictates. For many companies, this becomes their competitive advantage. These project-based workers may also provide skills and abilities that are not found in the organization. The project-based employees will be able to hit the ground running with little training because they have valuable experience. Potential savings in compensation costs also can be attractive to employers looking at the contingent concept.

In this era of talent shortages, most employers choose to use a staffing service. For many people in the contingent work force, it is a lifestyle choice.

It also is important for employers to include contingent workers in their company functions when appropriate.