

Temporarily Yours: Making The Best Use Of Temp Workers

by Cheryl Rhodes

MANY BUSINESSES hire temporary workers when mundane jobs such as filing or photocopying become backed up and permanent employees are too busy to get these tasks caught up. Companies also hire temporary staff to answer phones; a basic job—unless you have an extraordinarily complex phone system that may require an hour or so of training.

But how does the temp spend his or her time when the phones aren't ringing? Understandably, there may be only limited information you want an outsider to know about your company and operations, but try to think up any small job that can keep the temp occupied. The personnel agency charges a sizable fee per hour for supplying the temporary worker.

Beforehand

When you make the original contact with the personnel agency, give them all the information you can about the position. If you require a person to do absolutely nothing except answer phones, suggest that the temp bring in something to pass the hours if it is a

slow day. Better yet, check the list below for tasks that can be done at the switchboard desk.

Don't forget to tell the employment agency beforehand about your office dress code: business, casual, or blue jeans. Nothing makes a temp feel more out of place than being inappropriately underdressed. However, if the temp will be filing in a dusty warehouse, make sure the placement agency knows that the temp should wear clothes that wash up easily.

The Day of the Temp's Arrival

Once the temporary worker arrives, give him or her the grand tour: bathroom, lunchroom, coat closet, etc. Introduce employees the temp should be familiar with. If you have a large office, it's pointless introducing the temp to everyone, as he or she won't remember their names. However, it is important to advise the department involved that there will be a temporary worker covering a position, so they don't wonder who the stranger is. A short memo will do the trick. "To all staff: Jane Smith will be providing reception relief for the next two days. Please stop by her desk, say hello, and welcome Jane to our company." If needed, your coworkers can introduce themselves and let their needs be known.

If the temp is handling the reception desk and is required to greet business-related visitors, make sure he or she knows your procedures about where guests should wait and if any special attention should be given, such as offering coffee or snacks.


10 Ways to Get More from Temps

Most temps are eager for any work you can throw their way.

So give that temp something to do:

1. Let your temp handle the incoming mail and courier items. Mail should be opened, date-stamped, and distributed to the office staff.
2. Have the temp update your mailing list or your employee and customer contact list.
3. Look for any proofreading that needs to be done.
4. Let the temp verify spreadsheet reports to ensure the information was entered correctly into the computer.
5. See if it's time to inventory office supplies in the stockroom.
6. Have the temp handle business e-mail.
7. Let the temp revise office manuals that have been updated with handwritten notes as the old information became obsolete.
8. Have the temp check computer disks for old files and correspondence that can either be deleted or moved to an "old data" file.
9. Ask the temp to match up your waybill copies against the bill when invoices arrive from courier companies, then forward both to the accounting department.
10. Have the temp box up outdated files and reorganize your current filing cabinets.

Use your imagination, and you'll find a temporary worker can do so much more for your company than keep a chair warm all day!

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