

the Snelling Report

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Telecommuters and a Comfy Chair

The average daily commute time in the United States is 25.1 minutes, which equals over 4 hours in the car per week for the average commuter.

Because of this time requirement and the desire to reduce fixed costs, approximately **25 million workers are telecommuters and are allowed to work at least 1 day a week from home.** In a recent survey of this same group of workers conducted by Staples Advantage (the business-to-business division of office supply retailer Staples, Inc.), 76% of them stated that they are more willing to work extra hours and feel greater loyalty to their company. Additionally, 86% said they

are more productive. Respondents also reported eating healthier and being less stressed since they began telecommuting.

But what was lacking? Well, the number one item on these employees' wish list was a comfortable office chair. More than 80% of the telecommuters stated that their employers don't provide furniture, equipment or any other support in setting up their home office, so they cobble something together from old furniture or simply employ the kitchen table. Nearly half of the respondents stated that the associated clutter affects their productivity.

Even though employers are receptive to the idea of providing equipment for a home office, most are doing it on an ad hoc basis. However, this survey shows that a consistent minimal investment in providing a comfortable home-based work environment does pay off.

The price of employee loyalty and productivity among telecommuters may simply be the cost of a comfy chair and a well-organized desk.

Post-Recession Staffing Strategies...

The Great Recession has left an indelible mark on U.S. businesses and their hiring managers. The economic crisis spawned by the recession and worries over a possible dip back into another recession have created a “new normal” for American companies. Company-wide layoffs, benefit reductions, high unemployment, a huge skill gap in the candidate pool and lower demand have forced businesses to re-think the way they manage their workforce.

So how is your company to compete? One way is through the development and implementation of a strategic staffing plan. In other words, plan for staffing change. Change is inherent to any business model, and the impact that those changes have on staffing levels should be defined and addressed. This allows a company to see its flexible workforce as a competitive advantage instead of a drain to profitability. As you create this strategic plan, a couple of points need to be taken into account.

Embrace the ‘new normal’

The days of exclusively hiring full-time, salaried employees are over. Instead, businesses need to embrace a model where contingent resources (temporary employees, leased employees, contract professionals, freelancers, etc.) are a fundamental part of the workforce.

It is time to analyze how your business gets work done. Work with a staffing firm partner to develop strategies that link talent management directly to business goals. This includes the identification of the most essential positions within the organization and then evaluating the options for outsourcing the non-core functions to temporary/contract labor.

Including a talent management strategy in your company’s business plan will reinforce your company’s commitment to its workforce.

Look for new ways to use contingent staff more intelligently.

Temporary, temp-to-hire and contract staff are indispensable in today’s economy. As you adopt new models for getting work done in your organization, consider using contingent staff in the following ways:

Test new ideas.

Before you commit to hiring direct staff for a new concept or initiative, test the idea using temporary employees. You can either bring in highly specialized temporaries to assume a direct role in testing or have them fill in for your staff members who are involved with testing the new idea.

Try before you buy.

Temp-to-hire services can mitigate hiring decision risks. If your need for staff increases, you can try out temporary employees on the job. You can see how they perform and fit into your corporate culture – before extending offers for direct employment.

Access the knowledge you need.

If you need specialized expertise on a short-term basis, staffing firms can provide that. These experts can be used to assist with anything from developing new products lines and service offerings to integrating new technologies.

Facilitate cross-training.

The “new normal” demands an agile, cross-trained workforce. A staffing service can facilitate your need to cross-train direct staff by either supplying support personnel (to pick up the slack while employees undergo training), or providing access to highly trained specialists who can conduct necessary training.

Create a Partnership

Develop a strategic relationship with a professional temporary staffing firm in advance of a specific hiring need. Take the time to educate them on your company, business philosophies, and culture. This will shorten the time to obtain the necessary temporary resources when the need arises, and it will result in a long-term, high performing workforce solution.

Remember, no matter what staffing challenges your business is currently facing, Snelling is prepared to help you overcome them.

Together, we can analyze your strengths, challenges and goals – and design a proactive staffing plan to help your business prosper and grow in today’s market.

Contact your local Snelling office to arrange for a complimentary workforce consultation.



Did you know?

Interesting commuting highlights from 2010 Census Reports:

- Average daily commute time in the U.S. is 25.1 minutes
- It takes men significantly longer than it takes women to get to work - 26.7 minutes, compared to 23.4 minutes. This is probably due to the fact that men are more likely to take jobs that are further away from their homes.
- Almost 40% of men leave home before 7a.m. compared to 25% of women.
- 16.4% of Hispanics carpool - compared to 9.5% of non-Hispanics
- Foreign-born workers used public transportation at a rate of 10.1%, while native-born workers do so at just a 4.1%

It Is All in the Details – Helping Staff Stay Focused

Helping staff stay focused on the details is a key skill for managers and small business owners.

Sometimes, even the most intelligent worker does not catch an error or forgets to perform a step or does not focus on the details. To think of any of those details as trivial, unimportant or inconsequential can be hazardous to your business and future earnings.

This is because there are consequences when details get missed. Angry customers, incorrect billings, lost productivity can all severely impact a company's bottom line, so it is absolutely vital for all employees to stay on top of the details.

The good news is that it does not have to cost additional money to have your workers refocus on the details of their job function. Here are three ideas:

Track how much time goes by / transactions take place without a mistake.

This technique, which is used in many refineries and warehouses and on many construction sites, makes all employees aware of the consequences of inattention, without pointing fingers or calling people out. If an error is made, the entire team has to reset the counter to zero and start over.

Over a short period of time, team members will help each other to avoid having to start over.

Checks and Balances:

If work passes through more than one person's hands, each can check the other on key details to ensure everything has been handled correctly. If one individual has too many errors, this process can be set up as part of workflow retraining.

If the work is handled only by individuals, build a system of rewards with "levels" of achievement; this can help people stay on top of the details. The rewards don't have to be monetary. Enabling employees to leave 30 minutes early or assigning a front-row or covered parking space after a certain number of accurately completed transactions may be all it takes.

A Little Healthy Competition

Competitions, either individual or among a group of employees, can be set up to help departments or workers beat previous goals. The winners will get prizes, either monetary or otherwise. If a business owner would not like to promote as much competition he/she can establish certain goals that the employees need to reach. When they reach those goals, they receive the proposed incentive.

In business, it is the attention to detail that creates, builds and maintains customer loyalty. Your employees are

key here; their attention to detail helps create a quality product or service that will keep customers coming back for more.

To help workers stay focused, the process must be kept simple. The more complex the process, the more opportunities for mistakes. As you analyze your departmental workflows, look for any redundancies and any opportunities to simplify processes and procedures. Invite your employees to take part in this process. The more employees understand, the more they internalize the process, and the more detail-oriented they become.



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