

DEALING WITH PART-TIME HELP

Past experience has led us to believe that the more care you take with part-timers, the more care they will take to give you your money's worth.

by Rudd McGary and Ed Wandtke

Many companies need to find part-time help to get them through the peak season. These people fill in for full-time people and help perform tasks that have overloaded your regular crews. Several areas should be considered when planning your personnel needs, particularly when you are thinking about part-time personnel.

The considerations

First, you need to determine the type of people you want to hire.

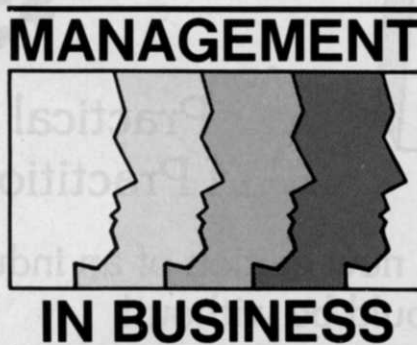
Many companies go through long processes to find their full-time personnel, but fail to take the same care when looking for part-time workers. Since these part-timers are going to be working with your regular employees, you should plan to look for these with as much care as you do your regulars.

Second, too many companies don't plan a hiring process for part-time help. They wait until part-timers are needed and then simply hire the first available people.

As you grow, consider keeping a part-time file. This file lists all the people you have interviewed in the past for part-time jobs, and comments that you may have made when you were interviewing. This will give you a start on finding part-timers who you already know.

Third, ask your regulars if they know people who might be part-time help. Get a list together. Often your best source of part-time help comes from people who work for you. If you have a good working force, you might want to try and find more people like them.

Fourth, you should have a plan indicating when peak work periods are, and then use this plan to determine if



you are going to need to hire extra people. This plan can be done with last year's needs as well as planning for the current year. This will help you to prepare for the personnel needs; it is also a valuable document from the standpoint of your operations.

On the job

Having hired your part-time people, several management actions should be considered.

First, the part-timers (unless they are former employees) are not going to be as efficient in their jobs as your regulars. Unless the job is so simple that anyone can do it—and there aren't that many things so simple—you should not expect the part-time people to work the same way your regulars do. Keep this in mind when you plan.

Second, you should be able to tell the part-time people exactly what is expected of them, and you should do this immediately after they are hired. Too many managers forget that the part-timers don't know how to work within the new company. They make assumptions on the level of knowledge and experience the part-timers have.

Managers who find that part-timers are doing work incorrectly, or even the wrong work, are usually frustrated. These frustrations could be avoided by making sure that the

part-timers are instructed when they are brought aboard. This may take a little time, but it is time well spent for most companies.

Third, while these part-timers aren't likely to become regular members of your organization, you should make sure they are treated as if they were. The style you use with your regulars should be the one you use with part-timers. Make it is clear to everyone that, although these people aren't permanent members of the organization, they are going to be helping the regulars get their jobs done. Managers with one style for regulars and another for part-timers often ensure a low work rate from the part-time personnel. Treat them the same way. It will pay dividends.

Summary

A growing company will generally have periods when part-time help is useful. Either part-time personnel is going to be used, the regulars are going to be overworked, or someone is going to be hired who might not be fully used. Given the three choices, often hiring part-time help is the correct one. The key then becomes the planning that goes into hiring and the management that is used after the part-time people have been hired.

Since the part-time people are an expense to the company, they should be chosen and managed with care, although it's unlikely that you will spend the same amount of time with part-timers as you would with your regulars. You also might want to consider using part-timers as part of your long-term growth pattern, finding out about new people without giving them full employment.

Whichever way you manage your part-timers, and for whatever tasks, be aware of the fact that these people can be tremendously helpful to the organization. Planning their hiring and managing them professionally will help your organization to grow and be profitable.

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