

# A Job Seekers Guide to Temp Agencies

By Kim Wacker and Tim Faber

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In a nutshell, staffing is about job placement. Our job is to get you placed and noticed by companies that are hiring and where your qualifications match their needs.

If you are looking for your next great job or want a predictable source of income and opportunities, working with a temp agency is the place to start...This guide provides a step-by-step process for success and “pro tips” to help make you experience the best it can be.



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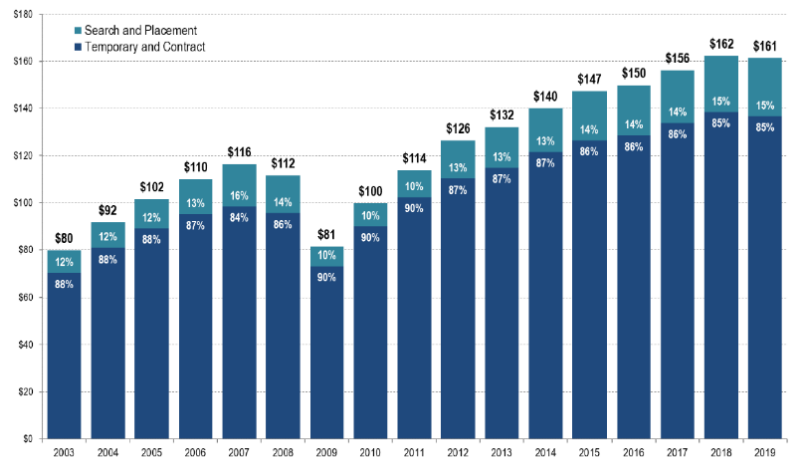
Staffing companies (temp agencies) provide 10's of millions of jobs to workers and professionals every year - providing a multitude of jobs to employees and a diverse, experienced workforce for employers.

The staffing industry offers opportunities across all industries from manufacturing, logistics, and production to legal, accounting and finance, IT, and healthcare. And while most temp jobs are contract in nature (for a fixed period), many positions are a pathway to full-time, permanent careers with some of the world's most recognized and respected companies.

## Introduction

Looking for work can easily be a full-time job. It is a daunting task that leaves many job seekers feeling overwhelmed. That is where temporary staffing agencies come in to play. Think of a staffing agency as the "middleman" between companies and people looking for work. Our job is to alleviate some of the pressure of the job search by pairing you up with the "right-fit" job and company.

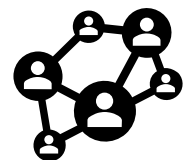
Sales (Billions of U.S. Dollars)—Annual Totals for Staffing and Recruiting Industry



Source: American Staffing Association, Staffing Industry Analysts Inc., U.S. Department of Commerce

## Benefits of working with a temp agency...

- **We do the job search for you** - [Temp agencies](#) typically have hundreds of clients and potentially 1000's of jobs available. If you are qualified, a job may just be a quick call away. This takes the burden and effort off your shoulders, and it saves you the time, money, and effort of launching your own job search.
- **Finding a permanent job** - Many agencies work with clients who are specifically looking for employees to join their companies on a permanent basis. We do the recruiting, screening, background checks, testing and preliminary evaluation of candidates. For many positions, the only way you can get into large companies is through the agency.
- **Flexibility** - In this "gig" world, many of us have become accustomed to the flexibility temp and contract work provides. It is not uncommon for many temporary workers to work seasonally (e.g., when kids are in school) or to work a few months for extra money for the holidays or to pay for the occasional vacation.
- **Experience/Skills** - Long-term temps often work with a variety of companies and gain experience and skills performing a wide range of duties in diverse environments.



If you are not sure where to begin, you've come to the right place. This job seekers' guide is designed with you in mind, providing everything you need to know about temp agencies. You will learn the "ins and outs" of temporary staffing and how to find an agency that is right for you. We will tell you what you can expect from interview-to-hire and answer questions about things like safety and risk management. Finally, you will gain insight on how contract jobs work and learn about the potential for full-time employment.

*First, let us begin with what a temporary staffing agency does.*

## What is the Role of a Temp Agency?



As mentioned, matching talent with companies and opportunities pretty much sums up the agency's role. Businesses look to add strong talent to their teams with expertise in niche areas, and as a job seeker, you have a plethora of options when it comes to how you find these opportunities.

Think of it as a *matchmaking* process where talent is matched with an agency, and ultimately with the right organization.

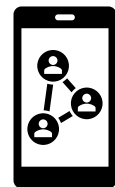
Also known as employment agencies and recruitment firms, staffing agencies are an excellent resource for individuals seeking work, as well as for companies with an open job requirement or "req." The advantage as a job seeker is that it allows you to dip your toe into the water and potentially "try before you buy" to determine if a company is the right fit for you. Many businesses turn to agencies for their recruitment needs because it saves them both time and money.

***"Companies are trying to be more productive and only have workers when they are absolutely needed. They need to find ways to make sure every dollar they spend is going to help the business. Temp staffing allows them to only have people when they need them, and those people are being productive." - AJ Brustein, CEO and co-founder of on-demand staffing platform Wonolo***

## Recruitment

Staffing agencies take the entire recruitment process into their hands. The recruiter's role is to write and publish the job postings and announcements via print, media, and online. This is one of the primary responsibilities of the agency to ensure they have a large, qualified pool of candidates....and to provide you with [jobs](#).

### **Typical Candidate Sourcing Platforms**



- **Job Boards** - Indeed, ZipRecruiter, CareerBuilder, Monster, Craigslist
- **Digital** - Website, Google, Yahoo, Bing, LinkedIn, Facebook, email campaigns
- **Grassroots** - Flyers, pamphlets, direct mail, sponsorships, referral programs, yard signs, banners, signage
- **Outreach** - Schools, trade centers, outplacement firms, career centers, unemployment offices, onsite, and mobile recruiting centers
- **Public** - Billboards, TV, radio, car, bus, and van wraps

Recruiters are also responsible for collecting and reviewing resumes, answering incoming questions, customer service, scheduling and conducting initial/pre-screen interviews, and in some cases, facilitating training and orientation. When a recruiter is satisfied a candidate is qualified, they will add him or her to their agency's roster/database and present the applicant to the appropriate organization(s) when jobs become available.

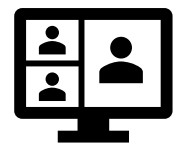
## Responsibilities

Some agencies provide what is called "end-to-end staffing solutions," which means that they work from beginning to end for a client, and may handle several the following:

- **Workforce management:** Understanding the workload needs of the company and determining the workforce needed.
- **Pre-screening:** Conducting background checks and reviewing candidate employment history
- **Documentation:** Drawing up contracts as needed and reviewing legal issues
- **Performance:** Following up on the performance of temporary workers to ensure they are meeting the client's expectations
- **Termination:** Terminating workers that may not be right-fit and handling compensation as needed

## Types of Roles

Recruiters typically "source" candidates who are looking for part-time, temporary, or what's known as "gig" work. And though "temp" work is a commonly used phrase to describe these type positions, "supplemental", "contingency", and "contract" are also used synonymously.



Oftentimes these are short-term or contract jobs and can be anything from a side-hustle to freelance projects based on professional skills. This could also equate to a seasonal role or the need to backfill an employee for a set amount of time that is out on leave. However, it is interesting to note that despite many positions being contract in nature, it is not uncommon for some positions to last for years.

### **Primary Temp Roles**

- Temp/Temporary
- Temp-to-Perm or Temp-to-Hire

Sometimes businesses bring in temporary talent solely for their expertise and assistance on a project, but they may not necessarily need them full-time. This allows them to add subject-matter expertise for specific projects without adding to their headcount.

In some cases, organizations will hire temporary workers on what is called a **temp-to-hire** basis. This means that there may be the possibility for the temporary role to become a full-time job should performance criteria be met. For workers who are not ready to jump in headfirst, this is a great way to become familiar with a company in advance - essentially a "try before you buy" opportunity for both the company and candidate to determine if there is a fit.

*Now that you know how temp agencies work, the next step is finding the right one.*

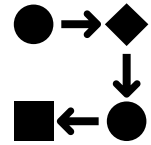
## How to Find a Staffing Agency

Even if you are looking for a full-time job, agencies are an effective way to get your foot in the door. They typically offer contracted roles for a set amount of time; however, these contracts are often extended. Many employers also bring on staff on what is called a temp-to-hire basis, which allows them to gauge performance before potentially making a full-time offer. This allows you to determine if the role and company are the best fit.

With all of that said, how do we find an agency to work with?

### Where to start

One recommended way to begin is with an online search using keywords such as “temp agencies near me”, “temp agency”, “employment agency”, “temporary agency”, and “staffing agency”. As you come across advertisements keep in mind that organic search engine results (SERPs) are typically going to be a better place to start than with paid ads.



When searching, it’s important to use *specific* keywords for the industry or type of job that you want. If you are looking for general labor roles, specify the job title i.e., light industrial, assembly, shipping and receiving, forklift operator, or packaging, for example. Keep in mind the more focused your search, the better.

**Pro tip:** Try using [Google My Business](#) and search for “temp agencies near me” using your cell phone with the location services turned on.

When you have completed your initial research, narrow your list down to the top 3-5 companies you’re interested in speaking with. If you are well-connected, you may even know someone on LinkedIn who works for one of the agencies. It is all about working smarter not harder, so be sure to use your resources to network and potentially get a referral!

### Locating the Right Agency for You

With so many temp agencies available, finding the right one may seem like a daunting task. The following are some tips to help you select the right agency for you:



- **Outreach:** Talk to people you know who have used a temp agency. Ask them who they have worked with and what their experience was like.
- **Network:** If you know any recruiters, employers, or hiring managers, find out what temp agencies they have used, and ask for a recommendation.
- **Contact:** Take your time and test out a few agencies before selecting one to work with. Review their websites and consider calling and/or visiting the office in person. Also, keep your eye out for advertisements, billboards, signage, or do a quick search on LinkedIn.

Typically, large staffing companies are better to work for than smaller ones primarily because larger clients equal more jobs. If you are ultimately looking for full-time work, temp-to-hire opportunities tend to be more likely when working with a larger organization. In areas such as Chicago or other large metro areas, the number of [branch locations](#) is often a sign of the company’s success. Typically, the larger, the better.

**Pro tip:** Staffing companies that have “specialties” tend to have the most jobs and best opportunities for you. For instance, if you are looking for industrial jobs (shipping, receiving, picking, packing, assembly, packaging, general labor, etc.) work with a firm that specializes in “light industrial”.

**Pro tip:** Do not make your decision on the agency to work with based on benefits, because traditionally there is a high turnover rate and qualifying may be difficult.

There are certainly a wide variety of options available for job seekers when it comes to temporary staffing. Be sure to take your time, do your research, and talk to others in your industry. You can also visit the firm’s [blogs](#). Look at their articles, how frequently they post, and if the information is helpful.

Once you have identified and connected with a temp agency, an interview will typically follow. This next section will help you prepare for the interview and let you know what to expect.

## How Do Contract Jobs Work

Gigs, gig workers, temps, and temp-to-hire--these are all terms that may come to mind when you think of a contract job. These titles describe the nature of the job because companies often hire workers for different positions and lengths of time. But how does a contract job really work?

*Indeed explains it well: “Contract employees are individuals hired for a specific project or a certain time frame for a set fee. Often, contract employees are hired due to their expertise in a particular area and are usually hired for projects that require niche expertise for a short-term project. Rather than hire a full-time, long-term employee with that expertise, a company chooses to hire a contractor for the duration of the project.”*

Every contract job is different, and many times there is the possibility of getting hired full-time. If you are seeking contract work, there are a few things that you will want to consider.

## What you need to know

First, it’s important to understand that independent contractors are classified differently than internal employees by the IRS for tax purposes. Contract employees typically receive 1099 tax forms rather than W2 tax forms. This can vary, however, and in some cases when working with a staffing agency, you still receive W2 tax forms because you are technically an employee of the agency.



You may also want to take note of the following:

- **Length of assignment:** Many contract jobs are full-time and have a definitive project start and end date. While some jobs may last as little as one month, others could be long-term, and in some cases, go on for years.
- **Hours:** Some contractual jobs require employees to work specific hours, while others allow workers to set their own schedules.



- **Background check:** Even though the assignment may not be permanent, many employers still require contract workers to complete a criminal background check and drug screen.
- **Expenses:** In many cases, it is the responsibility of the contracted worker to pay for business and travel expenses. If hired on a 1099 status, you will want to ensure that you keep track of all your expenses and hold on to your receipts for tax time.

## Benefits, Again

If you are weighing out the pros and cons, there are a myriad of potential benefits of contract jobs including:

- Work a flexible schedule
- Gain new and different skills in a short amount of time
- Earn higher pay in lieu of benefits
- Get your foot in the door with a company
- Test out the company culture and job before making a long-term commitment

## Getting Hired Full-Time

Although not a guarantee, it is possible for a contract job to turn into full-time employment. Many companies hire for temp-to-hire or contract-to-hire roles leaving the door open for the position to become a full-time, permanent role.

Employers will consider converting a contract employee to full-time within as little as 90 days. Each company and situation are different, so be sure that the expectations are made clear upfront.



As a job seeker, think of contract work as a unique opportunity to take a “test drive” with a company. You certainly do not want to be stuck in a job or culture that is not right for you. While on the job, take initiative, keep an open mind, and build relationships.

## What to Expect From the Process

Typically, you can expect a call from a recruiter or account manager at the staffing agency, and they will conduct what is called a pre-screen interview. This initial screening should only last a few minutes but depending on the agency and the nature of the job, it could extend longer.

Be prepared to answer a few questions about yourself, your work experience, your goals, and why you are qualified for the job you are applying for. You may also be asked about your skill sets and your availability for work. Bring several copies of your [resume](#) if available.

The purpose of this initial conversation is for the recruiter to learn more about you before conducting a more extensive interview and/or passing you along to their client. Simply put, think of this as the “groundwork.”

## Preparing for the Interview

After the pre-screen interview, you will more than likely be invited to interview in person at the staffing agency's branch office. You may also be scheduled for an interview via phone, Zoom, GoToMeeting, or in-person with the client. Sometimes this is a multi-step process, so be patient and always be on your game! The following are some tips to help you prepare for your interview(s):



- **How to dress:** Dress professionally or business casual at a minimum. Rule of thumb: Dress for the job you *want*, not the job you *have*!
- **What to bring:** Bring a copy of your resume, a notepad, and a pen. **Pro Tip:** Know your work availability and bring a list of scheduling conflicts (if applicable).
- **Ways to impress:** Be prepared to talk about your short and long-term goals. Be honest about what you are looking for, especially if you're interested in finding a temp-to-perm opportunity.

## Documentation

Now that the interviews are finished, it is time for the paperwork. The application process is usually the first step, and many times this can be completed online in advance of your interview. However, in some cases, you may be asked to complete a paper application in person.

Next, you will more than likely be asked to fill out a W-4 form for your taxes, an I-9 form for employment verification, a direct deposit form, and any other documents required by the staffing agency and/or the client. This may include signing off and confirming receipt of items such as an employee handbook or safety procedures.

## Orientation and Onboarding

Once you have completed the paperwork you may be scheduled to attend an orientation with the staffing agency, the client, or both. Depending on the company, this may be done electronically, or in person due to the nature of the role.



During orientation, you can expect to receive information about payment, safety, drug/alcohol policies, check-in and reporting procedures (i.e., what to do if you're going to be late or absent), and benefit qualifications.

Other items covered could include hours, shifts, rules and regulations, and badge requirements. The onboarding process is in place to ensure that you have all the information you need to get started, so be sure to get all your questions answered!



## Typical Onboarding & Application Requirements

- Application
- I-9 Employment Verification
- W-4 Tx Form
- Pay Authorization and Direct Deposit or Pay Card Forms
- Safety and Payroll Procedures Acknowledgement
- Skills Testing
- Drug Test, Background, DMV, Credit, and/or Criminal Background Authorization
- Rules and Regulations

## Payment

When you are ready to start work, you will more than likely be asked to complete an online or paper timesheet weekly that will need to be authorized by the client. Once they have signed off and authorized the hours you worked, it will trigger the payroll process--the best part is that most temporary employees get paid weekly.



Payroll and time submission can be done in several ways. Most often you will submit an individual timesheet - either paper or online. However, you may be asked to use an electronic time clock provided by the client or agency. Group timesheets are also common as well as time submission via a VMS (vendor management system). You will be instructed as to how and when to submit hours worked.

## On the job

Your assigned account manager or recruiter will provide you with the job details - when and where to report, who to report to, directions or location details, and any rules, regulations, or PPE (personal protective equipment, i.e., safety glasses, steel-toed boots, hearing protection, gloves, etc.) that might be required or provided.

This is when it's time to put your best foot forward. Be prepared that the recruiter or account manager from the staffing agency may give you a call to check-in and see how your first day/week went. The staffing agency's goal is to make sure that both you and the client are comfortable and happy, and that the job is as advertised.

Great people who do a good job can typically stay as busy as they want to. Staffing agencies consider their product and service to be their *people*, and there is no better feeling than receiving great feedback from a client. For the staffing agency, a solid match is a win-win for everyone--including YOU!

*Once on the job it's important to know about company policies. This next section covers safety, risk management, and provides you with tips on how to de-escalate situations.*

## Safety, Risk Management, Friction, and De-escalation

If it is your first time working for a temporary staffing agency, you may have questions or concerns about safety and risk. For example, what happens if you get injured on the job or if you are involved in an argument? These are valid questions, and it is important that you understand the policy and procedures the staffing agency has in place for these types of situations.

This information should be privy to you and explained during your orientation and onboarding. If you are not given the information you need in advance regarding safety, risk, or how to de-escalate a situation, be sure to reach out to the staffing agency and get your questions answered.

[Learn how the United States Department of Labor protects temporary workers when it comes to occupational safety.](#)

## Safety and Risk management

Roughly half of all staffing positions fall under the commercial sector which refers to office/clerical and light industrial work. These are the types of jobs in which SURESTAFF specializes, which may include product assembly, manufacturing, and machine-oriented roles such as operating a forklift. No matter what the job, it behooves the company to ensure that they provide a safe working environment.

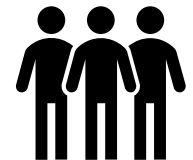


Usually, when people get injured on the job it is due to an accident caused by someone being careless. This could be as simple as someone not wearing the right safety equipment or not heeding instructions. In a COVID-era, it is also of the utmost importance for employees to understand PPE (Personal Protective Equipment) guidelines while on the job and follow Covid guidelines or mandates.

If you are involved in an accident, make sure that you contact the staffing agency immediately so that they can follow the appropriate procedures to make sure you are safe and well taken care of. More than likely there will be an accident investigation so that the agency can determine if there was employee negligence, and/or if there are ways that the work situation can be improved. If injured on the job, you may also be eligible for [Worker's Compensation](#).

## Friction and De-Escalation of Situations

When you work in close quarters with individuals from diverse backgrounds, things like race, religion, politics, and education can often be a catalyst for arguments and disagreements. This can of course be a risk and may be amplified with alcohol and drug abuse. No matter how fired up you are, the best advice is to be quiet and walk away from the situation.



Whatever you do, **DO NOT** confront someone, or engage in an argument. This will only escalate the situation, and usually, in these cases, everyone associated will be fired.

The following four tips are easy ways that you can de-escalate conflict in the workplace:

1. **Take a step back:** Once a conflict has come to your attention, step away from it. Do not get emotionally involved, and instead try to get work done or read something that will divert your attention. You may even want to try writing down the details of the conflict, because it may help to get things out and on paper.
2. **Practice empathy:** As difficult as it is, try to put yourself in someone else's shoes and see the situation from where they are standing, even if they are upset with you. This will help you determine how to best approach the situation.
3. **Evaluate the implications:** Determine if the argument or issue was a one-off incident or if it is a pattern of behavior. It is important to understand the context before getting others involved and problem-solving.

4. **Take preventive measures:** Once a conflict is resolved, take time to reflect on what happened, so that you can prevent it from occurring again. Remain objective and use the conflict as a learning experience for everyone involved.

Remember that your safety and well-being are of the utmost importance to the staffing agency that hired you and to the client you are working for. Communication is always your best resource in any situation where you feel at risk. If you believe that the environment that you are working in is unsafe in any way, physically or emotionally, do not hesitate to speak up. Take control of the situation and be the problem-solver, not the problem-starter.

## Conclusion

Temporary staffing agencies are a fantastic resource for job seekers of all kinds. Whether you are looking for a temp job, gig work, interim, part-time, or a full-time opportunity, there are a myriad of benefits across the board. Furthermore, working with a temp agency can provide you with new skill sets and help boost your resume.

Now that you have learned the ins and outs of temporary staffing agencies, it is time to put your best foot forward and march ahead.

***“The only way to do great work is to love what you do. If you haven’t found it yet, keep looking. Don’t settle.” — Steve Jobs***

There are many different types of staffing agencies, and they are typically aligned with specific lines of business. [Surestaff](#) has more than twenty years of experience in the staffing industry and specializes in recruitment for [warehouse, logistics, and skilled trades](#). The agency offers temporary, temp-to-hire, and direct hire placements in several different settings.

Learn more and start your [job search](#) today!... or call *toll-free* 1-833-SUREWORK (1-833-787-3967). *Hablamos Espanol.*