

# **THE TEMP FACTOR FOR JOB SEEKERS**



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**The Job Seeker's Guide to  
Temporary Employment**

Cathy A. Reilly



Universal-Publishers  
Boca Raton

*The Temp Factor for Job Seekers:  
The Job Seeker's Guide to Temporary Employment*

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This book is dedicated with love to my mom,  
Eleanor (“Pat”) Reilly, the best cheerleader anyone  
could ever ask for.



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## THE TEMP FACTOR FOR JOB SEEKERS

While each segment boasts expertise in its own area of interest, having a full understanding of how each of the others functions and achieves success, creates an important new level of business intelligence. This new level of business intelligence ultimately leads to better results and an ability to compete with innovation and skill outside what others are doing. Possessing a higher knowledge of temporary employment must include an adequate understanding about all three vital segments of this working arrangement, regardless of which space within it you occupy.

To illustrate a bit further, when a job seeker or current temp knows where to find work, what company clients and staffing services are looking for, understands what corporate culture is and why it is important, or what will make a client company take notice of a temp, they can compete, perform and achieve with more skill and success.

Temps and job seekers need every advantage they can arm themselves with in today's job market to secure and maintain gainful employment. That is what *The Temp Factor for Job Seekers: The Job Seeker's Guide to Temporary Employment* is all about.

Whether you are just setting out looking for a job and thinking about trying temporary employment, or have any level of experience as a temp, there are better ways to go to improve your chances of success with a staffing service and the client companies where you will be placed.

Remember, staffing services and client companies need you. This is three-sided working relationship where all three segments depend on each other. Knowing what your role is and how you can leverage it will lead you to quicker results and greater employment success. In a challenging employment environment, know how to make yourself someone that is in demand and the temp everyone wants to work with.

# CHAPTER 1

## Understanding the Basics of Temporary Employment

### A little background and history . . .

Temporary work has been around for over a hundred years and has roots in the shipping industry. Unemployed dockhands sought a day's wage through whatever work they could find on an "as needed" basis or temporary employment. Such an unstructured work arrangement was later organized and developed into a more formal approach when *William Russell Kelly* opened the first temporary staffing service in Detroit in 1946. Thus, emerged the famous "*Kelly Girl*" reference, which described the popular secretarial or clerical positions that temporary employees ("temps") were hired to fill during common staffing shortages, usually from maternity leaves, sick days, and vacations.

*During the 1960s and 1970s*, many women began looking for jobs beyond the conventions of office work. They considered increasing their earning power and started to leave administrative positions and move into higher paying manufacturing jobs. This shift helped to

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increase the demand for temps. It started expanding their roles as employers were realizing they could backfill vacancies quickly and effectively by using temporary workers. New visions were forming.

*From the 1980s through today*, temporary employment has dramatically increased in popularity, sophistication, cost savings, and efficiency for companies. The reasons for such growth is linked to advances in technology, the dawning of the “Information Age”, globalization, quickening reaction times for businesses, and the increasing costs of labor and worker benefits.

The temps of today need a wide range of skill levels and experience. They are more highly trained and educated. They are accountants, engineers, substitute teachers, scientists, doctors, nurses, technology professionals, and lawyers, among others, in addition to filling the more traditional administrative roles of earlier days. They work in every city across the globe and fill an important business need.

Temporary agencies have become diverse staffing services of international proportions. Staffing has not only become an industry; *The Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) considers it a “super sector”*. Just look at “Kelly Girls”, to see how things have grown. Today, Kelly Services, Inc. is a leading global organization providing workforce solutions and employment to more than 550,000 employees annually and generating revenues of \$5.6 billion in 2011.

Do not let the word “temporary” fool you. The next person providing service to you from a company, large or small, in any city, may very well be a temporary employee.

Here are some facts about temporary staffing in the United States according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), [www.bls.gov](http://www.bls.gov), the America Staffing Association (ASA), [www.americanstaffing.net](http://www.americanstaffing.net), and Staffing Industry Analysts, [www.staffingindustry.com](http://www.staffingindustry.com), to help you put staffing in perspective:

### **Temp Employment Rates:**

Approximately 2.58 million people are employed by staffing services every business day. 9.7 million people work as temporary or contract employees over the course of 1 year in the United States. 79% of these temporary or contract employees work full-time.

### **Staffing/Temporary Employment Revenues:**

U.S. revenue is projected to reach \$97.3 billion by 2012 for temporary, contract and direct hire employees. The majority of this revenue comes from temporary and contract worker placements.

If you are considering temporary employment, you have got lots of options and company. *There are over 17,000 staffing services in business today, maintaining upward of 35,000 offices across the U.S.*

## **What temporary employment IS and ISN'T . . .**

In building any knowledge base, it is significant to know what “is” and what “isn’t” about the subject matter. This provides a more thorough understanding and opens up your perspective. Perspective develops wisdom.

Prepare yourself effectively by learning the basics about what temporary employment *is* and *isn't*. Doing so will help you define your goals, and strengthen your performance. In addition, it will enable you to manage your expectations about working on a temporary basis. All this will position you for faster and greater success.

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### *Temporary employment is . . .*

By definition, it is a term for a flexible work arrangement that is performed on an “as needed” basis. Temporary employment is:

- A three-sided association. It partners staffing services, clients where you are placed on assignment and temporary employees;
- A way to work “on call” for work “assignments” or “placements” through a staffing service;
- An effective means to fill last minute, “out of office” requests for when employees change their schedules unexpectedly or have planned absences;
- Work that will vary in duration of time and scope. Quite often temp work is assigned daily, weekly or monthly, or for a particular project. Assignments are short (under one month) or long term (six months or more). Some are indefinite or “temp to perm”, which means they begin under temporary conditions with the goal of making the position permanent, should both the temp and the client agree. On average, temps assignments are three months or less.
- Coordinated through a staffing service, not with a company where you are placed;
- Available to qualified job candidates who meet staffing service qualifications, pass given tests, and become the registered employees of a service;
- Subject to a temp’s accepting or declining assignments based on availability, pay level, or work preferences.
- Primarily managed by phone or email through a staffing service. Work orders are received by staffing services from their client companies. Staffing services then dispatch temps as appropriate. Many large companies using temp staff book them through a VMS (Vendor Management System) that can record, manage, and track higher volumes of temporary employee requests electronically. Smaller companies go the phone/email route to place orders.

## UNDERSTANDING THE BASICS OF TEMP EMPLOYMENT

- A term that is evolving. Some staffing services/client companies use the phrase “contingency” employment. Many professional temp positions are now being called “contract” jobs. Other terms are “flexible” or “fringe” labor market;
- One of the quickest, easiest, and most cost effective ways for a company to fill staffing needs;
- A “try before you buy” work experience for both temporary employee and client. This is especially so if a permanent job opening becomes available. Companies get to test the waters with potential job candidates first when they perform the job as a temp. Temp positions can often be considered a job audition;
- Most effective when the staffing services, their clients companies and temps work as business partners;
- Gaining in popularity with companies and temps as a way to achieve a permanent hire before locking into a full-time commitment;
- Not fee-based. The temps pay nothing to a staffing service. The staffing service gets paid by their client company. Any time a temp is asked to pay a fee by a staffing service, that person should be wary and investigate the service thoroughly before handing over any money. Check with several other staffing services for the work you are seeking to see if they also work this way. See if the staffing service is a member of the America Staffing Association (ASA), [www.americanstaffing.net](http://www.americanstaffing.net). Ask questions and get more information before making a decision to work with a staffing service that is charging you a fee.

### *Temporary employment isn't . . .*

- Being paid through a client company's payroll. Temps are employees of a staffing service and are paid by the staffing service. The staffing service client is billed by the staffing service directly and pays by invoice.

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- An entitlement to perks or benefits of an assigned client company
- Guaranteed. Temp assignments can vary in duration. They can be extended, shortened, or end abruptly. Temps often move from assigned company to assigned client company within industries or specialties.
- Permanent. The nature of a temp is to float and fill in. If a temp's goal is permanent employment through temporary assignments, being placed in a "temp to perm" assignment can be the best bet. There are steps a temp can take to increase their chances of a full-time job through temping. Keep reading!

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### **The Temporary Employee**

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#### **Who are these people? . . .**

If your idea of a temporary employee is limited to thinking file clerk or receptionist, think again. Temps of today have a completely new look and feel. They have higher educational credentials and skill sets. Strides in technology, widespread company downsizing of employees, fluctuating business cycles, escalating costs of benefits, the quickening pace of competition, and a decreasing sense of company loyalty among the workforce all contribute to this change. This has strengthened temporary employment and the qualifications of who is temping.

So, not only has demand for temporary employees risen, so has its status. Job seekers are becoming less afraid of trying this work arrangement or of being classified as unemployable, less skilled or a lower performer, which was a temp stigma of the past. With more demand by companies for temps at all levels, experience, and qualifications, there is rising confidence in going this route by those looking for work and those looking to hire these workers. This produces a growth of employment opportunities for job seekers. They want work, so this change makes sense.

## UNDERSTANDING THE BASICS OF TEMP EMPLOYMENT

*Here's a look at some of the people who now wear the "Temp" label:*

- Accountants
- Assembly Line Workers
- Attorneys
- College Students/Grads seeking experience or a foot in the door to a company
- Doctors
- Entrepreneurs supplementing their income
- Financial Officers
- Graphic Artists, Web Designers & Illustrators
- Human Resource Professionals
- Information Technology Professionals
- Managers
- Nurses
- People leaving corporate America for greener pastures and work/life balance
- Professionals/Executive/Managers wanting more flexibility or escape from corporate confines
- Re-career folks leaving one career and starting another
- Retired baby boomers seeking new opportunities with less structure
- Retired military officers and personnel
- Returnees to the workforce
- Scientists

### **Reasons people temp . . .**

Of course, the most obvious reason to become a temp is to earn an income. However, there are other valid reasons why people temp, such as:

- New opportunities or a change of pace
- Testing the waters with a new company or field of interest
- Networking opportunities or greener pastures

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- Increased work flexibility (especially for young mothers, retirees, students, professionals, and executives)
- Help supplement current income level (even among entrepreneurs)
- Gain additional or necessary experience
- Brush up on skills before applying for permanent work
- Enrich a resume
- Avoid work gaps on a resume, especially large ones
- Supplement the gaps in between jobs
- See how other companies operate
- Gain a possible way to a permanent position
- Get a foot in the door of a company (especially college students and grads)
- Returning to the workforce

Need more convincing about doing temp work? Check out SimplyHired ([www.simplyhired.com](http://www.simplyhired.com)), one of the largest job search engines in existence. The site lists thousands of job boards and company career websites all in one place. I looked to see what postings I could find in temporary employment. To illustrate the point about today's temp sophistication level, the following jobs appeared on the site in January, 2012 under "temporary employment" (listed here in alphabetical order):

- Advisor, LA State Dept. Civil Service, Baton Rouge, LA
- Alzheimer Care Director, Portage, IN
- Associate Controller, New York, NY
- Attorney (EEO), Washington, DC
- Attorney (Licensing), Burlington, MA
- Benefits Representative, New Brunswick, NJ
- Bilingual Travel Trainer, Tampa, FL
- Buying Analyst II, Tempe, AZ
- Chemistry Lab Supervisor, Winona, MN
- Clinician 1, San Antonio, TX
- Communications Officer/Public Relations, New York, NY
- Corporate Recruiter, Danvers, MA

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- Director Employee Relations, Burbank, CA
- Echocardiography Sonographer at Children's Hospital, Charlottesville, VA
- FAA QA Administrator, Corona, CA
- Financial Analyst, San Francisco, CA
- Health and Physical Education Instructor, Barnesville, GA
- Human Resource Generalist, Waterbury, CT
- International Payroll Administrator, Metropolis, IL
- IT Desktop Support, Flagstaff, AZ
- Law Library Clerk, Washington, UT
- Medical Assistant, Antioch, CA
- Mortgage Loan Operations Specialist, Rockville, MD
- Network Engineer, Elgin AFB, FL
- Paralegal, Philadelphia, PA
- Project Coordinator, Pawtucket, RI
- Psychiatrist/Physician, Bay, AZ
- Psychology – Post Doctoral Resident, Pleasanton, CA
- Quality Engineer, Irvine, CA
- Real Estate Instructor, San Francisco, CA
- Registered Nurse (Emergency Dept.), Greenville, NC
- Senior Research Associate/Ophthalmology and Visual Sciences, Galveston, TX
- Software Developer, Renton, WA
- Staff Accountant, Winchester, KY
- Staff Engineering Designer, Lancaster, PA
- Staff Nurse, Ann Arbor, MI
- Supervisor Medicaid Eligibility Program, New Hyde Park, NY
- Web Writer/Content Strategist, Flagstaff, AZ

You can see how varied temporary work is today. There's something for just about anyone in the workforce.

## How does the money work? . . .

Since paychecks for temps are dependent on changing variables such as the number of hours/days worked, the position held and the pay rate, it is important to understand how the money works. Most temps are paid an hourly wage. Familiarity with what “*hourly wage*” vs. “*hourly rate*” (also called “bill rate”) is essential to know. They are two distinctly different terms and dollar figures.

*“Hourly wage” will be the rate of a temp’s pay and it is your concern.* “Hourly rate” or “bill rate” will be the rate a staffing service is charging their client company for a temp placement. The hourly rate or bill rate incorporates a staffing service’s costs (temp’s payroll, taxes and insurance) and profits. The difference between hourly wage and hourly rate is the staffing service’s mark-up. This money pays them for finding the jobs, hiring, and screening/training each temp. Mark-ups can be anywhere from 25 to 75% or more than the hourly wage paid to a temp. For example, a temporary Administrative Assistant’s hourly rate could be billed at \$32.50 an hour to the client, while the temporary receives \$25.00 an hour. The \$12.50 difference is a 25% mark up.

When it comes to mark-up, staffing services will take into consideration such issues as their specialty, a competitor’s pricing and the going rate for temp work in their region of the country (for example, a city like New York will be higher than say, Phoenix). Another item that factors into a staffing service’s hourly rate is the relationship with the client. Staffing services will consider length, depth, and volume of business with a client before setting their final bill rates.

## UNDERSTANDING THE BASICS OF TEMP EMPLOYMENT



Be sure to clarify your pay rate with your staffing service up front before you start work, so there are no surprises later. Your primary concern of course will be your hourly wage. You will not be dealing with the staffing service's hourly bill rate, but it is smart to be familiar with all temp terminology nonetheless and how the money works.

Strike the best deal you can with your hourly wage right from the start with the staffing service. Do some research on what the going permanent hire wages are for the same job in your area, so you have a rough idea of the going rate of pay. It is important to note though, often a temp's hourly wages will be more than a permanent hire will. The reason why temps may be paid more per hour is that they do not receive benefits. When it comes to temp wages, check with a few staffing services about what they pay for the temp job you are seeking, so you feel comfortable and compensated for the work you will be doing.

### *Consider the following insights about temps and money:*

- *Temps do not pay a fee to the staffing service for placement. Staffing services earn their fees from their clients. (Temp hourly wage + staffing service mark-up = the client's hourly bill rate).*
- *Temps are paid by the staffing service, not by the clients where they work.*
- *Temps should never discuss their pay with a client where they are assigned. Pay is a matter handled strictly between temps and the staffing service.*
- *The job position is a strong determinant of a temp's hourly wages and the client company's hourly bill rates. Other items are considered such as education, experience, and responsibilities. Specialty jobs are going to pay a temp more than jobs requiring little or no special skills or education. It works the same way as permanent jobs.*
- *Payroll for temps at staffing services is often handled on a weekly basis.*