TO KEEP BUSINESS GOING, EMBRACE FLEXIBLE STAFFING

Well, you made it. After a spring in which COVID-19 left its fingerprints everywhere, businesses are starting to recover. Offices are opening, hiring budgets are unthawing, and some semblance of normalcy is returning to the workplace.

But make no mistake — this employment landscape isn't the same one we left behind a few months ago. Distance and flexibility will need to dictate every aspect of every workplace decision, including staffing and recruiting.

THE NEED TO KEEP GOING

Flexibility in the workplace is usually mentioned with remote and nontraditional work environments in mind — and rightfully so. But one thing the COVID-19 outbreak made painfully clear was that some companies lacked the flexibility to activate a business continuity plan (if they even had one).

> UNFORTUNATELY, THE SAME REPORT REVEALS THAT 27% OF RESPONDENTS STILL HAVEN'T DRAWN UP CONTINGENCY PLANS FOR THEIR COMPANIES.

According to Mercer's "Business Responses to the COVID-19 Outbreak" survey, the coronavirus prompted 24% of companies to start creating business continuity plans. Unfortunately, the same report reveals that 27% of respondents still haven't drawn up contingency plans for their companies.

Creating one doesn't need to be a big to-do, though. All it takes is looking at what resources your company needs to remain effective in less-than-ideal circumstances. What — and in staffing's case, *who* — makes your business thrive will need to remain front and center.

THE CHALLENGE:
AN ADAPTABLE STAFFING MINDSET

Change catches up to us all. COVID-19 has shined a light on how important it is to remain fluid in almost every aspect of the work hierarchy.

The landscape of any industry can change at a moment's notice. Staffing is no exception, and the arrival and fallout of the coronavirus was something the market and our company specifically had to adjust to.

We had to be proactive about how we continued to operate and be of service to people. At Integrity Staffing Solutions, our team worked entirely remotely at the onset of the virus, using technology and software solutions to meet with clients and prospects virtually.

In addition, our recruiting and hiring processes needed to be scaled down. We had to find qualified candidates without large-scale gatherings, attempt to schedule interviews, and follow typical DT/BC employment verification processes.

Social distancing mandates forced us to do this virtually and in smaller doses for safety reasons. We were still able to meet the high and urgent staffing demands of our clients, but we had to modify most of our standard practices.

While processes are so crucial to the success of a business, peace of mind can't be taken for granted. The ability to go off-book in staffing ensures companies can build teams — even when things don't go as planned.

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THE SOLUTION:
A FLEXIBLE STAFF SETUP

Workplace flexibility is a matter of company infrastructure. Sometimes, companies with air-tight hierarchies and processes can't respond efficiently or effectively enough to pivot to changing circumstances.

But flexibility in operations requires flexibility everywhere. When things are business as usual, a steady stream of employees is necessary. But with an expanded or reduced staff, hiring and staffing might operate on an "as needed" basis.

Even as needs change, staffing will look different in the near term. First, agencies that cater to specific industries (e.g., hospitality) will lose employees and revenue as workers seek more permanent opportunities.

By that same token, those industries and businesses that better lend themselves to temporary workers can use those team members to avoid layoffs or furloughs. For instance, traveling nurse services are in high demand to keep up with the individual patient needs of healthcare facilities.

There also will be temporary support positions that emerge out of necessity to ensure employee safety. Temporary roles like temperature checkers, contact tracers, and others will need to be filled to keep employees and companies compliant.

Business continuity hinges on having a structure in place to adjust to any unforeseen circumstance. The more fluid your internal infrastructure, the more fluid your staffing can be.

THE OUTCOME:
BUILD A MARKET-READY STAFF

With so much unknown about what the workforce will look like in the coming days, weeks, and months, it will be essential to avoid overcommitting. Staying flexible at every level — especially staffing — enables businesses to make impactful and nonbinding decisions that help in the short term. **Here's how to do it:**

1. Coordinate a safe return to work.

Businesses looking to reopen their physical workspaces may only be doing so at partial capacities (e.g., 25% to 50%). Plus, OSHA guidelines for social distancing and employee safety will affect how post-pandemic offices look.

Prepare for that new reality with an assortment of flexible tools and approaches. Put protocols, equipment, and processes in place to make staff members feel at ease.

Whatever the makeup or layout of your team, make sure safety is paramount. That means taking a fluid approach to monitoring health guidelines and capitalizing on that flexible infrastructure to prioritize staff safety.

2. Link up with staffing agencies.

Leverage a staffing agency to build a team and formulate contingency plans. An agency can help forecast potential issues and advise companies on how to prepare for future crises.

The agency you choose should be able to vet candidates sufficiently, stay informed, understand your market, and act as a consultative partner with your company. Moreover, they can see market trends and base staffing recommendations on the direction they see your industry moving.

3. Strengthen your communication.

If your workforce is operating with a "to be determined" mindset, subscribe to over-communicating. Use any tools at your company's disposal to get that message across.

Give some thought to building a "return to work" leader or team to oversee that transition. Empower this person or unit to steer the return, trusting them to update others about pending changes. Transparency will be essential to getting staff buy-in and feeling safe to continue business through specific scenarios.

4. Establish and track end goals.

In terms of recruitment and operation, integrate real-time data that helps steer your overall decisions and define success.

Companies typically prioritize two kinds of metrics in business continuity:

- **Activity + Compliance Metrics** are straightforward trackers known as key performance indicators. They illustrate whether a company is doing what's necessary to prepare and execute on stated objectives.

- **Product + Service Metrics,** also known as key risk indicators, show leadership's ability to continue or retain time-sensitive materials that help deliver a product.

Each number can be used to evaluate current staffing and operational progress. And those insights can help guide effective decision-making.

CONCLUSION

Business norms are going to look different for the foreseeable future. Don't let a COVID-19 lull leave your staffing practices stuck in place, though. Embrace staffing flexibility to stay relevant post-pandemic.

INTEGRITY
STAFFING SOLUTIONS

Integrity Staffing Solutions is a full-service staffing agency that ranks in the top 2% of agencies across the country for quality service based on ClearlyRated's "Best of Staffing" client survey. To learn more about Integrity or for help with your hiring needs, visit **integritystaffing.com** or call **833-446-1300.**