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What are Findings and Practices Associated with Measuring and Taking Steps to Increase the Engagement of Contingent Workers?

Abstract

[Excerpt] Over the past few decades, the workforce has been shifting to include a larger number of contingent workers. While the corporate agenda regarding these temporary workers has been to cut cost and shirk some legal responsibilities, these past years show there is greater interest a greater interest in labor flexibility or tight market for specialized skills. In order for companies to attract and retain their valued professional contingent workforce, there needs to be greater focus placed on their integration with the firm.

Keywords

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Comments

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FINAL QUESTION

What are findings and practices associated with measuring and taking steps to increase the engagement of contingent workers?

INTRODUCTION

Over the past few decades, the workforce has been shifting to include a larger number of contingent workers. While the corporate agenda regarding these temporary workers has been to cut cost and shirk some legal responsibilities, these past years show there is greater interest a greater interest in labor flexibility or tight market for specialized skills. In order for companies to attract and retain their valued professional contingent workforce, there needs to be greater focus placed on their integration with the firm. (1)

COMMON PROBLEMS

According to a technology contractor based in Seattle, companies often fail to give contract workers the “big picture” surrounding their assignments, and how the project is progressing. Without the sense of larger purposes of work, it is more likely that contractors will do the bare minimum for the client. An example of what frustrates and disengages contractors is when they think they are doing a good job at an appropriate pace, and the company suddenly reports that the project is behind schedule (1). This disconnect also goes both ways. If the employer does not fully understand the expertise of their contingent worker, they might not get the most from their talents (1). Workers are more excited when they are given a project that is up their alley.

Understanding Contingent workers

Some contingent workers say they are seeking better work/life balance; others want to create or design their own careers by choosing the kind of work or projects that create a unique set of skills, making them more desirable prospective employees. Contingent employment can expose individuals to a broad variety of challenges, demanding constant learning and new skills, which make work more interesting for them (6). To better engage contingent workers, we must look at why certain professionals prefer to work as a contingent worker. Contingent workers choose this status due to flexibility, lack of office politics and diversity of assignments. (1). Involving free agents in strategy discussions or team meetings can increase loyalty and promote extra effort. As such, it becomes important for companies to create an environment that helps contingent workers achieve this level of flexibility.

BEST PRACTICES

“Contingents must be included in processes that are traditionally reserved for full-time, permanent employees: onboarding, corporate learning, expertise sharing, performance reviews, and succession planning” (2). Some additional strategies to include contingent staff are as follows.

- Include contingent workers in any structured after work or off-site social events
- Recognize contingent workers birthday’s just as you would any internal, full-time employees. This shows you are invested and paying attention to their work. (5)
- Compensation: Compromising with and understanding the contingent workforce is important to cutting costs while also maintaining a fair work environment. Example: Offer comprehensive medical insurance benefits (applicable to W-2 payroll-ees only), have a good understanding of current labor market, and be fair and transparent when discussing wages. External tools such as <http://www.peopleticker.com/solutions> can also help with finding the right compensation for the current labor market.
- Communicate: Design a performance management system where you are requesting feedback and seeking to understand the professional goals of your contingent staff members (this can be especially effective to understand someone’s desire to perform work for you in the future). Example: at the midpoint of their assignment, take some time to talk about next steps, and what financial/ work options they might have within the company (5).
- Inform your team of any new workers who might be joining. Create a clear picture that the contingent worker must be welcomed and feel comfortable. Some examples of how to engage a contingent worker is to invite them to lunch (5)
- Alignment and consistency is key (4).
- When contingent workers complete their projects, they should perform a transfer of knowledge and conduct exit interviews.(7)

CONCLUSION

At the end of the day, the big picture of what people want has not changed that much. There is still a prioritization of 1. Wages, 2. Health Insurance, 3. Work-life Balance, 4. Opportunities for Growth, and 5. A sense of purpose (2). It is important for companies to ensure they have the appropriate types and appropriate amount of benefits, as high rankings on “great workplace” listings can attract high quality stars. However, at the same time, companies might want to take note that high-quality candidates have some similar characteristics. High quality job candidates are attracted to companies that align with who they are, and encourage them to do what they do best (11), rather than focusing on immediate requirements, such as pay and benefits, work hours and work demands, or personal and family needs.

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<https://www.teksystems.com/en/resources/thought-leadership/it-industry-trends/the-contingent-workforce>

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

A. Global Focus:

<https://insightsresources.seek.com.au/rise-contingent-workforce-attracting-managing-engaging-transient-staff>

There is a need to **engage** contingent workers, and your workplace culture should be visible from both outside and within. (3)

Toni Jackson, Director APAC at SAP Fieldglass, a company that draws on a contingent workforce while also providing the technology to help other business manage their own casual workers, says, “People who are highly skilled want to take control of their own career. They want to be their own boss, so you need to work to attract the best talent and your brand has never been more important.” (3)

David Brown, partner of Consulting at Deloitte and national Human Capital Practice in Australia, says “If you can be clear on the culture that you are creating, people will know what the value proposition is” (3)

Next, it is important to evaluate how you **manage** contingent workers.

Brown says “It’s a two-edged sword in that you build up a strong capability and competency in a set of the people, but that corporate memory is walking out the door every time you churn. I think what the better employers are doing is trying to create a stickiness - while they will use contingent workers, they still want them to stay connected to their organization, so that after moving on to another gig, they will keep coming back.”

Using **Technology** to assist with the planning and managing of contingent workers:

Brown says, we’re seeing the big HR cloud platforms, like Oracle, significantly enhancing their workforce analytics platforms”

B. Technology

PricewaterhouseCoopers has created their own marketplace engagement of independent workers. Independent workers complete a profile and can use the platform to engage with managers seeking project based talent across all business units. <https://talentexchange.pwc.com/>

Freelance Management Systems:

<https://www.workmarket.com/>

<https://www.upwork.com/>

C. Other Readings

<https://www2.deloitte.com/content/dam/Deloitte/us/Documents/human-capital/us-hc-rewards-for-contingent-talent-may-2017.pdf>

<https://www.mbopartners.com/uploads/files/state-of-independence-reports/StateofIndependence-2017-Final.pdf>

<https://www.pwc.com/gx/en/people-organisation/pdf/recent-talent-trends-forcing-strategic-approaches.pdf>