



EPISODE 28

Flexibility In Staffing: Balancing Permanent & Contingent Roles

Intro: Welcome to Strategic Insights, brought to you by PrideStaff. On each episode, we bring you interviews with leading management and employment experts from across the country. Your host for Strategic Insights is Brad Smith. And now here's Brad.

Brad Smith: Hello, and thank you so much for tuning into this episode of Strategic Insights, brought to you by PrideStaff. Today I'm joined by Owner/Strategic-Partner of the PrideStaff Fort Myers Metro office, Lisa Gunther. Lisa, thank you so much for joining us.

Lisa Gunther: Thank you for having me today, Brad,

Brad Smith: We have a great topic lined up and it's something that I'm sure is going to resonate with everyone listening, something that we all want, it's flexibility. So, with labor shortages, with economic and political swings, with changes in legislation, companies need to be more flexible and adaptable today than ever before in the past. I'd like to talk about building in more flexibility into your workforce, that can help you manage fluctuations in demand, help you deal with seasonality changes. And let's talk a little bit more about proactively managing your human capital expenses, which are a big line item for organizations right now.

So, to set the stage, I always like to start by sharing some statistics and what we're finding in the industry is that more and more companies are turning to staffing agencies and recruiting partners to help. And this is mostly due to a shortage of available talent. We're seeing staffing companies put nearly 15 million people to work throughout the year. Most staffing employees are working full time. So sometimes when you think of temporary employees, we don't think that they're working, but the majority are, and that could be with one employer or it could be split with a few different employers, but the majority of those temporary associates aren't temporary, they're working full time. And what we're seeing is nearly every industry is embracing temporary staff, and that's due to the increased need for flexibility. That's due to the shortage in talent. Organizations are realizing that temporary staffing can be a vital tool to add more flexibility into their workforce model and into their business.

So, Lisa, let's dig into this a little bit more. With unemployment at record lows, again, I mentioned we're seeing more companies than ever embrace staffing agencies. I want to talk about how staffing agencies, like PrideStaff can help give

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employers that flexibility they need. When you think about staffing, when you think about flexibility, when you think about a strategic workforce model, what comes to your mind?

Lisa Gunther: Well, that's a good question because like you said, a lot of employers are looking for flexibility and also candidates are looking for flexibility. So flexible staffing is a business strategy that allows the companies to be able to adjust their workforce based on what their client's needs are and their changing needs. So, a lot of times companies are using staffing companies to provide the on-demand workers is what we call it, or temporary workers, so that their businesses can either scale up or scale down based on their needs at the current time. And of course, this is saving the companies a lot of money because if they hire permanent staff to be during their seasons or when they need... They have a huge project that just came in, then they have to let those people go. So, when you use the flexibility of using a staffing agency like PrideStaff, then we can assign the people to be there for those projects as it goes up and as it goes down.

Brad Smith: So, you've highlighted a bunch of different things on both sides of the equation. So, organizations can help better manage fluctuating demands, they can bring in talent on a project level, bring in specialized skills on a project level. But on the flip side of things, I think temporary staffing and temporary employment is a very attractive option to today's workforce. I would imagine that you see a lot of candidates come in that are looking for that schedule flexibility, right?

Lisa Gunther: They are definitely, they're definitely looking for that. And a lot of that since the pandemic when people were working for home or when they had a hard time finding anything that was open at the time, they started to like the flexibility of that work-life balance and being able to not be caught in the, so-called Rat Race of working 80, 90 hours a week, from some of them were working 50, 60 hours a week. So, the flexible staffing is a really nice thing, not only for the employers, but like you said for the candidates because now they get that work-life balance back.

Brad Smith: And I think that's why we're seeing so many companies in all different industries embrace temporary staffing because the concept of work has changed a little bit, employees, not that they're a hundred percent in the driver's seat, but they want more flexibility and companies need to change in order to get the talent they need to grow their business, to get orders fulfilled, to get things out the door. So, I think as companies embrace more flexibility, they're going to open up opportunities to get talent in that otherwise wouldn't even consider working there. So, I think it's a great opportunity. Now Lisa, I want to talk not just about temporary staffing, but I know a lot of companies now love the temporary-to-hire arrangement. So, if you don't mind, walk us through what temp-to-hire or contract-to-hire really is and why that's an attractive option for both employers and candidates.

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Lisa Gunther: Right, it certainly is. And it is one of the favorites, like you said. It allows first of all companies to be able to almost have their candidates doing a working interview. So, what I mean by that is they're going in with the idea of having a temporary with a set time. So, it's usually during the probation period, and their whole goal from the beginning is they do want to hire these candidates on if they're a good fit. So, it allows them to try out the candidates during the probation period, ensuring that they're a good fit for the company. But it also is a two-way street because it allows the candidates to try out the company to make sure it's a good fit for them.

And so a lot of times it works best because not only are they just making sure that the candidates have the right skill, but they're also making sure that they have the right attitudes, the soft skills that they're looking for, the attitudes, whether they fit into the culture of the company, whether they have the same vision and goals, the long-term commitment, those kinds of things and that's what makes a good match when you use the temp to hire as one of the options.

Brad Smith: Now, do you find the candidates are receptive to temp to hire?

Lisa Gunther: They are. They really are because we hear day in and day out that they're looking for a long-term company. They're looking for somewhere where they are going to have the potential of growth, where they're going to have training, because they want to learn more, they want to learn more skills. And especially with the way things are changing in our culture, they definitely want to have a company that's able to provide that for them. So, during this probation period, they're making sure that this is exactly what they're looking for also.

Brad Smith: Yeah, I love that it's a win-win. So, the employer has an extended on-the-job interview. They get to understand what the candidate actually can do, not just what they said they can do, but what they can actually produce and perform. And then on the employee side, they get to make sure that this is going to be a good long-term fit. And I think that's a benefit to the end employer too. As an organizational leader myself, nothing is more frustrating than when you hire someone on full time and realize that he is not a fit, that they're not happy, you are not happy and performance wanes. So, I love that arrangement.

Lisa Gunther: And it works out really well. And it helps avoid the costly turnover too.

Brad Smith: Yeah, and costly in so many ways, in lost productivity, in unemployment costs, in risk. There's so many issues with that turnover, and if we can do anything possible to increase those turnover levels, we'll have a much more productive and profitable business.

Lisa Gunther: That's so true.

Brad Smith: Lisa, now I want to talk about a third arrangement or type of staffing that you provide is direct hire or "permanent" placements. Why would somebody choose

to work with a recruiter or work with a temporary employment agency to hire someone on full-time when maybe they could do that on their own?

Lisa Gunther:

There's really many reasons for that. And so, like you said, first of all, hiring permanent employees can be a time-consuming thing for the companies. They have so many things that they have to do, and it's not only time-consuming, but it's costly. You think about what it costs to put out the jobs on the job boards, what it costs to go through hundreds and hundreds of unqualified resumes that come in, what it costs to do the interviews, the onboarding, the reference checks, the background checks, the drug tests, all those things. Time is, as we all know, is priceless. You can't put a cost on time.

And so, more and more companies are deciding that they want to do the permanent hire through us for that reason, but also it involves not only us doing all that for them, but there's so many, like you said, the unemployment rate, the talent pool is short right now. So, the talent that you're looking for a lot of times are the talents that are already working. They're in a job right now and they're looking for, like we said earlier, something better, something that's going to challenge them, a company that's going to train them more and more on different skills so that they can keep growing.

And so, when you use us to hire for your permanent, then we have that labor pool of, we call them passive candidates. So, they're working and they're out there, we know what they want and what they're looking for, and so they're just waiting for that right opportunity. And so, they're in our pool and we're able to get that where a lot of times companies don't have those people and also they don't have time to have a pool of people to call on in the future if they have an opening like we do.

Brad Smith:

For sure, yeah. And you're recruiting 24/7, that's what you focus on. That's what you do. I love that concept of having a deeper candidate pool. Now talk to me a little bit about how you're able to reach out to passive candidates. So, these are people that, like you mentioned, are already employed. So, these are probably people with top-tier skills that are successful in what they do. How do you go about getting in front of them and presenting your client's job opportunities to them?

Lisa Gunther:

Well, a lot of our job boards, of course, have potential jobs that they'd be interested in. So, when they call in, we do a pre-interview when we get to learn a little bit about them before we bring them in for our face-to-face interview. And if we can, through the pre-interview on the phone, if we feel that we're a good fit for them, because we never want to waste anybody's time, and if they feel they're a good fit for us, then we can bring them in and do their face-to-face interview where we dig deeper into what they're looking for, what they value most, what would make a good full-time position for them, something that would help them reach their goals and needs. And we have a long conversation because our mission statement is to consistently provide client experiences focused on what they value most.

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And so, our candidates are our clients also, and so we really dig into those kinds of conversations. We get to know them and through really actively listening and looking at them as a person, and we love to do what we do, we love making those great matches. So, when we listen and we focus on those kinds of things, what kind of culture they want to work in and all the many things that they tell us, and then we turn around and we do the same thing for the clients. We dig deeper into, what do they value most when they're looking for new employees? And so then at that moment, we're able to match not only the skills and abilities of what the job description says from the client, but also what the candidate has. And we're also able to match what they value most and what culture they're looking for. And it tends to be almost like a good marriage. It's a great fit, and it tends to be a long-term commitment for both.

Brad Smith: I love that. So, you're going in and doing an assessment of your clients, their organizational needs, what they need. And then, like I mentioned earlier, you're constantly recruiting. So, you are talking to candidates of all different levels, background skills, areas, interests, disciplines, and throughout those conversations, you already know what an organization needs, you know what it's going to take to be successful in a specific job position. And then you're using all of that background, all of that information to make sure that all of those candidate conversations lead to a great skill and a great culture fit.

Lisa Gunther: And the candidates know, they're already working, so they're passive. So, they're waiting for us to actually find them that great opportunity. So that's why we have such a great pool in all different skill sets and all different types of industries.

Brad Smith: I absolutely love that. Our final topic that I have for you is talking a little bit about future trends. So, I know the pandemic through a whole host of challenges. We have new legislation coming through, there's different changes in workforce dynamics, there's remote work, increased flexibility, a changing job market. What are you seeing and what should employers proactively plan for in the short term here?

Lisa Gunther: So yes, it is changing dramatically right now. And the workforce, like you said, is changing. And again, our candidates are changing in what they're for. Like we said, it seems like the pandemic caused everybody, including owners, employees, everybody, just to stop and reevaluate everything in life. It seems like it was the catalyst that got things changing. And so, what we're finding is, like we were talking about earlier, that they're looking for more flexibility, they're looking for work-life balance. The people that are working already are looking for the flexibility of changing their hours maybe. And so, the workforce is changing not only with the people that, they don't want to leave the company they're in, they want to stay, but they want to be heard and they want to have that work-life balance. And so not only if that's happening, but they're looking to work remote or hybrid, just so many different factors are coming into play right now.

And what's so cool about using staffing agency like PrideStaff is you can let your permanent workers have a little bit of flexibility and bring in the contingent workers to offset that to work the different hours so that your workflow and your production continues to go on. And you're making it win-win because your full-time employees are happy and they're going to stay because you're listening to them and then you're bringing on other people to offset that.

Brad Smith: So, Lisa, do you find that employers that embrace that, that are open to flexible work arrangements are able to secure better talent?

Lisa Gunther: They are. They are. And it's funny too because a lot of times what happens is the flexible talent that wants to come in sometimes fits the hours that the permanent employees do not want to work. And it's just amazing to start to watch that work out.

Brad Smith: Yeah, so I'm sure it helps improve retention, morale, performance, productivity, everything.

Lisa Gunther: Right. And also, you've got to think of it this way, during the pandemic, a lot of people were stuck in their house, and what did we have? We had the internet, we had our computers, our phones. That was about it, because they couldn't go out too much. So, they were learning new skills. They were learning more technical skills and other skills to just keep up with what was going on. They were bored, and so they were becoming more marketable. And those are the people that are out there that are very flexible right now with all these new skills for technology.

And we're hearing so much about AI coming in, but you can't just have plain AI, you need other people in there to counter and to work with it to make a great production team. And so, the flexible staffing people are the ones that have these special skills right now. And also, when they're working different jobs for us, they're learning more skills. So, when you combine them with your permanent staff, then you're bringing in a whole different mindset. You're bringing in creative people that weren't on your team originally because they're thinking outside the box because of all their other experience. You're bringing in new ideas, new energy. It almost lifts up the culture again because they blend together very well-

Brad Smith: For sure.

Lisa Gunther: ... and the company can become very productive.

Brad Smith: I love that. I'm going to ask you this question just because I planned to, but what you just covered I think sums it up. But for our listeners here that are looking to drive performance in their organizations, that might be struggling with some workforce issues or some workforce challenges, any closing words of wisdom?

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Lisa Gunther: I do. I want to say that flexible staffing, because people don't really understand what it's all about, so it's not just about filling a vacancy. And what I like to say to my candidates and clients, it's not just about making a check mark, it's about really filling the open position with the right person, with the right skill set at the right time. So, it's just not a check mark, it's just not that. And our goal at PrideStaff, I can't speak for any other staffing agency, but it's to build long-term relationships with our clients by positioning ourselves as an added value to our clients and their organization. After all, we get paid to find great candidates and great talent that they can't find on their own. And so, we always want to live, our mission statement, like I said, is to consistently provide client experiences focused on what they value most. So, we truly execute our mission statement, and this is embedded in our culture, in our operation systems, in our behaviors with both the clients and the candidates.

We just read yesterday, and we're so honored by this, that PrideStaff just won the 2024 Best of Staffing for the Client and Talent 15 years in a row with the Diamond status. That's amazing. We are so humbled and honored by that award for not only our individual PrideStaff, but the whole PrideStaff company as a whole. And that's fewer than .1% for that of all staffing firms in the US and Canada. And so, we are just amazed, and we just love what we do. And if you've ever thought of using staffing and you just didn't know, then we'd be honored if you just pick up the phone and look up PrideStaff and call your local PrideStaff office and get things moving.

Brad Smith: Wow, Lisa, I couldn't sum it up any better myself. I'm so that you brought up that award, and I want to commend you because PrideStaff is the longest tenured staffing company to have won that award consistently. It's truly amazing, and it's a testament to your mission statement, and it's a testament to the value that PrideStaff offers to end employers, so congratulations.

Lisa Gunther: Thank you. But you know what, Brad? We couldn't do it without the great clients that we have. We really have truly amazing clients through the company as a whole. There's over 85 offices in the United States and the candidates, because we do... We've really looked for the top candidates when we're trying to place them, and we couldn't be an agency that did that without both fitting together

Brad Smith: A hundred percent. Lisa, thank you so much. For those that are listening, if you do want more flexibility, if you do want to increase your opportunity to attract top talent, if you want to overcome your biggest employment challenges, visit [PrideStaff.com](https://www.pridestaff.com). Reach out to your local PrideStaff office and they can help you develop a strategic workforce model that adds in more flexibility to your business. Lisa, thank you again so much for your time. We really appreciate it.

Lisa Gunther: Thank you for having me today. I appreciate your time.

Brad Smith: Take care, everyone. Bye.

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Closing:

Thank you for listening to Strategic Insights brought to you by PrideStaff. Whether you're looking for high-level workforce consulting or staffing help to meet demands, PrideStaff is here to help.

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