

Career Tips: Maximizing Your Temporary Position

As an employee choosing to complete temporary or contract work, finding your place in the corporate culture and proving yourself to be a valuable asset to the team can often be a daunting task. The idea of walking into a new environment where relationships are already strong, and knowing your time there will be limited, can be intimidating to even the most seasoned temporary professional.

However, these are not the only challenges that temporary employees face.

Karen Wilson, president and CEO of [MAKE Corporation](#), a national resource for staffing and consulting services, notes that oftentimes the biggest challenge that temporary employees face is coming to terms with the expectations that their employer may have for the future of their employment.

“Many temporary employees have chosen this career path and are not interested in permanent employment. They enjoy the work/life balance, even if it means there are times of uncertainty between projects,” said Wilson. “Some employers wish to convert these temporary employees and when the temporary employee says no to the offer the end customer is frustrated.”

She adds: “Conversely, some end-companies use contingent workers very strategically to address spikes in workload that will not continue forever, so they will only keep the temporary workforce for the duration of the project. This can present frustration in the other direction if the worker wishes to be employed full time but the company does not intend to convert that workforce to full time.”

To overcome these challenges, temporary employees must educate themselves on the current state of the job market in their industry and be adaptive to whatever changes may come their way. In addition, they should communicate closely with the staffing firm responsible for their employment to understand the client’s intentions and expectations for the assignment.

This can be critical to the success and satisfaction with temporary work, as the staffing firm is the temporary employee’s advocate to the employer. If the temporary employee keeps the staffing firm well informed of changes in his or her role or abreast of issues occurring at the client site, the staffing firm will be able to better represent the temporary employee’s interests during the temporary engagement.

“The only constant is change, so it is important to work hard and be professional,” said Wilson. “If you do, you will have a great career regardless of your work status.”

Susan Selle, manager of the accounts payable department for [ProBuild](#), one of the nation’s largest suppliers of building materials to national builders, local contractors and do-it-yourselfers, seconds this advice.

“We know that the nature of a temporary position can bring uncertainty, but the best thing you can do is consistently demonstrate your work ethic, skills and commitment,” said Selle. “In the past, we have converted temporary workers who consistently go above and beyond to full-time employees.”

To do so, temporary employees should volunteer for projects and committees outside of their expected roles and responsibilities and asking for more responsibility when their workload seems slow. This will go a long way in the eyes of the employer. Further, they should also demonstrate the professional skills necessary to accomplish the task at hand.

Career Tips: Maximizing Your Temporary Position

Page 2 of 2

As such, temporary employees should also strive to become a part of the “team” and demonstrate their value to the department and the organization as a whole. Wilson adds that temporary employees should think of themselves as a well-known sports figure—while during the game they are part of a great team, they are ultimately responsible for their own athletic ability.

Finally, temporary employees should always demonstrate a positive attitude, as bad news always travels faster than good news and a negative attitude can result in the premature end to an assignment in most organizations. Further, because temporary employees represent the staffing firm while engaged in contract positions, the firm will be very hesitant to place the employee in another position after receiving negative feedback from clients.

“Above all, just do your best always,” said Selle. “We know that the nature of a temporary position can bring uncertainty, but the best thing you can do is consistently demonstrate your work ethic, skills and commitment.”

Remember that professional contingent labor is in high demand, and a positive attitude is most likely to keep temporary workers at the top of the supply chain.