



## 理解

### **Market uncertainty shapes hiring trend**

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It seems that every entrepreneur you talk to these days is hiring staff that is "freelance", "on contract", "part-time", or just plain "I call her when I need her".

Quite often, job descriptions for these people are very specific and do not include general tasks. Instead, this kind of employee brings specialized skills to the company that may not be required everyday or on every project.

What could be causing this shift in hiring? Is it some kind of human resource strategy designed to align staff time and expenses with specific projects? Or is it a reflection of a current market environment that discourages entrepreneurs from increasing staff and boosting payroll?

As it turns out, there are a number of factors at play.

#### **Uncertainty breeds caution**

Clearly, for some businesspeople, an uncertain economic climate makes them wary of overloading their payroll with staff.

While some entrepreneurs are optimistic about their own company's growth, the overall mood in today's business environment is that of general unease. World events continue to shift investment opportunities resulting in an economic rollercoaster ride as sectors yo-yo up and down.

Consequently, even though a company may be forecasting positive growth for the near future, hiring strategies are marked by both prudence and caution.

"Let's say you are expecting your sales revenues to jump 20 per cent this year and your company has 2 employees," poses Ted Mallett, Chief Economist for the [Canadian Federation of Independent Business](#). "If you hire a new employee to handle the new business, then you have increased your human resources by 50 per cent."

Does it then bode well to hire part-time? Perhaps. The anticipated sales increase may not justify the hire of a full-time employee and given the fluid nature of business and the current mood, it's hard to say whether projected sales will actually materialize.

#### **Skilled staff can be hard to find**

Ironically, while some firms are opting to step away from the traditional full-time hire, others are hiring freelance, part-time or contract staff simply because they can't find skilled workers to bring on full-time.

According to a recently-released CFIB report (April 2003), small business concern over the shortage of qualified labour has hit an unprecedented high. The organization began monitoring the issue in 1989. This year's results broke an all-time record and mark a 3 per cent jump from what the CFIB refers to as "the already disturbingly high level seen in 2001."

The report is based on two national surveys conducted among CFIB's 105,000 small- and medium-sized business members.

To demonstrate the severity of the problem, the CFIB notes that "one-third of firms were unable to pursue new business opportunities, depriving themselves and the Canadian economy of growth."

So, how does a firm resolve these hiring difficulties?

The most common solution, chosen by 56 per cent of the firms surveyed, involves hiring under-qualified people.

Once again, hiring temporary help comes to the forefront: 34 per cent of respondents chose this option as their most likely route. Other solutions include passing additional responsibilities on to other employees (34 per cent), and increasing the length of shifts and the use of overtime (25 per cent).

"Small businesses are looking for a much greater sophistication in the range of skills they require than in the past," explains Mallett.

"Some of this is due to the domino effect," he continues. "It's become very acceptable over the years for larger companies to subcontract out to smaller, more specialized firms, so now these SMEs, in turn, are searching for a much more diverse range of skilled help."

What this translates into is a seller's market. "If an employee has the required skills," says Mallett, "An entrepreneur may love to bring these skills into their organization, but if there are not enough of these skills to go around, a smaller company may be forced to hire part-time. It may not be a matter of choice."

### **Self-employment may eliminate some skills from the full-time job market**

Finally, Mallett notes that "successful firms are networked firms", who may chose to find employees through referrals from suppliers or other companies.

"There has been a change in the mindset of both employers and employees," he explains. "Although we don't have strong evidence yet, it may be that a number of skilled people are choosing to be self-employed and work with companies on a freelance or contract or temporary basis."

"In turn, employers are saying to themselves: 'I don't have to hire full-time. My company can access those skills when we need them. This is the most flexible and profitable way to run my business.'"



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