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## Temping Can Offer a Lucrative Career Path to the Right Professional

By Julie Bennett



it turns into a permanent job, tell your recruiter, says Brett Good, senior district president of Robert Half International for Southern California and Arizona. Robert Half, based in Menlo Park, Calif., has 250 U.S. offices, including Accountemps, that specialize in finance and accounting jobs and others that do project and full-time staffing of technology professionals, attorneys, paralegals and advertising, marketing and web design professionals. "We will let the employer know you are interested in making that transition," says Mr. Good, who works in Irvine, Calif.

"Do the best you can do in your current assignment, ask your manager if there's anything you can do differently or better and demonstrate that

**"People don't realize that temp agencies have such lucrative, rewarding positions available."**

you fit into the employer's culture," advises Mr. Samuels. "Even if you're told the employer doesn't anticipate hiring full-time workers now, that doesn't mean an opportunity may not come up."

Or you may decide that temporary assignments have more allure than a permanent placement. The benefits of being a full-time contingent worker, says Mr. Good, include being exposed to a range of challenges and people.

Ginger Eldridge says she took a series of temporary accounting jobs when she moved from Seattle to Spokane, Wash., a few years ago. "Taking temporary assignments through Accountemps helped me learn what companies here had the best opportunities," she says. She accepted a permanent position from one of them and worked there several years, before returning to full-time temping last winter. "I like having a choice," she says. "And I like taking summers off to ride my mountain bike."

William Gochnauer of Walnut Creek, Calif., is a contingent chief financial officer, taking seven assignments in seven years, mostly for public companies going through a lot of turnover or needing an experienced hand to help them through something they had not encountered before, like a big acquisition or divestiture. "I like the variety," Mr. Gochnauer says. "I am able to earn more on my project assignments than when I was working as a full-time CFO, and I can take time off between engagements."

Says the ASA's Mr. Wahlquist: "As the economy heats back up, we expect even more employers to discover that staffing firms are an effective way to deploy and use talent. It's an exciting time to be part of this industry."

workers are hoping that a temporary assignment will be a bridge to a permanent position, 23% of them end up choosing a succession of temp assignments as a full-time career.

When telecommunications engineer Michael Tremblay of Denham Springs, La., was laid off from a six-figure job, "I hit a brick wall that was six months thick," he says. "I probably sent out 4,000 resumes and our bank balance was down to below zero before I started working with the Specialized Recruiting Group at the Express Employment Professionals office in Covington, Louisiana. They sent me to an engineering firm in Metairie that needed someone with my skill set for a nine-month assignment. When it ended a few months ago, the company offered me a permanent job. I think most people don't realize that temp agencies have such lucrative, rewarding positions available."

Express Employment Professionals of Oklahoma City, a firm with 510 franchised offices in the U.S., has specialized recruiters in 40 offices across the country, who work with professionals from accounting, finance, information technology, engineering, marketing, medicine, sales and other fields. Paul Tosso, who placed Mr. Tremblay and specializes in engineering and technical positions

says, "When companies have a special project and don't want to bring another person onto the payroll, they pay us to find someone with the skill set they need. But even if we don't have a job order for something you're qualified to do, we're always glad to work with a marketable candidate. I'll call companies that hired similar candidates in the past and try to set up interviews, for example."

### Tips for Applicants

To convince recruiters you are indeed a marketable candidate, dress professionally, Mr. Tosso says, and arrive for your first interview with current contact information for at least five references, from previous employers and supervisors to business colleagues and people you have supervised. "We will call them and verify everything you've told us," Mr. Tosso says.

Be flexible. In this economy, there's no stigma to taking a temp assignment below your skills or salary levels. "Working as contractor is seen as more helpful for a candidate than not working at all," says Conrad Samuels, manager of talent acquisition for Pepco Holdings Inc., an electrical utility in Washington.

If you like the temporary assignment and hope

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