

Temporary staff - the in-thing in IT companies

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BANGALORE: The number of temporary staff employed by tech firms has gone up dramatically in the past two years. In fact, they've been quietly hiring more temp staff for many quarters now. That's the key reason why they don't talk about wellstocked benches (bench refers to employees not currently on a project).

Temp workers account for 10% to 15% of the actual employee base of IT companies today, against 2% to 5% a few years ago. This share is expected to go up to 20% to 25% in the coming quarters, say temp staffing experts.

A quick check run by the Indian Staffing Federation, an apex body of temp staffing firms in the country, among its eight key members at its recent board meeting indicated that the demand for temp staffing by tech providers would go up by 40% to 45% in the next couple of years. Mafoi Randstad, TeamLease, Kelly Services, Adecco India, Manpower and GI Staffing Services, Alegiss and Global Innovesource are the leading players in this space which includes 20 small and medium firms too.

Vipul Prakash, vice-president, Indian Staffing Federation, told reporters, "Temp staffing helps tech firms maintain a healthy bench position, while still having quick access to a large pool of talent."

There is buoyancy in temp hiring among IT companies, confirms E Balaji, CEO, Ma Foi. In fact, there could be a time when IT companies start giving a break-up of employee bases under core-headcount and temphead count categories. Enterprises across business domains, mostly IT firms, seem to be quickly adopting temp staffing to beat margin pressures, maintain lean benches and also facilitate just-in-time hiring in a highly volatile market. Sudhakar Balakrishnan, MD, Adecco India says, "Temp staffing is fast catching up among tech firms in India. The space is witnessing a bullish growth."

Domestic companies didn't believe much in temp staffing until recently. Temp staff account for 20% to 25% of the global workforce. This is having a rub-off effect on their Indian counterparts, say staffing experts.

"The trend has been registering a steep growth. Temp staffing is slowly maturing with more sectors opening up to it and more job seekers shedding their inhibitions about the nature of temp jobs," says Vinay Grover, CEO, Symbiosis Management Consultants. Globally, temp employees are valued on a par with the mainstream workforce. They've been treated as "springboards" in good times and "shock absorbers" in bad times in India. "This outlook has been changing rapidly in the past three quarters," says Ashok Reddy, managing director of TeamLease.

NOTHING IS PERMANENT

Largely, temp talent paid on a par with permanent employees Given provident fund, gratuity, etc Normal temp tenure between 6 months and 9 months, but extendable Assignments include sales, marketing, accounts, HR, administration, customer support, hardware support and software development * Temp workforce around 100 million of which around 10% in organized sector BFSI, telecom, retail, FMCG and hospitality hire temps in large volumes.

