

# how to

## hire cost-effectively



part of the "how to" online series by Robert Half

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You don't have to look far to see dramatic changes taking place in businesses around the world today. Companies globally are concerned about how their business will survive the current economic climate, and what lies ahead for their organisations.

Making sure they have the right team in place and, importantly, sufficient numbers of staff available to cover the workloads represents a difficult challenge for managers in today's market.

When the internet bubble burst in 2001 many organisations faced a tough lesson on the consequences of over-hiring and were forced to make mass redundancies.

Forward-thinking companies learnt from this and introduced 'strategic staffing' – bringing in a mix of permanent and temporary professionals – which gives them the flexibility to contract during lean times and expand when the market improves.



“Learn from past mistakes.”

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**Remember: A successful team creates a successful business.**

“A company is only as good as its people” may sound trite, yet in a more challenging economy these words hold true.

Talented members of staff are especially important during a downturn when you can't afford to let quality and customer service slip.

In tough times you want to keep your customers while taking market share from less forward-thinking competitors.

Whilst good employees are your greatest asset, they are also your greatest expense and so, when budgets are being cut, it is important to consider the following:

- If headcount has been reduced, are your remaining members of staff working overtime?
- Are there any team members stretched too thin and others bored?
- What projects can you put on hold and which areas need more focus?
- How will you maintain the day-to-day business activities if your permanent headcount is decreased and there is a hiring freeze?



**We can help you  
answer these  
questions with  
4 easy steps:**

- Step 1:** Be flexible
- Step 2:** Devise a plan
- Step 3:** Make the most of your resources
- Step 4:** Bring in the experts

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### STEP 1: BE FLEXIBLE

#### TAKE YOUR TIME

**Remember: Don't do what you've always done.**

It is important to think outside the box when considering your staffing requirements. Could the team's work load be reshuffled leaving a gap in a different area to before? Take this opportunity to analyse where the weaker points are in the team.

- Fill needs, not desks - Look at the short and long term needs. Rather than panic to fill a role, really take the time to work out what is best for your department.
- Keep a close eye out - Evaluate your department's day-to-day activities and identify workload trends over the last couple of years. Are there any repeated times when the workloads peak?
- Look back in history - If a member of your team leaves, don't automatically assume you have to replace like for like. Look for creative alternatives – there is a good chance that systems internally have changed since the position was last filled.



“If a member of your team leaves, look for creative alternatives.”

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### STEP 2: DEVISE A PLAN

### REPRIORITISATION

**Remember: The aim is to have a strong yet flexible employee base.**

Before you automatically just replace like with like, go back to the planning stage and consider what skills you need in which roles and is the work cyclical or do you need someone on a permanent basis.

- Assess your resources - Work out if your team can cover the existing workload easily enough and still be able to help out with additional unanticipated projects.
- Look internally - Can you reprioritise workloads and reassign some of your team members to more urgent projects?
- Be creative - Look to create project teams that can quickly disband or regroup depending on current needs.
- Adapt and adjust - By bringing in temporary workers to help out when workloads really peak, you reduce stress for your existing team.
- Watch those fixed costs - Shift a portion of your fixed staff costs to variable costs so that you can bring in additional support during challenging times.



“Flexible staffing will ultimately give you the competitive edge.”

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### STEP 3: MAKE THE MOST OUT OF YOUR RESOURCES

#### THE VALUE OF TEMPS

**Remember:** Adding skilled temporary professionals to your team gives you the flexibility to react to changing market conditions...a major advantage in uncertain times.

Temporary workers can be brought in for a whole host of reasons and not just to cover unforeseen leaves of absence. And, in today's more challenging economic climate, there is the added advantage that they do not add any fixed costs to your bottom line.

- Planning for the unplanned - Bring in temporary workers to cover not only for staff holidays but also for the unforeseen such as long medical leaves of absence, sudden resignations and unanticipated projects.
- Free up valuable time - By using temporary professionals for day-to-day responsibilities, you can free up permanent employees to work on more complex challenges and new company initiatives.
- Acquiring new skills - Project workers can be brought in if you need specialised, technical skills that your current team don't have.
- Try before you buy - You can take the opportunity to see how a temporary professional works out over a period of time. Then decide whether he/she would make a suitable member of staff when the market picks up.



“Temporary professionals can look after your immediate and long term requests.”

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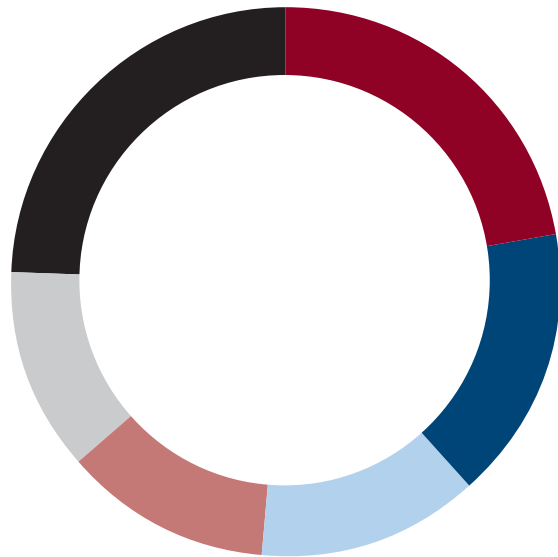


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### WHY USE TEMPS?

We asked executives, “Which of the following is the greatest benefit of bringing in finance professionals on a temporary or project basis?”



- 22% Access to special skills that may not exist internally
- 16% Provides a fresh perspective on the job and the company
- 13% Enables our company to quickly accommodate workload peaks
- 12% Opportunity to evaluate someone for a permanent role
- 12% Keeps human resources costs variable
- 24% Other/no answer

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### A HELPING HAND

Temporary/project professionals are objective and independent, and bring valuable experience from other companies and industries to your business. Below we've detailed a couple of case studies to give you an idea of the types of temporary roles we place project professionals in:

#### Financial Restructuring in Hong Kong

- Business situation - As part of an Asia-Pacific compliance initiative, this financial services giant discovered deficiencies in its international reporting.
- Project scope - We sourced several independent project consultants to work with its existing team to restructure processes across subsidiaries to ensure future compliance and increased efficiency of core accounting processes.
- Success - The project team drastically improved the reporting efficiency of several major regional subsidiaries and ensured the smooth closing of year end accounts.

#### Cost Accountant for Hire in Australia

- Business situation - Due to increasingly strict cost-saving objectives, the client required an additional resource onsite to support senior production management in understanding the costs of the business.
- Project scope - Our independent project consultant was hired to support the increased demands of the production team with a major focus around cost accounting, budgeting and variance analysis, as well as assisting managers with improving business processes.
- Success - As a result of the project consultant's efforts, the mine's management was able to quickly increase resources and manage a spike in analysis and reporting requirements. In fact, the relationship worked so well the client actually ended up hiring the project consultant permanently.

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### DON'T JUST TAKE OUR WORD FOR IT...

“Robert Half has provided a number of contractors to Aker Kvaerner Australia over the last few years. What has been a particular strength and benefit to our company is the time taken to understand the requirements of the Finance Department and more importantly become aware of the team dynamics. The staff at Robert Half have also taken a personal interest in the individuals placed and the team as a whole and continue to put forward quality candidates.”

**Brian Evans, Financial Controller, Aker Kvaerner**



“Robert Half has been instrumental in providing strategic locations with skilled consultants and helping Makita meet the stringent SOX requirements... the most impressive part about Makita’s working relationship with Robert Half, however, was Robert Half’s ability to closely monitor the quality of work produced by each consultant, listen to client’s feedback and make adjustments as deemed necessary to ensure client’s satisfaction.”

**Minobu Mato, General Manager, Makita Corporation (Japan)**



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### IN SUMMARY

The advantages of this ‘strategic staffing’ approach:

- Pay only for the staff you need when you need them.
- Protect your permanent team members by reducing the cycle of redundancies and rehiring as the business changes.
- Complete projects on time without having to pay overtime for permanent staff.
- Increase morale and ease the stress levels of permanent employees.



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### STEP 4: BRING IN THE EXPERTS

#### SAVING YOU MONEY

**Remember: Recruitment firms will help you increase business efficiency and trim expenses.**

At the risk of sounding too much like a sales pitch, below we offer just a few of the many reasons you should make the most of recruiting specialists.

- Save time - When your team are stretched, use a specialised recruitment firm to take the hassle out of hiring so you can get on with your job.
- Save money - It is always more cost-effective to engage more experienced specialists to complete a project than lower-cost and less specialised professionals.
- Minimise ‘down-time’ - The best recruitment firms will place individuals with you who have the technical expertise and the ability to ‘hit the ground running’ and get on with the job with minimal disruption.
- Unlock the hidden job market - Through the extensive networks that reputable staffing firms have, they can access candidates you might not otherwise meet and who are not necessarily actively looking for work. Work with recruitment firms that have long-standing alliances with leading professional organisations. Such alliances add some of the most highly skilled individuals to the specialised recruiter’s network.
- Take advantage of a sounding board - Specialised recruitment firms often can act as a consultative partner. Bounce ideas for new projects or new service offerings off your recruitment partner, and they will help you determine the staff you’ll need to support your business goals.

“A first class recruitment firm will save your business money with a higher quality candidate who will finish the job more quickly and accurately.”

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### IT DOESN'T END HERE

There is no question that the current economic downturn marks a period of business turmoil not seen in nearly eight decades.

Companies that take a progressive view of their staffing needs, such as that outlined in this eBook, will be best positioned to survive and emerge as industry leaders after the inevitable market recovery.

When the economy is healthy again, you will be rewarded for your long-term thinking with experienced and motivated staff ready to seize market advantage.

This latest guide in our eBook series was designed to share our insights gleaned over 60 years of working with candidates across all kinds of industries.

But it doesn't end here. We are always interested in learning more, so if you have any nuggets of information that you would like to share on how to build a successful team please get in touch.



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**We're here to help you with your recruiting needs.**  
**Contact the office nearest you for more information:**

<b>Australia:</b> <a href="http://www.roberthalf.com.au">www.roberthalf.com.au</a>	<a href="mailto:sydney@roberthalf.com.au">sydney@roberthalf.com.au</a>	61 2 9241 6255
	<a href="mailto:melbourne@roberthalf.com.au">melbourne@roberthalf.com.au</a>	61 3 9691 3631
	<a href="mailto:brisbane@roberthalf.com.au">brisbane@roberthalf.com.au</a>	61 7 3039 4202
	<a href="mailto:perth@roberthalf.com.au">perth@roberthalf.com.au</a>	61 8 6430 6801
	<a href="mailto:parramatta@roberthalf.com.au">parramatta@roberthalf.com.au</a>	61 2 8833 4500
	<a href="mailto:mtwaverley@roberthalf.com.au">mtwaverley@roberthalf.com.au</a>	61 3 9239 8100
<b>New Zealand:</b> <a href="http://www.roberthalf.co.nz">www.roberthalf.co.nz</a>	<a href="mailto:auckland@roberthalf.co.nz">auckland@roberthalf.co.nz</a>	64 9 915 6700
<b>Japan:</b> <a href="http://www.roberthalf.jp">www.roberthalf.jp</a>	<a href="mailto:tokyo@roberthalf.jp">tokyo@roberthalf.jp</a>	81 3 5219 6633
	<a href="mailto:osaka@roberthalf.jp">osaka@roberthalf.jp</a>	81 6 4560 5522
<b>Hong Kong:</b> <a href="http://www.roberthalf.com.hk">www.roberthalf.com.hk</a>	<a href="mailto:hongkong@roberthalf.com.hk">hongkong@roberthalf.com.hk</a>	85 2 3653 7300
<b>Singapore:</b> <a href="http://www.roberthalf.com.sg">www.roberthalf.com.sg</a>	<a href="mailto:singapore@roberthalf.com.sg">singapore@roberthalf.com.sg</a>	65 6533 7778

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