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Hiring temporary help a trend that is getting 'lot of emphasis'

BY MARILYN BOWDEN

The constraints of the economy are playing into an emerging trend toward the use of short-term or interim profes-

sionals, say executive recruitment specialists.

"Everything is mobile now," said Dennis Nason, founder and CEO of Nason & Nason. "The 401K means people are not as

tied to their place of employment for retirement benefits.

They can go from one situation to another and feel comfortable in a medium-term environment."

Companies like the idea of hiring temporary professionals because “they don’t feel locked in for the long term,” he said.

Heidrick & Struggles recently set up a Client Advisor Network that focuses on interim solutions, said Guy M. Cote, a partner in the firm’s Miami office.

“It’s a trend that is getting a lot of emphasis right now,” he said. “It seems as though it’s coming from a couple of different angles. The war for talent is still on, but great talent is not moving. They don’t want to make the leap in this economy from the secure to the unknown, and companies are desperate to keep their good people.”

These considerations make it difficult for companies to upgrade talent, Mr. Cote said, “so they have to get creative. Often that means bringing on people more efficiently.”

Companies will always want permanent, full-time CEOs, he said, “but for some other functions companies are looking for access to talent they wouldn’t normally be able to recruit. Interim solutions provide flexibility to both the company and the individual, and buffers or enhances existing teams, and when business does return they may have paved the way to a full-time hire.”

Due to the salary constraints of the market, Mr. Nason said, some businesses that may have been wanting to modernize their staffs are “gently retiring or easing people out and not replacing them, but looking down the road to when they can get more experienced people for the same amount of money.”

If the massive layoffs that have hit law firms in New York and the Northeast are repeated locally, the use of short-term contract attorneys is likely to increase, said Sherry

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Dennis Nason

Schneider, managing partner of The Lucas Group, which focuses on the legal profession.

“Contract attorneys are brought in to help with a particular project or for a particular period of time,” she said, “and the projections are that we will be seeing more of that because it’s a way for law firms to keep costs down.”

“They’re typically employees of the staffing company, which makes it a good deal for the law firm, because they can get qualified help on a project-by-project basis and be invoiced by the staffing companies on a per-hour basis. They don’t have to be concerned with payroll taxes, benefits or anything else.”

In time, Mr. Nason said, more of these temporary employees will be working out of a home office or a remote facility.

“Someone working at home is no longer considered second-tier or a lesser producer,” he said. “I think we will see more office pods or commercial pods such as Datran Center where people will work and live closer to their home simply because they can. The cost of not doing so is taking its toll.”

“There is more flexibility in allowing a person to work virtually,” said Mr. Cote, “and come in for some key meetings. People are working and living differently, and companies are becoming more flexible.”