



Seasonal Staffing: Get It Right

Dreading your busy season?

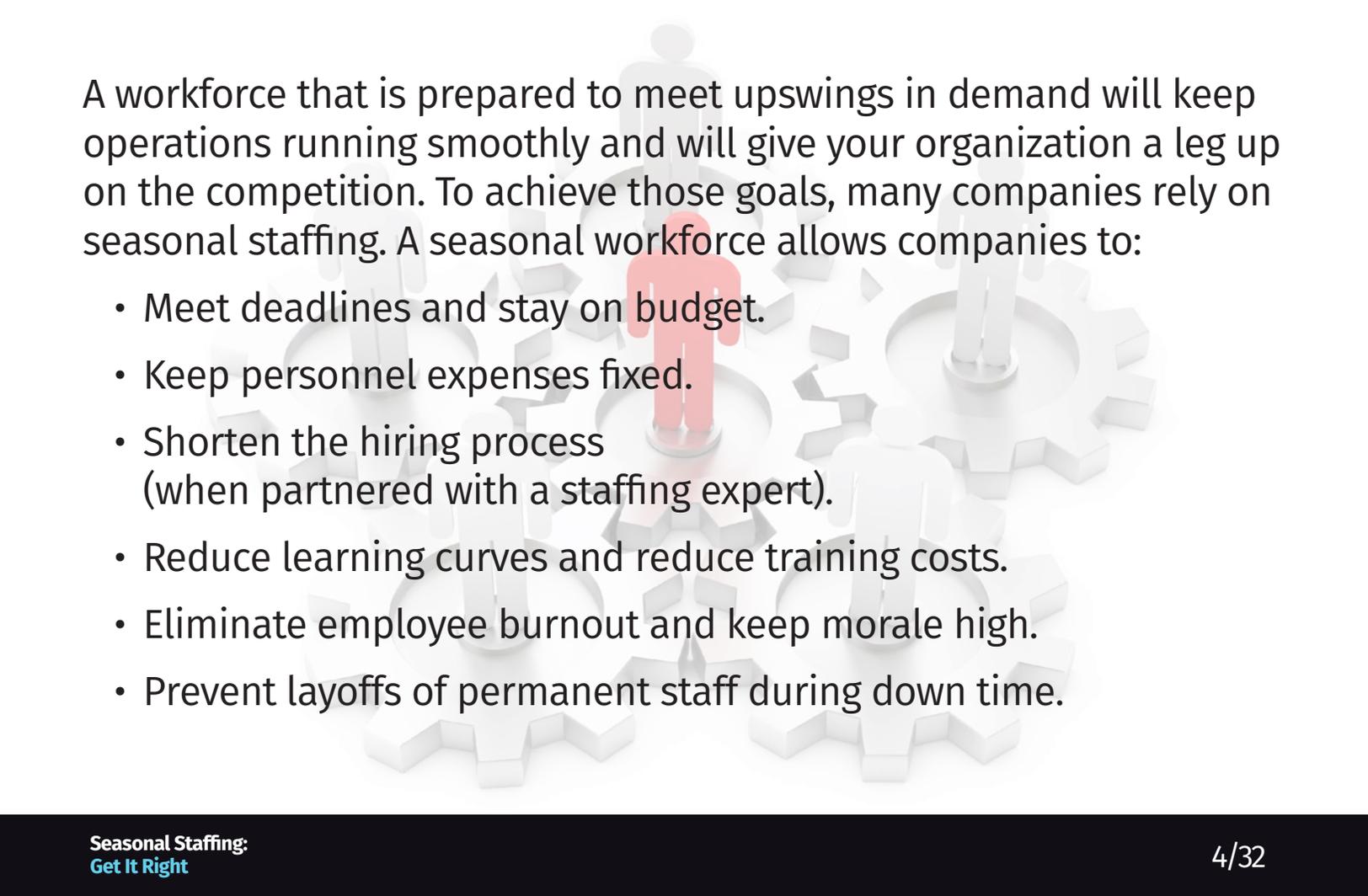
Your company relies on you to find the right help – with the right skills – right when you need them.

Start planning now. This handy guide contains all the tips and tricks you need to get it right (and keep your sanity!).

The Best of Times, the Worst of Times

Seasonal sales surges are exciting for company leaders and corporate shareholders (more sales = higher profits!).

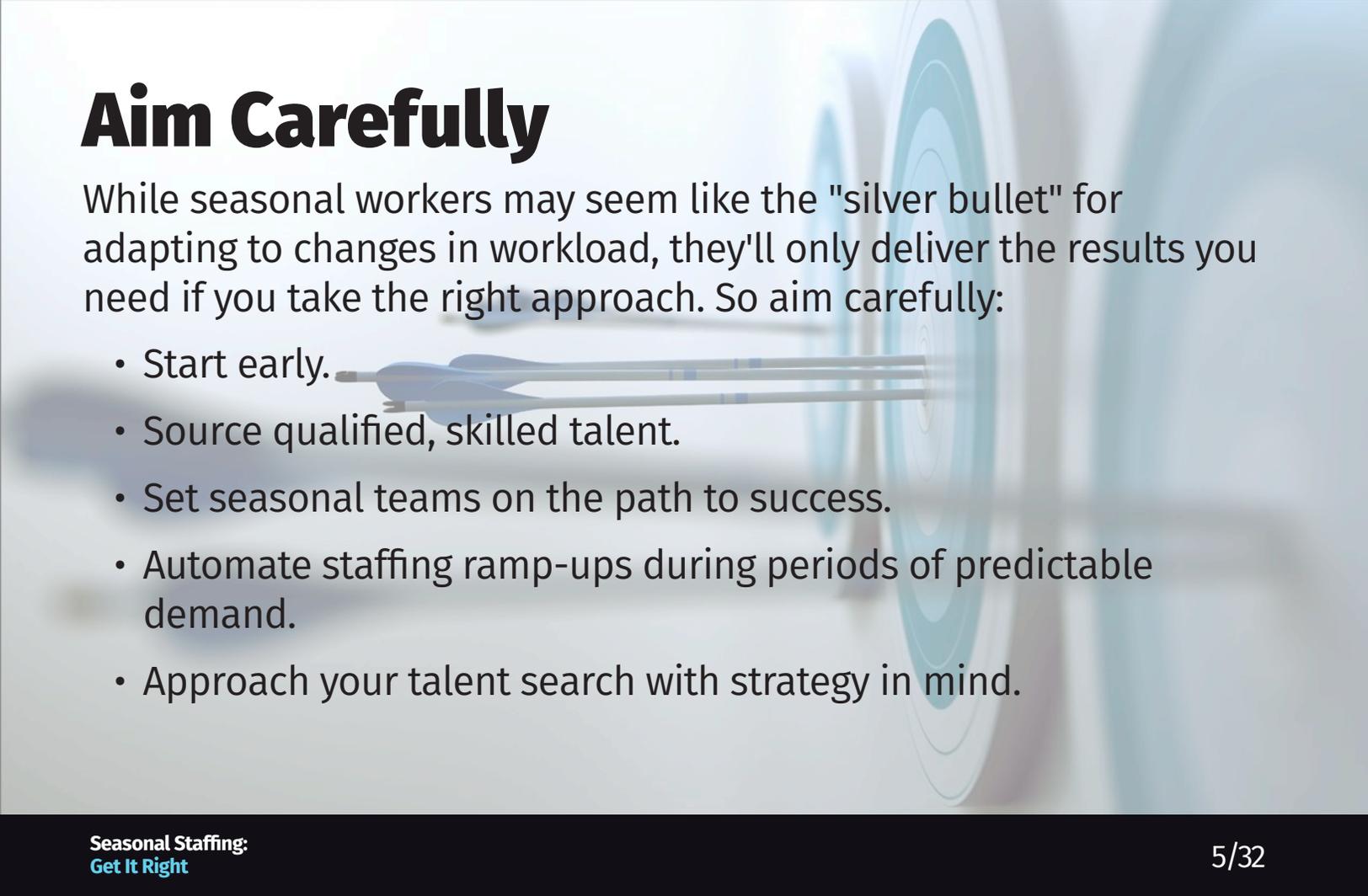
But lurking somewhere beneath those dollar signs lies a sea of exhausted employees, an unpredictable personnel budget, and the fear that this year, you might not be able to make it all come together.

A background graphic featuring a central red silhouette of a person standing on a large white gear. Several other white gears of various sizes are scattered around, some overlapping the central gear and the person. The overall theme is industrial and mechanical, symbolizing workforce and operations.

A workforce that is prepared to meet upswings in demand will keep operations running smoothly and will give your organization a leg up on the competition. To achieve those goals, many companies rely on seasonal staffing. A seasonal workforce allows companies to:

- Meet deadlines and stay on budget.
- Keep personnel expenses fixed.
- Shorten the hiring process (when partnered with a staffing expert).
- Reduce learning curves and reduce training costs.
- Eliminate employee burnout and keep morale high.
- Prevent layoffs of permanent staff during down time.

Aim Carefully



While seasonal workers may seem like the "silver bullet" for adapting to changes in workload, they'll only deliver the results you need if you take the right approach. So aim carefully:

- Start early.
- Source qualified, skilled talent.
- Set seasonal teams on the path to success.
- Automate staffing ramp-ups during periods of predictable demand.
- Approach your talent search with strategy in mind.

Ready to get it right?

Use the following tips on finding, hiring and training a strong and successful team during your busy season.

The Early Bird Gets the Talent

It's never too soon to get the ball rolling. Ideally, your seasonal strategy should be outlined months in advance, and you should begin posting jobs 60-90 days before the start of the upswing.

Planning will put you far ahead of your competitors. When you start early, you enjoy the benefits of:

- **A deep talent pool** – By November, the best winter holiday workers already have their seasonal jobs in place. If you start in September, those workers are still free agents.
- **Time to train and onboard the right way** – If you rush around at the last minute, your training and onboarding programs will suffer. Starting early ensures that your workforce is prepared properly.
- **Time to prepare permanent staff** – Your existing staff will have lots of time to adjust to the idea of a new crop of employees, and they will be less resistant to the change.
- **Reduced stress** – If your holiday staff is lined up early, it is one less stress to worry about once your busy season hits.
- **Being the hero** – Everyone will notice the reduced stress, and they will have you to thank for it!

Think it's no big deal to wait?

Here are some of the consequences of inadequate staff planning:

- **Poor hiring decisions** - When you can't find the talent you're looking for, you're forced to settle for "warm bodies" who may not perform to your expectations.
- **Staff overwhelm** - The busy season will come, whether you are ready or not. If you have to lean on your existing staff to pick up overtime shifts, work days they aren't normally scheduled, or force them miss important family events, they will become overwhelmed, unhappy, burned out and more likely to call off.
- **Missed budgets** - Those overtime hours you stick your existing staff with will add up quickly, throwing a wrench in your personnel budget.

- **A bad reputation** - You have your first experience with many new customers during your peak season. If you are unable to meet your regular quality standards or you cannot keep up with demand, those new customers will not come back. Moreover, they could leave bad reviews online, damaging your reputation.

Remember, even if you wait to implement a seasonal staffing plan, your competitors probably won't. Wow your team and your leadership by preparing early for your annual rush.

Where Can You Find GREAT Seasonal Employees?

The seasonal job market can be extremely competitive, so use these strategies to sniff out the best and the brightest temporary employees in your industry.

1. LOOK TO YOUR EXISTING ROCK STARS

Great people know great people. If you employ part-time or floating employees, look to top performers in these categories first when seeking help covering seasonal upswings in workflow and demand.

2. BRING BACK PAST SUPERSTARS

Contact previous part-time, seasonal or floating employees who left on great terms. These individuals may have moved on to new opportunities, but they might be looking to earn some extra spending money over the holidays.

Consider reaching out to retired high-performing employees, or employees who left to take care of children or ailing parents. They may be interested in rejoining the team on a temporary basis.

Starting your search with current and recent employees allows the company to:

- Shorten the onboarding cycle.
- Reduce errors and losses that occur during new employee ramp-ups.
- Strengthen loyalty and improve morale among your existing part-time staff.

3. FILL THE GAPS WITH OUTSIDE TALENT

Your part-time staff and previous seasonal employees likely won't cover all of the holes in your seasonal roster. This reinforces the need to start planning early:

- Assess your company's workforce requirements by anticipating the departments and shifts most significantly impacted by a seasonal surge.
- Once you know where you will need the most help, flesh out the details. Are you in need of sales talent? Will your warehouse require reinforcements? Which shifts will be the thinnest?
- When you've determined what you need to recruit for, map out how and where you will seek out the skills you need.

- Get creative. Instead of simply placing ads in your local papers or popular job boards, cast a wide net:
 - Local job fairs
 - College job fairs, career centers and student newspapers
 - Professional organizations in your industry
 - Social media: LinkedIn, Facebook and Twitter
 - Paid ads on search engines and social networks
 - Local schools
(teachers make highly reliable seasonal employees)
 - Referrals from current employees
 - Your local retiree community
 - Your customer base

Remember, if you try the same old tactics, you'll end up with the same old results. Think outside the box!

Outside Talent: Seasonal Recruitment Advertising Plan (1)

You probably spend a great deal of time fleshing out job descriptions and job postings for permanent employees. How much time do you spend on your seasonal descriptions and ads?

If you want to attract top-quality talent, you must put time and effort into attracting that talent. Keep these things in mind when crafting your posts and descriptions:

- **Be specific about the length of service** – If you expect the team to stay on through the middle of January, don't advertise the position as "holiday." Many candidates will assume they will be done on December 24 or January 31. Be very clear about the terms.
- **Be specific about the skills you are looking for** – If you require knowledge of specific computer programs, if the job requires physical labor, or if you are looking for certain certifications or degrees, be very clear in your descriptions and post.

- **Get into the details of the job itself** – Explain exactly how seasonal employees will spend their days.
- **Talk schedule** - If employees will be expected to work the same days and times each week, be clear about that. If flexibility is not really an option, don't bill it as such. If weekend and late-night hours are required, state it clearly so there is no confusion. It is better to be upfront about scheduling than find out about conflicts after you've made a hire.

Outside Talent: Seasonal Recruitment Advertising Plan (2)

- **Describe incentives** - Do you offer completion bonuses, performance bonuses or employee discounts? Advertise all of your perks! Remember, your competitors are doing the same thing, so you need to do what you can to catch a candidate's eye.
- **Discuss future options** - If you regularly hire high performers on a permanent basis, say so. Many individuals look to seasonal opportunities as a way to get their foot in the door with great companies.

- **Go where the talent is** - Today, everyone is online. Think beyond popular job boards and consider leveraging social media platforms like LinkedIn and Twitter to connect with potential seasonal employees.
- **Highlight company culture** - What type of work environment do you offer? Is it buttoned-up and corporate? Laidback and social? Be clear about your company's values, culture and vibe so that you attract people with complimentary values and work styles.

When it comes to crafting job descriptions, honesty and candor are always the best policies. Help candidates make an informed decision about applying for a seasonal position with you.

Set Seasonal Teams on the Path to Success (1)

Translation: Don't skimp on onboarding, orientation and training for seasonal staff!

Seasonal workers may only be with you for a short time, but they still deserve to be set up for success – and your company should always focus on maintaining its quality standards, no matter what the external demands may be.

Follow these tips to be sure your seasonal workforce is just as effective as your permanent team:

- **Offer the same orientation program** – Provide them with the same materials, opportunities to ask questions and informational sessions you would any other new employee. In fact, you may want to add a program that demonstrates just how the seasonal team fits in to the big picture to help engage new employees in their work.
- **Set clear expectations** – Provide a written plan of employee goals, objectives and responsibilities, and have a manager review it with each seasonal employee.

Set Seasonal Teams on the Path to Success (2)

- **Create a buddy system** – Pair each seasonal employee with a mentor who will be their go-to for questions, assistance and general support. Set guidelines for the mentoring program, and consider incentivizing the mentors when their buddies hit certain benchmarks in their training and performance.
- **Hold everyone to the same standards** – Be sure managers check in regularly to monitor performance and hold everyone to the same standards. If you do not tolerate tardiness from permanent employees, for example, don't tolerate it from seasonal employees. If you recognize direct employees for success, be sure to recognize seasonal employees, as well.

- **Incentivize completion of the term** – Some seasonal employees will drop off the map on December 24 or towards the end of August in summer upswings. Consider offering cash or gift card bonuses to employees who complete the entire seasonal term.



Prepare Your Existing Team

Your existing team may dread the thought of a seasonal workforce invading their space, interfering with team dynamics or even outperforming them on the job.

Have managers meet with their teams to talk about the reasons why a seasonal staff is necessary, outline the specific jobs the new employees will be performing, and frame the conversation in a positive manner. Highlight the benefits for the existing team such as:

- **Reduced stress** – Seasonal help allows your team to avoid burnout and enjoy their own holiday or summer.
- **Help when they need it** – If teams have been asking for help, they are about to receive it. Show them how the seasonal workers will make their jobs easier.
- **Meeting demand** – Do teams get incentives for hitting quotas and benchmarks as a unit? With more hands on deck, it increases the chance they will get those bonuses, even in the face of increased demand.

When your direct staff is on board with the plan, it will create a more positive, receptive environment for the new employees, and will reduce the chances of an “us vs. them” mentality breaking out among the workforce.

4. PARTNER WITH A STAFFING EXPERT

Finding all the seasonal help you need in a short time is no small task. So don't go it alone!

Seek out a qualified staffing firm that knows your industry. These companies have extensive talent networks comprised of skilled candidates who know the seasonal job market and are ready to tackle new challenges on demand.

A staffing partner will:

- Work with you to understand your company and its unique fluctuations in demand.
- Design a seasonal staffing plan to even out the highs and lows of your business.
- Handle the recruiting, screening, interviewing and background checks for you.
- Ease the strain on your internal HR team and shorten the hiring cycle.

Be sure to select an agency that wants to be an active partner. They may schedule on-site visits to get a better feel for your work environment. They should also spend a great deal of time with you, asking critical questions to fully understand your needs.

Partner with a Staffing Expert: Planned Staffing

If your business experiences predictable changes in workload, a planned staffing option can give you on-demand access to temporary employees, precisely when you need them the most.

A planned staffing partnership allows companies to tap into seasonal talent quickly and efficiently. Every firm has its own, unique process, but that process typically follows these steps:

1. Analyze sales and production data to identify regular, annual shifts in demand and workload.
2. Identify the departments and teams that will require the most help.
3. Develop thorough job descriptions that outline the skills needed for each position, the requirements of each position, the goals for each position and desired outcomes.
4. Recruit for talent early and then continuously throughout the year, so your workforce is ready to ramp-up with temporary employees on demand.
5. Revisit the plan regularly as the needs of the business shift over time.

Partner with a Staffing Expert: Set-And-Forget Seasonal Changes

Your staffing partner will constantly be working on your plan, but from your end, planned staffing is a “set it and forget it” arrangement. The staffing firm will handle the recruiting, screening, interviewing and background checks while you experience the benefits of:

- Seamless ramp-up and wind-down periods.
- Elimination of permanent staff layoffs in times of low demand.
- Consistent control of line-item salary and personnel costs.
- Streamlined training and onboarding – many temporary employees will return to you on a regular basis if they know the work is there.
- Higher productivity – by easing demand on core employees (even when business surges), everyone can work at their peak.

Planned staffing strategies keep your company running efficiently, no matter what the market has in store for you throughout the year. While they are designed for predictable upswings in workload, planned staffing partnerships can come in handy during unforeseen surges, too.

Final Thoughts

At the end of the day, it is the people who make a difference for your company – from your CEO to your seasonal, entry-level team members.

So don't dread your busy season. Plan for it.

When you approach seasonal staffing with the same focus and attention as permanent hiring, the result is a highly skilled, highly productive and highly engaged team that will carry you through your busiest of seasons. And you'll look like the true hero you are!

To design a seasonal staffing plan that makes your workforce more responsive and productive (and makes your job a lot easier), contact your staffing firm.