

A DAY IN THE LIFE OF A STAFFING EMPLOYER

“The staffing industry has achieved its goal of omnipresence; the challenge now is to maintain it.”

Diedra Thomas Ajayi



Situation

I was pursuing the business of a major company but could not get the executives to budge. A year into my pursuit it happened. They called for an assistant for one of their VPs for an indefinite assignment. I chose Joy, a fairly new employee who during her interview earned 5-stars in every professional area. I was sure she would make a good company fit.

Discovery

Several weeks into the assignment I received a call from my client informing me that Joy was performing exceptionally well until that afternoon. She reported to work that morning, left for lunch that afternoon and never returned. She did not contact my client nor did she contact me—she simply vanished. *“Now you know why we were not interested in doing business with you,”* said my client, finally revealing why they were hesitant in using our staffing services. This was obviously a familiar experience they had with this

industry. Without warning, I lost both my prized client and valued employee.

I phoned Joy to discuss what happened. She said she left my client’s office on her lunch break for an interview intending to return to work. This was her third interview and she was expecting a permanent job offer any day. It surprised her when the offer came that day, which also turned out to be the day of new employee orientation. She was asked to stay and attend, so she stayed. Just like that she brushed us off.

She explained how the company has a policy where employees must attend orientation before beginning work. The next orientation was a month away. Assuming a permanent job offer was more important than a staffing assignment where she could be easily replaced; she accepted the job and never looked back.

I later learned it was my company that placed the staffing employee in the position for which Joy was hired. There was no reason this should have happened. We should have been on top of both assignments and known about our second client’s search for a permanent employee, and Joy’s interest in that position. This would have allowed us to have both employees remain in place until the day of orientation, then switched their assignments—simple.

I explained to Joy how the relationships of this industry’s affiliates are most impressionable and must be carefully considered, and that if her services were not needed; she would not have been called.

It was important that she understood how the staffing needs I promise to fulfill for my clients, how

long I have been in business, the types of companies I service, and how well my employees perform on assignment, are all critical factors my clients use to determine my ability to provide quality staffing service. That when she came to my company seeking solutions to her employment needs it became my duty to see that she received the highest quality of service regardless of how long she planned to work in the industry, and I expected her to extend the same consideration to my clients and my company.

I also explained how not giving staffing employment the same consideration as permanent employment threatens the industry's position—she is part of a daily workforce that stands 2.01 million strong on any given day. That's far too many employees for such hasty decisions. As a result of this, it was important for her to understand that the length of time she spends in the industry should always be secondary to how she performs on assignment.

Joy explained how she never viewed her role that way and had she understood the industry as she does now, her departure would have been different. She admitted she was afraid to call and inform us that she could not complete the assignment, but more afraid that if she declined to attend the orientation someone else would have been chosen for the job, and sincerely apologized for destroying a year's worth of work. I too apologized and told her how I was equally responsible for the outcome of the assignment.

Looking back, there were two safety measures I could have taken:

First I should have explained, and then made sure she understood the importance of her successfully completing the assignment—no exceptions. But lost in my excitement in the client's call for business, I failed to consider the depth of the situation: the challenge in winning the client's business and making sure that the assignment would be successfully completed. Simply informing Joy of my battle to win the client's business before placing her on assignment would have given us a chance to decide if she was the right candidate for the assignment and if not, find someone else. In fact, satisfying this client was important enough for me to have taken one of my top employees off assignment if no one was available.

Second, each of the follow up calls I made to my client to see how things were going should have been extended to Joy. This would have opened the door for her to discuss her situation.

Also, extending the call to Joy would have shown my client that I made an effort to do everything possible to ensure that all went well for everyone.



Think About It:

Things can change for people from day to day as it did for Joy. I now understand the importance of asking both my clients and employees if they are planning to do or anticipating anything that could affect the outcome of an assignment before it begins, or anytime during the assignment. It was a missed opportunity that should not have happened, and a very hard lesson to learn. It destroyed my company's reputation and contributed to a client's once bruised now ruined impression of the industry. Such situations can not be allowed to happen.

Who knows what Joy and I could have achieved had we openly expressed our needs and expectations. I was pleased that she realized the depth of her actions now that she understands the industry. I believe she will make a more purposeful staffing employee if she ever returns. I would feel comfortable rehiring her. And I too will be a better employer by sharing information with both my clients and employees. This experience taught me how my being knowledgeable of industry trends and events mean little if it is not shared equally with my staff and employees; whom I depend on to achieve my goals as a reliable staffing employer.