



Hints for a Healthy Recovery

Industry Leaders Reveal Ways You Can Keep Your Firm Strong

By Jennifer Peltak and Jennifer Silber

Create Goodwill and Clean Up Bad Habits

With more candidates on the market than jobs to fill, **Donn Harvey** of **Protingent Staffing** advises his staff to be sensitive when dealing with the newly unemployed.

"It's emotional and it's traumatic," says Harvey. When he talks to candidates that can't be placed through Protingent, Harvey passes on other leads that he knows about and provides contact information for other staffing firms. Creating goodwill, he says, will benefit Protingent when the economy rebounds and job orders are booming.

"All of these people will eventually get jobs. If we leave a bad taste in their mouths now, and later they're part of a project that's hiring, they'll say, 'Protingent didn't treat me well, and I'm not going to work with them.'"

Overall his firm is receiving fewer job orders, but Harvey says there's still a demand for highly skilled technical positions. "Companies that are smart are realizing that there is talent that is available that would not otherwise be on the market," he said.

Protingent, which earned a spot on the 2008 Inc. 5,000, maintains a diverse client base, which is critical when most sectors are cutting back. Harvey stays in close touch with clients, many of whom are reporting that staff cuts have resulted in much heavier workloads. "They say, 'We're so busy we don't even know which way is up,'" Harvey says, "which indicates that when the recession is over, there will be a pent-up demand for staffing."

Harvey says that internal staff at Protingent has declined due to attrition, but he's cutting expenses elsewhere so he doesn't have to lose any more people. "There are a thousand little things that can be done to save money," he says. The company is transitioning to electronic pay stubs to reduce postage costs, and it's taking a more aggressive stance on delinquent accounts and performing more credit checks on new clients. "I read recently that in good times companies can develop bad habits," he said. "Going ahead, we're going to continue to clean up bad habits."