



Personnel Placement Firms: Most Lack Plastics Manufacturing Expertise

By Thomas R. Cutler

Belonging to industry organizations is not everything when it comes to plastics manufacturing placement firms. However, very few of the organizations proclaiming industry expertise have a thorough understanding of the needs of manufacturers. Belonging to organizations such as NAM (National Association of Manufacturers), American Production and Inventory Control Society (APICS), Association for Manufacturing Excellence (AME), and National Tooling & Machining Association (NTMA) indicate a commitment to understanding and participating in the manufacturing sector.

A comprehensive investigation of more than one hundred personnel placement firms revealed that nearly all claimed to have expertise in the manufacturing sector; ninety-one percent (91 percent) of those surveyed said they were somewhat or very knowledgeable about the needs of manufacturers.

Plastics manufacturers' feedback did not corroborate this self-perception. Of the nearly 200 plastics manufacturers surveyed who have used personnel placement firms in the past year, more than half (52 percent) reported dissatisfaction with personnel placement firms because the temporary or permanent staffing offered was under-qualified, poorly screened, or unable to provide immediate productivity.

Pre-screening is Key

Micro Star Innovations in Largo, Fla. manufactures Six-Sigma quality injection molded components. The sixty year old firm has partnered with customers to provide a continuous reel to reel stamping, forming, molding, post-mold forming, inspection, and packaging solution. The result is a customer base with one-stop shop for advanced insert molding requirements. Staffing the company with appropriate personnel was a challenge for Operations Manager Shawn McNary. According to McNary, "Most of the staffing agencies that I contacted did not specialize in manufacturing, which made it more difficult to get them to understand our needs for specialized labor to efficiently produce insert molded products."

Micro Star Innovations required a personnel placement firm that would consistently provided specific labor to meet the company's specific needs. ResourceMFG was selected. According to McNary, "ResourceMFG staff members are continually challenging themselves with finding the ideal candidates for our facility. This is accomplished by bringing in the staffing agents and putting them through a mock interview as if they were going to be running the machines so they can realize what the future candidates are going to be responsible for. ResourceMFG also has a specific test it distributes to qualify all potential candidates and I believe this helps with mechanical aptitude."

Indeed this type of pre-screening becomes critically important in manufacturing operations where skill sets are far from vague and "light industrial labor" does not fit a single job description required.

Mind the Gap

Any visitor to the London underground will hear the warning to "mind the gap." (This is the space between the train and the platform). The gap between the *claim* of understanding the staffing requirements and the *perception* on the part of manufacturers that their staffing needs are not understood cannot be closed by "generic" placement organizations

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that are attempting to serve all sectors from administrative to accounting to industrial. Less than one in ten (8.6 percent) of the manufacturers surveyed realized that there were manufacturing-specific placement organizations. Just as patients would not engage a general practitioner physician to perform brain surgery, manufacturers must hire personnel placement organizations that specifically understand their issues and hiring needs. Any gap in additional costs to hire personnel specialists is easily and quickly remedied; cost recovery from immediate productivity justifies the differential. The cost of hiring the wrong person is considerably greater - expertise counts.

Finding the Right Organization

Ask for referrals. If the placement organization truly has the expertise they claim, then they will have several clients who would be delighted to provide positive testimonials.

Review the screening process. The more rigorous the screening and pre-placement training procedures, the more likely the employee placed will have the required skill sets. That will allow for optimum productivity from date-of-hire.

Don't be cheap! Efficient and effective employees are often worth the price differential. Experience counts both in selecting a personnel placement firm and the employees hired. ■

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Employment Responsibilities to be Considered by Outside Personnel Placement Firms

This is not an exhaustive list and every placement is unique.

- Monitor and comply with all issues regarding source supply protocol.
- Maintain and improve pre-operation and operational standard operating procedures, programs, and suggest corrective action and verification procedures.
- Be aware of plastic facilities structural and equipment defects that may create product deficiencies or defects. Communicate with operations and maintenance when such issues are noticed.
- Follow all procedural documents and work instructions to ensure process control and proper production practices and accountability.
- Meet or exceed all metrics to monitor, verify, and validate process control and production practices.
- Improve quality assurance objectives. Inspect, identify, inform, and resolve, with production management, facilities, operational issues or transportation issues, process control deviations and/or product noncompliance such as temperature, sanitation, specification, foreign objects, analytical, or packaging.
- Plastics businesses must continually improve the quality management system (QMS) by establishing, implementing, reviewing and measuring organizational objectives.
- Meet or exceed all regulatory requirements which apply to the plastics industry and specific plastics business.
- Have a clear understanding of, and strictly adhere to, the plastics business safety and quality policies.