

Staff and Contract Personnel Search Strategies

Determine when you need to add staff to your department

Your publications department works hard to provide your company with the best possible documents to support your product. There are times, however, when current staffing is insufficient for the needs of the product, or when a large project comes up that requires specialized expertise. We understand your technical publications needs. Underwhelmed offers you immediate access to well trained, highly experienced technical publications specialists.

Determine whether contractors or staff are needed

When you present us with a publication project or staffing need, a representative from our experienced team of project managers will help you determine what is needed to fulfill your requirements. Does the project call for short- or long-term staffing? Does the project require multiple writers now, but only a single editor later in the process? Can your company afford to hire another full-time staff employee? Would it be more feasible to add a few months of contractor expense to your already overstressed budget?

Determine requirements and duration for contract position

It is very important to discuss what you really need for the project in detail. Is a knowledge base about your product or related technologies more important than another qualification? Will experience in a similar but not identical industry be appropriate, or do you need someone who meets specific industry requirements?

We have learned over the years that specific knowledge is good, but the ability to transfer related background to a new work situation is also valuable and contributes a fresh perspective to the project. Technical writers are frequently expected to have qualifications such as programming experience, even though much well received software documentation has been created by writers without this background. To resolve issues of specific knowledge, clearly communicate your requirements and try to be flexible and open-minded in searching for what you want.

Underwhelmed maintains a database of hundreds of technical writers and editors, WinHelp and HTML-based help authors, Web publishers, multimedia developers, and graphic artists. It is likely that we will find a close match for your needs. We also draw on other resources to complement our database, such as job announcements posted on our Web site and other Internet resources frequently used by the kinds of professionals we seek, and newspaper advertisements that we run as needed.

Locate and screen candidates according to job requirements

Underwhelmed has established a database of technical publications specialists, searchable by area of expertise, specific skills, desired location, desired compensation, and so on. This provides us with a current resource list to fulfill your project requirements. Underwhelmed conducts an extensive background check on each technical publications specialist we enter into our database. We qualify all candidates by reviewing their resumes and writing samples, meeting with them to verify that they exceed industry standards, and contacting their previous employers. In addition, many of our technical publications specialists have proven themselves on other Underwhelmed projects before they begin working with you.

After one of our project managers defines the parameters of your project and helps you refine an existing job description or create a new one, we immediately search for candidates who most closely fit your needs. Of course, in this day of competitive staffing challenges, not everyone in our database may be immediately available, but with our extensive list of specialists and other resources, we are usually able to produce several strong candidates for consideration.

We contact the candidates, describe the requirements for the position to them, and confirm their interest and availability. We further supplement our initial screening process by reviewing writing samples and references more specific to your project. Then, and only then, we send candidate resumes to you. It is important to us that this process remain as efficient for you as possible. We work in a way that minimizes the time you must invest. We want to efficiently fulfill your current staffing need and work with you in the future as well.

Present candidates until one is chosen

Staffing is an unpredictable equation in the best of circumstances. With a tight labor market, finding the right person with a high skill level has become increasingly challenging. The Underwhelmed team promises to do everything in our power to make this process work for your company. We'll present candidates until you find the right person for your needs.

After you have reviewed our candidates and selected the right individual, all that's left is to put all of the details in writing to ensure that there is no miscommunication.

Generate agreements, paperwork, etc.

After discussing the details, we take care of all the paperwork and present you with an Agreement to sign. Of course, we will incorporate your requirements into the Agreement. Further, we are happy to sign any nondisclosure and confidentiality agreements you may require.

Our Agreement contains sections that protect both Underwhelmed and our clients, such as nondisclosure and confidentiality clauses. Similarly, our Agreement states that Underwhelmed is an independent contractor responsible for our own income and employee taxes and that we are not entitled to any benefits accorded to your employees such as worker's compensation, disability insurance, vacation, and sick pay. Our Agreement also defines our relationship to the candidates we

present to you, and specifies the time interval that must pass before you can hire any of our candidates directly without our representation. The Agreement also enumerates the hourly contract rate or the percentage of the candidate's first year salary that we charge as a fee, and specifies when we expect payment. Our standard Agreement offers a 2 percent discount if you pay invoices within 10 days; otherwise, you are welcome to pay the full amount within 30 days. After 30 days, we apply a 1.5 percent monthly interest charge.

Staffing solution logistics

- We pay all contractors who work regularly on your site for extended projects on a W-2 basis. Because we pay payroll taxes and incur other expenses such as worker's compensation and errors and omissions insurance, the cost of the contractor is higher than the hourly rate of a staff person. However, the reduction in administrative cost, employee benefits packages, and risk to your company is comparable to, if not less than, the expense you would incur if you hired someone through your company's system.
- We pay off-site contractors on either a W-2 or a 1099 basis, depending upon your requirements.
- All of our contractors are covered by errors and omissions insurance as protection for you in the unlikely event that they contribute to a situation that damages your product or company in some way.
- Regarding the contract or staff employee's working environment, we recommend that you consider offering a telecommuting option if appropriate. Most of our technical publications specialists have well equipped home offices and would greatly appreciate the opportunity. They are accustomed to working with little or no supervision, and have found that their productivity is far higher when they are not subjected to the distractions and interruptions that are typical of on-site office environments. In addition, this alternative work method reduces your overhead and helps the community by reducing smog and traffic congestion.
- We have also learned that often a contractor who bills at a higher rate can perform work more quickly and at a higher level of quality than a less expensive individual. Proficient technical publications specialists advance up the pay scale because they are highly skilled. No one will pay for incompetence since the market is so competitive. We have found that specialists who charge a higher rate have skills well worth the investment. If you are looking for efficient, excellent work product, consider our recommendation for the higher paid consultant. We believe you will be pleasantly surprised at how cost effective this choice truly is.

Our assurance of quality staffing

We want you to know that Underwhelmed stands behind our contract and staff placement. If any issues arise with one of our candidates, we want to know about it. Please don't ever hesitate to call us if you feel there is room for improvement, if you need someone more knowledgeable, or you prefer an individual who "fits" better with the rest of your staff. We are here to help negotiate an amicable solution to any problem. Staffing is definitely an art, not a science. Our excellent track record attests to our ability to find the right person for your company. We won't stop working for you until you are satisfied.