

# Employment Agencies

Some businesses don't want to advertise their job openings, they don't want to read piles of resumes, and they don't want to interview scores of job applicant's. So, they hire an employment agency to do it for them.

## **What is an employment agency?**

Employment agencies are match makers. They find employees for their business clients. In all, there are about 20,000 employment agencies across the country and according to some estimates, 90 percent of all businesses have used an agency.

## **How do they operate?**

Employment agents spend a lot of time on the phone talking to business clients. Businesses tell them about upcoming projects and what kind of help they're going to need. The agents go out and recruit people to fill those jobs. Then, they send the best recruits over to meet the employer. Lots of employers like this service. It's easy; all they have to do is choose from several good people. Some occupations, like clerical, are in huge demand. So the agencies try to keep a steady pool of people available. If an employer tells an agency that they need five computer operators, the agency wants to respond within hours - or a competing agency may get the order. Agencies need lots of fresh talent to sell. That's how they make money. So don't be shy about calling them.

## **Are all agencies the same?**

No. Most specialize. Some agencies only recruit office and clerical staff, others only recruit technical, creative, sales, production, or management people. So, when you look for an agency, you have to find one that specializes in your line of work. In addition, some agencies only recruit people who are looking for "permanent" jobs - jobs that fill-in when someone is sick or help out on a new project. Some temporary jobs can last a few days; others can last a few months.

## **I heard that some people take temporary jobs just to get their foot in the door at a good company.**

True and it works. Three-quarters of all temporary workers are eventually offered full-time permanent jobs.

People also use temporary work to learn new skills, gain experience, make contacts, and build references. 40 percent of all temporary workers are on their first real job.

## **Okay, agency or employer, who am I working for?**

When an agency finds a "permanent" job for you, you usually become an employee of that hiring company. The hiring company issues your paycheck, withholds taxes, and provides your benefits.

In a "temporary" agency, you could move around a lot, job to job, company to company. Because of all this moving around, the employment agency becomes your employer. The agency issues your paycheck, withholds taxes, and provides your benefits. As with any employer, ask the agency to explain their benefits package to you.

## **Where do I find these agencies?**

Look in the yellow pages of your phone book under “Employment”. Most agencies are small, local firms. A few are large national companies with names that you’ll recognize. Call a few of each and don’t forget to visit the biggest agency in the country, your local Job Service office ([ajb.gov](http://ajb.gov))

## **Connecting with an employment agency**

1. Pick up the phone and call an agency: “Good morning. My name is Claudia Ucanuseme. I’m a pastry chef. I saw your ad in the yellow pages and I’d like to register with your agency.”
2. Since agencies do specialize, they may ask you a few questions over the phone to see whether they can help you. If they cannot, ask for a referral to an agency that can help you. Most will be glad to give you a referral.
3. If you’ve linked up with the right agency, they’ll invite you to come in for a meeting. This is a business meeting and impressions are very important. Dress and act like a professional. Bring your resume. Bring a list of references: four or five people who would say that you are a hard worker. Include names, addresses and phone numbers.
4. During the meeting, the agent will go over your resume and ask questions about your skills, abilities, and talents. The goal is to determine how much experience you have. Don’t be embarrassed if you’re only beginning; lots of businesses want to hire people with basic skills and train them their way.
5. The agent may also ask you to take a test to measure your skills. For example, someone looking for a clerical job would be asked to take a typing test to measure their speed and accuracy.
6. The agent will also ask about your needs: Do you want to work for a large company or a small one? How far would you commute? Do you want a full-time, part-time, or a seasonal position? What kind of hourly pay are you looking for?
7. In a few days, the agent may call with a job opening. The agent will tell you all about the company and the job. They’ll also tell you about the manager, what he’s like and what he’s looking for. The agent will coach you so that when you go for the interview, you’ll be able to “wow” the manager and land the job.