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Top 8 Questions to Ask When Interviewing an Engineering Staffing Agency

Guide for Interviewing an Engineering Staffing Agency: Tips from a Recruiter

Here are the best questions for employers to ask a prospective engineering recruiting firm, and why the answers are crucial in helping to source the right engineers for greater Boston or Massachusetts firms.

[1] How long has your staffing firm been in business?

This is a very relevant question because the staffing industry has become crowded, with new firms opening every year. It's important to choose an agency with a solid record of successful placements for satisfied clients within your geographic region, in engineering disciplines relevant to you. Further, well-established contract engineering staffing firms are more likely to maintain deep networks of working professionals – most of whom are not actively seeking new opportunities, which generally makes them the best candidates.

[2] What types of professionals do you place?

If you have engineering positions to fill, you may experience the most beneficial partnership with a staffing agency that specializes in recruiting engineers. A staffing firm with an engineering-focus may develop a deeper network of engineering professionals than those who also recruit for non-technical fields. Engineering recruiting is challenging, and recruiters who work exclusively in this field often have a keener understanding of the requirements of technical and engineering positions, enabling them to thoroughly vet the best-fit candidates for you.

[3] How do you find candidates?

A firm's process of sourcing potential employees is very important. Many staffing firms and engineering temp agencies rely on job postings to attract interested candidates. You want to partner with an engineering recruiting firm that can present you with prospects that cannot be sourced solely from job advertisements. A staffing firm that conducts proactive outreach to a strong in-house database of engineers – *many of whom may be not currently seeking new opportunities* – will uncover the most desirable candidates. When performed correctly, engineer recruitment requires countless hours of dedicated effort and relationship maintenance.

[4] Is your firm a member of a staffing industry professional association, and are your recruiters professionally trained and certified?

Membership in a staffing industry professional association is not required, but it certainly demonstrates a staffing firm's commitment to professional business conduct and ongoing training for its staff. Member firms of the American Staffing Association (ASA), for example, agree to adhere to a strict code of ethics that guides their operations as well as their interactions with employees and clients. The ASA offers a comprehensive recruiter certification program, and requires continuing education credits to maintain certification.

[5] What services and placement options do you provide?

It's wise to partner with an engineering recruiting agency that offers a variety of services and placement options to support your engineering and technical hiring needs. For example, engineering temp agencies only place contract engineers, while others offer contract-to-direct staffing, and engineering direct hire (also called engineering direct placement). Some firms also offer payrolling services for employees you find yourself. A full-service agency partner can best advise you of all your options for vetting, hiring and retaining quality employees.

[6] What are the terms of your client agreements?

Some engineering staffing firms use a client agreement template developed by the American Staffing Association (ASA), with terms that are fairly standard in the industry. Others may have developed their own agreements. Whatever the agreement, it's important to ensure that the terms you require are comprehensive and clearly defined. Examples of key terms include temp-to-perm conversion period; placement fee calculation; guarantee period; invoice payment policy, and more.

[7] What types of background screenings do you perform?

Ensure that your staffing agency partner has developed an in-depth background screening process that meets the needs of your industry and corporate culture. Depending on the background and seniority of the candidate, this may include professional reference checks, E-Verify, criminal background checks, degree verification, license verification, drug screening, and more.

[8] Can you provide guidance throughout the recruiting and hiring process?

Ensure that the staffing firm is well-established in your geographic area and has deep expertise and experience with placing the types of professionals you currently seek to hire, as well as those you may consider hiring in the near future. An agency of seasoned professional recruiting specialists will be more likely to provide you with accurate, timely information and advice based on their in-depth knowledge of the local engineering job market.