

JHS CASE STUDY

Manufacturing companies put a significant amount of resources into hiring and training the right employees, and this is no different for temporary positions. Therefore, why is it so difficult to retain contingent workers?



Jubilant HollisterStier (JHS) is a contract manufacturer of sterile and non-sterile injectables and liquids. They employ a large contingent workforce that must be flexible and also fully trained in Good Manufacturing Practice (GMP). JHS is no stranger to temporary staffing and had been using a provider with one dedicated rep in the area. This rep was responsible for screening applicants for eligibility and fit, managing issues and answering questions from the employees he placed, and communicating with the various departments he served. Unfortunately, he was not performing up to their requirements, and under this arrangement, JHS had been experiencing high turnover and a lot of open positions were going unfilled. It was costing them hundreds of thousands of dollars in onboarding expenses and impacting client commitments. Line supervisors were frustrated with Human Resources, who was in turn pressing their staffing provider for better results. The agency made some suggestions, but between the high vacancy rate and poor service, an agreement was hard to find. **“In the process of trying to find a solution, the other agency had offered an on-premise program, but the temps didn’t want that because he [the rep] handled their questions and issues so poorly. And to be honest, I didn’t feel comfortable with it either.”** Says Liz Helgeson, Talent Acquisition Manager.



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Too many open positions weren’t the only problem. Because of their previous experience and high turnover, supervisors didn’t see the contingent workforce as future full-time employees.

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“Some of it was self-inflicted, but not being able to keep 50% of our temporary hires killed us. One of the biggest problems was changing the mindset of our supervisors to see temps as potential full-time hires. There was a disconnect in the team, and it was rolling down the chain of command, causing further damage to the company culture as a whole.”

- Helgeson
Talent Acquisition Manager, JHS

The constant questioning of how many would actually show up on the first day, and how many of those would still be there after a week was taking its toll.

When Kirk Wood-Gaines, Director of Human Resources, returned to JHS after working in higher education for several years, he was met with a huge problem. The quality and volume of temporary workers was poor, and the full-time employees were not able to meet their goals. **“My number one priority was to quickly fill the 60-80 vacancies that had been open for far too long.”** said Wood-Gaines.

The leadership at JHS knew they needed to make some changes, but they were resistant to the idea of an on-premise program. After weighing their options, it was determined that this type of arrangement would serve their needs best, but it was unclear where to start. After all, they were not in a hurry to get involved with another agency that was barely performing and unresponsive.

Brian McGuire, Associate Director of Supply Chain, had some ground rules to lay before they began their search for a new partner.

“Let’s not just try something else. Let’s do a robust RFQ for our needs. We need to know what they [staffing companies] will put into finding and qualifying applicants. They need to be able to tell us what their process is and how they will vet the candidates. We wanted to mitigate the transition risk, and we wanted a long-term partner to help ensure our success.”

- McGuire | Associate Director of Supply Chain, JHS



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“Money always weighs in on a decision like this and when Atlas Staffing came in slightly above other services that were being considered, I had to fight for approval. The leadership was understandably skeptical and warned that we would just be paying more money for the same results. They believed that it was a straight forward financial decision and the focus should be on cost, not promised value adds.”

- Wood-Gaines
Director of HR, JHS

Interestingly, Wood-Gaines had success elsewhere in his career with an on-premise model and wanted to give it a try.

According to Wood-Gaines, **Atlas Staffing differentiated themselves as a partner who was willing to listen and come up with a solution**, rather than just another company with a great pitch that would say or do anything to get the sale.

“We were asking for a lot. As a point of reference, we had companies taking themselves out of the running after they saw the RFP! Atlas didn’t come in and promise to solve every issue we had, but they were upfront about what they could do and what problems they could solve.”

- Wood-Gaines | Director of HR, JHS

Atlas Staffing was immediately forced to show what they were made of. When the previous staffing agency heard that Jubilant was going to make a change, they threw a curveball. Instead of winding down slowly as to avoid too much turnover in the transition, they gave 30 days’ notice and shuttered their operations. “We had an emergency when our previous vendor turned us off, we didn’t anticipate it switching off so quickly and we thought we were truly at risk if we lost too many in the transition. **I wouldn’t have been surprised to see 25% turnover, but to not see one single temporary employee lost, was incredible,**” said Wood-Gaines.

Atlas Staffing’s team oriented and high-touch handling of a tough situation made for a smooth transition from one staffing provider to another in only 2 weeks. **“The service that the temps saw during the transition made a HUGE difference. They all felt secure and we were able to keep all of them.”** Helgeson recalls.



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“It’s nice to just go into a meeting with the president and managers and being able to report that we don’t have any openings in filling or packaging! This makes for happy supervisors and no more frustration directed at me!”

- Helgeson
Talent Acquisition Manager, JHS



Atlas didn’t slow down after the transition. Their on-premise representative has been so successful in filling open positions, that there is a waiting list to start the Good Manufacturing Practice class. When asked about how Atlas Staffing has changed their plans for the better, McGuire says, “We were planning on finding two vendors. We couldn’t afford to keep losing people, and with the labor market as tight as it is, we couldn’t see another option. If Atlas wasn’t here, we’d probably have a second vendor which would be a bigger time suck for our HR team.”

Beyond hitting it out of the park within the first two weeks and saving JHS the headache of going with two separate providers to meet their needs, Atlas has helped to shift the mindset of the supervisors. Taking the time to talk with them and understand what they needed has helped build trust with the program. Now temporary workers are viewed as potential full-time employees which has made a real difference in retention. For employees, setting expectations and walking them through the onboarding process is just the beginning. Temporary workers are now getting the coaching, updates, and support that they were missing along with dedicated meeting times and more access to things like company sponsored events. This type of inclusion and support has gone a long way in engaging people and keeping trained employees on the team. Management has been reaping the rewards as well. “It’s just nice to go into a meeting with the president and managers and being able to report that we don’t have any openings in filling or packaging!” This makes for happy supervisors and no more frustration directed at me!” says Helgeson.

When a company partners with a staffing agency that can provide hands on service and regular on-premise hours while also nurturing relationships with line supervisors, employee morale will soar. When the employees feel secure and valued, they will want to stay, and the company will reap the rewards of their training investment.



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BIOS



Brian McGuire is the Assistant Director of Supply Chain at Jubilant HollisterStier. He graduated from Whitworth University with a degree in International Business, and he has over 25 year in supply chain management in several industries including commercial mining, explosives, and chemicals.



Kirk Wood-Gaines is the Director of Human Resources and has been with Jubilant HollisterStier since 1992. He took a few years' leave to work in Germany and also Higher Education, but missed manufacturing; his passion is with manufacturing and the fast-paced challenges that it brings.



Liz Helgeson has been the Talent Acquisition Manager for Jubilant HollisterStier since 2017. She received her degree in Business from Montana State and has worked as a recruiter in retail, insurance and the medical field.



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Atlas Staffing is a full service staffing provider that serves companies seeking permanent and temporary staffing solutions for call center, engineering, technical, office/admin and light industrial positions.

Atlas is dedicated to creating people-oriented solutions for those who are seeking new jobs and careers and the employers who want to hire them. We invest in solutions that drive the best possible outcomes for everyone involved in the hiring process.