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A strategic workforce partner controls costs while improving quality



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Since the 1970s, when hospitals began using nursing staffing agencies to fill occasional vacancies, contingent staffing has become the norm for healthcare facilities across the country. Today, supplemental staff accounts for over 30% of total nursing hours¹ and hospitals in all 50 states use locum tenens physicians.

The demand for contingent workers is not going away anytime soon. Contingent workers play a critically important role in ensuring quality and continuity of care. Based on findings from a 2019 Workforce Solution Buyers Survey from Staffing Industry Analysts (SIA), companies project the contingent share of their workforce to be greater two years from now, and greater still 10 years from now.

Estimate the percent of your organization's workforce that is (or will be) contingent...

	Today	In 2 years	In 10 years
25th	11%	15%	20%
MEDIAN	20%	20%	25%
75th	25%	30%	40%
AVERAGE / MEAN	21%	24%	29%

Figure 1 - Estimate the percentage of your organization's workforce that is (or will be) contingent, 2019
Workforce Solution Buyers Survey from Staffing Industry Analysts (SIA)

While contingent staffing has helped solve staffing shortages and maintain patient care, its cost burden can't be ignored. Over the past decade, the cost of labor as a percentage of total hospital costs increased from 50.6% in 2008 to 54.9% in 2018². Additionally, managing a blended workforce of permanent and contingent staff contributes to higher administration and overhead costs.

The advantages of having a strategic workforce partner

While there are numerous advantages to contingent staffing, there are still challenges in its overall management, including quality candidate sourcing, credentialing, onboarding and ongoing support. Add emergency preparedness to the list of tasks and the complexity increases significantly, putting bedside quality at risk.

Hospital leaders use forecasts, predictive modeling and analyses of historical trends to plan strategically, but the bottom-line is healthcare staffing relies on predicting the unpredictable. This is true especially when it comes to emergency preparedness. However, with a flexible and adaptable workforce partner, healthcare organizations can leverage actionable insights and expertise to weather the unexpected and outpace the competition.

Ultimately, they can reduce the costs associated with contingent labor and gain a clearer picture of their temporary labor spend. Organizations that find themselves sacrificing their bedside capability due to the burdens of managing a contingent workforce should look for an MSP they can trust to work as a true partner.

A successful MSP partner is clinically focused and led by technology

In today's economy, what is needed from an MSP partner has changed, and the bar for service is being set at increasingly higher levels. Relying on a cookie-cutter, big-box managed services provider (MSP) is not the answer. You deserve a dedicated team that works with you to custom build an MSP program that includes:

- Single point of contact
- Dedicated program manager
- Personalized service
- Market expertise
- Process efficiencies
- Technology expertise
- Intuitive reporting
- Program scalability
- Compliant practices
- Spend visibility and cost savings
- Full vendor transparency
- Flexibility



1. Focus on Quality



Good workforce management begins with establishing goals aligned to the organization's culture and desired outcomes. High-performing MSPs have an experienced clinical team on staff that understand how staffing decisions affect patient care. They understand your unit leaders' challenges and they sit down with them regularly to determine the unique requirements for the positions they need to fill. They support the entire process of screening, interviewing and onboarding contingent and long-term staff to prepare them for success.

In order to relieve you of the burden of staffing, so you can focus on quality patient outcomes, they should be highly trained board-certified clinicians who have prior experience in hospital leadership roles.

Your MSPs clinical team should have the experience and compassion to:

- Understand your expectations.
- Identify candidates who share your organization's personality, values and goals.
- Help new hires fit seamlessly into your healthcare culture.
- Limit the potential for expensive bad hires.



2. Innovative recruitment process



Getting the right, high-quality healthcare professionals is key to both productivity and engagement. That starts with clear descriptions and qualifications for each job to attract the best matches and avoid expensive bad hires. Whether that criteria comes from the hospital's own clinical team or the MSP's team, clinicians should lead that part of the process.

It helps to work with staffing vendors who meet with the team personally to understand the organization's culture and staffing goals. It also requires new and innovative strategies to attract, source and qualify talent matched to the organization's needs. An innovative MSP can provide technology-driven solutions if the hospital doesn't have its own digital platform. These solutions may include:

- Social recruiting, matching algorithms and programmatic advertising customized to your target personas.
- Innovative nurturing technology which customizes communication across email, text and social so you are always prepared for your next need.
- Unique location promotion kits featuring hospital, clinical setting and location strengths to position your hospital as a desirable workplace for candidates.
- Technology which encourages applicants to self-qualify and provides access to online interview tools to filter the best applicants to the top.
- Social listening technology as well as candidate, staff and partner feedback programs to stay ahead of the market.

3. Strategic vision and realistic goals



It's important to develop and align with your management team and MSP partner on a strategic vision for staffing. What does a healthy unit look like in the future? From an aligned vision, realistic objectives and goals can be established and measured for success.

Having a comprehensive understanding of your talent helps to reduce your sole dependency on costly short-term options. With a proactive approach that considers all the available resources — whether travel or locum, temp to perm or permanent — companies can craft strategies that address the root cause of staffing challenges, opposed to simply filling the highest demand job on a specific day.

Hiring international staff provides a pipeline for future permanent labor and an effective strategy for reducing the need for contract labor. Contracts can be written to grant permanent employment after a required number of years of service.

In order to benefit from this solution, you need an MSP that can offer a full range of relocation services for globally trained nurses and allied professionals, including credentialing, visa procurement, introductions to peers, housing, training and ongoing support to help them acclimate to their new country. Only a few MSPs can provide that service.



4. Data collection for better scheduling



Successful workforce management requires a management by measurement philosophy. Every organization needs the right data to assess labor utilization. Innovative technology platforms can provide the insights needed to optimize work schedules and reduce dependency on contract labor while improving care delivery. These platforms are generations ahead of the legacy scheduling programs many facilities continue to use.

A good MSP should be on the cutting edge of digital staffing, providing access to a staff management program that is easy to use and offers the following data and functions:

- A clear overview of the entire staff at any moment in time.
- All open positions across the entire organization, down to the individual unit level, with the fill rate for each unit.
- Census fluctuation predictions and ability to anticipate staff shortages.
- A view of who is overspending, and where.
- Ability to schedule the right providers for the day's needs and notify them of their schedules.
- To assess and maximize the staff's full skill sets, so their time is never wasted.

5. Enhancing reputation and retaining talent



Any healthcare organization that proactively takes steps to implement a workforce management program should see a return on their investment in the form of an optimized workforce and lower labor costs. As they develop a more productive and supportive work environment, they enhance the facility's reputation, improving their opportunities to attract and retain high quality talent.

Organizations that can't dedicate staff to serve as workforce managers without sacrificing their bedside capacity should look for an MSP they can trust to work as a true partner. The MSP should have the capability to develop and implement all elements of a good workforce management plan.

To learn more about Health Carousel's unique MSP approach, which puts facilities and patients first, please contact us at

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¹Bae, S. H., Mark, B., Fried, B. 2010. "Use of Temporary Nurses and Nurse and Patient Safety Outcomes in Acute Care Hospital Units."

²<https://www.hfma.org/topics/hfm/2019/october/hospitals-innovate-to-control-labor-costs.html>