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# STAFFING TECHNOLOGY: ACCELERATING STAFFING FIRM SUCCESS

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## **Abstract**

This document examines how strategic investments in staffing enterprise technology can accelerate firm success through cost efficiencies and market differentiation.

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*From the outsider's perspective, most don't understand the scale of staffing operations. But those in the business appreciate the complexity, scale and fast-paced nature inherent to the staffing industry.*

## **The High Volume Staffing Environment**

The U.S. staffing industry is responsible for sending nearly 2 million people to work each day. The very largest staffing companies place up to 4 million temporary workers each year, which means that they employ more workers than most of the nation's largest companies. Staffing firms must find, screen, interview and present qualified temporary candidates to the potential client faster than their competition. With over 6,000 staffing firms in the U.S., the competition for job orders and talent is fierce and orders are often won on price which makes profit margins extremely tight. Because of the intense competition for each order and the time sensitivity of client needs, staffing firms handle high volumes of candidates and orders with an incredible sense of urgency.

Those employed by the staffing firm are generally new to temporary work and placed on short-term assignments, making efficient hiring and rapid onboarding a mission-critical function for staffing firms. A large staffing firm might have tens of thousands of temporary workers out on any given day. Most likely, these workers were recruited and hired by the staffing firm for a specific assignment and all of the necessary screening, interviewing and new hire paperwork was completed within a matter of hours. In the extreme case, a temporary worker might be hired and paid on the same day. For the largest firms, multiple tens of thousands of paychecks and invoices may be processed each week – often for new employees and clients. Onboarding must seamlessly trigger downstream payroll and invoicing processes. In a cash intensive business such as staffing, accounts receivable and cash management processes are vital to the firm and must work in concert with the pay and bill functions.

In most segments of staffing, getting the opportunity to compete on a job order is the most critical and difficult first step. Even when centralized purchasing of temporary labor has been put in place by clients, staffing firms do all they can to maintain and develop relationships directly with hiring managers and talent decision-makers. Managing a long and diversified set of prospective and active client contacts and target companies requires a highly efficient and well-coordinated sales organization.

Large staffing firms are also complex and decentralized organizations that must manage activity and performance across hundreds of retail branch locations. Communication across the organization, its brands and divisions as well as its product lines must be coordinated. With the rise of centralized sourcing and recruiting, communication and coordination must happen across time zones and geographies. The fast-paced nature of the staffing

business means that communication channels must allow for real-time and immediate interaction around orders, clients and talent.

Net profit margins in this high-volume industry are notoriously “razor thin”, which means the importance of the enterprise being managed efficiently couldn’t be greater. In the past, staffing company leadership relied more heavily on personal relationships, both at the executive and desk level, to win business. As client service level agreements have become pervasive and every last unnecessary cost must be driven out of staffing operations, there has been a recent and rapid adoption of data-driven management across the staffing industry. Staffing firms must have instant access to the vast set of operational and financial data that drives their performance. While data analysis capabilities are helpful for staffing management to understand profitability at a high level, real-time, role-based access to performance data and business intelligence is needed at the desk to support decision-making around each order.

*Like any other high-volume environment, staffing firms are extremely dependent on technology. Downward price pressure is squeezing profit margins, especially for traditional staffing services. Increasing operational efficiency and creating greater barriers to entry have grown in importance, making staffing technology more strategic to the staffing firm than ever before.*

### **Staffing Technology: More Critical to the Firm’s Success than Ever Before**

Technology touches absolutely every aspect of a staffing firm’s operation. The high volume nature of staffing means that automation underpins every mission-critical function of the organization, including communication with clients, candidates and internal staff; coordination across the enterprise for order fulfillment and management; time capture; payroll processing; invoicing; and financial management. In industries such as staffing, where the profit per order is relatively small, operational scalability and efficiency are essential to financial success. Staffing firms are reliant on technology for scalability and efficient service delivery.

As the buyers of temporary labor become more sophisticated and price sensitive, staffing firms must respond and technology solutions are often the key. For example, staffing firm clients are adopting service level agreements (SLA) which often include quarterly business reviews. In order to manage their operations to meet SLA goals proactively, staffing firms are reliant on technology to measure, report and manage performance. Further, hiring companies are adopting vendor management systems (VMS) to enable electronic distribution and management of job orders. To manage the service fees and additional administrative overhead associated with VMS orders, staffing firms are gaining competitive advantage by streamlining their operations and technology to support VMS order fulfillment.

Hiring companies understand that taking all unnecessary costs out of the staffing process results in the potential for lower bill rates. Where direct contact with hiring managers used to be the expectation of all involved in the staffing process, staffing firms' clients have changed their view on the value of high touch, high cost interactions with their staffing suppliers. In many situations, high cost contact channels, such as client visits and phone calls, are giving way to email communication and automated workflow, especially when vendor management systems are used by the client.

Clearly, changing client demands have played a large role in increasing the importance of technology to the staffing firm.

Some staffing firms are able to differentiate and defend their margins by offering superior candidates and delivering a higher quality of service, while others reduce prices. No matter how they differentiate themselves, all firms continuously work to reduce their operational costs. Each of these strategic business approaches requires enabling technology.

As a result, more and more staffing firms include technology objectives and initiatives as part of their strategic business plans. While individual firms may recognize that technology is central to their success, the industry as a whole has been slow to embrace technology. This reticence is giving way as staffing firms increasingly view technology as a strategic enabler.

Some of a staffing firm's strategic goals which may involve additional technology-enablement are:

- Alleviate margin pressure by reducing operational costs across the staffing enterprise through automation
- Enable market-facing and operational differentiators, such as providing higher quality candidates, better client and candidate service or lower prices
- Expand staffing products and service offerings, but manage new products and services using existing operations
- Train new sales and recruitment staff faster and more cost effectively, assuring best practice procedures are followed
- Enforce compliance with client contractual agreements and government regulations

The staffing firm's technology is as complex as the staffing organization itself. Most large staffing organizations have hundreds of software applications in use. Multiple technologies must be connected and carefully orchestrated in order to enable a firm's desired business goals as well as their differentiators.

A staffing firm's ability to offer superior service, quality and price is increasingly enabled by the integration of highly tuned technologies requiring substantial effort and investment. In the past, barriers to enter the staffing industry have been low as only a telephone, email and relationships were needed to start a new firm. As a result, there are a large number of very small firms in the industry. A sophisticated technology infrastructure enables a higher quality of service at scale at a lower price point, competitive advantage and greater barriers to entry can be established, protecting the staffing firm's market share.

In order to achieve strategic objectives within a complex technology landscape, staffing firms are investing in technology more than ever before.

## **THE FOUR KEY STAFFING TECHNOLOGY OPPORTUNITIES**

There are four key areas where staffing firms are making strategic technology investments with a vision to accelerate, not merely enable, business performance improvement

- 1. Knowledge Management**
- 2. Professional Service Delivery**
- 3. Client Experience**
- 4. Practice Performance**

*Microsoft's Knowledge Management solutions transform information into the know-how necessary to build professional expertise, create saleable knowledge and contribute to productive business actions.*

### **KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT: Effectively leverage enterprise know-how**

A knowledge management solution provides the forum for all employees to find answers and expertise within an organization rapidly. Information technology improves knowledge sharing by identifying and connecting the disparate data that is available to the staffing firm in new and productive ways.

### **Be the fastest to find and present the best value talent**

Recruiters need to understand their constantly changing inventory of candidate skills, certifications and availability. Knowledge Management helps them immediately fill orders and drive qualified candidates to the right opportunities at the best possible margin. Competitive advantage accrues when the time-to-fill is reduced by quickly seeing all facets of all of the potential resources.

Current, complete and accurate candidate-related data is one of the greatest assets of any staffing company. Large staffing firms have accumulated millions of résumés over the years. Candidate records have been updated with proprietary screening information, interview notes, test and assessment results, references and work history. Niche staffing firms may be well on their way to having collected profile data on every potential candidate within their particular geographic or skill focus. When staffing company databases are complete, secure and up-to-date, they have enormous potential to generate strategic competitive advantage for the staffing firm.

Candidate databases are extremely valuable, yet they tend to be underutilized by recruiters for a number of reasons. It is not uncommon for recruiters to search job boards and social media sites for candidates first, just to produce a shortlist of candidates that may already exist in their in-house database. External job boards and social sites tend to have powerful search technologies and features with up-to-date candidate availability and profile information and an extremely intuitive user experience. Because external sites often have better user experiences around candidate retrieval than legacy in-house systems, these external candidate sources are often more attractive to recruiters.

***“With FAST as the core of our applicant tracking system, we can get to candidates faster, we can qualify them better...and we have a much greater chance of putting a proven candidate back to work.”***

*Mary Pat Smith,  
Recruiting Services Manager,  
Allegis Group.*

But the tendency to search external candidate sources first is extremely costly to staffing firms. Since job boards and social sites are not tightly integrated with in-house systems, recruiters must manually reenter candidate data into the staffing firm’s database. In a high employee turnover industry like staffing, this means that valuable contacts and candidate data are likely to end up residing only in the social network site and can freely move with the recruiter to a competitor; the staffing firm is unable to capitalize on the new candidate data over the long-term.

Powerful search technology is the key to getting recruiters to search the internal candidate database first, which will result in lower operating costs and increased profits.

Allegis Group, the largest staffing company in the United States, manages a database of more than 11 million job candidates. Allegis integrated Microsoft’s FAST search technology with their applicant tracking system so that recruiters can search data across enterprise systems to draw on a broader range of information and automatically filter search results to reduce the time recruiters spend on data entry and query building.

Leveraging the internal candidate database to the fullest, as in Allegis’ case, allows staffing firms to find and place the right candidate at the right

time for the most competitive and profitable price. With powerful search tools and usability features, recruiters can accurately rank an entire candidate database not only based on the candidate skills and qualifications, but also based on the candidate's relationship to the staffing firm. For example, a staffing firm which places a previously-placed candidate as they roll off an assignment has almost no additional costs. Familiar and easy-to-learn search technology that effectively helps recruiters quickly identify these high margin opportunities dramatically drives up staffing firm profitability.

When recruiters get this kind of value from the staffing firm's database they will invest in the data (e.g. ensure all candidates are in the database, log all candidate interactions, complete candidate records), creating an even more valuable asset for the staffing firm.

Staffing firms can utilize additional data to refine candidate search results to focus recruiters on the highest value candidates first. Incorporating additional data elements into how search results are ranked - such as onboarding status, client feedback on past placements or pay rate history - enables staffing firms to factor profitability into search results ranking. While many firms are using only basic keyword and Boolean searching to retrieve and rank the candidate pool, advanced search technology such as FAST enables staffing firms to maximize their return on recruiting investments over both the short-and long-term.

*Microsoft's Professional Service Delivery solutions help staffing firms connect and coordinate staffing professionals, clients and candidates across time zones and geographies; offer workflow to guide best practice service order fulfillment; and integrate enterprise content management to streamline performance while reducing security and compliance risks.*

## **PROFESSIONAL SERVICE DELIVERY: Transform how clients and candidates are served.**

With an integrated communication and content platform, staffing companies can connect qualified candidates to the right opportunities regardless of physical location, geographic time zone or computing device. Digitally connecting and engaging the staffing firm's internal workforce helps improve communication and collaboration among a mobile, distributed workforce and integrates relevant expertise across the firm for successful service delivery.

### **Coordinate communication and content across the global enterprise**

Staffing firms must provide the most qualified talent in the shortest timeframe while offering more competitive rates. Market pressures have driven staffing firms to implement creative and innovative operating models and service delivery solutions.

Centralization initiatives are a growing trend in the staffing industry. Even the smallest staffing organization may utilize remote, or even overseas, operations in order to reduce operating costs, improve service delivery or enhance quality of service. Centralized functions often include back office responsibilities, such as time entry, payroll and invoicing, but are more frequently including front office focused processes, such as candidate sourcing and screening.

Communication with clients and candidates, not to mention within the staffing firm itself, has changed dramatically. Whereas the fax machine used to be the central fixture in any branch, multiple communication channels are now widely used to connect with both clients and candidates. Even though staffing firms almost always favor the most high-touch client contact channel – the in-person meeting – clients understand that downward price pressure means more telephone and email communication with their staffing suppliers. Some staffing firms offer clients self-service Web portals which provide access to key reports, performance results, online ordering and order tracking. While Client Web portals are utilized by a relatively small subset of staffing firms, nearly every staffing firm, large or small, offers online self-service functionality to candidates.

***“Office SharePoint Server 2007 resonated with our marketing organization because it was simple to use. They could take advantage of that to do their own content management without needing a lot of technology expertise.***

*Chris Fiorillo,  
VP of Internet Strategy,  
Adecco USA*

To drive business and increase efficiency, Adecco wanted a Web site where job candidates could submit job applications online, and that its marketing-content teams could manage without day-to-day IT support. Using Microsoft® Office SharePoint® Server, Adecco built a Web site that allows business users to create, publish, and target dynamic content to job candidates. When job seekers visit AdeccoUSA.com they can browse job listings, create an account and profile, and apply for a job or multiple jobs and they can revisit the site to track their application or update their profile. Adecco can deliver targeted content that is appropriate to each job candidate’s career needs, based on their profile and site activity. If a user applies for or browses specific listings in engineering, for example, the Web site will display personalized content that the Adecco marketing teams created and targeted for users interested in engineering careers.

Continuing to develop the candidate relationship over the long-term is becoming more and more important to staffing firms, and electronic contact methods make this strategic goal possible. In the past few years, it has become more common for recruiters to use both individual and bulk text messaging to reach out to candidates. Instant messaging (IM) has also become a popular method for internal staff – sales professionals, recruiters, administrative support staff and management – to stay continually coordinated in the highly dynamic, branch environment.

While IM and text messaging are having an emerging role in the staffing organization, bi-directional and tight integration of email and calendaring with the staffing front office has become a mission-critical capability. The pervasive use of email highlights the importance of capturing and integrating all account, client contact, job order and candidate-related data so that a long-term and complete view of candidate and client interactions is available across the staffing enterprise.

Staffing firms are enabling a mobile and decentralized workforce, for both temporary workers and internal staff, and technology ensures that data is available to everyone involved in the staffing process no matter where they are. More sales and recruiting professionals are working remotely. Working offsite takes many forms as sales staff might be on a sales call, management may be running an onsite client location, recruiters might be interviewing a candidate in Starbucks or the situation might be just plain, old-fashioned telecommuting. In any case, staffing professionals need access to enterprise systems via workstations, laptops and mobile devices for any locale or environment.

With recruiting functions moving to centralized locations, remote hiring is becoming more widespread. With the wide adoption of video content, there is increasing adoption of both live and recorded video candidate interviews and reference checks, which must be stored with the candidate profile. In addition to the remote hiring of candidates, some staffing firms have been readying themselves to onboard and manage a virtual workforce of telecommuting temporary workers.

Staffing firms need a unified business platform that connects internal staff, clients and candidates across the organization, time zones and geographies. Communication must be consistent across all devices including desktops, laptops, phones and mobile technology. Current information must incorporate data from email, text messages, IM, voice and social media channels. Staffing firms must be able to collaborate, manage content and share information within their core staffing applications. A unified business platform optimizes productivity and ensures complete and current information is available to all parties.

***“Our consultants drive our business, not our infrastructure. With Microsoft Online Services, we can invest in our people and let Microsoft worry about the servers. It’s a perfect fit for Lodestone.”***

*Reto Alberini  
Head of Information Technology,  
Lodestone Management Consultants*

Microsoft’s Professional Service Delivery solutions provide a common workspace for connecting professionals throughout the staffing business process and across the organization. Recruiters, sales staff, clients and candidates stay on the same page, with current information regardless of their physical location or time zone. Microsoft’s solution offers a common infrastructure which is adaptable and scalable to align with changing business needs; provides the same experience when users are at, or away

from, their desks; offers the opportunity to share and consistently follow best practices across the organization; and makes it easy to set-up and manage both users and workflow. Microsoft's solution includes Exchange, SharePoint, Office Live Meeting, and Office Communicator. These solutions are designed to help meet business needs for robust security, 24/7 reliability and user productivity.

By establishing and leveraging a unified business platform, staffing firms can enable seamless communication and rich collaboration across their entire enterprise, while reducing IT administrative time and hardware costs.

### **Efficiently and effectively onboard in a high-volume environment**

A stack of paper-based, new hire forms combined with high admin and recruiting turnover is a recipe for missing data, incorrect and overlooked forms and compliance risk. Candidate onboarding for staffing firms is a complex workflow, which varies by client, geography and role.

Hiring companies have pushed more and more onboarding functions to their staffing suppliers, resulting in client and assignment-specific onboarding requirements. Background checks and drug tests have been added into the mix and are required by the majority of large companies. Because numerous third-parties are usually involved, the process is typically time-consuming, paper intensive and subject to delays. These client-driven trends, along with an increasing number of government-related forms, make the onboarding process for staffing firms complex and error-prone.

Most staffing firms collect new hire paperwork for all interviewed candidates, even though about one out of every ten interviewed candidates is actually placed. Managing the tremendous volume of onboarding paperwork is an enormously complex task. In addition to the staffing company's standard onboarding documents, the candidate may need to complete additional paperwork for the city and state of the work assignment as well as any client-specific documents. Branches are often responsible for capturing the completed forms and then sending them to a central location for compliance auditing and storage. Missing or invalid paperwork must be tracked and managed until the candidate onboarding process has been successfully completed. Internal, client and government audits must be facilitated by the system such that onboarding data and documents are quickly and accurately retrieved.

***“We use SharePoint extensively for candidate onboarding document management. The system allows for easy storage, retrieval and packaging of an incredible volume of candidate documents.”***

*Bruce Carothers,  
Sr. VP and CIO,  
AMN Healthcare*

“AMN's SharePoint-based onboarding system is integrated with our custom front office system,” explains Bruce Carothers, Sr. VP and CIO of

AMN Healthcare. “It collects all of the necessary documents and data necessary to present an AMN candidate to a hospital. Our onboarding system handles the decision tree to determine which onboarding documents are required for each assignment. In healthcare staffing, a typical onboarding package might include 100 discrete documents that we have to gather and present to clients. Because of the nature of the healthcare industry, our onboarding requirements are mandated by the government and industry organizations as well as our clients, and our compliance is critical to our success. In addition to packaging onboarding documents, our system also captures a great deal of meta data that helps us track candidate credentials. For example, we track certification expiration dates and set-up automatic alerts to notify the candidate’s recruiter, or perhaps the candidate themselves, to provide us with updated documents 30 days in advance of the expiration date.”

Staffing companies need secure document creation, storage and retrieval with easy-to-administer workflow that enables them to ensure compliance with best practice policies and practices across a decentralized workforce.

Document management controls the life cycle of documents in your organization — how they are created, reviewed, and published, and how they are ultimately disposed of or retained. Although the term "management" implies control of information from the top of the organization, an effective document management system should reflect the culture of the organization that is using it. The tools you use for document management should be flexible enough to allow you to tightly control a document's life cycle, if that fits your enterprise's culture and goals, but also to let you implement a more loosely structured system, if that better suits your enterprise.

Information Rights Management (IRM) technology helps organizations and information workers control sensitive information electronically by enabling users to specify permissions for accessing and using documents and messages. IRM is a persistent file-level technology from Microsoft that uses permissions and authorization to help prevent sensitive information from being printed, forwarded, or copied by unauthorized people. Once permission for a document or message is restricted by using this technology, the usage restrictions travel with the document or e-mail message as part of the contents of the file.

*Microsoft's Client Experience solutions help firms build a differentiated approach to client relationships - improving the firm's understanding of the client organization, business priorities and talent requirements. Client Experience solutions enable interactions with the hiring company to be more productive – they allow firms to offer better service to their clients and facilitate the early identification of new revenue opportunities at every client touch point.*

## **CLIENT EXPERIENCE: Surface new opportunities from more productive client interactions**

New customer relationship management (CRM) tools, such as Microsoft Dynamics CRM, enable full visibility into client sales and account management activity so that virtual team members are able to distill client account and order activity quickly and provide timely, insightful responses to service demands.

### **Differentiate customer service and develop long-term client relationships**

Large staffing firms have complex and distributed sales organizations, often splitting responsibilities based on account size, client needs and geography. Staffing firms may have hundreds of retail branches that service client accounts locally, as well as many centralized sales and service teams. Gaining a comprehensive and actionable view of the staffing client requires complete access to marketing, prospecting, sales, account and order management activity across front and back office functions. Orchestrating this enterprise-wide view of client accounts, especially for large staffing organizations, is a very difficult task.

Many staffing firms have diverse, disconnected applications for supporting business development. These disparate systems create data silos that make it difficult to gain an enterprise-wide view of sales opportunities. Without a centralized customer, contact or activity management system, sales efforts can easily become uncoordinated. Aggregating opportunity data in this disparate environment is labor intensive – making it a challenge to get key data into the hands of decision-makers in a timely manner so that they can make informed decisions regarding the business portfolio.

Staffing sales professionals may singlehandedly be responsible for hundreds of accounts. Managing this volume makes them heavily reliant on their CRM system. Further, a strong CRM system is critical to the staffing firm as it aids in client continuity when sales staff turns over.

Client interaction data has to be quickly captured and easy to distill in order to enable sales team members to meet activity goals. At the same time, staffing firms need solid sales data to accurately forecast sales performance. Without a clear view into the account, sales people become transactional in their calls – focusing on the activity of connecting but aren't in the position to efficiently add value at every touch-point. Because of the transactional nature of these interactions, buyers of temporary labor have great difficulty differentiating one staffing firm from another.

Microsoft Dynamics CRM allows firms to drive sales and marketing efficiencies across multiple business units, while the familiar and intuitive user interface reduces training time and speeds user adoption, which is essential in the high turnover staffing environment. Microsoft Dynamics CRM makes it possible to manage client and contact information in a secure, policy compliant environment—especially to firms supporting an increasingly mobile, distributed workforce.

Companies can track marketing and business development activities in a clear, concise and readily visible way. The familiar, easy-to-use solution makes it easier for new team members to get up-to-speed on account and order activity and become productive quickly.

Microsoft Dynamics CRM also integrates extremely well with the company's existing installations of Microsoft Office, the Office Outlook messaging and collaboration client and SharePoint technologies. Communication and collaboration across the organization is greatly improved. Staffing firms use Dynamic CRM as a "single source of truth" for all customer data and interactions combined under one-user interface and data store. It reduces integration costs and per person costs for each new line-of-business application.

Microsoft Dynamics CRM solution supports the firm's business development strategy for growing the right clients and increasing opportunity evaluation and selectivity. Firm-specific business rules and configuration enable the solution to provide common metrics across the staffing enterprise in order to produce improved sales forecasting from the CRM data and provide dashboard views to help business development staff track sales performance.

***"AMN client sales teams use Microsoft CRM. They love CRM's fluid integration with Outlook and Office. Their seamless user experience has made the sales team's adoption of CRM a snap."***

*Bruce Carothers,  
Sr. VP and CIO,  
AMN Healthcare*

*Microsoft's Practice Performance solutions help firms give individuals and teams the tools they need to define, measure and track key metrics - such as gross margin, time-to-submit, time-to-fill, number of temporary workers out - so that they can prioritize their work efforts to improve performance.*

## **PRACTICE PERFORMANCE: Dramatically improve business results**

Investments in practice performance technology such as business intelligence tools, role-based dashboards and enterprise reporting solutions increase the staffing firm's profitability by providing internal staff with real-time feedback on how they are performing so that they can quickly adapt and refocus their efforts to optimize performance.

## **Increase profitability by leveraging enterprise intelligence**

Metrics and data-driven management are a growing trend in the staffing industry, however many firms are scrambling to connect disparate data sources so that they have the information they need to identify opportunities for operational improvement and increased profitability. Staffing firms tend to have multiple core business applications, each with their own reporting tool and set of reports. Reports that cross business systems don't tie because of variations in data definitions. Staffing firm management ends up with hundreds of reports but no actionable data.

Role-based dashboards that present an individual's goals and actual performance results compared to those of their colleagues are highly desired, but not widely implemented. In some cases, staffing firms are in the heart of making a cultural shift and becoming more data-oriented; others are in the process of defining key metrics; but most are on the verge of making strategic investments in business intelligence technology to improve their agility.

In order to calculate profitability by account, branch, business unit, employee, temporary worker or other dimension, staffing firms must have a clear understanding of the various cost components of service delivery and operations overhead. Large buyers of staffing services often have unique requirements that result in manual steps, process workarounds or additional technology needs. Staffing firms have difficulty determining the overall cost and profitability of an account, which means they are left to manage and make decisions based on "gut-feel" rather than actual financial and performance data. Lacking the business intelligence they need, many staffing firms unknowingly service unprofitable accounts or service accounts in unprofitable ways.

As clients become more sophisticated buyers of temporary labor, service level agreements (SLAs) are becoming standard practice for large accounts. Quarterly business reviews (QBRs) provide an opportunity for staffing suppliers to review their measured performance with their clients. Staffing suppliers are often in the position of understanding their good or poor performance levels only after the fact. Instead, staffing firms would much prefer to know their performance real-time, by role and in advance of their customers.

***"We have an insatiable appetite for metrics and indicators and business performance data. Microsoft SQL Analysis Services with Microsoft SharePoint is our preferred platform for delivering data to our business leaders."***

*Bruce Carothers,  
Sr. VP and CIO,  
AMN Healthcare*

"Having a common technology stack with a business intelligence platform has been very powerful to AMN business leaders," states Bruce Carothers, Sr. VP and CIO of AMN Healthcare. "We have combined data from all of our core systems, including our custom front office, our back office and

other 3<sup>rd</sup> party applications into a multi-dimensional cubes. Our financial analysts have access to the cube and may download data sets to conduct additional analysis in Excel. We used SharePoint to create pre-defined dashboards with stoplights, graphs and charts that are pushed out on a daily or weekly cycle. In addition, business leaders can access or create reports on a self-serve basis, whenever they want. In the past, we printed out two thousand pages of reports a week; now, our reports are electronically delivered through SharePoint.”

Firms use Office SharePoint Server as the standard entry point to the company’s many disparate business systems. The portal acts as a development platform to streamline access to data in line-of-business systems—ultimately helping users work more productively and have a greater impact on the business. People across the company access SharePoint to view and manage information—from executives who use graphical scorecards to monitor business performance, to branch staff who are tracking where they stand with their weekly activity and monthly commission. The system brings together various measures of business capabilities so that the company can effectively track, monitor and report performance, providing dashboards on both a role-based and roll-up basis. Users can then dive into deeper individual analysis as needed using Excel Services, with a familiar, easy-to-use interface designed enabling richer investigation and reporting.

Practice performance solution investments enable staffing firms to understand in a timely way the true profitability of client relationships and orders within specific service lines as well as the effectiveness of contingent workers placed, pulling together data from across multiple enterprise systems.

**INTEGRATION:  
CONNECTING THE  
ENTERPRISE,  
CONNECTING TO  
CLIENTS**

No application is an island. Whether we like it or not, tying systems together has become the norm. Yet connecting software is about more than just exchanging bytes. Combining different systems into effective business processes is a challenging problem, especially for staffing firms who often have a variety of core systems that must share critical data elements. Staffing is a high-volume environment where the sales and recruiting teams work in one set of systems and the back office function often sits in

another. Systems must be connected to tie together the front and back office in this high volume, high throughput staffing environment.

The great majority of modern business processes depend at least in part on software. While some of these processes are supported by a single application, many others rely on diverse software systems. In many cases, this software has been created at different times, on different platforms, and using different technologies. Automating those business processes requires connecting diverse systems.

***“Kelly Services aggressively eliminates ‘swivel chair integrations’ wherever possible - across our architecture and between ourselves and third-parties. BizTalk is our integration technology of choice.”***

*Paul Blowers,  
Sr. Director, Enterprise Architecture  
Kelly Services*

BizTalk Server is Microsoft’s Integration and connectivity server solution. Microsoft BizTalk Server helps organizations meet the challenges of integrating diverse systems. Most organizations have a multitude of systems and technologies that are required for their daily operations. By bringing together these technologies in an agile and scalable way, BizTalk can help unleash the potential of your existing infrastructure.

Addressing this challenge goes by various names: business process automation (BPA), business process management (BPM), and others. Regardless of the name, two scenarios are most important for application integration. One is connecting applications within a single organization, commonly referred to as enterprise application integration (EAI). The other, called business-to-business (B2B) integration connects applications in different organizations.

It is not only important that applications within the enterprise be connected; integration with outside 3rd parties has become vital to business success.

With vendor management systems (VMS) becoming increasingly prevalent, staffing firms are receiving more and more orders from clients electronically. In this digital scenario, interaction with the hiring manager is limited or non-existent; submittal speed and quality make all the difference between winning and losing an order, sometimes even in a matter of minutes. In this increasingly commonplace environment, duplicate data entry across staffing firm systems, or between the staffing and client systems, is an opportunity killer. Integration with VMS is just one of many examples of the importance of integrated applications to staffing firms.

## **STAFFING FIRMS INCREASE THEIR RELIANCE ON TECHNOLOGY VENDORS**

Staffing firms recognize that they are not in the technology business; they are in the human capital business. Firms have a growing desire to partner with third-parties to get the technology solutions and services they need.

In the past, staffing firms had no choice but to build custom, enterprise solutions for core business processes because scalable, flexible solutions were not commercially available. Staffing firms have a strong preference to buy commercial software but because of the complexity of their organizations and the broad set of services they offer, they need flexible and configurable solutions.

As an example, Professional Advantage provides industry-leading staffing software solutions leveraging the Microsoft technology platform. 1Staff for Microsoft Dynamics® provides an end-to-end solution for staffing organizations from resume parsing to generating financial statements. It is designed to fully leverage the Microsoft Dynamics platform and includes Microsoft CRM, Microsoft Dynamics GP, SQL Server, SharePoint and Outlook. Customers receive the benefit of Microsoft's research and development investment, while having a system tailored to the needs of the staffing industry. Professional Advantage is a Microsoft reseller and implementation specialist for customers that range from local staffing firms to publicly traded, multi-national organizations.

In order to maintain and grow profitability while reducing prices, staffing firms are under great pressure to reduce operating costs and IT has been called upon to do their part. Staffing firms can no longer afford to maintain massive data centers and dedicated hardware. Not only do staffing firms want to get out of the custom software business, staffing firms are moving away from owning and operating their own data centers, wanting to minimize infrastructure and hardware costs without sacrificing the end user experience by moving toward Cloud Computing.

## **MICROSOFT: EXCITING TIMES AHEAD**

Strategic investments in staffing technology can accelerate staffing firm success. Staffing firms who invest in the four key areas of Knowledge Management, Professional Service Delivery, Client Experience and Practice Performance will increase profitability, differentiate their service offerings and create new barriers to entry for competitors.

Microsoft's core philosophy is that people are at the heart of business success. Amplify their impact, and you improve business results.

Microsoft's integrated infrastructure gives staffing firm professionals and their leadership the technologies they need to advance firm know how by sharing ideas and delivering results; to identify, attract, and retain high value clients and candidates; to drive service quality and efficiency with integrated processes; and to improve financial and practice performance with better business insight.

Visit [www.microsoft.com/professionalservices](http://www.microsoft.com/professionalservices) or contact your local Microsoft representative for more information on how Microsoft's Professional Services solutions will radically transform your staffing firm's capabilities and effectiveness.

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