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MEDIA RELEASE

Contingent work a lifestyle choice, not a last resort: WorkPro survey

New research by WorkPro reveals that contingent work, such as temping and contracting, is a positive alternative to permanent work for many Australians, who are attracted by the flexibility and variety of work, understand their rights, feel well-treated and are happy doing it.

The WorkPro quarterly Workplace Pulse survey of 2,328 contractors and agency-employed workers, known as 'contingent' workers, found that for the vast majority of the workforce (86%), temping and contracting is a lifestyle choice, not a last resort.

The survey revealed that while 65% say they'd be willing to accept permanent work if the right job came along, the same number (65%) also enjoy the flexibility and variety of temping or contracting. Another 21% say it suits their current lifestyle, either because of study commitments (9%), a career break (5%) or a reduced their workload (7%). Only 14% of respondents said contracting or temping was all they could find at the time, while 14% cite pay as a key attraction.

Tania Evans, Manager of online pre-employment screening solution, WorkPro, said the research sheds new light on the typical stereotype of contractors and temps and their willingness to do this type of work.

"These findings paint a picture of a workforce that favours flexible hours, autonomous working conditions and stimulating content. They have specific skill sets and want a work/life balance that is sometimes hard to find in a full-time permanent position," Ms Evans said..

"It's increasingly clear that the way Australians are working today is different to any other time in history. Modern workplaces include a mix of 'traditional' permanent employees, as well as contractors, consultants and on-hire workers. People who choose to work this way do so for a number of reasons, often because it suits their lifestyle at the time," she said.

While flexible work attracts Australians for a myriad of reasons, the research found these employees are highly informed and have been accepted into the modern Australian workplace: 70% of workers say they are fully aware of their employment rights and responsibilities, and 88% say they feel welcomed by their permanent colleagues upon starting a new role.

It also found this type of work is no longer confined to its traditional demographic of school leavers and university students. WorkPro's survey found almost half (49%) of respondents were thirty years of age or older.

"We are now seeing a new breed of contingent workers who are assuming greater responsibility for themselves and their rights and obligations as 'free-agents'," Ms Evans said.

"Employees of all ages are using contingent work to fit in with their lifestyle, not just while studying, but parenting and even those who are not quite ready to retire completely," she said.



Ms Evans said the demand was also coming from employers, as they look to service sudden growth spurts or projects, where temporary or specialist skills can be called in relatively quickly to get the job done.

“It’s the new normal for a variety of white and blue collar industries and Australians are making the most of it,” she said.

However, with new Work Health and Safety harmonisation laws set to come into effective as of 1st January 2012, WorkPro warns employers need to be ready to manage a more diverse workforce and be aware of their new obligations.

“The new laws will impose greater responsibility on all employers to be liable for the health and safety of their ‘total’ workforce – this will include permanent staff as well as temps, contractors and even voluntary workers operating on their premises,” Ms Evans said.

“More importantly, regulators will require tangible evidence of a plan, system or process in place that prevents any potential workplace hazards and addresses the needs of all types of ‘staff’ at any one time,” she said.

Other findings:

Despite feeling empowered, contingent workers are still hungry for information. The following tips were cited as most helpful for contractors and temps before starting a new job:

- Upfront briefing on what’s expected of them
- Manual instructions/guidelines on how to conduct required work
- Information regarding the likely OHS hazards of the workplace and procedures
- Introduction to other staff around the office
- Having pay clearly explained

-Ends-

About WorkPro:

WorkPro is a web-based employment screening solution.

The system represents recruitment industry best-practice in the mitigation of workplace risk, getting candidates job-ready and providing an auditable track-record of key compliance processes. This includes the ability to conduct Workplace Health and Safety and Equal Opportunity training to suit a variety of industry and job-types, as well as conducting criminal history checks and verifying an individual's Visa-status - through one central portal.

The system was designed to ensure candidates are employment-ready by storing their employment history and training information in one central location, making it easy to share that information with any potential employer and streamlining the hiring process for candidates, contractors and employers. It provides the option for companies to tailor and customise the solution to represent their brand and the workplace risks associated with their industry.

WorkPro was launched in early 2007. It has since been adopted by over 500 recruiters across Australia and New Zealand, and more than 400,000 individuals have registered and completed induction training on the system to-date.

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