



IS TEMP WORK THE FUTURE?

From a health hazard to possibly the future, temporary work has its challenges.

I recently read a Sydney Morning Herald article by Nick Toscano that stated a joint Australian-Swedish study presented at the Australian Psychological Society’s College of Health Psychologists’ conference in Sydney in April had found that people moving in and out of temporary or “insecure” work were at an increased risk of health problems, with the research revealing an “accumulation” effect from multiple spells of unemployment.

The study tracked the experiences of more than 1080 school-leavers and found that accumulated effects of shorter spells of unemployment were damaging in similar ways to the well-established health effects of long-term joblessness. The findings showed that people were more likely to experience health problems including depression and negative behaviours if they had experienced intermittent unemployment.

The study focused on school leavers and while it is not specified in the article, you could make the assumption they would be younger job seekers lacking in practical work experience. As such, you might also expect they would have a preference for securing permanent employment as opposed to temporary work as they embark on their working careers.

Of course, there are many experienced practitioners in the events industry who choose to work freelance or project by

project; essentially on a temporary work basis. This suits both their lifestyle and circumstances and is a sustainable mode of working for these individuals because they have established clients and therefore a regular flow of work and revenue coming in.

Notwithstanding, at a time when the employment market is fickle, if not soft, and under-employment is a problem, there are some in the events industry who would rather be employed on a permanent basis but can only secure temporary contract work for periods of time that can last from several weeks to in some cases several years.

It is also true that since the GFC job security has been impacted and many employers have opted for temporary contractors to fill specific workload requirements as it gives them greater flexibility to increase or decrease their workforce as needed in line with market demands. In many cases this has been at the expense of offering someone a position on a permanent full-time or part-time basis.

Which leads me to another article I sighted in the Sydney Morning Herald, also by Nick Toscano, who declared, “Throw out your briefcase, clear your desk. The days of working in an actual office could be coming to an end.”

Nick was reporting on those speaking at the Future of Work conference held in Melbourne in late April this year. Delegates were told that in the future we are more likely to be freelancers or sole contractors (i.e. working on a temporary contract basis), as we race faster than ever towards a dramatically different economy.

John Brumby, Advisory Board Chairman of the Centre for Workplace Leadership, stated that “the workplace is changing... and one of the big drivers is because the world itself is changing so profoundly... and these changes are having a massive impact on how people work.”

The “on-demand economy” is gathering pace with increasing numbers working as freelancers and on demand for their own clients rather than for the one employer. The future of work is mobile and flexible and these flexible work arrangements should also boost workforce gender equality, with parents finding it easier to have careers as well as be caregivers.

Demographer and KPMG partner Bernard Salt added that he believes workers are embracing flexibility and placing higher value on “loyalty to self” as opposed to their employer, and said that those valuing flexibility over job security will be the clear winners in the new economy.

Certainly much to consider for employers and employees alike... [m](#)

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