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USE OF EMPLOYMENT AGENCIES IN COMPANIES

– Case Employment Agency X



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BACHELOR'S THESIS | ABSTRACT

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USE OF EMPLOYMENT AGENCIES IN COMPANIES

Because of the bad economical situation, companies have become more hesitant to commit to their employees. The goal in today's business world is to have as few risks as possible, while using workforce efficiently. Temporary agency work offers flexibility and lowers risks for user companies. Gaining knowledge and information about different options has also made its difference in the supply and demand of temporary agency work.

In temporary agency work the employer is the employment agency, and their client is the user company. An employment agency leases temporary agency workers to the user company in exchange for compensation.

The purpose of the thesis is to get an insight for the employment agency industry and finding out how employment agencies can better serve their customers. The concentration is on temporary agency work and how it is used and perceived in user companies.

This thesis is done in co-operation with employment agency X, catering to their needs and questions about the industry. The research is done with an online questionnaire that is targeted towards medium to large companies in southern Finland that are potential customers for employment agency X.

KEYWORDS:

Employment Agency, Recruiting, Temporary Agency Work

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HENKILÖSTÖPALVELUYRITYKSIEN KÄYTTÖ YRITYKSISSÄ

Yritysten halukkuus sitoutua työntekijöihinsä on laskenut taloudellisten taantumien myötä. Nykypäivän yritysmaailmassa on tärkeää ottaa mahdollisimman vähän riskejä, samalla kuitenkin ottaen täysi hyöty työvoimasta. Vuokratyön käyttö tarjoaa joustavuutta ja vähentää riskejä käyttäjäyrityksille. Tiedon lisääntyminen eri työllistämismahdollisuuksista on tehnyt lisännyt vuokratyön kysyntää ja tarjontaa viime vuosikymmenien aikana.

Vuokratyössä henkilöstöpalveluyritys toimii vuokratyöntekijän työnantajana, ja käyttäjäyritys on asiakas. Henkilöstöpalveluyritykset vuokraavat työntekijöitä käyttäjäyrityksille. Vastuu ja valvomisoikeus jakautuvat käyttäjäyrityksen ja henkilöstöpalveluyrityksen kesken.

Tämän opinnäytetyön tarkoituksena on tarjota katsaus henkilöstöpalveluyritysten toimialaan, ja tutkia millainen käsitys käyttäjäyrityksillä on kyseisistä yrityksistä sekä vuokratyöstä.

Tämä työ on tehty yhteistyössä henkilöstöpalveluyritys X:n kanssa, keskittyen heidän tarpeisiinsa ja kysymyksiin toimialasta. Tutkimus on toteutettu Internet kyselyllä, joka on kohdistettu keskikokoisille ja suurille yrityksille Etelä-Suomessa, jotka ovat henkilöstöpalveluyritys X:n potentiaalisia asiakkaita.

ASIASANAT:

Vuokratyövoima, henkilöstövuokraus, rekrytointi

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

YTR	Yritys ja toimipaikkarekisteri (Register of Enterprises and Establishments)
HPL	Henkilöstöpalvelualojen liitto (Private Employment Agency Union)
PALTA	Palvelualojen työnantajat (Service Industry Employees)
TSL	Työsopimuslaki (Employment Contracts Act)
TEM	Työelinkeinoministeriö (Ministry of Employment and the Economy)
HR	Human resources

1 INTRODUCTION

Temporary agency work is not a new phenomenon per se, but at one point in time it was prohibited to lease workforce in Finland. Temporary agency work was allowed as its own industry again in 1995. To this date there has been very few legislations concerning temporary agency work. The most used regulation is from the Employment Contracts Act, which came to effect in 2001. (Elomaa, 2011, 25)

After the depression in the 90s companies have become more hesitant to commit to their employees. The goal in today's business world is to take as few risks as possible, while using workforce efficiently. Temporary agency work offers flexibility and lowers risks for user companies. Gaining knowledge and information about different options has also made its difference in the supply and demand of temporary agency work. (Viitala et al, 2006, 11)

The employment agency industry has had an effect on lowering unemployment rates in Finland. It lowers the threshold for employment and makes it easier and faster especially for young people to enter the working-life and gain valuable experience. (HPL, 2011.) In a research conducted by Huotari & Pitkänen, temporary agency workers said that it is easy way to get employed, and they can choose the time and place of work (Huotari & Pitkänen, 2013, 22).

There are many names for employment agencies and temporary workers. In order to make my thesis uniform and clear, I chose to use the terms employment agency for the service provider and user company for their client. The employee that is leased by the employment agency to the user company will be called temporary agency worker, or worker for short.

1.1 Background

I was doing my internship in company X in the summer of 2013. During that time, I developed an interest towards human resource management and the

employment agency industry in general. I came up with the idea of doing my thesis for company X, and after discussing with the CEO about different topics and ideas we came to agreement that I would do a market research survey on their behalf.

Company X is an employment agency located in Turku, Finland. They have about 10 employees, which is about double the usual amount in the industry (HPL, 2011). They are doing business all over Finland, and offer many services including temporary agency work. They are continuously improving and broadening their operations, and this research will act as a guideline for them to see what companies expect from employment agencies.

1.2 Research objective

The purpose of the thesis is to get an overview of the employment agency industry and identify how employment agencies can better serve their customers. The concentration is on temporary agency work and how it is used and perceived in user companies.

The research is done with a questionnaire that is targeted towards medium to large companies in southern Finland that are potential customers for company X. The opportunities of employment agencies are investigated through these research questions:

- What do user companies value the most about employment agencies?
- What is the state of markets for temporary agency work in Finland?
- What can company X do to attract more customers?

The end goal of this thesis is to provide company X with insight about the industry they are doing business in and provide answers to the questions they have about the industry and potential customers.

1.3 Structure

My thesis consists of theoretical part and research part. The theoretical part of this thesis focuses on the employment agency industry and temporary agency work in Finland. Most of the factual information is based on legislation and directives that are further explained in the literary used

In the research part, I will go through the research methodology, including the execution of the research, questionnaire design, sampling and reliability and validity. The results of the survey will be reviewed according to the questionnaire. In the end, I will have conclusions with recommendations for company X to take note while developing their services.

2 INDUSTRY

According to the YTR (Register of Enterprises and Establishments), there were 1168 companies in the employment agency industry in 2008. Figure 1 shows how the amount of employment agencies has tripled in ten years. However, there are companies that are registered to do business in construction or services industry. Those are not included in the YTR calculations. There were also about 300 employment agencies doing business in Finland, yet were registered in other countries, mainly in Baltic countries which are not included in this figure. (TEM, 2010)

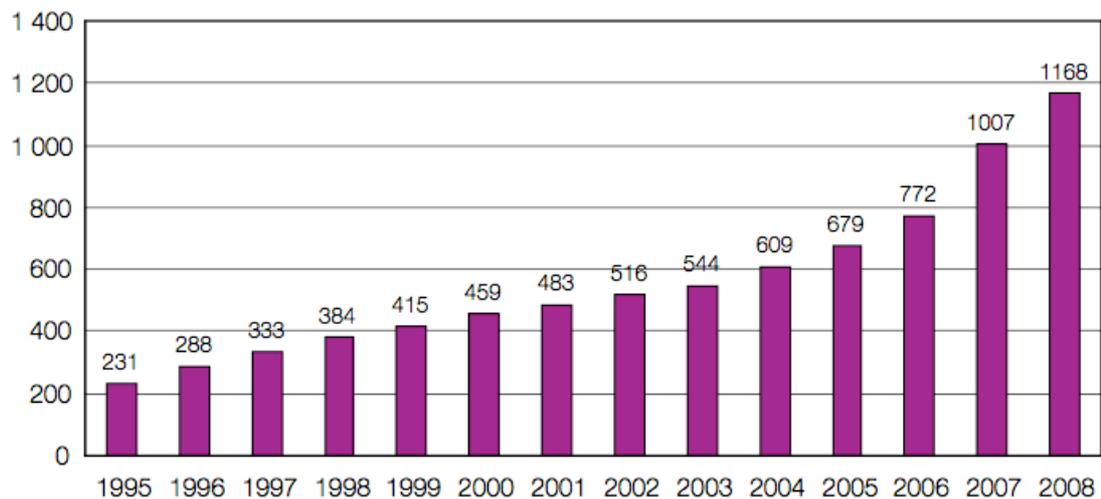


Figure 1. Amount of employment agencies in years 1995-2008 (TEM, 2010, 25)

According to Statistics Finland's Labor Force Survey (Statistics Finland, 2013), there were 27,000 temporary agency workers in 2012, which amounts to little more than one percent of the total number of employed persons in Finland, which was 2,483,000 in 2012. There were almost equal amount of men and women employed through the temporary agencies. (Statistics Finland, 2013)

2.1 Temporary agency work

Instead of hiring employees themselves, companies can outsource their workforce. Temporary agency work is one of the options, in which the employer of a worker is the employment agency, which then leases the temporary agency workers to user companies in exchange of compensation. It should not be confused into subcontracting, which has its own definitions. (Salli, 2012, 105.)

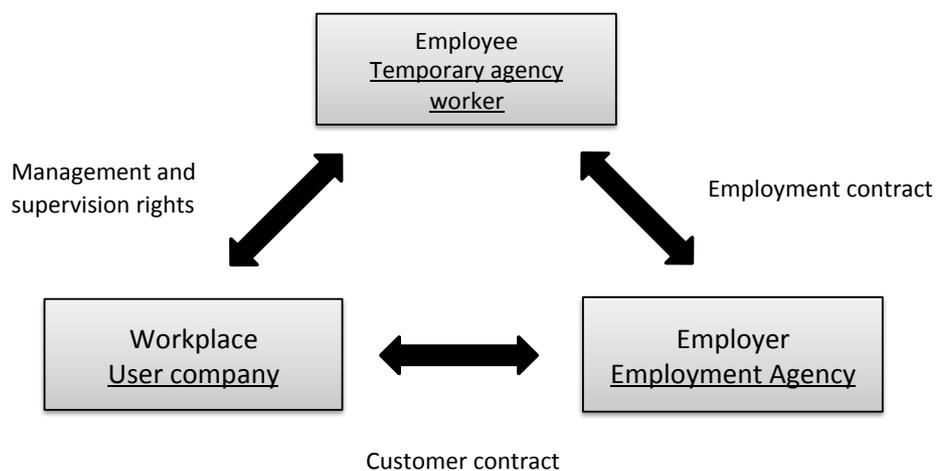


Figure 2. Triangular agreement on temporary agency work. (HPL, 2011)

Figure 2 shows the triangular arrangement of responsibilities. With temporary agency work, the user company is responsible for the management- and supervision rights concerning doing the actual work, and its arrangements. All other employer obligations, like paying salary are handled by the employment agency. (Sädevirta, 2002, 21.)

2.2 Contractual perspective between employment agency and temporary agency worker

The temporary agency worker makes the employment contract with an employment agency, thus making them his/hers employer. The terms set in the

employment contract should be followed no matter what terms the user company uses. There is no uniform labor law with temporary agency work, but some employment agencies can have their own collective labor agreement. For example, HPL (Private employment agency union) has their own labor agreement that is used with temporary agency workers in financial management, data processing and office work. (Moilanen, 2008, 88.) According to Employment Contracts Act, or TSL (2012, 2:9) if the employment agency is not bound by their own or a universally binding collective labor agreement, the employment contract made with a temporary agency worker use the labor agreement of the user company. For example, in contracts for temporary agency workers who go to a user company that is in construction, the collective labor agreement of construction industry is used.

2.2.1 Trial period

The purpose of a trial period is to give both parties of the employment contract a chance to terminate the employment without term of notice. The trial period can be four months at the most, and if there is training arranged for the employee that lasts over four months the trial period can be six months. The training has to be more elaborate than just basic introduction to the work. In temporary agency work, the user company evaluates the suitability of the temporary agency worker. The employer of the temporary agency worker, as in the employment agency, always does termination of the employment. (Salli, 2012, 107.)

In 2009, TSL was changed in order to include a clause regarding the temporary agency work trial period. Before this change, temporary agency workers would have a four-month trial period, and if they were hired straight to the user company after the first four-month trial period, they would have to agree to a new four-month trial period even if the job description was the same as before. This was irregular to the TSL, but according to the wording of the clause it was legal. After the changing of the TSL, the trial period for the same job can be only done once. (Elomaa, 2011, 30.)

2.2.2 Working hours

The collective labor agreement and the Working Hours Act determine the working hours of employees, including temporary agency workers. One of the rights of an employer is to determine the placement of working hours, which means that the user company is responsible for arranging the shifts and informing the worker about them. (Elomaa, 2011, 31.)

The employment agency is responsible for keeping the working hours register. They are obliged to keep register of the worker's daily working time, the starting and ending time of the workday and daily rest periods, such as lunch. The register should also state overtime hours and any additional work. If the user company compiles all of the shift lists, it should provide a copy to the employment agency, as they are the ones that pay the salary, and should have the working hours register of every temporary agency worker. The general rule is that the user company approves the temporary agency workers recorded working hours in order to minimize deceit. (TEM, 2009.)

2.2.3 Annual holidays

Temporary agency workers accrue annual holidays in the same way than any other workers. The legislation does not have special clauses for temporary agency workers considering annual holidays. As the length of temporary agency work contracts can vary, there are different options for handing the annual holiday. With very short-term employments the holiday is given in money, as holiday compensation. If a worker has several short-term employments with an employment agency, they might not use their annual holidays. In these cases, the worker can either have their holiday in between employments, or during an employment just like any other employee would. (Elomaa, 2011, 32.)

Based on the distribution of the employer rights, the employment agency is responsible of making sure that the worker receives his or hers annual holidays. The worker does have a say in the time that they would like to have their holi-

day, but at the end, it is the employer who decides on the dates. In longer employments it is possible that the employment agency and the user company will agree that the user company will be responsible for the workers holiday. It is also important to remember that temporary agency workers should be treated equally to the user company's own employees. This means that the worker should not be having their summer holidays during the least desired time, when the other user company's employees would have the most desired time periods. (Elomaa, 2011, 33.)

2.2.4 Fixed-term

The Employment Contracts Act regulates the length of an employment contract between employment agency and the temporary agency worker. The contract is effective indefinitely, unless it is for some reason made fixed-term. The grounds for fixed-term need to be fulfilled; otherwise the contract will be indefinite. The reason for contract being fixed-term has to be based on the work assignment and its duration. If the assignment only lasts for a month, then the employment contract can be set to be fixed-term for a month. (Salli, 2012, 107.) Using multiple back-to-back fixed-term contracts create uncertainty of the continuity of work for the temporary agency worker. Of course the situation is not the same for everyone. For example students like to work for several companies while studying, in order to increase their work experience. However, two thirds of temporary agency workers would like to have stable and permanent employment. (Elomaa, 2011, 34.)

2.2.5 Equality

Temporary agency workers have the same rights to the services and shared arrangements of the user company, as their own employees. However, the user company is not responsible for paying the use of services for the temporary agency worker. This should not be confused with fringe benefits, for example giving financial support for employees to use in the workplace cafeteria in their

paycheck. As the user company is not paying for the salary of a temporary agency worker, they do not have the liability to give benefits towards the use of company services or arrangements. A temporary agency worker may have to pay higher price for example food in the cafeteria as they are considered an outsider. (Salli, 2012, 110.)

An employer has the responsibility to inform temporary agency workers about any openings in the workplace according to the customs of the company. This has to be done so that part-time and fixed-term employees have the opportunity to apply to the open job the same way as permanent workers. The user company has to inform their temporary agency workers about open jobs as well. This doesn't mean that the user company has to inform about every job opening that they have, but if they have adapted a custom that they do inform about openings, they should not discriminate temporary agency workers, but inform every employee group evenhandedly. (Salli, 2012, 111)

2.3 Contractual perspective between employment agency and user company

The contract between employment agency and the user company does not use the Employment Contracts Act. The HPL (Private Employment Agency Union) has composed general terms of agreement that it recommends to use as an appendix for the contract between user companies and employment agencies. The purpose of the terms is to make it clear to both parties how the responsibilities and rights are shared. (Salli, 2012, 113)

2.3.1 Contractor's Liability

The Contractor's Liability Act that came to effect in 2007. It states that the user company is liable to find out these facts about the employment agency before commissioning them.

1. commercial register
2. proof of paying taxes

3. proof of having pension insurance
4. report of what collective labor agreement the employment agency is using
5. whether the employment agency is in the preliminary taxation registry, employer registry and the goods and services tax registry. (Meincke & Vanhala-Harmanen, 2011, 208.)

The inquiry is not needed, if the user company can trust that the employment agency fulfills its statutory responsibilities. For example if the employment agency is a public company, or they are established in the marketplace, which means that they have been in business for over three years. (Meincke & Vanhala-Harmanen, 2011, 208.) There is also no need for the inquiry if the user company is doing a contract with an employment agency within a year from making their last contract, unless there is need to suspect that there are changes in the conditions (Moilanen, 2008, 101).

2.3.2 Work equipment

In the contract the parties will agree who will provide the temporary agency worker with the proper work equipment and attire. The main purpose is that the correct safety regulations are followed. As in any employment relationship, proper training should be conducted before the employee starts working. In temporary agency work, the user company has more knowledge about the requirements of the workplace and is usually assigned with the training of the worker. (Elomaa, 2011, 40.)

2.3.3 Recruitment fee

The costs of recruitment are usually assigned for the user company by the contract. The purpose of the compensation is to pay for the employment agency for the costs that they have for recruiting the temporary agency worker. Compensation for recruitment is also used in case the worker makes a contract directly

with the user company. The problem with the compensation is that the temporary agency worker may have problems getting a permanent employment in the user company, as they might not be willing to pay for the compensation even though they would like to have the worker as their own employee. The amount of compensation should be reasonable in order to avoid the situation where the temporary agency worker will only have multiple fixed-term employments in the user company, even though there is a need for permanent employment in the company. (Elomaa, 2011, 40)

2.3.4 Liability for damages

Sometimes a temporary agency worker can cause damage that the user company will have to pay their client. The temporary agency worker has the employment contract with the employment agency, even though the supervision right is the user company's responsibility. With the triangular agreement, it is hard to determine who is responsible for the damages. In order to make these situations clearer, the user company and the employment agency should state in their contract the party that is responsible if damages occur, or it has to be settled case by case, sometimes even in court. (Elomaa, 2011, 41.) The user company is responsible for temporary agency workers occupational health and safety at the workplace. The employment agency is responsible for general safety and health, such as providing accident insurance. (TEM, 2009, 11.)

2.4 History of temporary agency work in Finland

Sädevirta (2002) talks about the history of temporary agency work. The use of temporary agency work started to develop and become more common in Finland during 1960s in the shipyard industry. The fast development of society, growing competition and the specialization following that added the need for companies to use outside workforce. On the other hand the public employment agency could not fulfill the employee need during seasonal and rush peaks. Es-

pecially in the metal industry the volume of orders generated the need to license professionals from small companies in the metal industry. (Sädevirta, 2002, 9)

This new way of recruiting employees brought the downsides of temporary agency work. It was typical to not pay workers their salaries by driving a company into bankruptcy. It was also normal to ignore the work-, social- and tax laws in the temporary agency workers' contracts. These misbehaviors lead to creating a contract regarding outside workforce in 1969. The contract allowed companies to use outside workforce only in addition to their own employees to stabilize the employment peaks or when there were no employees available for a certain job. (Sädevirta, 2002, 10)

In late 1970s and early 80s the law and ethical aspects of temporary agency work became the subject of criticism. Problems like hiring temporary agency workers during strike, not giving employee perks and risking the employment safety of the permanent employees was found. Temporary agency workers were prohibited to transfer to the user company's payroll after their contract ended. This was enforced with a clause in the contract between employment agency and the user company, who would have to pay a contract penalty if they hired the temporary agency worker. (Sädevirta, 2002, 11)

In 1986 an employment agency law came into effect. In it temporary agency work was set to be subject to license. In clause 2a, it stated that one could not practice temporary agency work leasing without the permission of an employment official. The permission was granted only if a company could prove that the employee need was short-term and temporary or there would be some other substantial reason. (Sädevirta, 2002, 12)

According to the 1986 law, an employment agency or the user company could not employ the same temporary agency worker for more than six months in the same job. Exceptions were artistic presentations, for example theatre performers, or replacing someone on maternity- or sick leave. A temporary agency worker also could not work for two employment agencies at the same time. An-

other employment agency could hire a worker only after three months his or hers last contract was terminated. (Sädevirta, 2002. 14.)

In the beginning of 1994 an employment service law came into effect, which overruled the previous regulations about temporary agency work. In the new law, the employment agency services were freed for competition. (Sädevirta, 2002. 16.) Today, there is no specific law for employment agencies or temporary agency work. Employment Contract Act is often referred, as there are some clauses that deal with temporary agency work. (Elomaa, 2011, 26.)

2.5 Reasons for using employment agencies

Using temporary agency workers is effortless for the user company, as they do not have to worry about the employer obligations (Moilanen, 2008. 86). In small companies, hiring new employees can be difficult, for example when a private entrepreneur wants to hire their first employee. Having all of the responsibilities of an employer can cause fear of hiring, which leads to using temporary agency workers. Small companies might not have needed human resource (HR) management knowledge, or the staff to do it. Doing all of the HR can take time off from doing actual business, so small businesses usually consider temporary agency work as a viable option to get workforce. (Elomaa, 2011, 16.)

In some cases, if a company has staff reduction consultations, and they had to lay off employees, they are legally unable to hire new employees. Instead, they have a responsibility to hire back the employees they laid off. However, this does not affect the use of outside workforce. This means that companies can use temporary agency workers instead of hiring back laid off employees. (Moilanen, 2008. 88.) In their research for the Ministry of Labor, Viitala et al (2006, 127) found that there are three main reasons for using temporary agency work, flexibility demands for production, managing costs and recruitment and minimizing the HR work relating to it.

2.5.1 Flexibility

One of the main reasons for using temporary agency work is to stabilize the peaks in the employee needs. For example seasonal changes or sick leaves can cause the user company to need more employees, and temporary agency workers are a quick and easy way to have skilled personnel in the workforce. When the demand drops, they are also easy to get rid of. Some user companies do project works, which means that they only need employees for certain project, and after that there is no need for them. In those kinds of situations, using temporary agency workers is ideal. Forecasting demand is very hard, so it is easy to have temporary agency workers come and work for a week or two, which can relief the user company from additional HR costs and help them meet their customers orders. (Viitala et al, 2006, 128-130.)

2.5.2 Financial

On top of the costs of a temporary agency worker, the employment agencies charge an additional fee from the user company. That is used to cover charges from other business activities. Some employment agencies use multipliers when calculating the additional compensation, and others determine a lump sum that is paid case-by-case. Multipliers are figures that are determined in a contract between an employment agency and the user company. The user company pays for the hourly salary of a temporary agency worker multiplied by the predetermined figure. For example, if a temporary agency worker gets paid ten euros per hour, and the multiplier is 1,75, the user company will pay 17,5 euros per hour to the employment agency. (Company X.)

There is not a mutual agreement between employment agencies about the use of multipliers, and there is very little information available about the pricing of temporary agency work. Viitala et al (2006) interviewed representatives from employment agencies in their research. One said that their multiplier is between

1.65 and 1.95. The multiplier can depend on the collective labor agreement, or the difficulty of finding suitable worker. (Viitala et al, 2006, 82.)

Using temporary reduces the financial risks of the user company, but does not transfer it to the employment agency. With equipment, space and machinery, the rental agreements are usually long and hard to terminate. With temporary agency workers, the contracts are either for certain period of time, or they are indefinite and can be renewed when there is a need for the worker. (Viitala, 2007. 186)

The hourly pay for a temporary agency worker is more expensive than having a permanent employee. However, there are many other savings that the user company will have, which makes temporary agency workers more attractive. User companies do not have to pay for holiday compensation, sick leave compensations or occupational health payments. They can also save with not paying benefits and bonuses, although some user companies choose to pay them for temporary agency workers. User companies also like to pay more for making their job easier with not having to deal with the risks of recruitment. (Viitala et al, 2006, 83.)

2.5.3 Channel for recruitment

Employment agencies do more than just temporary agency work leasing. User companies can outsource their recruitment to an employment agency, and avoid the long and challenging process of finding a new employee. In these cases in which only the recruitment is outsourced, the employee will go straight to the user company's payroll.

Recruitment processes have become more complex and become more challenging for companies to arrange. Managers are often busy and there is no time to arrange long recruiting meetings and have a complete in house process for recruitment. It is easier for them to pay someone else to post a job advertisement online or in the newspaper and handles all the applications and preliminary interviews. The user company comes in the picture when the employment

agency has viable candidates for the available job. The employment agency has done all the screening beforehand, so the only thing left to do is for the user company to pick the best suitable candidate for their needs. (Company X)

3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Company X is a young and growing corporation that offers staffing-, recruitment- and payroll administration services. They have offices in three major cities in Finland, Helsinki, Turku and Tampere, while doing business all over Finland. Big part of their appeal is that they are part of an union, and they are very conscious about being a reliable service provider, taking customers' needs into consideration and providing good services all around (Company X website, CEO).

I was asked by the CEO of company X to do a research about how firms use employment agency services, and what are their views on said companies and services in general. The goal for this research was to provide company X with knowledge on how firms use employment agency services. With the results, company X can develop their services and actions to cater towards their customers' needs.

3.1 Execution of Research

The research process started August 2013 with a discussion with the CEO of company X about the topic of the research. They wanted to find out more about the companies that use employment agency services, and how they use the services. After setting the end goal and knowing what would benefit the company the most, I started searching for appropriate secondary data about the subject from books, articles and the Internet. There was a decent amount of information available, mostly in Finnish books and online. Some of the information was also gotten from the company X.

I used quantitative method for my research. Quantitative method is used when the data collection generates numerical data, usually conducted in questionnaires or surveys. The collected data is often presented in graphs and charts. However, because some of the questions had the option to be answered with

own opinions, the questionnaire has also qualitative elements (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2012. 161).

As the size of the sample was rather large and geographically dispersed, I decided to use Internet-mediated questionnaire. It is a questionnaire that is easy to develop on an existing online platform and to send to the recipients via email. Using an Internet-mediated questionnaire also meant that all of the data was automatically collected and it was easy to transport straight to excel for additional analyzing. The main downside with Internet-mediated questionnaires is that the response rate varies a lot, with 30% being reasonable response rate, but sometimes it can be as low as 11% (Saunders et al, 2012. 419-421).

Based on the information I had gathered about employment agencies and temporary agency work, the questions were drafted in co-operation of the company X's CEO. It was important that the questions were catered to suit their needs and answer the questions they wanted to know. With knowing the possible low response rate of Internet-mediated questionnaires, we decided to have an incentive to boost the responses, which was a lottery for a gift card to a travelling agency worth 100 euros. Respondents could take part in the lottery by leaving their contact information in the end of the questionnaire.

3.2 Questionnaire

The survey was made in an online platform called SurveyMonkey.com, which has good options for questions and designs for the questionnaires. The layout of the questionnaire is important because it can affect the respondents' willingness to answer. Having just a few questions per page and using neutral color scheme makes the questionnaire clean looking and more appealing to the respondent (Ghauri & Grønhaug, 2002.100).

Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2012, 454) also emphasize the fact that respondents may not all use the same operating system or computer screens, which may affect the look the questionnaire, making it even more important that the design of the questionnaire is clear.

The survey consisted of sixteen questions. They all were closed questions, where the respondent was instructed to choose from alternative answers. Because the answers were predetermined, it is easier to compare the responses. There are different kinds of closed questions, and I chose to use various types, including list questions, ranking questions, category questions and rating questions. (Saunders et al, 2012, 432-437). From these predetermined alternatives, I would detect the data collection method to be quantitative. But with per request of the CEO of company X, I added answer options that would result in open answers. Some of the questions give the option to the respondent to tick the box "other", and it will ask them to write their own answer. This results in qualitative data, which would have to be separately added to the quantitative data collected, in order for it to show in the charts and graphs. The other reason why option of adding own answer was added to some questions was the fact that even though there were predetermined options, there was a risk that none of the alternatives were viable for the respondent, thus them wanting to add their own answer.

It was also important that the questions were in a coherent order. The first questions should be easy to answer, so that there is no intimidation towards the respondent, and that they will complete the survey (Ghauri & Grønhaug, 2002. 100). With that in mind, the survey that was used in this research started with background questions about the company, then asking simple questions about temporary agency work. The last questions weren't too complicated either, but required a bit more thinking.

3.3 Sampling

I used homogenous sampling, which means that the concentration is on a certain subgroup of people, in which all the members of the sample are similar, as in the same occupation or level in hierarchy (Saunders et al, 2012. 288). As the research is about employment agency services and how they are used in com-

panies, it is crucial to send the questionnaire to the right people, in this case to the personnel that are responsible for the HR.

Because I was not going to be able to send out the questionnaire to a representative of every company in Finland, I had some limitations. Company X provided me with a list of contact information for people to send the questionnaire to. The list was defined by place, industry, size, revenue and credit rating of companies in Finland, and from those companies, the HR managers were chosen to answer the questionnaire. With those definitions, the sample size came out to be 954 people.

3.4 Data collection

Before sending out the questionnaire it was tested by the employees of company X, to make sure that it would work in different computers and that it was clear and understandable. I sent out the questionnaire to the recipients 6th of November 2013, allowing them to have twelve days for answering. Due to the large number of recipients, I divided all of the contacts into groups of twenty people, and sent out the covering email with the hyperlink to the survey. I did not send the emails all at once in order to avoid congestion on the survey website, and it would also give me time to correct any errors in the survey. After sending few emails and seeing that the survey didn't have errors, I sent out rest of the emails.

After sending out all of the emails, I got a total of 117 mail service error and out of office messages. So from the sample of 954 people, 837 received the email. Most of the responses came during the first 24 hours after sending the link for the questionnaire. After a week, I sent out a reminder in order to get answers from those who were out of office, or forgot to fill out the questionnaire. Also, some of the answers were incomplete, as in the answerer clicked out of the questionnaire before completing all of the questions. The total amount of completed answers was 230. The response rate was then 27,5%.

3.5 Reliability

It can be assumed, that because the survey was sent to the HR managers of selected companies, they are qualified to answer in behalf of their employer about the company and how they use employment agencies and their services.

Some of the respondents do not necessarily use the services of employment agencies. As there were a lot of questions considering the occurrence of employment agency services in companies, it is possible that they have left some questions unanswered, or did not even open the questionnaire. There is also a possibility that some of the respondents weren't sure about the meaning of the question, and misunderstood the question. This can result in leaving the questions unanswered. (Ghuri & Grønhaug, 2002. 99) The fact that some respondents skipped some of the questions doesn't affect the reliability of the research, as they were taken account in the data analysis as their own variable. It can actually be useful to see whether it is often the same questions that are left unanswered.

Participant error is considered to be any factor that alters how the respondent of the questionnaire answers (Saunders et al, 2012. 192). This risk was minimized by sending both of the emails in the morning, so that the respondents have time to answer the survey before their lunch break, or set a reminder to do it after.

According to Ghauri and Grønhaug (2002, 93) having a reward for answering the questionnaire can influence the respondents and their reactions. Third of the respondents decided not to leave their information in order to take part in the gift card giveaway. There weren't any double entries of information, which indicates that the responses are still reliable, and people didn't abuse the possibility of winning a free gift card.

4 RESULTS

The questionnaire was carried out 6. -17.11.2013. The questionnaires were sent to 954 people in different companies. The respondents were either the HR-manager or if there was no such person in the company, the CEO. Out of those 954 recipients, 117 did not receive the email and 290 answered the questionnaire. 60 of those respondents answered less than third of the questions, which resulted in disregarding their answers. The amount of viable responses used in these results is 230. It gives a response rate of 27,5%

4.1 Basic Information

Most of the respondents work in a company that is in construction (11,7% of 230) or metal industry (19,6% of 230). 35% of the respondents chose option “other”, which means that the industry that they work in couldn’t be found in the list. This was predictable, as the questionnaire did not include retail industry in the options.

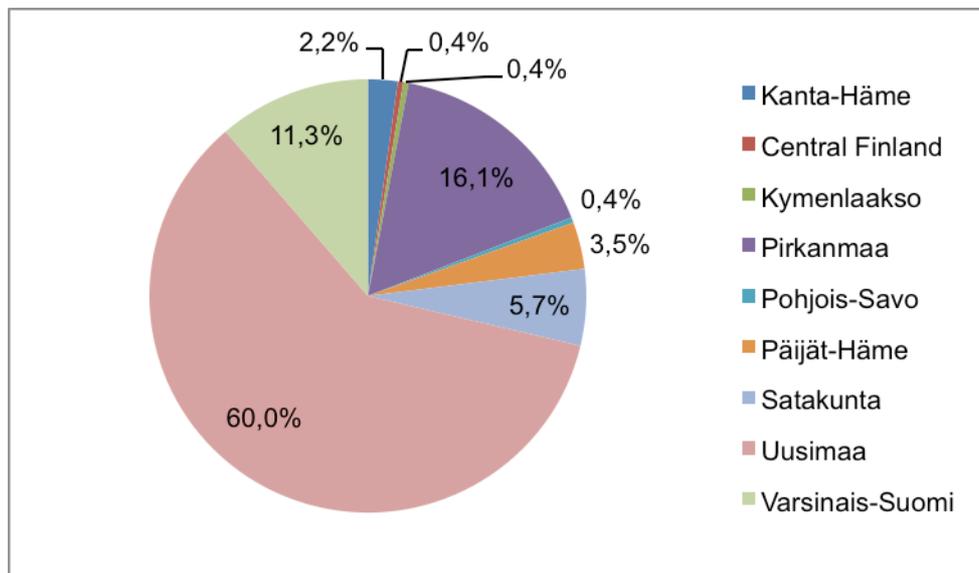


Figure 3. Geographical distribution of responses.

The second question was about geographical location of the companies. The dominant area is Uusimaa, where 60% of the respondents have their main offices. 16,1% is from Pirkanmaa, and 11,3% from Varsinais-Suomi, as it is shown in Figure 3. This is not surprising, as those three areas are the biggest regions in southern Finland in terms of population and number of companies. There were no respondents from the most northern part of Finland.

As the questionnaire was sent to certain companies based on a list created by the Company X, it already cut out some of the companies either by geography or with small size. These options were still asked in the questionnaire in order to make the answering options more coherent and clear for the respondents. There were some respondents from smaller companies as well.

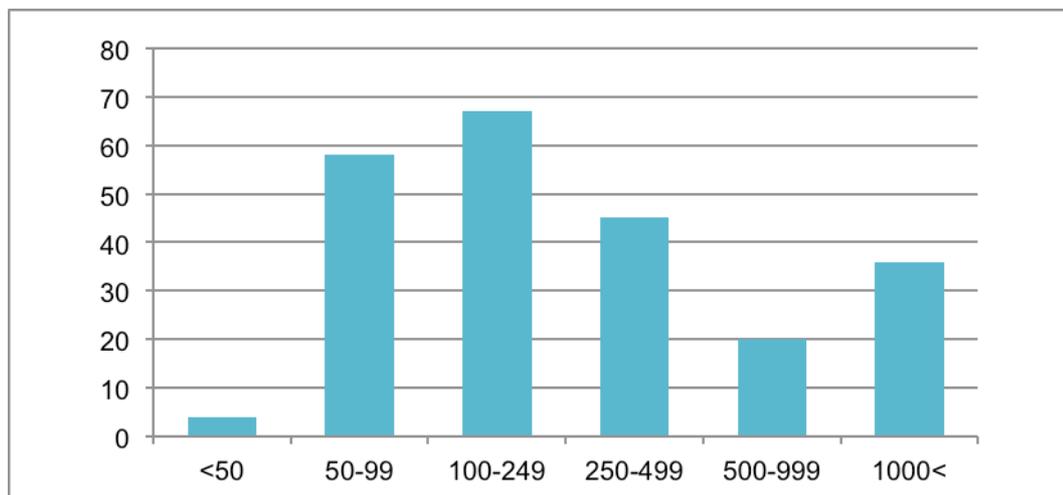


Figure 4. Company size.

Figure 4 shows the size of the companies that responded to the questionnaire. Out of the 230 respondents, only 1,7% have less than fifty employees, which makes them small companies. Medium companies are considered to have up to 250 employees, which means that 54,3% of the respondents are medium sized companies. 44% of the respondents have 250 or more employees, and can be considered large companies. The questionnaire was sent to all kinds of companies, including public limited liability companies, which explains the variation between the company sizes. Because of the variation, this questionnaire gives a good overview of the potential customers for company X.

It was interesting to see that no matter how big or small your company is, the respondents still took time from their busy schedules and answered this questionnaire. Nine of them sent me back emails giving feedback on the questionnaire and the idea for my thesis. Almost every email was a positive one, except for one or two that were sent by people that do not use employment agency services in their companies.

4.2 Use of employment agencies

85% of the responding companies have used employment agency services in last 12 months. This gives reliability for the other answers that was given in the questionnaire, as most of the respondents are from companies that actually use employment agency services. 15% said that they have not used employment agency services in the last year. The respondents were not asked to specify why they have not used employment agency services, but there can be multiple reasons. Some companies might have used said services before, but are not currently in contract with an employment agency. Other companies do not need employment agency services, or just do not consider them useful for their company. There probably are recipients that received the questionnaire, and did not answer it, as they do not use employment agency services. If they had, the portion of no answers would be larger.

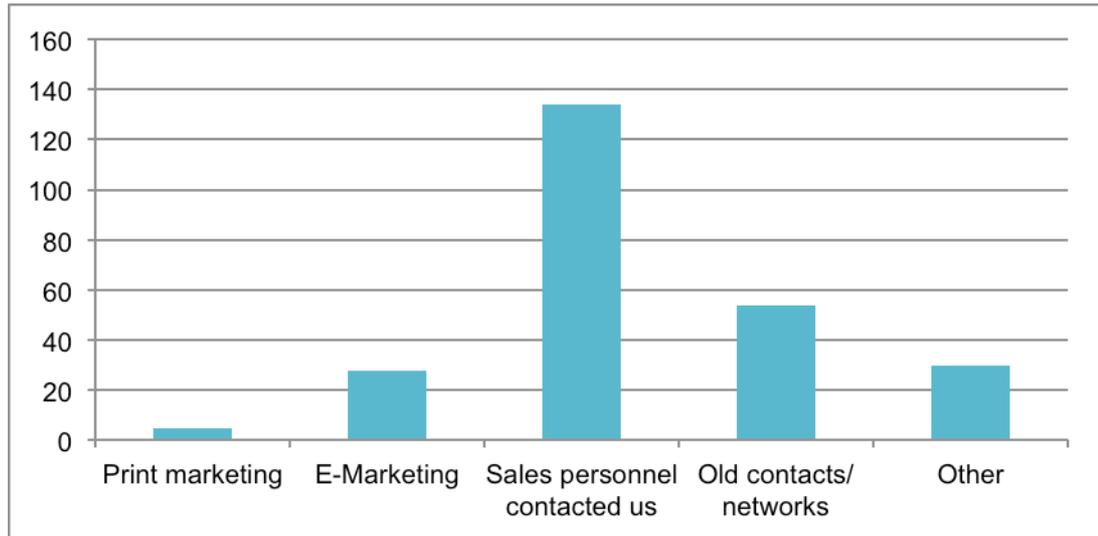


Figure 5. How companies have found their employment agency.

When asked how companies have found the employment agency they use, 53,40% of the respondents said that the sales personnel of an employment agency contacted them. Only 11,20% said e-marketing, and 1,9% said that print marketing caught their attention. This shows that doing marketing online or with print does not bring too much visibility in the employment agency industry. As most employment agencies are small with few employees, it is important to have good sales personnel, who contact companies, ask about their needs and set a meeting with the company. 33,5% of the respondents choose the other option, but when asked to specify their answer, 54 of them said that they have used networks and old contacts. That was added as its own column in the Figure 5, as it is a quarter of the total respondents with 21,5% of the answers.

Other answers that the respondents specified included tendering and systematic analyzing as their way of finding their employment agency. Internet, LinkedIn and fairs were also mentioned. 13 respondents skipped this question; those are most likely companies that do not use employment agency services.

Employment agencies offer a variety of services. In question six, I asked what employment agency services user companies have used. Respondents could click more than one section if they used multiple of these services listed. 205 people answered this question, and the total amount of clicks was 355. This

means that many companies use more than one service. Recruiting was chosen most often with 40,3% of the total amount of clicks. Temporary agency work got 25,20% and psychological evaluations 24,8%. 29 respondents also told that they use payroll administration services. That amounts to 8,1% of the total.

From this, we can assume that the services provided by employment agencies are well catered, as companies often use more than one service. Companies also like to have a package deal, where they buy multiple services from employment agencies, in order to make their human resource management easier. 31 respondents skipped this question, who are most likely those who do not use any services from employment agencies.

4.3 Temporary agency workers

The second part of the questionnaire was about the use of temporary agency workers in companies.

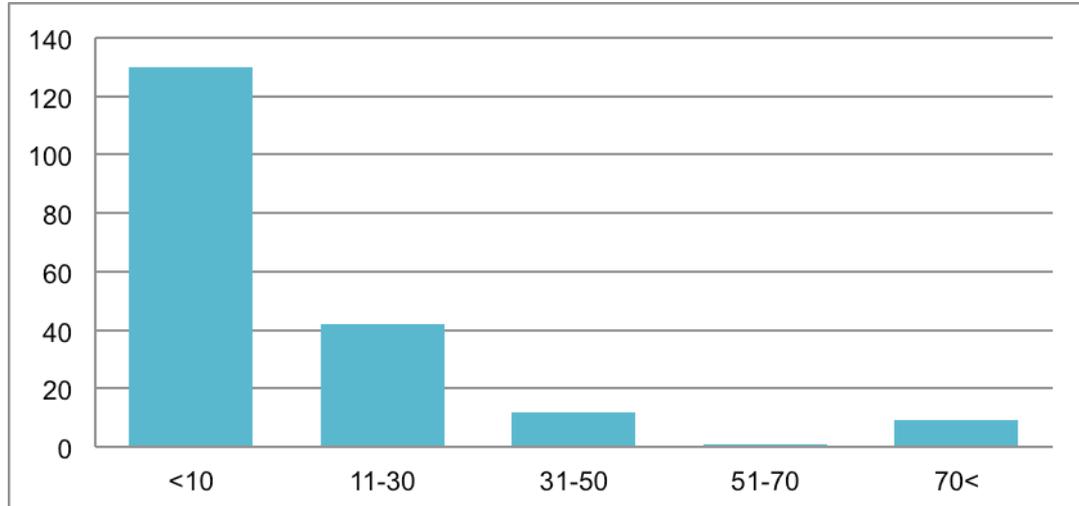


Figure 6. Average amount of temporary agency workers.

As it can be seen in Figure 6, 69,5 percent, which is a majority of the respondents, said that they have ten or less temporary agency workers leased on average. 9 respondents, which amounts to 4,3% said that they use more than 70 temporary agency workers. The percentage of temporary agency workers in

companies can vary a lot, as there might be a company that has thousand employees in total and only ten temporary agency workers. Then again there can also be a company where half of the workforce is leased from an employment agency.

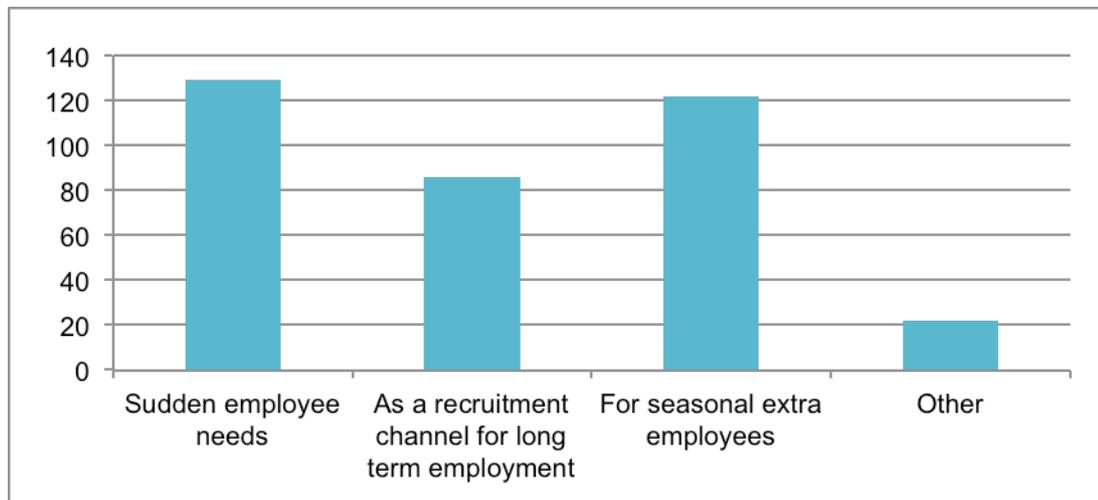


Figure 7. Reasons for using temporary agency workers.

Figure 7 shows the situations where temporary agency workers are used. Respondents could again choose more than one of the answering options. The most popular answers were sudden employee needs with 35,90% and seasonal extra employees with 34%. This shows that companies have grasped the basic idea of temporary agency work. It is an easy way to get employees when there is a high peak in demand. In these situations companies can save a lot of time and money.

24% said that they use temporary agency workers as a recruitment channel for long-term employment. It is good to notice that user companies realize that they can in a way try workers, and if they are good in what they do, the company can then proceed to hire the temporary agency worker to their own payroll.

4.4 Preferences in employment agencies

In this part of the questionnaire, the respondents were asked about their situation regarding employment agencies, what they value in an employment agency when tendering and other preferences that may affect the decision of hiring outside workforce.

In question 9, the companies were asked to tell how many employment agencies they use for their recruitment needs. The answers were quite equally dispersed. First of all, 15 people did not answer this question. Those are most likely the ones who don't use employment agency services at all. 41,4% of the respondents, which is the majority, uses only one employment agency. It is the easiest way, especially if you only use one service from an employment agency. 32,6% said that they use three or more companies. It was surprising that two companies got the least answers with 26%. Using multiple employment agencies can be explained with the fact that there are a lot of small agencies in Finland. Bigger employment agencies can provide companies with a lot of temporary agency workers, and sell other services in addition to that. If companies use smaller employment agencies, they might have to use many companies to deliver a lot of temporary agency workers, or use multiple agencies to deliver different services.

When asked whether companies are satisfied with the employment agency they are using, 95% said that they are satisfied. Those who answered no specified that they are not happy with price, the skill level of the temporary agency workers, or the quality in general. Two people also said that they use multiple companies, and they are not satisfied with one of them. Twenty-two people skipped this question; they are most likely the ones who don't use employment agency services.

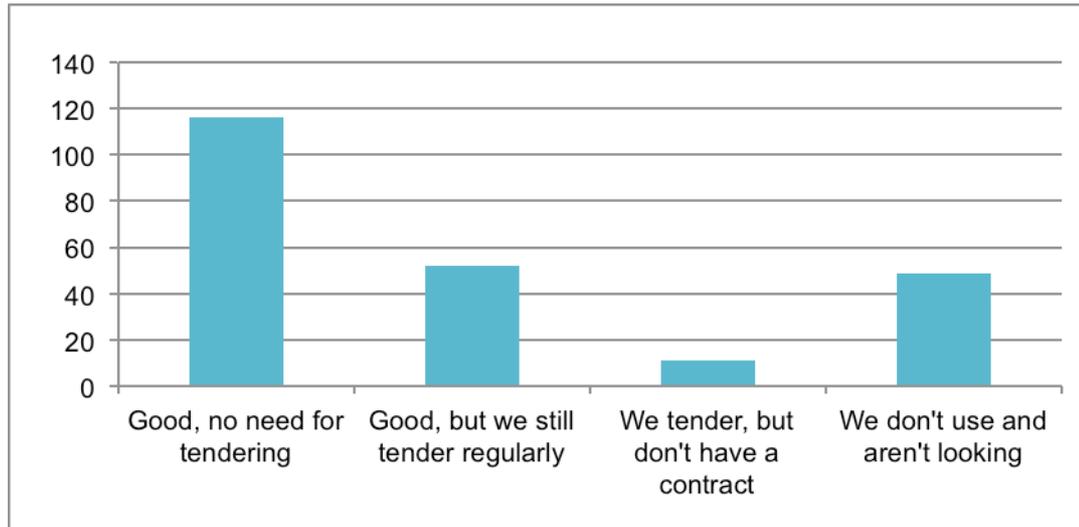


Figure 8. Current situation in companies regarding employment agencies.

Following the previous question, companies were asked more specifically what is their situation with employment agencies. As most were satisfied with their employment agencies, it was no surprise that 50,80% of the respondents said that they have a good situation, and there is no need for tendering. As it can be seen in Figure 8, 22,80% of the respondents said that they have a good situation but still do tendering regularly. This is often done in order to keep the competition fresh and get a good deal from employment agency. 21,50% do not use and they are not tendering either. This reflects to the fact that some of those have not used employment agency services at all, and some of them have used them in the last 12 months, but aren't interested right now.

Question 12 asked the respondents if they think that employment agencies advertise enough. 82% said that employment agencies do advertise enough. This can be connected to question 5, where it was established that companies have found the employment agencies they use with sales personnel contact or connections. Many of the smaller employment agencies do not advertise in media, but still companies think that there are enough advertisements. This further enforces the fact that straight contact with phone calls and emails is more appreciated than advertisements. Only 7% said that employment agencies don't advertise enough, and 11% said that they do not know.

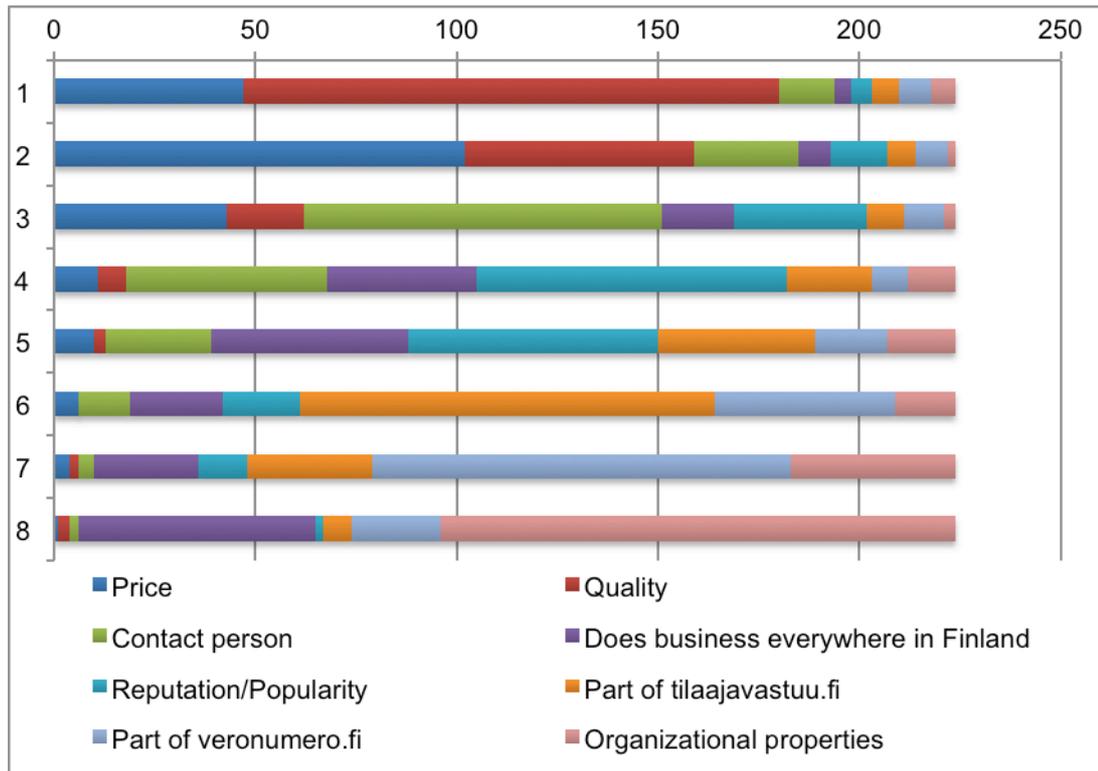


Figure 9. Importance of different factors in choosing an employment agency.

Figure 9 shows how respondents of the questionnaire rated certain factors that may have an effect in the tendering and choosing of employment agency. 1 was the most important factor, and 8 the least important. The eight factors are represented from the most important to the least important based on the rating average. The first two, quality and price are not surprising. 59,40% of the respondents put quality as their first option, and 45,50% put price as their second. In the previous questions, some respondents specified how they are not satisfied with the quality of temporary agency workers in the employment agency they are currently using. No matter what the industry is or what the commodity or service is sold, quality and price always go hand in hand. It is understandable that user companies want good quality workers with low price. Five respondents placed quality lower than fifth place, where as eleven people placed price in lower importance than five.

Contact person and the reputation of the company also seem to be important for the user companies. A good contact person in the employment agency will

make a great difference, as the user company will most likely be in contact with the employment agency in several occasions with their employee needs. Having a good reputation and being well known amongst potential user companies can also be useful, as user companies get recommendations from others and as it was found earlier, employment agencies are found by networks.

The other half of the factors is more irrelevant to the user companies. Aspects like being part of *veronumero.fi* and *tilaajavastuu.fi* are helpful to boost the image of an employment agency. They are mostly used in construction industry, so the fact that they are irrelevant can be dependent on the industry of the respondents.

Doing business everywhere in Finland can be important to bigger companies that have offices or production all around Finland as well. The least important factor was the organizational properties of the employment agency. It was placed in the last place by 128 respondents and its rating average was 6,93.

Question 14 asked which trade union the user companies would prefer for their employment agency. 86% of the respondents said that the trade union does not matter to them. This can be explained with the fact that in most employment contracts employment agencies will use the collective labor agreement of the user company.

9% said that they prefer employment agencies that are part of HPL (Private Employment Agency Union) and 4% said that they prefer PALTA (Service Industry Employees). Two respondents chose the "other" option, and specified that they prefer an employment agency that is part of the Finnish Construction Trade Union.

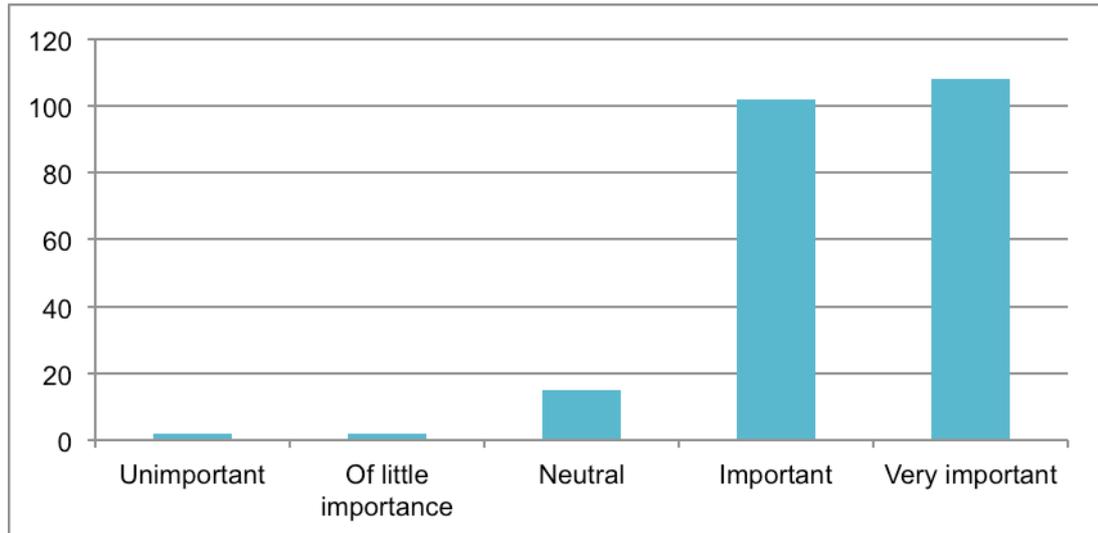


Figure 10. Importance of customer service in employment agencies.

The importance of customer service in employment agencies is shown in Figure 10. Clearly it is an extremely important factor for the user companies. After all, employment agencies do B2B with user companies, who are their customers. It is very unlikely that an employment agency will be any good if they don't have proper customer service.

As the last question, I asked how the companies would like to be contacted for their employment agency needs. 43,40% said that they would like to be contacted personally, by a sales person in the employment agency. As found earlier, this is a good way of contacting user companies, as they get immediately the feel of the agency's service and make a decision of buying based on the connection with the sales person.

E-marketing was also a popular option, even though in question 5 only 12,3% of the respondents said that they found their employment agency through e-marketing. This is interesting, because it can be possible that user companies like e-marketing, and then they will take contact themselves if they are interested. In the end E-marketing does not generate that many sales, but it is more enjoyable for the customer.

Figure 11 shows that 6,20% actually said that they would take contact themselves if they want to use employment agency services. These were those companies that most likely do not use any employment agency services. From those that chose the “other” option, most said that they do not have any need right now, so they just wanted to skip the question. One person said that they do not want direct marketing, and two people said that employment agencies take too much contact.

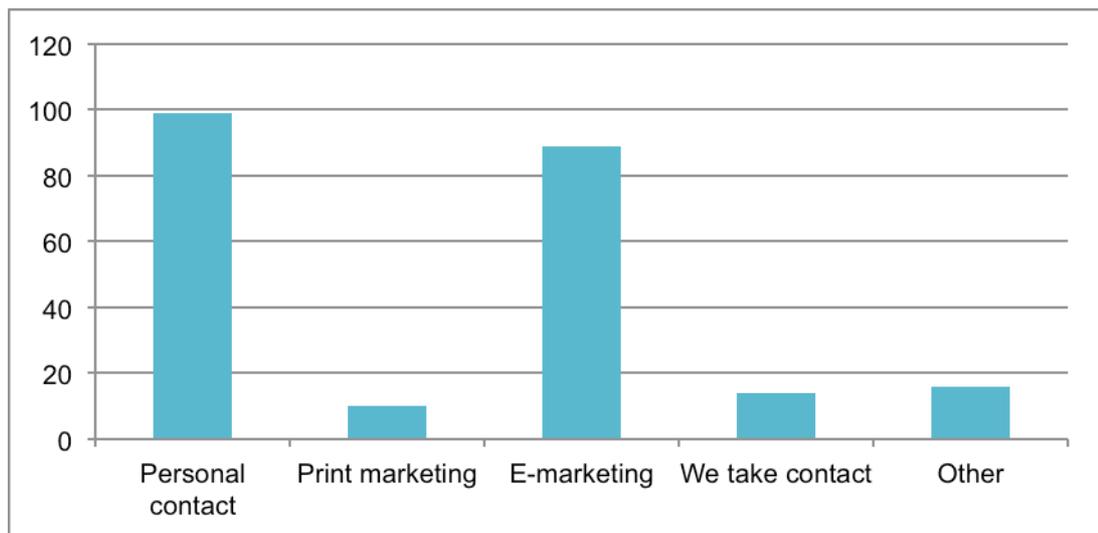


Figure 11. Preference in way of employment agency contact.

The final part of my questionnaire was the lottery for the travel gift card. 147 of the 230 respondents, or 63,90% that finished the questionnaire left their contact information. From those, a winner was drawn and the gift card will be sent to them by company X, with a note from me and the CEO of company X.

5 CONCLUSIONS

As companies become more aware of their possibilities of using outsourced workforce, the demand for temporary agency workers rises. Because of this, there are now more employment agencies offering their services to user companies than a decade ago. The industry is growing constantly, and in order to stay in the competition, employment agencies need to develop their services. (Viitala, 2007)

The occupational safety and health administration defines temporary agency as follows: "In temporary agency work, the employer leases their employees to the work assigned by another employer (user company). The employee works under the supervision of the management of the user company and the working usually happens in the workplace of the user company. The user company pays compensation to the licensee of the labor force, not to the employee. His or her own employer will pay the employee". (Työsuojeluhallinto, 2013.)

The responsibilities of an employer are divided between the user company and the employment agency. Using temporary agency workers has low risks for the user company, as they do only have to conduct training for the temporary agency worker and supervise them. Everything is done by the employment agency, including paying their salary, handling healthcare and calculating annual holidays. (Elomaa, 2011)

There is no uniform collective labor agreement for temporary agency work. Employment agencies can use their own labor agreement, but if they do not have any, they will use the labor agreement of the user company that the temporary agency worker is licensed to. (Salli, 2012)

There can be multiple reasons for using employment agency services. One reason can be a situation where user companies are prohibited of hiring new employees because of employee co-operation negotiations. Often the easiness of using temporary agency workers drives user companies to license employees, as well as financial savings. As employment agencies further develop their ser-

vices, user companies can further outsource their HR management. (Viitala, 2007)

The research conducted in this thesis was done in co-operation with company X. This means that all of the questions for the questionnaire were designed to help them get a good picture of the potential market and improve their services accordingly. Based on the theoretical research and the questionnaire results, it is clear that making a contact with user companies can be hard as there are almost 2000 employment agencies in Finland.

Most of the potential for the industry is in the Southern Finland for Company X, as they have offices in Turku, Helsinki and Tampere. Although they are a relatively small company, they are still established in the industry.

The key elements are to find a customer and after making a contract, keep them happy. Based on the results of the research, companies like to be contacted through personal contact. Most often user companies have found their employment agency with a contact from the sales personnel. Contacting potential user companies personally gives a good impression, and further supports the image that you have good customer service. After establishing a relationship with a user company, it is important to be active and helpful with any question they might have.

Having a good internal communication throughout the employment agency helps in customer service. Company X should utilize their corporate online system where all of the orders and licensed temporary agency workers and their information is gathered helps an employment agency to stay informed of all the things happening in the company, thus being able to answer questions from clients.

Price and quality of the temporary agency workers that are leased to the user company are important. Getting good quality workers who have potential of becoming permanent workers with low compensation is an ideal situation for user companies. Mostly user companies are unsatisfied with the price they are paying or the quality of workers they are getting from the employment agency. The

pricing of employment agency services varies a lot depending on the case. Company X should go over their pricing strategy, and make sure that they can offer competitive prices while still maintaining profitability. They should also ensure that they evaluate every job applicant carefully in order to assure the quality of their temporary agency workers.

This research process was very interesting and further deepened my interest in HR. It was interesting to find out what the actual HR managers and CEO of companies thought about employment agencies. There is a possibility to further research the subject of temporary agency work and employment agencies from the perspective of the temporary agency worker.

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APPENDICES

Covering letter

Hei,

Olen Sanni Parkkisenniemi, ja opiskelen Turun Ammattikorkeakoulussa kansainvälistä liiketaloutta (NINBOS09). Kirjoitan tällä hetkellä opinnäytetyötä työnimellä Private Employment Agency services in companies, eli aiheenani on tehdä tutkimus henkilöstöpalveluyrityksien käytöstä eri yrityksissä.

Tutkimustani auttaisi paljon, jos voisitte vastata Internet kyselyyni. Vastaaminen kestää noin viisi minuuttia.

Kysely löytyy täältä: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/N823YW5>

Kyselyn lopussa on mahdollisuus osallistua 100 euron lahjakortin arvontaan.

Vastausaika päättyy Sunnuntaina 17.11.2013 klo 12.00.

Ystävällisin terveisin,

Sanni Parkkisenniemi
Turku University of Applied Sciences
International Business
NINBOS09

Questionnaire

Tämän kyselyn tarkoituksena on kerätä tietoa henkilöstöpalveluiden käytöstä yrityksissä.

Vastauksia ei jaeta eteenpäin kolmansille osapuolille.

Yhteystietonsa jättäneiden kesken arvotaan 100 euron matkalahjakortti.

Kysymys 1. Millä alalla yrityksenne toimii?

Media/viihde

Internet/tietotekniikka/tietoliikenne

Koulutus/aattellinen

Tekstiiliteollisuus

Metalliteollisuus

Logistiikka

Markkinointi/markkinointitutkimus

Hallinto

Energiateollisuus

Maatalous/ravintola-ala/elintarviketeollisuus

Autoteollisuus

Matkailuala

Rahoitus/pankki

Laki

Lääketiede/lääketeollisuus/hoitoala

Rakennusala/kehitys/teollinen muotoilu

Merenkulkuala/kuljetusala

Muu

Kysymys 2. Millä alueella päätoimipaikkanne sijaitsee?

Ahvenanmaa

Etelä-Karjala

Etelä-Pohjanmaa

Etelä-Savo

Kainuu

Kanta-Häme

Keski-Pohjanmaa

Keski-Suomi

Kymenlaakso

Lappi

Pirkanmaa

Pohjanmaa

Pohjois-Karjala

Pohjois-Pohjanmaa

Pohjois-Savo

Päijät-Häme

Satakunta

Uusimaa

Varsinais-Suomi

Kysymys 3. Kuinka monta työntekijää yrityksessänne työskentelee?

<50

50-99

100-249

250-499

500-999

1000<

Kysymys 4. Oletteko käyttäneet henkilöstöpalveluyrityksien palveluita yrityksessänne viimeisen vuoden aikana?

Kyllä

Ei

Kysymys 5. Miten olette löytäneet käyttämäenne henkilöstöpalveluyrityksen?

Printti markkinointi

Sähköinen markkinointi

Myyntihenkilön yhteydenotto

Muu, mikä?

Kysymys 6. Mitä henkilöstöpalveluyrityksien palveluita olette käyttäneet? Valitkaa yksi tai useampi.

Työvoiman vuokraus

Rekrytointi

Psykologiset soveltuvuustutkimukset

Palkka- ja taloushallinnon palvelut

Muu, mikä?

Kysymys 7. Kuinka monta vuokratyöntekijää yrityksessänne on kerralla töissä?

<10

11-30

31-50

51-70

71<

Kysymys 8. Missä tilanteissa käytätte vuokratyövoimaa?

Äkillisiin työntekijätarpeisiin

Rekrytointikanavana pidempiaikaisiin työsuhteisiin

Sesonkiaikana lisätyövoimana

Muu, mikä?

Kysymys 9. Käytättekö mieluummin yhtä vai useampaa henkilöstöpalveluyritystä henkilöstöressurssienne täyttämiseen?

Yksi

Kaksi

Useampi

Kysymys 10. Oletteko tyytyväisiä käyttämäänne henkilöstöpalvelu yritykseen?

Kyllä

Ei, mihin ette ole tyytyväisiä?

Kysymys 11. Millainen tilanne teillä on tällä hetkellä henkilöstöpalvelu yrityksen suhteen?

Hyvä, ei tarvetta kilpailutukselle

Hyvä, kilpailutamme silti säännöllisesti

Kilpailutamme, mutta emme ole tehneet sopimusta

Emme käytä, emmekä hae

Muu, mikä?

Kysymys 12. Mainostavatko henkilöstöpalveluyritykset mielestänne tarpeaksi palveluitaan?

Kyllä

Ei

En tiedä

Kysymys 13. Kuinka seuraavat asiat vaikuttavat henkilöstöpalveluyrityksien kilpailutuksessa ja valinnassa? Laita tärkeysjärjestykseen 1=tärkein, 8=vähiten tärkein.

Hinta

Laatu

Toimii koko Suomessa

Maine/tunnettavuus

Mukana tilaajavastuu.fi ohjelmassa

Mukana veronumero.fi ohjelmassa

Asiakaskohtainen yhteyshenkilö

Työnantajan järjestäytyneisyys

Kysymys 14. Mihin liittoon kuuluvan henkilöstöpalveluyrityksen palveluita käytätte mieluummin?

Henkilöstöpalvelualojen liitto (HPL)

Reminder letter

Hei,

Olen Sanni Parkkisenniemi, ja opiskelen Turun Ammattikorkeakoulussa kansainvälistä liiketaloutta (NINBOS09). Kirjoitan tällä hetkellä opinnäytetyötä työnimellä Private Employment Agency services in companies, eli aiheenani on tehdä tutkimus henkilöstöpalveluyrityksien käytöstä eri yrityksissä.

Jos olette jo vastanneet kyselyyn, kiitos paljon osallistumisestanne!

Mikäli ette ole vielä vastanneet, on teillä vielä muutama päivä aikaa täyttää kysely. Vastaaminen kestää noin viisi minuuttia.

Kysely löytyy täältä: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/N823YW5>

Kyselyn lopussa on mahdollisuus osallistua 100 euron lahjakortin arvontaan.

Vastausaika päättyy Sunnuntaina 17.11.2013 klo 12.00.

Ystävällisin terveisin,

Sanni Parkkisenniemi
Turku University of Applied Sciences
International Business
NINBOS09