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STAFFING, From page 1

The pair knows that Hanford is their bread-and-butter for the highly technical positions they specialize in, but they've recently done international placements for local companies. And they believe they can help smaller businesses as well.

"So many of the local companies like ours focus just on Hanford, and it appears other companies out there need recruiting help, too. I think it's a segment that we can really help," Copenhagen said.

Copenhagen and Laws agreed it seems harder to find qualified people now than when they entered into the field of staffing work. When today's college students go into technical programs, they commonly focus on computer-related skills. Meanwhile, demand for skilled workers continues to grow in traditional

technical areas, they said. The two recruiters recommend that students consider traditional technical careers such as civil engineering, structural engineering, architecture or electrical power engineering.

With some companies at times struggling to find qualified workers, the staffing services industry has become one of the nation's fastest growing industries, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics.

In fact, with the addition of an average of 234,000 jobs per day, the staffing industry grew by more than 8.7 percent in 2005, marking the third year of growth for the industry, according to a survey performed by the American Staffing Association.

Additionally, the Bureau of Labor Statistics estimated the industry would gain about 1.6 million new jobs between 2004 and 2014, due to increasing demand for flexible work arrangements, coupled with significant turnover in these positions.

However, that doesn't mean growth will come easily for ANR Group. The partners said successful recruiting requires time and specialized skills beyond the capacity of many human resources departments—who are already scrambling to handle the demands of existing employees.

"It may take hours of searching and making phone calls to find one qualified person—the right person. Then you have to be able to talk them into at least considering the position you are trying to present to them," Copenhagen said.

The pair hopes to have 25 contractors on their payroll each month and to annually place 100 people in new positions.

Many of ANR Group's candidates are referred by someone who knows of an individual looking for a job change. They also find candidates who want to leave a permanent job to try a six-month overseas assignment, to make more money or to fill time during retirement.

"We work with a lot of retired engineers, because they are perfect for contract positions," Copenhagen said. "Retirees like to have the option to work when they want or when there is an interesting and exciting project, without making a long-term commitment."

They have also found that contract positions can be a good fit for individuals who are between full-time jobs or for college students entering the workforce. Temporary assignments give these new graduates a chance to gain experience while they're looking for the right job.

And although there are many candidates for the placement work ANR does, the partners know they have their work cut out for them.

"I think it is just how much drive you have and how much patience you have to find the right individuals. If you don't have patience, you better get out of the business," Laws said.

Reach ANR Group at (509) 946-1725.

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