



Part-time Recruiters Become Experts At Time Management

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Part-time work is alive and well in the recruitment industry, with many recruiters finding they can bill almost as much in a three-day week as when they were working full-time. Here are tips from six recruiters on how to make it work.

Be realistic about what you can achieve

Kirsty Robb, a perm recruiter with Eloquent Staffing who works part-time after having her first child, says that when scaling down to part-time work, it's important to manage your own expectations of what you can achieve - "you've got to be able to step back and say, 'I can only do what I can do'".

As well, if you work in an organisation that doesn't have many part-time employees, you might need to manage your boss's expectations. "You have to be clear about what you can, and can't, get done," she says.

How much you can do might depend on your demands at home, she says. "If your kids are at an age where they sleep a lot that's fantastic, but if not, it's harder."

Most of the recruiters in this article agree that some work is usually necessary on their "off" days, but usually this is limited to answering calls on their mobiles or checking and responding to emails.

Clients generally supportive

Robb says she has strong relationships with her clients and these "trust me and know my limitations".

None has ever complained about her working part-time and Robb ensures they understand her hours and that they can contact her about urgent matters on her mobile. She says working part-time has made her more able to anticipate clients' needs before they arise, so she's prepared to manage them.

Emmy Hathaway, the managing director of Sales Source Australia, is in her 60s and has scaled her working week down to four days, in order to look after her young granddaughter one day a week.

She confesses, though, that it's been difficult to let go of her old work ethic, and feels guilty about not being full-time (to the extent that she sometimes goes into the office on Saturdays or starts extra early on her work-day mornings).

Hathaway says her clients are supportive of the arrangements as they've built good relationships, and they know they can contact her by mobile on her day off.

Lona, who prefers not to name her employer, says her clients are "generally fine" about her working part-time "because they know that I do absolutely everything that I can for them when I am here". If they need help on a Monday or Friday then her manager, who is supportive of the arrangement, can assist them.

Part-timers more productive

Karen Gordon-Lewis, from Neal Andrews + Associates in New Zealand, says that while part-time recruiters work fewer hours, they're capable of being just as productive as full-timers. (Two of the company's top three billers are part-time account managers, and Gordon-Lewis says "it makes business sense for us to make it work".)

Her firm employs four part-time account/candidate managers and one part-time admin assistant. Three of these are mothers, so the company allows them to work around school and childcare hours.

Gordon-Lewis says that when the part-timers are in the office, "they are 150 per cent productive and totally focused on making deals happen, because they simply don't have time to waste".

Part-time workers seem able to look at a CV and "immediately know whether to waste their precious few minutes on them", she says. "They're very good at juggling everything in life and can certainly do it with recruitment."

Agreeing with Gordon-Lewis, both Robb and Lona say their pay hasn't suffered significantly by cutting back their hours.

Robb says that in her three days, she bills at about 80 per cent of her previous totals, while Lona says: "I find that I am billing the same as many full-timers as the days that I am here I am really *here* and focused on my job."

Good prioritisation a must

Nicole Underwood, who is the general manager of [Entrée Recruitment](#), works three days a week. She says the key to finding balance is to "make sure that you are doing the important rather than the urgent. In recruitment there always seems to be something urgent... but being clear on what makes the difference and doing those important things first is critical".

In the past three years, most of Entrée's senior consultants have had children, but Underwood says she has managed to retain them all by offering a return to part-time work. (Her team now includes six part-timers and six full-timers.) Those working part-time work, on average, three days a week and bill close to the same amounts as they did when working full-time, she says.

As GM, Underwood stresses the importance of dividing her day into staff meetings, client visits and planning/staff development time. She has also empowered other staff members to take on tasks that were formerly hers, such as signing off invoices and advertising approvals.

More strategic approach needed

All the recruiters here agree that a more strategic approach is needed to manage a part-time workload.

Robb says working part-time requires a much more strategic approach to tasks and time management. She needs to ensure she has fully briefed her clients and candidates before leaving the office, and adds that having support with marketing (such as group emails to candidates) in her absence helps her stay on top of her targets.

Lona says the key to making her three-day week work lies in devoting Tuesday mornings to scheduling candidate registrations and client visits for the week.

She admits that it sometimes feels like there aren't enough hours in the day, "but I know that for most recruiters that would be true whether you worked a 24, 40 or 60-hour week".

Supportive environment crucial

Kathy Wall from Nizza Recruitment Services says that full support from an employer is absolutely necessary to ensure the success of part-time work arrangements.

Since returning from maternity leave last year, she spends three days a week working as a resourcer, and Nizza has similar arrangements in place for other resourcers, consultants and account managers.

Wall believes that the work environment, along with the right attitude, is essential to succeeding in part-time work, and notes that she has access to systems from home to manage and check her emails on the days she doesn't go to the office.

Lona agrees, and adds that she believes she is a more loyal and productive worker as a result of the flexibility her employer allows her.

Hathaway encourages her staff with young children to spend more time with them, by allowing them to arrive for work later and leave earlier, and says she believes they're actually more productive as a result.

"As long as they do not let down the client or the candidate it can work very well," she says.

Meanwhile, at Entrée, Underwood says part-time staff are provided with flexible start and finish times, remote access, administration support, mobiles, and car parks available 24/7.

Underwood adds that it's crucial to have a stable full-time team in the office to assist, as "without that support it would be near impossible to achieve the same results".

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