



January 27, 2022

Staffing Challenges

BUSINESS INSIGHTS

Written by: Kirk Hoaglund, Chief Executive Officer

One of the challenges we've always faced as a professional services organization is staffing: finding the right people, in a timely way, to create enough capacity without creating too much. As challenging as that has been for many years, the events of the past two years introduced a whole new set of problems. The lead time on finding and hiring a qualified candidate has stretched to double what it once was. In this highly competitive market, a candidate who accepts an offer might rescind upon receipt of a better offer. Candidates are in a position to be highly selective and look for just the right situation.

Our work is entirely project based, so changes happen in chunks, not on a smooth line. If we assume, for instance, that a project leader can manage two projects and we are operating at capacity, the next new project requires adding a new project leader, but doesn't provide the demand for full utilization. That impacts our cost and the new project leader's job satisfaction. While we can strive for

some flexibility in the start dates of projects, no service organization really wants to put off a project start!

As with the processes that we use to run our projects, we address this challenge by looking at real data. We've been around long enough to have metrics on thousands of projects. Our project metrics let us look at things like project churn and late delivery challenges. These point to a project that is straining the staff assigned. Over thousands of projects, we've been able to create capacity metrics that allow us to predict the staffing required to meet predicted demand.

Our two, key leadership roles on every project are Delivery Lead (DL) and Technology Lead (TL). We know that a DL can handle more, simultaneous projects than a TL. We have a large amount of data that shows the upper and lower ranges for project demand for each role. If we stray above the upper range, the project will be at risk. If we stray below the lower range, we drop below our target margins.

Whenever a sales discussion leads to a likely positive outcome for us, a new project, we place that project on our overall timeline. That same timeline shows our staffing metrics (number of DL and TL resources available). It shows when other projects will complete or when resources become unavailable. We need to hold the DL and TL staffing levels between their respective lower and upper limits.

Adding predicted lead-time for hiring, we can reliably plan for hiring activities. We can also use this information to suggest changes to start dates for projects that are more flexible. We know, based on the metrics accumulated over thousands of projects, that if we hold our staffing levels “between the lines” we’ll deliver quality work, on time, with high customer satisfaction, and with engaged, happy staff.

What could be better than that?

CONTACT US

