

Staff for every occasion or use contract or consulting labor?

If your company is like most, times are tight on budgets, yet to remain competitive and sustain growth, your business needs to be ahead of its competitors. Sounds much like a double-edged sword, right? I've been on both sides of the equation. On one side, staffing corporate America with full-time personnel to cover what seemed to be a never-ending growth curve, and a consultant, filling the gap between what companies have on staff, and what they need, hence the "Chief Technology Officer on Call" tagline that we use at Competitive Network Solutions. I've seen large companies reorganize on a regular basis, which really means that they're trying to cut costs. What normally happens is that they pick and choose who to "let go", and who to keep, and invariably, some of the good ones go as well.

What that leaves is a void in some larger companies when a new project, product, or capability needs to be developed. That's where an experienced outside contractor or consultant can save the day, provided you find the right one with the right kind of experience. In smaller companies, an occasional need exists for someone to lend technical and project guidance to a project.

In the area of vendor management, who better to manage a vendor than someone who came from the same industry, even more so, from the same company that you're trying to manage. As Telecommunications Industry veteran, I've found that I've been able to prove carriers wrong in their troubleshooting, network provisioning, billing, and contractual obligations. Most of the time, my time is "re-billable" by my customer to the carrier, so it's a win-win situation for the customer. The problem is solved, and they're not out any expense. This void, especially in the Telecom sector, became evident a couple of years ago when the Sales Engineer, Technical Consultant, or other titles were eliminated in lieu of quota-bearing sales people. Provisioning errors became more widespread, troubleshooting errors became more frequent, and the "Account Team" didn't pay any attention to their existing customers' growth needs.

This void is where the successful consultant with the right experience can truly be a valuable asset to a company. A trusting resource for counsel, vendor management, troubleshooting, strategic planning, project management, and advice; the right consultant can be just what you need, without breaking the budget. Just remember, with a consultant, there's no employment agreement. We work on an as-needed basis, only when needed, not like other firms that charge a retainer fee for doing nothing at all.

David Parker is a 20-year veteran of the Technical Sector, and has managed Competitive Network Solutions, Inc. providing services as "Your Chief Technology Officer on Call" for over two years since leaving a major Telecommunications Service provider in 2001.