Who Are Canadian Part-Time Workers?



Over the past few years and very much in the news over the past few months we have heard more and more about the growing contingent of part-time workers. In particular over the past year gains in part-time jobs have outweighed gains in full-time jobs in the Canadian economy. Between June and July Stats Canada reported that full-time employment fell by 59,700 while part-time job increased by 60,000. Of course, stats can be easily manipulated. Between June and July all types of jobs including many in the education sector do temporarily go on hiatus and many part-time summer jobs open up.

In fact, the bigger picture shows that over the past 12 months (July 2013-July 2014) full-time jobs have declined by only a cumulative 3,100. However, part-time employment has increased by 118,500. Since the beginning of 2014 a total of 95,000 job have been added to Canada's economy and of those 60% have been part-time. Is Canada becoming a nation of part-time workers?

Last year the HR Insider reported on data found in a survey that indicated that almost half of the working population in the GTA and Hamilton was working in precarious jobs: Is Job Insecurity Making Your Workers Sick?; precarious jobs frequently being part-time, contingent and self-employment.

Why the Increase in Part-time Jobs?

Statistically the reality is that most jobs, 80% according to a new TD Bank report, 'Part-time Nation: Is Canada Becoming a Nation of Part-time Employed?' are comprised of full-time employment. Increases in part-time hiring reflect many factors including the choices of people entering the workforce who seek part-time roles and the fact that hiring for full-time jobs had picked up since the recession ended and in some organizations part-time work is just filling in the gaps. Generally, however, part-time jobs are fuelled in large part by two demographics that are in the marketplace; seniors and more women; individuals with a disability and youth/students comprise a smaller percentage of the part-time workers.

70% of part-time employees are women; 8% are seniors

For many part-timers the reasons for working part-time are often very individual and personal.

Seniors: Canada's aging population may have found their way into part-time employment for 2 reasons, restlessness and financial need. Older workers are choosing to stay

in the workforce longer, but cut down on their hours. Reasons also include the strong health of older workers who are able to stay employed longer either by choice or financial need.

Women: The vast majority of part-time employees are women, many of whom by choice, necessity, availability of jobs (economic and labour market reality) work part-time. Many of these part-timers have returned or are completing their education, they may be raising children or grandchildren or acting as caregivers to partners or aging relatives or do not require a full-time job and/or wish to have the flexibility to volunteer their time while working part-time. Not all part-timers are part-time by preference. Frequently women are more likely to be employed in roles or industries where part-time work is more common; service industry including hospitality, non-profit sector, education (not necessarily as teachers but as support staff), social services, support services and so on.

Persons with Disabilities: For reasons that again are very personal individuals living with disability often work part-time. In some cases this is because their disability makes working full-time a struggle. Some individuals with a disability cannot sustain a full-time job because of their physical or mental health or logistical reasons such as transportation challenges, the time required for managing daily routines and chores, limitations on when they can obtain assistance and the same range of challenges and reasons women and seniors experience.

Youth and Students: Of course it comes as no surprise that a small number of part-time employees are youth or students including college and university students; primarily as a result of availability but also because they may not have the qualifications for many of the available jobs or trouble competing against more qualified applicants. Additionally their commitments to school and the same reasons as the other individuals face including providing care for a family member, logistics and transportation and more contribute to their choice or situation as a part-time employee.

Even as the economy improves and many organizations seek to increase full-time employees there will remain a solid number of part-time employees of all types. In fact, there is a growing conversation about the benefits of working fewer hours. More individuals may look at the idea of a 3 or 4-day work week as a way to find a balance between work and living. Understanding your workforce and working with them to accommodate their needs and preferences is an excellent way to build a strong organization of engaged employees.

Source:

Stats Canada July 2014 Labour Force Survey

Part-time Nation: Is Canada Becoming a Nation of Part-time Employed? TD Bank