Ethan Allen
WORKFORCE SOLUTIONS

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Flexible Workforce Planning Guide

Scale your operations and fill workforce gaps without a permanent headcount commitment.



Why Workforce Flexibility Matters in the Hudson Valley

Right now, the Hudson Valley region is experiencing unpredictable demand across sectors. Several factors are causing this, from a declining population and an economy that's "out of alignment" with the region's shifting demographics, per Pattern for Progress.

But even when conditions are uncertain, business must go on. When demand spikes, you have to meet it. And you have to be prepared to adjust your workforce when demand goes back down.

So the real question when you're heading into a busy stretch usually isn't whether you need help. It's whether you need permanent help, or just more flexibility right now.

When workloads climb, you have three options: push your current team into overtime, commit to a full-time hire, or scale with flexible staffing. Each carries a different cost and a different level of risk. This guide walks through all three so you can match the right approach to the need in front of you.

Overtime
Lean on your current team.

Full-Time Hire
Commit to headcount.

Flexible Staffing
Scale up and down.

KEY TAKEAWAY

Permanent headcount is a fixed cost you carry whether demand holds or not. Flexible staffing is a variable cost you scale up when you're busy and scale down when you're not. That single difference is what lets you grow output without locking in long-term risk.

The Workforce Fit Assessment

Before you read further, take two minutes to see where your situation currently stands. Circle one answer per question, add up the points in the blue circles, and read your result at the next page.

1 How long will you need this support?

Seasonal or temporary spike	3
Recurring but unpredictable	2
Clearly long-term and stable	0

2 How urgently do you need someone working?

This week	3
2–4 weeks	2
30+ days / planning ahead	1

3 How confident are you that this demand will last?

Unsure if it will hold	3
Likely, but not certain	2
Confident it's permanent	0

4 What happens if the role stays open?

Burnout, missed deadlines, or customer impact	3
Added overtime for the current team	2
Manageable for now	1

5 Could this role become permanent?

Maybe. I'd want to test fit first	2
Yes, if it's the right person	1
No, it's a true short-term gap	3

SCORE YOUR ANSWERS

Your Result

Add up the points from your five answers, then find your range below to see the most cost-effective path for the need in front of you.

10–14 POINTS

Flexible staffing is likely your most cost-effective move.

Your need is urgent, uncertain, or temporary, which makes flexible staffing the most risk-averse option.

6–9 POINTS

Temp-to-hire may be your lowest-risk path.

You may have a longer-term role but want to reduce hiring risk. Temp-to-hire lets you evaluate fit before you commit.

0–5 POINTS

A direct hire may be right, and we can help you fill it faster.

Your need looks stable and long-term. A permanent hire likely makes sense; the priority becomes filling it reliably and quickly.

Overtime, Full-Time, or Flexible Staffing: Which Costs Less for Your Workforce?

When demand spikes, every employer has the same three choices: push your current employees into overtime, hire more full-time staff, or implement some kind of flexible staffing model.

But which one costs the most? The answer may surprise you. Here's how it breaks down once you consider both the direct and indirect costs associated with each option.

OPTION 1 Rely on your current team (overtime)

Leaning on your current team, pushing them into overtime, often feels like the lean, budget-conscious choice. But beyond short-term "stretch" periods, it ends up racking up more costs:

- Sustained overtime can cost 2.2 to 2.5 times a worker's regular hourly rate once you factor in payroll taxes, workers' comp premiums, and the productivity drop that sets in past roughly 50 hours a week.
- Workers start to experience compounding exhaustion, fatigue, and burnout. This leads to more errors, more rework, and a higher rate of accidents and near-misses on the floor.
- Burnout drives turnover at the worst possible time. For example, losing an experienced worker mid-surge is far costlier than losing one in the off-season.

OPTION 2 Make a permanent hire

A direct hire is the right call when the demand for the role will be sustained over the long term. But committing to permanent headcount in the middle of an uncertain stretch is expensive and hard to reverse.

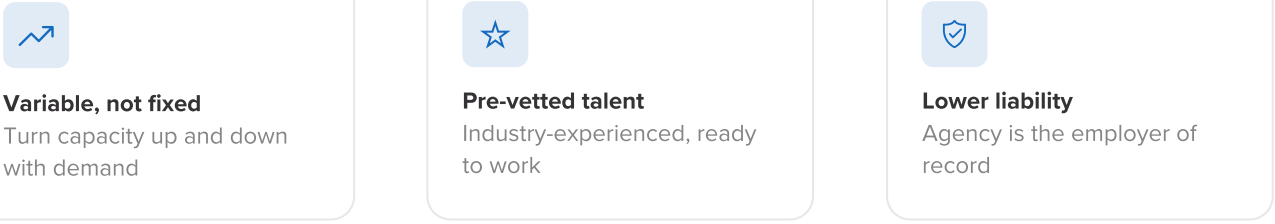
- You're on the hook for recruiting, onboarding, training, and benefits before the role is even proven.
- The cost of replacing a mis-hire can run 50% to 200% of annual salary, which is a steep penalty for a decision made under deadline pressure.
- If demand ramps back down, you still carry the headcount and the fixed cost that comes with it.

Overtime, Full-Time, or Flexible Staffing: Which Costs Less for Your Workforce?

OPTION 3 **Scale with flexible staffing** **MOST COST-EFFECTIVE**

For most short-term, seasonal, or uncertain needs, flexible staffing is the most cost-effective of the three. It gives you the output you need without the fixed cost or the long-term commitment.

- It's a variable cost you turn up and down with demand, not a fixed cost you carry year-round.
- You get pre-vetted, industry-experienced candidates without spending your team's time on the search.
- No long-term benefit commitments, and far less overtime pressure on your core team.
- Lower hiring risk: if a placement isn't the right fit, a vetted replacement can step in.
- Because the agency is the employer of record, the agency carries the workers' comp policy, shifting a meaningful share of peak-season liability off your books.



Overtime, Full-Time, or Flexible Staffing: Which Costs Less for Your Workforce?

STEP 1 | Identify the type of need

Start with the assessment above. Is the need temporary, recurring, urgent, seasonal, project-based, or genuinely permanent? Pay special attention to PTO and leave coverage, which can exacerbate your staffing shortages. If you rely too heavily on overtime, you may start to see more fatigue- and burnout-caused errors.

STEP 2 | Quantify the risk of leaving key roles unfilled

Be specific about what actually happens if a given role (or group of roles) stays open: delayed work, missed deadlines, burnout, slipping lost opportunities, or overloaded managers. This helps you to quantify the cost of the vacancy itself. The longer a needed role sits open, the more it costs you.

STEP 3 | Weigh speed and compliance together

Moving fast and staying compliant are not opposing goals, but rushing a hire can put both at risk. Skipped I-9 verification, worker misclassification, and compressed onboarding are common shortcuts that invite fines, workers' comp spikes, and legal exposure — and peak season is exactly when these mistakes happen most.

> **HOW A QUALITY AGENCY LOWERS THAT RISK**
>
> A reputable partner handles screening, background checks, I-9 verification, and proper worker classification before the first shift, and reviews the client's equipment and PPE standards with each candidate. Safety orientation specific to your site remains your responsibility; but the administrative and classification burden doesn't have to be yours alone.

STEP 4 | Move quickly without sacrificing quality

Once you know which model you need, the next step is to move quickly without sacrificing the quality of your hires. This is where a local staffing partner plays an essential role:

- We're constantly interviewing and maintain a database of pre-screened candidates, so you're not starting a search from zero.
- Our industry-specific recruiters place people already know your line of work, so they don't pull random candidates across unrelated roles.
- We've helped Hudson Valley businesses manage the complex regulatory and compliance requirements associated with New York and federal law for 55+ years.

Industry-Specific Examples of Flexible Staffing

What does this actually look like in practice? Here are some tangible examples of how flexible staffing helps fill critical gaps in manufacturing, landscaping, hospitality, and more.

Industry	Where flexible staffing fits	Representative roles
Manufacturing, Warehouse & Distribution	Production increases, surge coverage, and relief from overtime burnout	Assemblers, machine operation support, picking and packing, material handling, receiving
Landscaping & General Labor	Fast crew support when timing and weather windows matter	Crew labor, equipment operators, seasonal grounds support
Hospitality & Events	Reliable coverage when events book on short timelines	Event staff, front-of-house, banquet and setup, service support
Administrative & Clerical	PTO and leave coverage, plus short-term office support	Reception, data entry, customer service, general office support
Professional & General Business	A non-seasonal uptick in demand across roles, not just industrial work	Paralegals, customer service representatives, general business support

• 50+ YEARS IN THE HUDSON VALLEY

How Ethan Allen Workforce Solutions Helps

You don't have to choose between doing nothing and making a permanent hire before you're ready. For more than 50 years, we've helped Hudson Valley employers add the right support at the right time and pull it back when the surge passes.

- **Local expertise.** Five decades of relationships and market knowledge across the Hudson Valley.
- **A ready candidate pool.** We're always interviewing and pre-screening, so qualified people are available when you need them.
- **Industry-specific recruiters.** People who understand your work and place candidates who fit it.
- **Flexible options.** Temporary, temp-to-hire, direct hire, RPO and recruitment, and payrolling. We choose the right model for your specific needs.
- **Payrolling without the added burden.** Already identified the people you want? We can carry them on our payroll and handle the administration, so the management burden doesn't fall on you.

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Talk to our team about flexible staffing support.

Call **845.471.9667** Email **support@eaworkforce.com**

Visit **eaworkforce.com** to start the conversation.