Optimizing the Staffing Agency Quality Control Process

An Inavero Research Summary

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Conducting a check-in phone call with clients and placed permanent and temporary employees at the start of any new assignment is as fundamental to the process as timecards and background checks for many in the industry.

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- Most firms have a formal process in place and 99 percent of staffing professionals surveyed felt the feedback they gained from conducting quality control (QC) check-ins was valuable.

- Nearly 250 industry professionals from the highest performing agencies (those included in the Best of Staffing™ competition) weighed in on a recent survey conducted by Inavero. This study identifies 5 best practices for implementing a successful quality control process to manage your client and placed job candidate relationships.

## 5 Best Practices for Creating a Successful QC Process

Each of the five below QC process best practices is described in detail within the the following pages.

1. Implement a formal QC process with accountability metrics.

2. Have 3-4 check-in points with clients and placed talent throughout the course of the placement .

3. Measure the satisfaction of your clients and placed talent throughout the process.

4. Consider using email to conduct at least some of the check-ins – client satisfaction is higher for those who do.

5. The key question to ask clients is, *"If you had a permanent position available in your company, how likely would you be to recommend hiring this person?"*

1. Implementing a formal process for checking-in with clients and job candidates throughout an assignment is key to success.

- Nearly 85 percent of staffing agencies have a formal quality control process in place.

- More than 80 percent believe it is "extremely important." However, less that half said they complete their check-ins 100 percent of the time.

- There isn't a single touch point throughout an assignment where more than half of agencies are checking in 100 percent of the time with their clients and talent (figure 1).

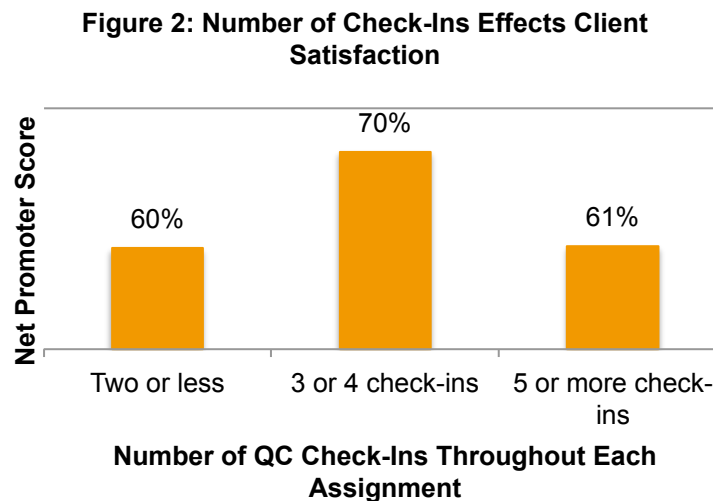**Figure 1: Perceived Importance and Implementation of QC Check-Ins**
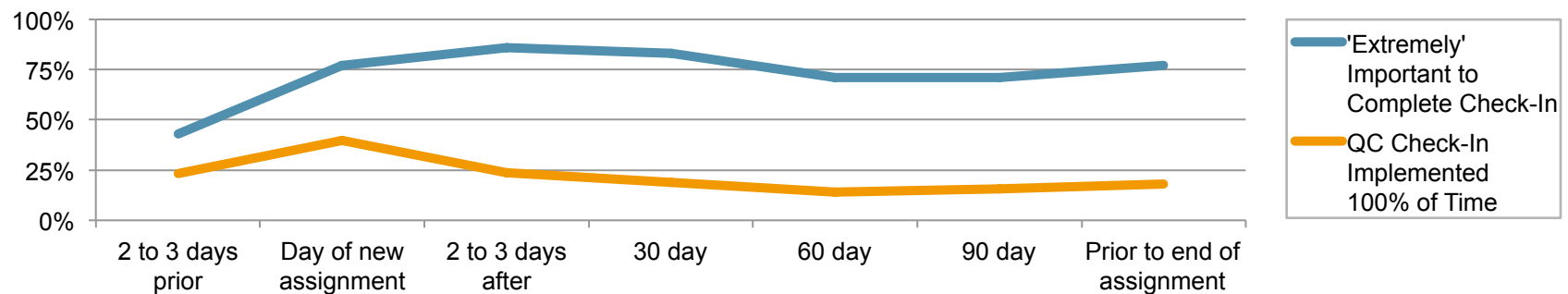
1. Implementing a formal process for checking-in with clients and job candidates throughout an assignment is key to success.

- More than half of agencies have a process that requires a check-in at the 60 or 90-day mark for longer assignments, yet just 20 percent said their agency always performs the check-ins. For the agencies that have a process, the check-ins tend to diminish over the length of the assignment.

- Only 44 percent of agencies reported they have a policy in place to check in with clients and placed talent 2-3 days before the start of the assignment. However, those who do check-ins during that time achieve higher satisfaction with a Net Promoter® Score, more than 10 points higher on average than those who don't. This check-in, 2-3 days before the start of any assignment is a critical time to manage the expectations of your clients and talent and assure the job will run smoothly from the beginning.

2. Put in place 3-4 check-in points with clients and talent placed on assignment.

- Most agencies reported having 5-7 check-in points during an assignment. However, the study found that agencies who implement a process with five or more touch points achieved significantly lower satisfaction levels than those who limit check-ins to 3 or 4 (figure 2). Having 3 to 4 check-ins optimizes the satisfaction of your clients and talent.

- Too many touch points may fatigue a relationship. Clients expect each touch point to deliver value and if they are contacted too frequently, delivering value each time is difficult. In open-ended suggestions from staffing agencies over the last several years, Inavero found that clients ask to be contacted less frequently, even if they are satisfied.

Figure 2: Number of Check-Ins Effects Client Satisfaction

**Number of QC Check-Ins Throughout Each Assignment**

3. Measure the satisfaction of your clients and placed talent throughout the process.

- More than 40 percent of agencies don't have a formal way of tracking their team's accountability to the check-in process. Recruiters and account managers conducting the check-ins need goals as specific as their sales and recruiting metrics if you expect them to remain accountable to this process 100 percent of the time.

- Your quality control process is designed to ensure the satisfaction of your clients and placed talent. Therefore, satisfaction is the single best metric to determine if your process is working.

- Keep you metrics simple, yet accurate.

  - ✓ Track the issues
  - ✓ Identify if similar issues arise across multiple placements
  - ✓ Track issue resolution
  - ✓ Hold your team accountable for following though and resolving the issues

- Clients and placed talent who report the lowest levels of satisfaction with an agency are often more upset with the lack of resolution to an issue than they are that the issue initially occurred.

4. Consider using email to conduct at least some of the check-ins – client satisfaction is higher for those who do.

- Three out of four agencies conduct their quality control check-ins primarily by phone (figure 3), depending on the primary sector that the agency works in. Industrial and office/clerical sectors are more likely to conduct check-ins by phone, while professional, IT, and healthcare sectors are more likely to rely on email as their primary form of communication for QC check-ins from clients and talent.
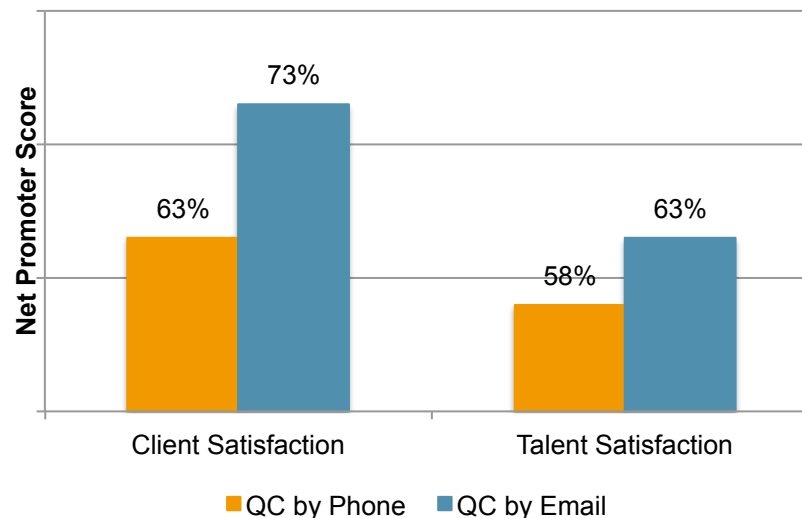
Figure 3: Primary Method of Conducting QC Check-Ins
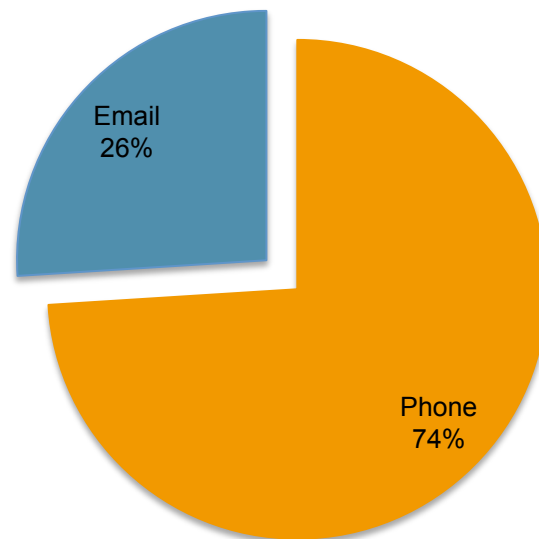
Email
26%

Phone
74%

4. Consider using email to conduct at least some of the check-ins – client satisfaction is higher for those who do.

- Although a minority of agencies (1 in 4) primarily use email to conduct their check-ins, the ones that do use email achieve significantly higher satisfaction with both clients and placed talent (figure 4) across all sectors.

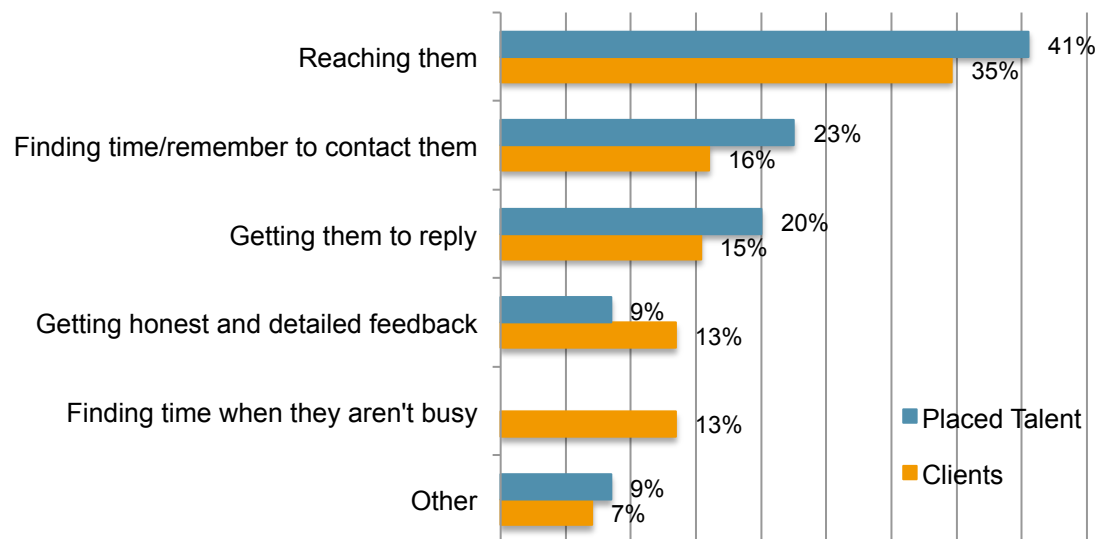**Figure 4: Net Promoter Score by Primary QC Method**

- Many agencies continue to push the idea that phone calls are the best way to build a relationship, but it's often not the most preferred method by clients and placed talent who have difficulty finding time in their hectic schedule to talk on the phone.

4. Consider using email to conduct at least some of the check-ins – client satisfaction is higher for those who do.

- The largest barrier to quality control check-ins for the field is gaining the ability to reach clients and talent (figure 5). For phone calls, reaching people is a huge issue and once recruiters finally get them on the line, it's tough to get honest and detailed feedback. For email, the challenge is getting them to respond, but when they do, the feedback is more honest and detailed than if contacted by phone. Either way, your process only works if you are able to get timely, accurate, and actionable feedback from clients and talent.

Figure 5: Biggest Challenges of QC Process

Challenge	Placed Talent	Clients
Reaching them	41%	35%
Finding time/remember to contact them	23%	16%
Getting them to reply	20%	15%
Getting honest and detailed feedback	9%	13%
Finding time when they aren't busy		13%
Other	9%	7%

5. The key question to ask clients is, "If you had a permanent position available in your company, how likely would you be to recommend hiring [insert job candidate's name]?"

- 76 percent of staffing professionals listed 'Talent's Overall Performance' as one of the three most important things they learn (figure 6) from check-ins.

Figure 6: Most Important Questions to Ask Clients
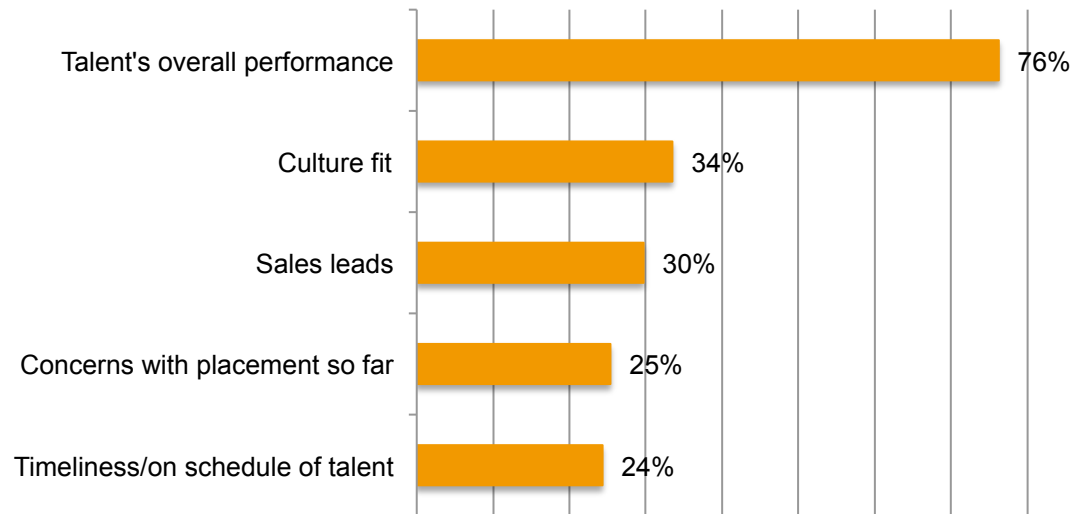
5. The key question to ask clients is, "If you had a permanent position available in your company, how likely would you be to recommend hiring [insert job candidate's name]?"

- 1 in 4 agencies use the QC process to generate additional sales. However, it is important to use caution when employing this type of strategy. Agencies with the highest client satisfaction (Best of Staffing™ winners) were nearly half as likely to use their QC process as a way to generate new leads as those with lower satisfaction levels. Remember, the key purpose of the QC check-in is to ensure an exceptional experience for clients and placed talent. If that part is done correctly, new leads and referrals will follow, but the inverse is rarely true.

- Along with asking key questions, provide open opportunities in your check-ins for your clients and talent to ask you any general questions they may have. Depending on your sector, there are additional questions that should be included. For example, if your agency serves the industrial sector, it's also important to ask about the safety of the work environment. Similarly, if your talent is traveling for the job, it's important to gauge how they are settling into their new living arrangements.

Your check-in process is a way for your agency to stand out from the rest. When creating this process, identify ways for your firm to provide a unique experience that excites your clients and talent and inspires them to share their experience with others.

Optimizing this process will increase their happiness, retention, and referral rates, ultimately growing your business.

Survey Methodology

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This survey was conducted online within the United States by Inavero, and includes responses from 243 staffing agency leaders and employees. Forty-four percent of respondents were VP level or above, and 37 percent were branch-level employees. Nearly a third of responses were from agencies with more than $100 million in revenue, while 35 percent worked for agencies with less than $7.5 million in annual revenue.

The survey was conducted in December of 2012. Respondents included staffing agency professionals from Inavero's industry database and social network. With a pure probability sample of 243, one could say that with a 95 percent probability, the overall results have a sampling error of +/- 5.41 percentage points. Sampling error for data from sub-samples is higher and varies.

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ABOUT INAVERO

Inavero administers more staffing agency client and talent satisfaction surveys than any other firm in the world. Inavero's team reports on satisfaction surveys from more than 500,000 staffing agency clients and talent each year and the company serves as the American Staffing Association's exclusive research partner.

For more information about Inavero, visit us online at www.bestofstaffing.com, or www.inavero.com.

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