

PSG: Heavy investment in training key to success

More than 60 hours to start — then weekly sessions and mentoring

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Twenty-five-year-old Kristen Coppins is an anomaly among her college friends.

Three years after graduating from University of Massachusetts-Amherst, Coppins is still with the same company she joined fresh out of school,

while most of her friends have switched jobs a couple of times. Coppins gives the credit to her employer, Boston-based **Professional Staffing Group**, which snagged the Boston Business Journal's title of best place to work among small businesses for 2006.

"Within the first six to eight months I

worked here, I knew this was a place I wanted to be for the long term," Coppins said. "I realized the growth potential that was here."

PSG, founded in 1996 by Aaron Green, has 50 internal employees and about 1,000 temporary employees at any given time. The company places temporary or contract workers in four areas — office support, financial, creative and technical.

PSG invests heavily in training for all of its employees, including its temporary workers, and provides opportunities for rapid advancement. The company also offers health benefits, tuition reimbursement and other perks to temporary help after only a short time with PSG.

Coppins started out in an entry-level position, working the phones and interviewing job placement candidates. Since the summer of 2003, Coppins has been promoted five times and now is the group manager of the company's creative division, which includes graphic design and Web design.

"I actually had come in as a candidate to be placed," Coppins said. "I had gotten out of school and the job market wasn't fantastic at the time."

Coppins instead took an internal job at PSG, saying she was drawn to the company's dynamic and high-energy atmosphere. She took advantage of the various training the company offered, including a sales leadership development program, to assist her as she climbed the ladder into management. "The best part about our training



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Professional Staffing Group founder Aaron Green makes sure his employees are trained for just about any situation that may confront them.

is they give you training across the board," said Coppins, noting that training didn't stop after she was no longer a new employee. "They set you up to be successful."

Green, the company's president, said training is a core value at PSG. New hires receive 60 hours of classroom training, covering an assortment of topics, including the types of positions it fills and screening candidates. Weekly hour long training sessions are offered for all levels of employees. Subjects such as employment law can be helpful for everyone in the company, while topics such as recruiting might be targeted toward a certain group.

Managers spend a significant amount of time helping new employees learn the ropes. The company also recently instituted a mentoring program that pairs newer hires with more senior-level employees.

"For virtually every type of situation someone can be confronted with, we build a process around that and train for that," Green said.

Green said such training is typical of larger companies in his industry, but rarer among companies his size.

"We are a small company, but we're on a mission to get larger," Green said. "If we act small, we'll always be small." Green cited career development

as another key for PSG's success.

"We're constantly helping people get that training for their next role," Green said. "That's definitely helped to reduce turnover."

Green said company officials strive to infuse the company with a positive atmosphere focused on teamwork. "We recognize small and large wins," Green said. "We invest a lot of time in trying to find ways to congratulate people."

Michael Connors, the company's CFO and a minority owner, said there are many examples of people who joined PSG, were put on rapid promotion paths and rose to management.

"Pretty much all of our senior people came up through the ranks," Connors said. "That's one reason why people want to work here."

Some employees who thought they were joining PSG for the short term as entry-level workers are now managing teams of people and "making more money than they ever thought they would," Connors said.

The low turnover rate also benefits clients, who like the same person handling their needs, Connors said.

"One of our beliefs is developing people, so training is definitely a high priority for us," Connors said. "We're in the people business. It's all about people and the development of them."



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