

Contractor doctor: how can I avoid late contract renewals?

Dear Contractor Doctor,

I've been contracting for almost a year now and I've completed two contracts. On both occasions my clients have only offered to renew at the very last moment-- literally a few days before the end.

This is in spite of the fact that I've prompted the client directly around 4 weeks prior. I'm also still getting only 3-month contracts which is a problem too.

It's hard managing when I only know at the very last minute if I'll have work or not. What can I do?

Thanks

Rebecca

ContractorDoctor says:

You need to take steps to avoid these terribly late renewals. Usually, clients and agents want to renew earlier so that they are certain you'll stay on the job. Perhaps your agent is particularly slow about it; wake the agent or the client, as the case may be, up to the fact that you want to renew when you inform them 4 weeks before. Nag them a bit-- in a polite way-- and make sure they understand that you're about to start looking.

Get an answer, or at least, a reason why they can't give you one.

Offer them two rates. A higher rate for a 3 month contract, and the same rate for a 6 month contract. When looking for alternative contracts quote a higher rate and insist on a longer duration. There's little point changing one contract for a similar one, and having something better to go to gives you more bargaining power anyway.

But if all else fails, you just have to find another client. Some clients are just bad clients, and sometimes the best bet is just to move on. If you find that the field is too narrow, consider looking abroad or expanding your skill set. If the industry you specialise in really only runs short-term contracts, then either of these solutions might solve that problem as well. Try the various job boards websites for offers both at home and abroad.

And , to avoid running short when you're out of work, try to save up a 6-month buffer of cash in your company if you can. Then you won't be forced to accept less favourable contracts due to economic pressure.

Good luck with your contracting!

Contractor Doctor

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