

Contractor doctor: is it acceptable to ask for relocation expenses?

Dear Sir/Madam,

I have an enquiry which I hope you can help answer for me. I am currently a desktop support engineer based in London and have been offered a 2 months contract in Holland. As I would need to be relocating for these months is there any extra fee I should ask for relocation.

Many thanks

Colin

Dear Colin,

Thanks for your question. The answer to this is all about sales and negotiation.

There is certainly no harm in asking for more money to cover your additional expenses, and it does not seem unreasonable to expect the client to pay those extra costs. Like all business deals you should ensure you agree everything up front and get it in writing rather than trying to charge for services/costs after the event based on assumptions.

If this was an existing contract with a new requirement then you could expect to charge additional fees to your normal rate, since they are asking you to go abroad. For new contracts the relocation costs would be expected to be covered by you and the agent/client will undoubtedly argue that the rate is reflective of the need to travel, and also that it is irrelevant that you live in the UK – it is you after all that is choosing to move. Saying that, if they are have a need to hire someone from the UK and cannot get someone locally this will increase the strength of your negotiation position and you could simply ask for a higher rate.

From a sales perspective we suggest approaching your agency/client with an alternative and assumptive close: "How would you like to cover the relocation costs? Would you prefer to arrange my travel and accommodation separately, or shall I do this and charge it back to you?". This might work better than "Are you prepared to pay my relocation costs?" which would usually respond in the answer 'No.'

Ultimately, the negotiation will depend on how strong your bargaining position is - how keen the agency/client are to hire you, and how keen are you to only take the role if you get extra expenses.

The strongest bargaining tactic is to give the impression that you will never take the role unless they pay you more expenses, which works if it is true on your part and they are very keen for you to start work, and have the extra money you are asking for. Your weakest position is to turn up with a begging bowl and simply ask for more money whilst giving the impression that you will take the role even if you get nothing extra!

Like all negotiations the agency will be asking probing questions to establish your position, and you should do the same to establish theirs. For example, the agent might ask "Will you take the position if they cannot pay any extra costs?". You need to turn this around by saying "Let me turn that one around, how much extra are the client prepared to pay to cover my additional expenses?"

Our dedicated on [sales for contractors](#), might give you some valuable pointers when it comes to negotiation.

Good luck with your contracting!

Contractor Doctor

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