

Contractor doctor: i've signed a terrible deal. what can I do?

Dear Contractor Doctor,

Hello doc, I am on an incredibly low rate due to poor negotiation when I got the role. When my contract was renewed in June, I complained to my agency.

The agency asked me to write a letter explaining why I wanted a raise. I sent the letter, and talked to the client who, thanks to my good performance, agreed to a rate increase. On that basis I signed a renewal agreement.

After some weeks, I asked the client what had happened, and it turned out that the agency never even contacted the client. I wrote my agency again only to be told that the renewal agreement is in place and cannot be modified.

I feel cheated since this should have been sorted before I accepted the renewal. I have already started to look for another contract (even though I enjoy working with the client). I'm thinking of giving 1 week notice even though the agency contract calls for 4 weeks.

Thanks.

Kay

Contractor Doctor says:

Okay, there may be a solution here, but the first point is: never, never sign a contract unless it says exactly what you want it to say. Once you've signed you have no legal rights to change what is written for the term of the contract, unless there is a clear sign of abuse.

Part of being a contractor involves knowing the rules of how business is done. That you cannot alter a fully executed contract is one of these rules. We suggest that you read our [dedicated legal section](#) carefully to know your rights in the future.

With that said, you have every right to feel cheated as the agency promised you something and didn't do it. This notion of "write us a letter about it" seems to be a successful stalling tactic which some agents use. It's a little naughty, but not illegal. You are under pressure to get the renewal finished, so you trust the agency to solve the problem.

But whether or not you write a letter, you must see that the contract or renewal states explicitly what conditions and terms you agree to. Otherwise, don't sign!

Now for a possible solution: talk to the client. You get along well with the client, you say, and the client probably doesn't want to lose you. Before you give notice or look for another job, give the client a chance to pressure the agency for you. Agencies don't like to upset their clients for obvious reasons.

But if you feel you must leave, be careful about how you give notice. The agency may refuse your last payment if you don't respect the notice period as stated in the contract.

Yes, the words in the contract are the final authority on almost everything. Make them say what you want them to, for you will have to live with them for a long time.

Good luck with your contracting!

Contractor Doctor

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