

## Contractors need a more efficient market says PCG

All the players in the contracting industry need to work more closely with each other, says John Thomas, chief executive officer of the [Professional Contractors Group](#) (PCG). "It is crucial that in the next few years, all the players in the contracting industry make an effort to work together to bridge unfortunate gaps that are affecting levels of service," says John Thomas, chief executive officer of the London-based Professional Contractors Group.

"There is still far too much mistrust between companies who hire contractors, the agents who work for them, and we contractors ourselves," Thomas explains. This is caused by a lack of communication. The companies tend to hire very large agents who work with smaller ones that actually engage the contractors. What can happen, what often does happen, is that the terms agreed to by the companies and the larger agents do not always get properly communicated to the smaller agents and the contractors themselves. This creates a high degree of frustration at every level in the process," Thomas says.

Working with the London-based organisation INTELLECT, the trade association for the UK IT, Telecommunications, and electronics industries, Thomas and the PCG are trying to bridge these gaps. "We need to create a whole different marketplace," Thomas insists, "one that will move away from confrontation and mistrust that arises because of these gaps in communication. Clients spend too little time with contractors, and we are the ones who actually do the work. Working more closely with contractors, clients would learn to spell out far better exactly what they expect in terms of results."

INTELLECT last year put together an initiative called "Prof IT" in which the PCG took part. The initiative launched a series of measures designed to improve organisational professionalism throughout the ICT value chain. The move focuses on six key elements: integrity, processes, people, communication, relationships improvement, and citizenship. The initiative is designed to implement a range of activities to ensure successful programme/project delivery, including the Intellect Code of Conduct, IT Supplier Code of Best Practice and Concept Viability. "Prof IT" has received full support from the government, and includes a strategic alliance formed by the [British Computer Society](#) (BCS), [e-skills UK](#), Intellect and the [National Computing Centre](#) (NCC), and the PCG.

“ There is still far too much mistrust between companies who hire contractors ”

John Thomas - PCG

"But that effort is only part of what we are trying to accomplish," continues Thomas. "We are constantly seeing public projects that go over budget targets, operations that are set up but that never see the light of day. Most of these failures are due to people in the industry not talking to each other. It's time to put an end to all this," Thomas maintains. Having himself taken part in every level of the industry, from working for a company that engages contractors to working with agents, to being a contractor himself, Thomas is well-placed to bridge these increasing communication gaps.

"Ours is an industry of rapidly increasing importance," Thomas says, noting that University of Kent Professor Richard Scase has predicted that contracting will make up about 40 per cent of the workforce by 2010. "While I don't know if we will grow to be that large, we contractors clearly are, and will continue to be clearly be one of the most important components of the workforce in the coming years," Thomas says. "Certainly it is not one that government can afford to ignore."

While Thomas sees steady demand in our contracting market, he notes that there are conflicting forces at work. "We are about to see at least a mild economic slowdown, so it is clear that there will be pressure from finance directors to limit budgets. Contractors should keep this in mind when negotiating rises. But at the same time, there will be enormous pressure from CEOs to increase competitiveness, and there are also efforts underway like the European Commission's Lisbon Strategy (improving IT competence in the European Union) so there are also drivers to expand the market at work.

“ contracting will make up about 40 per cent of the workforce by 2010 ”

Professor Richard Scase -  
University of Kent

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