

Contractors can win work and help clients out of recession through knowledge transfer

Contractors searching for the next lucrative contract could introduce a new angle to their sales pitch and increase their chances of winning contracts if they are prepared to share some of their skills with permanent staff and help firms out of recession.

Offering to help train existing staff as part of the regular [hourly or daily rate](#) is a new way for contractors to market themselves, as this input by skilled and experienced contractors can raise employee morale and increase workforce productivity.

Adding value by sharing knowledge

For the client, this presents great value. Not only can they bring in the services of a highly skilled and experienced contractor, but they also have a well-qualified expert willing to share their knowledge with permanent employees.

The introduction of 'can-do' contractors to teams of permanent employees can be a sure-fire way for clients to improve battered morale, increase loyalty and help set up client businesses to take advantage of post-recession opportunities.

An added benefit is that contractors do not appear on the head-count as they are business-to-business suppliers whose services can be switched on and off according to need.

Survivor syndrome and the talent crunch

Although the level of compulsory job losses through redundancy in large firms has been comparatively low compared to the recessions of the 80s and 90s, many firms have still shed permanent staff by the hundreds and thousands.

Permanent employees that remain after such purges typically suffer from survivor syndrome, where the guilt they feel as a result of keeping their jobs at the expense of redundant friends and colleagues can manifest as:

- o Falling morale, with a knock-on effect lowering productivity and performance,
- o Reduced loyalty, where employees move on at the earliest opportunity when the up-turn comes, and
- o 'Business as usual' taking priority over driving the business forward.

In addition, organisations shedding large numbers of permanent employees often lose the experienced and skilled personnel they need most to take them through the downturn and maximise opportunities when the recession ends.

And, even when companies do retain their best workers, those permanent employees often jump ship at the first opportunity, leaving firms facing the future with inexperienced and lower-skilled workers who lack the skills to turn businesses around.

Contractors can do their bit

That's where contractors can make a real difference to their clients, by offering to share their knowledge. In fact, contractors prepared to go the extra mile for clients can use their willingness to pass on expertise to demonstrate at interview the extra value they can add.

And, because of their status as business-to-business suppliers, not employees, contractors are rarely included in the headcount. This is a boon to managers with recruitment freezes in place, particularly where those freezes have been imposed more to appease shareholders and the board than through any business logic.

In addition, canny contractors keen to secure an edge when competing for oversubscribed contracts can demonstrate 'soft-skills' that complement their technical competences, by showing an understanding of the challenges faced by the client project manager.

Plus in some sectors suffering acute skills shortages despite the recession, such as areas of IT and engineering where there is still a talent crunch in many organisations, contractors can use their flexibility and knowledge-sharing approach to help win contracts.

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