

Contractor doctor: what is the 'fake contractor' tactic to bypass the agencies?

Dear Contractor Doctor,

I have heard of a tactic used by some shrewd contractors to bypass agents and go direct. This is where you invent a fake contractor to hook an agent who then arranges an interview for you. After getting the name of the contact you then attempt to go direct at an increased rate by cutting out the agency. The agent then has no way to trace the fake contractor, and if they are found out another one can be invented

Have you heard of this and can it work?

[Name supplied]

Yes, I heard about this a few years ago and it does not seem to have taken off.

It's basically turning around the phishing technique used by agencies. i.e. where agents advertise misleading or non-existent jobs in the hope of attracting contractors who might be moving on and can provide them with lead information.

This 'creative sales technique' will obviously upset agents if they find out and contractors could find themselves being black listed in the same way that some contractors will not work with certain agencies.

Another hurdle is that many companies have a policy of not taking on contractors directly, and prefer the cushion of an agency in between.

In business, the sensible long term approach is to build business relationships based on mutual respect and trust. This type of activity might work in the short term, but isn't really a long term tactic.

Ironically, it is something that agents have actually been known to do to each other in the past! Although with not much success since an experienced agent can usually tell if they are speaking to another one.

The time and effort you could expend conducting this type of strategy, not to mention damage to your reputation, probably isn't worth it for the extra few quid you could make on your rate.

A more solid option might be to simply use the time to train yourself to earn that higher rate.


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