

## Online collaborative network provides opportunities for recession-hit contractors

Contractors faced with decreasing opportunities for contracts potentially have an additional method of finding work, thanks to the launch of a new collaborative tool by contractor and freelancer website [www.freelanceadvisor.co.uk](http://www.freelanceadvisor.co.uk).

Many contractors have found that, as one-man-bands, they are restricted from bidding for larger multi-disciplinary projects. But, according to [freelanceadvisor.co.uk](http://freelanceadvisor.co.uk) founder Darren Fell, that's no longer the case.

"We have created an online collaborative network that allows individual contractors and freelancers to build a virtual team online," explains Fell. "This means the scope of work that an individual contractor can tackle has suddenly increased hugely."

### Virtual teams

The 'Network', as the online service is named, allows a contractor to search for fellow freelancers with complementary skill sets. So, if the contract requires a team of several developers plus an analyst, the lead contractor can search for those skills online using the Network.

Online contact and conferencing tools are planned that will allow the team to stay in touch on an ongoing basis as if they were sat in the same office, ensuring that all the collaborators know exactly how the project is progressing and when their input is required.

With contracts becoming increasingly tough to come by, contractors with the right skill sets and attitude to working in virtual teams will find the opportunities presented by the 'Network' extremely welcome, especially as the number of registered users grows.

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Darren Fell, Freelance Advisor

### Rapid 'Network' growth

[freelanceadvisor.co.uk](http://freelanceadvisor.co.uk) was launched in March 2008 by serial digital entrepreneur Fell, who explains that he wanted to support and advise the contracting and freelance community.

"According to research carried out by the [Professional Contractors Group](http://Professional Contractors Group) (PCG), there are currently 1.4 million people freelancing in the UK," continues Fell. "Freelanceadvisor.co.uk is one of the only sites in the UK that is truly written by the community for the community."

Fell aims to grow the site and to expand the 'Network' to have 25,000 registered users within the next two to three years, ambitious plans for growth from a standing start. The number of current users is small, but likely to grow rapidly as contractors start to build trust in the collaborative tool.

### New media

Current users of the [freelanceadvisor.co.uk](http://freelanceadvisor.co.uk) website tend to be from a new media background. This is reflected in the kind of groups emerging in the 'Network' and the types of projects they are working on.

Although not there yet, Fell's long-term vision is to embrace the entire freelance and contractor communities within a network where the creation of virtual project teams and successful implementation of contracts becomes the norm.

"Its tough enough out there for freelancers and contractors and there is no need, with the technology tools we have available now, for communication to be a barrier," says Fell.

### A ray of light during tough times for freelancers and contractors

"Given our current times, freelancers and freelancing is the future, whether companies become more willing to employ flexible, talented staff or redundancy forces people to become self-employed," comments Fell. "Freelanceadvisor.co.uk plans to be helping in every possible way to improve freelancers' existence."

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Fell continues: "Network allows online collaboration between freelancers on bigger projects, and freelancers can also use the trusted group of people they build within Network to pass overflow work to. With the forums already available and planned in Network we wanted people to be able to ask questions and get them answered quickly by the community."

Not every contractor will find the 'Network' is suited to their own style of contracting, and it is likely that agencies will continue to

dominate the contracting market as sources of work. The 'Network' is in its early days and the number of users and collaborative groups needs to grow considerably.

However, for those contractors whose skill set does fit, the 'Network' and [www.freelanceadvisor.co.uk](http://www.freelanceadvisor.co.uk) is well worth a visit, and keeping a close eye on in the future and users and projects increase.

**Published: Tuesday, March 24, 2009**

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