

What to expect when going from permanent to contracting

Introduction

This article answers some of the questions a permanent employee might be thinking about when consider contracting. The steps to becoming contracting are contained in another article: [Steps to become a contractor](#)

Will I be able to work flexibility?

It is very unlikely you will find flexible contract working, in terms of a few days a week or short days. The only chance of this is if you have a contact yourself, or if you finish an existing contract and negotiate a part time renewal - perhaps for a support role. It would then be hard to find another part time contract to fill your spare days (if you want to).

What you can do is work normal hours on a contract and take time off between contracts.

This is discussed more in a contractor doctor article: [Contractor Doctor - Can I Get Part Time Contracts?](#)

Can I take holiday during a contract?

Taking holiday whilst in a contract is perfectly acceptable and 99.9% of employers will manage your holiday time the same as if you were a permanent member of staff. But, remember that you don't get paid when you are on holiday. If you work full time then managing your accounts on working 44 weeks a year will be about right.

“ Taking holiday whilst in a contract is perfectly acceptable ”

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When should I start applying for contracts?

Two to three weeks before you are available. You will need to quit your permanent job first. This is discussed more in a contractor doctor article: [Contractor Doctor - Should I Quit My Job Before Applying For Contracts](#)

Will I be free of politics and toeing the company line?

Don't hold your breath and think things will change dramatically. Just because your pay structure is different doesn't mean politics vanish.

Saying that, there is the benefit of not having to creep as much because you are trying to 'rise up the corporate ladder.' You will find yourself being more frank with your boss and on a level pegging. The 'us and them' is not as strong.

You will find yourself focusing on other aspects and saying different things because your interest is now in the project succeeding, rather than trying to get a promotion.

Will I still have to do 'face time'?

You will still need to do this the same as the permanent staff. The only difference is that you won't have to 'stay on and finish a piece of work late, or work weekends because it will look great on your appraisal etc etc'. You can simply say 'Yes, I'm happy to stay provided you pay me'.

In some organisations the permanent staff might be working from 8am to 7pm. You don't have to join them, although you might be pressured to do so depending on the type of rate you are on. This is discussed more in: [Comparison of Hourly and Daily Contract Rates](#)

“ It is much more satisfying knowing that you get paid for what you do rather than working on promises ”

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You will still have to do 9-5 or whatever is the norm, particularly if you work in a team. If you have a good boss you might be able to flex things a bit, but unfortunately for some middle managers the perception is that 'if you are not at your desk typing away then you ain't working'. Their perception does not change just because your pay structure does.

Will my skills become old? How will I keep up with the latest ones?

It is a myth that contractors cannot remain as a contractor whilst continuing to use the latest skills. The skills issue is discussed in detail in the article [Keeping Your Skills Updated and Avoiding the Scrap Heap](#)

It is a sad fact that many companies do not currently train their permanent staff, and only do so if there is a need on a particular project to do so. When you are contracting you are totally in charge of your own training. If you want to go on a course, or buy book

or anything you can. When you are contracting you gain control of your own professional destiny.

It is one of many myths. Others are discussed in the article [Myths on the Disadvantages of Contracting](#)

Will I get the boring work to do?

No!. If you stay on top with your skills then you will get very interesting work to do. Again, this is another of the many myths of contracting discussed in [Myths on the Disadvantages of Contracting](#)

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Published: Monday, November 21, 2005

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