

Recession is leading skilled workers into dream contracting careers

The recession is changing many skilled workers' lives for ever, and for the better, according to Dave Chaplin, editor in chief and CEO of leading contractor news and resources website, ContractorCalculator.co.uk.

"As the economic downturn has led to permanent employees being laid off in their hundreds of thousands, we've seen thousands taking up contracting as their next career move," explains Chaplin.

"Many who have previously thought about contracting and not taken the plunge, plus others who have never considered contracting as being for them, are finding that life as a contractor is not only better paid, but also a lot more enjoyable than being an employee," he says.

But don't you need specialist qualifications to become a contractor? Not at all, says Chaplin: "To be a successful contractor you need a skill that clients will pay for, and to learn some basic contracting skills like [sales](#), [negotiation techniques](#) and a little bit about [contract law](#)."

Taking stock

Chaplin, who in addition to being an online publisher for the contracting sector is a former City IT contractor and author of the new, critically acclaimed [Contractors' Handbook](#), is seeing a whole generation of workers taking stock of their lives and work.

"One of the Contractors' Handbook buyers on Amazon also bought Man's Search for Meaning, by concentration camp survivor Victor Frankl," explains Chaplin. "That says to me there are a lot of people out there right now asking what their life is all about.

"And," he continues, "when employees realise, as they're doing now, that the supposed security of permanent employment is not all it's cracked up to be, it's no wonder that so many are choosing to take control of their lives and careers by becoming professional contractors."

Workers typically choose the contracting lifestyle for a number of financial and lifestyle reasons. According to Chaplin, "Most contractors report the pleasure with which they leave behind all the office politics and career path pressures, and also say how much they enjoy being left to get on with what they are good at, whilst being very well paid to do it!"

Reasons to become a contractor

So, why go contracting? "The number of questions we have received to our popular [Contractor Doctor](#) section on the website has shot up in the last 12 months," says Chaplin, "with a huge number of permanent employees asking about the 'whys' and 'hows' of contracting."

As the Contractors' Handbook explains in its introduction, most successful contractors chose the lifestyle for the following reasons:

- To do the things they really want to do, which often includes taking more time off
- To avoid the things they really don't want to do
- For the money.

And it's the first two reasons that are cited time and time again as the main reason for becoming a contractor, with the potential for considerably increased earnings proving an added bonus.

Where to learn about core contracting skills

But budding contractors should make some preparations before they choose to search for their first contract, as being a contractor is fundamentally different from being a permanent employee.

"On entering the world of contracting there are some key skills that have to be learned very quickly, and refined over time," warns Chaplin. "These are what I call 'contracting skills', and they are essential for anyone who wants a successful, sustainable and lucrative contracting career."

New contractors have access to a wealth of resources about contracting skills that were simply not available a decade ago. These include websites such as www.contractorcalculator.co.uk, which is full of [how-to guides](#), resources and [contracting news](#). As its name suggests, there are also sophisticated but easy-to-use [calculators](#) that budding contractors can use to check, for example, how much more they are likely to be able to earn.

And the [Contractors' Handbook](#) is a one-stop-shop, providing detailed guidance on everything the

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novice contractor needs to know, plus advanced sections for experienced contractors who want to up their game.

What contractors needs to know

Your core skills are unlikely to be enough to get you the best contracts and keep you in work when you want it, warns Chaplin. "Being a highly skilled programmer, or engineer, or whatever skill you might have, is just the start to finding lucrative contracts, because winning contracts is a very different process to applying for permanent employment."

As Chaplin highlights, contractors need to acquire contracting skills, such as creating [highly targeted CVs](#), developing interview techniques that are more like sales pitches with the contractor as the product, and learning negotiation skills that get the best possible deal for the contractor.

"Some people try contracting without preparing themselves with even the most basic contracting skills," says Chaplin. "Not surprisingly, they tend to be the ones who get burnt and only realise too late that they've signed up to a really bad deal."

"That's why I wrote the [Contractors' Handbook](#), to impart years of hard-won contracting experience and make the transition from permanent employee to successful contractor as easy and profitable as possible."

Published: Monday, June 01, 2009

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Dave Chaplin is a former IT contractor in the City of London, and is founder and CEO of ContractorCalculator, and author of the Contractors' Handbook.

Started in 1999, ContractorCalculator (this site) is the leading independent website for the UK contracting industry – most of whom are highly skilled knowledge workers. [Read Full Profile...](#)

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