

## Interview: Getting the right support can help make your contracting career a success

Despite starting his career in IT in 1981 during a recession, and launching his contracting career in 1994, the depths of another economic downturn, Peter Meace has only ever been out of work for 5 weeks – during the dotcom crash.

According to Peter, the secret of his success is due to a number of factors, not least his evident ability to turn what for most of us would be a threat to jobs and livelihoods into an opportunity.

"I've worked as a first and second line analyst in IT support for most of my career," explains Peter, "so I understand the value of having the right amount of support and how it can mean the difference between success and failure."

### Can-do, can go!

"Because I live in a small village near Saddleworth in West Yorkshire, where work prospects are variable, I've always been prepared to go anywhere for a contract," continues Peter. "The buzz for me is that I never know where I might be working next."

Right now Peter is working 250 miles from home for the [Ministry of Defence](#) at the Royal Naval Air Station in Yeovilton, Somerset, where his security clearance helped him win the contract as a support analyst.

"I cut my teeth in IT operations and support when I started working in the sector for Whitbread in 1981," says Peter, "The pay was great but the promotion and career progression prospects were zero, which is why I decided to go contracting in 1994."

### Trading solution

According to Peter, when he started contracting in 1994, contractors had the option of [starting their own limited company](#) and not much else. So incorporate he did, but regretted the decision as the quality of many contractor accountants back then was poor.

"There was no such thing as an [umbrella company](#), which would have suited my contracting lifestyle much better. And high street accountants had not then got their heads around how limited company contractors differ from other small businesses," Peter says regretfully. "But fortunately, that has all changed and I've been with umbrella company [Parasol](#) for over five years now."

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Peter Meace

Peter had a particularly novel solution to [IR35](#) when it came into force in 2000: "Whilst many of my contemporaries left the contracting IT sector completely, which was a tragic loss of talent, I simply left the country for two years and worked for a pharmaceutical giant in Brussels."

On his return, he went straight into a contract with a major bank in Edinburgh and joined an umbrella company, thereby circumventing the issue of IR35 completely.

### Contractor affairs management - online

As well as avoiding any IR35 hassles, as an IT specialist Peter has appreciated being able to conduct his contracting business online. "I've managed all my contracting affairs online ever since I joined Parasol," says Peter, who points out that the company has recently upgraded its [MyParasol portal](#).

"The [new portal](#) has a range of features that make managing invoices, expenses and payments possible 24/7," he explains. "That's particularly useful if, like me, you don't work in an office environment where you can take 15 minutes out to call with a question."

### So, who supports the support desk?

"Because I've worked for so long in a support environment, I've learned to judge organisations on how well they support their customers, and the brutal facts are that most organisations provide very poor support," says Peter. "However the support team at Parasol exceed even my high expectations. And that's important, because as a contractor it's the support you get that can make all the difference."

So what's next? "More of the same hopefully," concludes Peter, "as the role I perform is always in demand and it's the job I love to do. I'm the one they call when things go wrong!"

**Published: Monday, April 27, 2009**

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