

## Study shows contractors are very happy

A series of attacks on contractors and temp workers by union leaders have, strangely enough, highlighted the relative satisfaction of UK contractors.

Last week, the head of the UK Transport and General Workers Union launched a series of attacks on contracting. It is, of course, natural that there should be tension between the contracting industry and the unions. The unions struggle to regulate and fix the labour force just as the contracting industry seeks to make it flexible and supple. The unions, sadly, represent the past and contractors are the future for industry.

So while little heed was paid to the union leaders insistence on stricter rules and fixed conditions for contractors, the controversy did manage to bring out some interesting aspects of the contracting industry that perhaps we should pay more attention to.

### BMG Research Study

A study by the Birmingham-based consulting group BMG Research shows that 52% of contractors and temporary workers in the UK are "extremely satisfied" with their work, and with their working lives. This won't come as a shock to most contractors, but, as the study points out, it should be better-known. The study isn't a small one: BMG spoke to about 2,500 workers.

"There continue to be a number of misconceptions about temporary work in the UK..." the study says. "The findings show that temporary and contracting work is increasingly valued as an on-going means of balancing work and personal life. Temporary workers and contractors are tired of being patronised and portrayed as systematically downtrodden. Attitudes to work are changing, with variety and flexibility increasingly seen as key indicators of job satisfaction. In addition, traditional notions of job security are being challenged, with individuals taking more responsibility for developing their own skills, experience and contacts."

### Contractors love contracting

So this tedious notion that contractors are all frustrated job seekers can be permanently placed in the circular file where it belongs. But before we get into the details of the study, we asked a few contractors how they felt about it all. Says Wendy Grossman, a journalist who works under contract for several large publications: "I love contracting. Not only do we contractors have a more independent lifestyle than those who work a single job, but we make more money, and we have better control of our lives."

“ contractors are tired of being patronised and portrayed as systematically downtrodden ”

"As a contractor, I've been able to pursue some of my particular interests in a way that would never have been possible if I'd had a regular job," agrees another contractor, a corporate marketing specialist named Clive Couldwell.

We could go on finding happy contractors, but let the study do the talking. Four times more agency workers are satisfied with temporary work and contracting than dissatisfied, the study says. Only one in every seven agency workers is dissatisfied to any degree. Satisfaction among agency workers is far higher on a quantified basis than that of employees. Satisfaction among agency workers is highest in respect to working relations (71%) and convenience of traveling to work. Over 50% of agency workers feel that they receive better pay than employees.

Get this: a substantial number believe that they are paid better (about 24%)!

More than 30% of the contractors surveyed were offered training while on assignment. And they love training: about 60% were not only eager to be trained on assignment, but willing to pay for training themselves.

Perhaps the most important statistics are those that echo what Couldwell and Grossman said: 84% of contractors believed that contractors gave them independence and control over their own destiny, while 86% believed that it gave them invaluable experience and introductions to many new things.

Given this level of job satisfaction on the part of contractors, it's not surprising that the union leader's complaints don't garner much attention. Perhaps it's time for the rest of the world to stand up and take notice that contractors have got a good thing going here.

“ 84 per cent of contractors believed that contracting gave them independence and control over their own destiny ”

Published: Friday, February 02, 2007

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