

Do you think like a contractor?

Before you take the plunge into self-employment, you need to think carefully about whether you're the kind of person who might thrive in the – sometimes very choppy – open seas of freelancing.

Answer these questions honestly, and you will get an idea of whether contracting is really for you:

1. What is your primary source of job satisfaction?
 1. Being in charge
 2. Going home
 3. Doing a good job and being well-rewarded for it
2. You have seen an online advertisement for some training you want. Do you:
 1. Email the link to your boss with the words "PLEASE!"?
 2. Cross your fingers and hope you get put on a project that requires training.
 3. Get your credit card out and book it yourself?
3. You have been asked to organise the Christmas party. Do you:
 1. Immediately initiate a Secret Santa program?
 2. Phone around for deals on hotels?
 3. Politely remind your boss that they are paying you good money to do work that a school leaver could probably do?
4. You feel that you are worth more money than you're being paid. Do you:
 1. Cry a lot in private?
 2. Email your boss with a smiley face and the words "PLEASE!"
 3. Put your rates up?
5. You are thrown into an unfamiliar situation with people you don't know in an industry you have no experience of. Do you:
 1. Jump out of the nearest window screaming "I can't take the pressure!"?
 2. Keep quiet and hope no one will notice your inexperience?
 3. Like it that way?
6. Your boss is taking the credit for all your hard work. Do you:
 1. Wear a T-shirt around the office with the slogan "It was me!"?
 2. Set fire to his South Park pencil case?
 3. Even care?

If you answered c to all six questions, then you might be the kind of person who will enjoy freelancing.

How Contractors Think

Most contractors are independently-minded people who are happy to make their own decisions, and prepared to accept the consequences. They don't look to employers to take care of them, or to help them develop their careers.

For the majority of contractors, there are no prospects of advancement other than getting better at the job and charging higher fees accordingly.

It requires a certain amount of self-confidence to find happiness in a job where you'll always be the bridesmaid and never the bride.

Contractors wear the hideous salmon pink dresses that make the bride look good in her expensive designer number. The best contractors know that they would look much better in it if they could be bothered to get married in the first place, but they love the single life – being footloose and fancy free.

Contractors are often brought in to get the job done. If your project succeeds, you can expect the managers to take the credit after you're gone. And of course, if your project fails, it'll be the "contractor that just left" who'll get the blame.

Contractors provide a very valuable service, and they are handsomely rewarded for it. But if you want more than money, and the secret satisfaction of a job well done by you, it's probably not going to be your cup of tea.

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