

10 tips for clients hiring contractors

Clients who are thinking of hiring contractors to assist with completing a project in their organisation can benefit from ten top tips from Emma Brierley of specialist freelance and contractor recruiter [Xchangeteam](#).

According to Brierley, who is also the author of [Talent on Tap](#), clients who understand right from the start that contractors are not employees will do well: "Hiring a contractor is exactly the same as hiring any other business services supplier, and contractors respond better to being managed like the professional knowledge workers they are."

Top ten tips for clients hiring contractors for the first time:

1. Know exactly why you want to recruit a contractor

Clients need to be very clear about why they want to hire a contractor. There must be a series of clear goals that a contractor must achieve to be of value to the client. Understanding the role of the contractor from the start will be immensely valuable in justifying the contractor's costs within the client organisation, particularly to finance and procurement functions.

2. Have a framework in place for the project

For each project where a contractor will be involved, make sure all the following boxes have been ticked:

Objectives

Deliverables

Timescale

Costs/invoicing/payment

How the organisation operates

How the contractor interacts with permanent employees

Access to support

How the contractor exits

Knowledge transfer on contractor exit.

3. Be open and communicate

It is essential to be open and keep communication channels flowing freely. Be honest about why the contractor is being brought in, what they are there to do, how this impacts on permanent employees and why the money is being spent in this way. Permanent employees often feel threatened by contractors – this won't happen if there is openness and honesty.

4. Be very specific about what skills and experience are required

Contractors are a bought-in service and arrive ready to use. The tighter the specification of the skills required to complete the project goals, the more likely the contractor will complete the project according to the brief, timescales and budget. And remember that contractors usually come with their price tag for a reason – an expensive contractor can be twice as productive and do a better job as a cheaper contractor, so don't opt for false economies.

5. Don't recruit a contractor based on 'chemistry' or 'culture'

Contractors don't have to fit your company ethos and meld with the team. They won't be around long enough. Frequently, a contractor's unique outsider's perspective can be refreshing and challenging to corporate 'group think', helping invigorate teams and their processes.

6. Be sensitive and accommodating to a contractor's concerns over IR35

[IR35](#) does not really matter to clients. But it dominates a contractor's working life, so clients can ensure they have a happy, well motivated and highly performing contractor by being accommodating to their requests relating to IR35. This will relate to simple issues like signing a letter to confirm the contractor's working arrangements – small to you, but very important to the contractor and how much tax they pay.

7. Don't over-manage or micro-manage contractors

Contractors are not employees. They've been hired to fulfil a very specific need and because they have the skills you need and know how to apply them. Get the contractor motivated and engaged with the project then let them run with it and don't try to micro-manage them like an employee.

8. Ensure the contractor is performing

Contractors are not employees, but they do need to be and are accountable. Sell to the contractor a picture of what the completed project will look like. Make sure this is turned into deliverables with milestones. Consider a penalty clause if deliverables and milestones are not met and/or a bonus if they meet or surpass objectives.

9. Have an exit strategy for the contractor

Contractors can outstay their welcome, not through their own actions but because their client renews their contract when they are no longer really needed. Make sure that contractors leave when they are contracted to, and that project creep does not mean they remain with no real purpose.

10. Knowledge transfer

Contractors are not trainers and are perfectly within their rights to refuse to train permanent employees, if it is not specified in their contract that they should. So, plan for a contractors exit and get permanent staff to spend time with contractors before they leave, to ensure there is reasonable knowledge transfer from the contractor to your permanent employees.

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