

Using social media to win contracts

Contractors can use social media to be more easily found by relevant agency recruiters looking for candidates with the right skills and capabilities, and to find advertised contracts directly. [LinkedIn](#) has come to dominate the contractor recruitment social media space.

"Contractors need to be shouting from the rooftops about how their skills and experience can benefit clients," explains Paul Clutton, Business Director of [Hays Senior Finance](#). "Social media is an increasingly important way of doing this, and LinkedIn has emerged as the most used professional network."

According to Clutton, any scepticism about the value of social media as a tool for matching the right contractor candidates with the right assignments has long disappeared. For many recruiters and clients, it has become one of the key methods of locating suitable candidates.

"Many recruiters are afraid of LinkedIn taking their knowledge away. We see it as a benefit that can increase our knowledge of what is happening in real time in the candidate market."

Who uses social media to find contractors and locate contracts?

"Large organisations routinely use onsite recruitment teams to trawl through LinkedIn to find good candidates," continues Clutton. "Whereas employers often use LinkedIn in isolation, agencies use it alongside their own database and network to identify suitable candidates.

This can be very effective, particularly as LinkedIn has a range of tools to make candidate searches easier."

Increasingly, LinkedIn has become integrated with hirers' business processes, demonstrating how important it has become. For example, Hays has developed an integrated search tool that its consultants can use to simultaneously search the internal candidate database and LinkedIn.

LinkedIn also provides other ways for recruiters and contractors to engage, such as through groups. This is often how recruiters will target contractors with specific skills sets, because they have become a recognised expert in a particular topic.

"In addition to recruiters using LinkedIn to find contractors, the same search facility can be used by contractors to find relevant recruiters. Adverts for current assignments will also be posted directly on LinkedIn and contractors can run keyword searches to find them."

Optimising the search - or find - process

Clutton highlights that contractors must ensure they include the right information in their profile because of the tools that LinkedIn supplies to agency and client recruiters to help them find candidates

He explains: "The tools are driven by keyword search terms. So, if a recruiter is looking for an interim accountant and plugs it into the search tool, then contractors who have this term in their LinkedIn profile will get flagged.

"This seems like an obvious point, but many contractors continue to use the job title of their most recent assignment, which may relate to the obscure hierarchy of their client and mean nothing to the outside world.

"Just as in a traditional CV, using industry accepted terms is always the best approach. If in doubt, contractors should try searching on the keywords they use to test them out."

Once found, ensure profiles say the right thing

Having been found by a recruiter or a client, the next challenge is for the contractor to include the right information in their profile so that the hirer makes contact.

The first thing Clutton suggests getting right first time is the profile picture: "Contractors have about 20 seconds to make an impression. Ideally, the profile photo should be in colour with the contractor in smart business clothes and smiling.

"They also need to differentiate themselves from permanent employees and make it clear that they are open to offers of work. This means using the right words in their professional headline and summary."

Clutton suggests saying it how it is, using phrases like 'Experienced interim financial controller seeking next assignment' or "Immediately available accountant" so a contractor makes it clear what they do and that they are available.

“
Contractors need to be shouting from the rooftops about how their skills and experience can benefit clients. Social media is an increasingly important way of doing this, and LinkedIn has emerged as the most used professional network
”

Paul Clutton, Business Director of Hays Senior Finance

LinkedIn profiles are more than just an online CV

Contractors should also ensure their LinkedIn profile has at least the same features as their 'killer' contracting CV, because that is effectively what their LinkedIn profile should complement. This includes listing key skills and attributes, and detailing past assignments describing the deliverables and client benefits, all the time using the right industry terms.

But used well LinkedIn can also enhance the information included on a CV: "Contractors can highlight the skills they have for clients to endorse them or to provide a more specific recommendation. That is an incredibly powerful sales tool for a contractor, and sends a very strong message to recruiters, who rate these very highly."

Contractors should make a point of asking clients to provide a testimonial, or at the very least endorse them for the appropriate skills.

Contractors can also do the searching

Ultimately, the most successful contractors and the most successful recruiters work on developing relationships, on and offline. Clutton notes that this is another way for contractors to become proactive: "My advice is to proactively search for recruiters on LinkedIn and make selective connections.

"Contractors can harvest names by doing their own searches or by capturing named recruiters on relevant job adverts. A recruitment consultant would much rather send a personal invitation to a small list of trusted contractors who they know, because it results in a better fit to the contract, a successfully completed assignment and a delighted end-user client."

Clutton's advice is to target the three or four main operators who have a very strong presence in any one sector first, and then look for the specific consultants who work in the contractor's area. "Do research and see who is actively recruiting in the market. Being selective is important, as some recruiters may operate only in the senior end of a market, or in very specialised disciplines," he adds.

What about Facebook, Twitter and other social media?

In Clutton's experience, LinkedIn is the predominant social media channel actively used for contractor recruitment within finance: "Some candidates can find work through [Twitter](#), but this is very much the exception. Otherwise, contractors are unlikely to find work via other social media channels at this time, except as a result of personal contacts within organisations.

"Contractors who use [Facebook](#) also run the risk of overlapping their personal and professional lives. Reputation is everything online and clients routinely screen candidates just by doing simple searches. Contractors should also do the same to make sure there is nothing negative said about them."

Contractors can help themselves in this way by looking at really basic things such as the privacy settings in their social networking accounts.

Clutton concludes: "There is no doubt that contractors can use social media, which right now means LinkedIn, to find good contracts. And the tools are there for them to do it, and to make the impression made in those first 20 seconds count."

Published: Monday, November 24, 2014

© 2016 All rights reserved. Reproduction in whole or in part without permission is prohibited. Please see our [copyright notice](#).



ABCe verified website - last audit confirmed 134,482 monthly unique visitors

© Copyright 2016 Byte-Vision Limited UK. All rights reserved [Copyright notice](#)