

Contracting mindset tips: you're responsible for managing your career, not the client

Contractors are business services providers and responsible for their own career management and skills development. Any attempts by clients to impose practices resembling human resources processes must be fiercely resisted, otherwise contractors start to look like employees, and could be caught inside [IR35](#), resulting in [significantly more tax](#) being liable.

Would your builder welcome a 'personal development review' from you?

The builder you hired to build the loft extension is on the National Register of Warranted Builders (ie well qualified and recommended). Are you really going to offer him a personal development review so he can put together a personal development plan whilst he's working on your loft?

Would you then request that the builder attends a short course on installing skylight windows, which were never a feature of the original design, at your expense, and expect your builder to meekly submit?

At the end of the job, once the extension has been completed, how do you think your builder would respond if you asked him to attend a performance review and exit interview to identify how he might improve how he builds future extensions, and to discuss whether he has the potential to do more than just build loft extensions?

Employees have personal development reviews and planning meetings with their managers, contractors' don't

Clients sometimes forget that contractors are not employees; more often the human resources (HR) department gets involved, and insists that contractors undergo the same personal development and planning processes as employees.

Contractors are sometimes invited to join general business skills training sessions with employees, or are told by a client that they must learn specific new skills if they are to continue to work on a project that was not included in the original contract.

Because it's appraisal time of year, or because HR processes say so, contractors find themselves being invited to attend career development meetings, or exit interviews during the final week of a contract.

Contractors are business services suppliers hired to provide specific deliverables for a fixed duration

You can reasonably expect, and can often benefit from, constructive feedback on how you deliver your services during project review meetings. However, you are not an employee to be developed but a service provider delivering a specific service for a fixed duration, so you should politely decline invitations to personal development meetings.

If a client requests a new skill not specified in the original contract, this is a variation to the contract, which you must negotiate into the original agreement as an addendum. If you need to learn a new skill, your contractor [limited company](#) must pay for your [training](#). Then, you must ensure any new skills are reflected in a new, higher, rate.

If you've not delivered on your original contractual requirements, that's a contract issue, which you should rectify in your own time; it is not a performance management issue. And by all means conduct a project review on its completion, but you're not an employee, so you should not participate in an exit interview.

Contractor mindset tip:

Contractors are businesses delivering specific services for a fixed period, not employees with careers to be managed & developed.

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