

Veteran IT contractor reveals how to build a successful IT contracting career

Contracting [provides a way of life](#) that is just not possible for most permanent employees to enjoy. And it's this lifestyle and constantly renewing scene of challenging, enjoyable contracts that has kept IT contractor and consultant Jason Gorman in-contract for over 12 years.

According to Gorman, it was redundancy that led to his first taking up the contracting lifestyle, and he's not looked back since. "I only had a few years of software development experience and when I got made redundant back in 1997, I didn't think I was qualified to go contracting," he says. "Nevertheless, I thought I'd see what might be out there."

Then based in the West Country, Gorman sent his CV out to a few agents without any real expectation of hearing anything. So he was surprised, and delighted, to get contract offers within a few weeks. "I found myself mainly working on short contracts with mediocre rates away from home and soon realised that all the plum contracts were in London," he says. "So I relocated, and have never looked back!"

Variety is the spice of IT contracting life

"Some IT contractors stay very focused on one sector, but I've worked for all sorts of clients, from investment banks to law firms, through dotcoms and new media to engineering," continues Gorman. "Most contracts have been for six to twelve months, sometimes longer if the project required it and if I was enjoying working with the client's team."

A self-confessed non-conformist with a family he firmly believes is genetically predisposed against traditional employment, Gorman admits contracting suits him down to the ground: "I have a short attention span, and like to be in control of my own destiny and take charge of my own career. That does not suit everyone, but is an essential trait to maintaining a successful and sustainable IT contracting career."

And would Gorman ever consider a return to permanent employment? "Never say never", I always say. If the right opportunity arose that was interesting and stimulating but required me to become an employee, I would consider it. But the deal would have to be pretty fantastic!"

Ongoing skills development

Gorman is committed to self-development and strongly believes that ongoing training, learning new skills and staying abreast of advances are essential ingredients for any successful IT contractor.

"So my advice to new contractors is to have confidence in your existing skills, but make sure you keep them up-to-date and always be ahead of the curve of new developments," he says. "I'm always reading a book to develop my skills, and also routinely attend workshops and conferences about the areas of IT that interest me," he continues.

Originally a software developer, Gorman keeps those skills honed and up-to-date. And he now spends an increasing amount of his work time helping end-user clients coach and manage their IT contractors, plus advising on cutting-edge developments in fields like [Agile consulting](#).

Networking is key

"I tend not to work through agencies anymore, as my contact network keeps the work flowing," says Gorman. "Plus I'm active in online communities like [LinkedIn](#) and [Twitter](#), where they are appropriate to my field. "Networking, attending events like seminars and writing technical articles for the trade press and contracting media also build your personal brand to the extent that work finds you – not the other way round."

This approach to his IT contracting means that Gorman rarely has to send out his CV, as most clients already know his work and reputation. But this has taken years of hard work, creating and maintaining contact networks in the IT contracting sector, plus, of course, always achieving the best possible results for clients' projects.

"Getting out there and making yourself known is key for winning new work, and has been responsible for the growth of my consulting business," says Gorman. "New contractors should find groups of contractors who do what they do, and make themselves known and be proactive. Being an IT contractor is increasingly like being any chartered professional and takes ongoing work and commitment to maintain that professional approach."

Get good advice from the start

Gorman went through the learning curve many contractors did during the nineties when there was less support for the sector, and new contractors starting out, than there is now.

"Thankfully, there is a huge amount of guidance and support for new contractors on contracting hubs like ContractorCalculator and in books like [The Contractors' Handbook](#). I wish they'd been around when I first started out, and would urge new contractors to take advantage of all the advice available, because a lot of them might fall into the same traps we did on [taxation](#) and [running a limited company](#)."

“
Being an IT contractor is increasingly like being any chartered professional and takes ongoing work and commitment to maintain that professional approach”

Jason Gorman

Gorman is keen to encourage others to explore IT contracting and the extra income and lifestyle benefits it provides. "I was able to turn a period of adversity immediately after my redundancy into the best career choice I could make." He concludes: "Anyone who fancies being a contractor should try it – they'll only regret not finding out when it's too late!"

Contractor Spotlight

Share your contracting experience and ideas with our readers via an exclusive one-on-one interview with ContractorCalculator.

We'll then send you a **FREE COPY** of the *Contractors' Handbook*.

Whether you're a first-time contractor seeking to share your start-up experiences or an old hand willing to pass on your tried and tested contracting tips, we'd love to hear from you.



[Find out more >](#)

Published: Thursday, August 27, 2009

© 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](#)