

Finding contract work: 10 tips for contracting job seekers

Contractors seeking their first contract or looking for new contract work can boost their chances of being successful, reducing unpaid gaps between contracts and gaining higher rates by adopting a targeted approach to finding contractor jobs. The process for finding contractor work is very different from seeking permanent employment – this guide will help you know what to expect.

Clients will often fill contractor jobs within days, often after a single interview or even just a telephone interview. And to get on the list for interview for contract work, contractors must create a targeted CV tailored to the requirements of the specific contract job being sought.

Here are 10 tips for finding contract work fast:

1. Create a contractor CV – short, tailored, focused and targeted

A 'killer' **contractor CV** is the first step towards finding work as a contractor. It should include a **targetted profile**, skills, **achievements** and career history. **Customise the CV** to highlight skills and achievements relevant to the contract job being applied for. Create a 'bank' of skills and achievements that can be tailored to the client's needs.

2. Market yourself on contractor jobs boards, using agencies and via networks

An estimated 80% of contract work is sourced via agencies, so get on agency CV databases, and apply for specific roles. **Upload a CV to contractor job boards** and CV libraries, and start working professional networks online, face to face, by phone and email.

3. Find specific contractor jobs and send a targeted application

Identify contractor jobs that match your skills and experience, **tailoring your CV** to the exact needs of the work contract in your targeted application. **Apply for contract jobs via email** and keep records of what applications have been sent and when, then diarise follow-up and chasing.

4. Follow-up contract job applications and chase agencies and clients

You should expect a high level of competition for all contract work you apply for. Follow-up each tailored CV application by telephoning the specific contact at the agency or client; these are busy people and chasing helps get a contractor's CV to the top of the pile. As a by-product, getting on the phone and having a conversation can also eliminate time-wasters.

5. Initial contract job negotiations with the agency/client – secure an interview

Experienced contractors know that once in front of a client at interview, the contract job is often in the bag. But **initial negotiations** should focus on **securing an interview** for contractor jobs, not bargaining over rates.

6. Pre-interview stage: the 3 'P's' – Preparation, Preparation and Preparation

Contractors turning up to job interviews poorly prepared are unlikely to progress their application for contract work. To **prepare for an interview** find out the basics like the interview location, transport links and parking. Research the client, what it does, its needs and its latest news.

7. During the interview: be proactive

Contract work interviews are different from interviews for permanent employment; they are sales pitches. Securing work as a contractor requires you to be proactive and **apply sales techniques** to control the interview. If you do this you will have a greater chance of securing the project at a good pay rate.

8. During the contract work interview: explore and understand the issues

Most contract work should have been started yesterday so most contract jobs are awarded on the basis of one interview, that interview is the only opportunity to understand the issues of what the contract work entails. So the contractor must ensure that the client knows that these issues have been taken on board and that the contractor has the skills to tackle them.

9. During the interview: ask for the contract work and close the deal

Contract job interviews are sales pitches where the contractor is offering skills on a business-to-business basis. Contractors must ensure they don't waste time and ask directly for the project and close the deal, emerging from the interview with an offer for the contract work.

10. Follow up on the interview before starting work on the contract

Having reassured the client at interview that the contract work issues are understood and asked for the business to close the deal, contractors should follow up with the agency, or client if contracting direct, to agree next steps and timings.

Depending on market conditions, contractors seeking contract work may find they apply for one contract job and are successful, or tens and possibly even hundreds of contractor jobs. However many are applied for, each should still follow the same process of tailoring a bespoke CV and covering email in response to client specifications, rigorously following-up each contract job application and pushing for an interview.

A targeted search will yield results, but a 'scattergun' approach will leave you applying for multiple positions without winning any contract work for potentially long periods. So the investment in following the [contract search process](#) will yield dividends in the form of a steady stream of contracts.

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