

## Hiring a contractor directly without using an agency

Clients looking to find and hire a contractor, or team of contractors, can do it themselves rather than [use an agency](#). But they need to understand the differences between recruiting permanent employees and hiring contractors if they are to make a success of it.

"Hiring contractors is a business-to-business (B2B) transaction and takes a different mindset to taking on an employee," says Emma Brierley, founder and Chairman of specialist freelance recruiter [Xchangeteam](#).

"When you hire contractors and freelancers, you're not interested if they have absolutely the right chemistry or fit the corporate culture," continues Brierley, who is the author of [Talent on Tap](#), one of the definitive handbooks on finding, hiring and managing freelance talent. "The contractor won't be there long term, so these issues don't matter."

### Finding contractors

"The first port of call for a client trying to find a contractor is to look through their own contact database and networks," suggests Brierley. "Look at existing networks, but also go back through past contacts, in case any former colleagues have since gone independent."

If the address book does not have the answer, the next step is to try online job boards. Brierley says: "The key element of finding the right contractor is understanding precisely what skills are needed, and ensuring these are effectively communicated in any online ads on job boards."

There are other options for finding suitably skilled contractors, such as using trade associations or even print media advertising, but this can be expensive and might not suit the client's timescales.

According to Brierley, the more senior the appointment and the more experienced the contractor, the more likely it is the right contractor will come via personal networks: "And the reverse is true, too, as most junior appointments requiring fewer skills and less experience are outsourced to agencies who can deal with volume."

### Evaluating contractor CVs

Assuming the search process has been successful, the client should have a large pile of CVs on their desk, or in their inbox. So, the next stage is to whittle these down to a shortlist for interview.

"What the client should be thinking is 'what specifically is it that I need done on this project and what skills does the contractor need to have in order to complete these tasks,'" says Brierley. "The contractor is coming into the client's organisation to achieve specific goals and these must be made clear."

If the original advert was very focused on what is required, the resulting [CVs from contractors](#) should detail relevant skills and experience that the client can easily spot, in order to shortlist the candidates that most closely match the requirements.

### Contractor interviews

Contractors, by their very nature, are being engaged on contracts on an ongoing basis. This means that the client's window of opportunity to meet, [interview](#), evaluate and hire a contractor is typically quite small, and certainly much smaller than when recruiting for a permanent employee.

"Once decided, clients should get their shortlist of contractors in to be interviewed as soon as possible," continues Brierley. "If colleagues from HR insist on attending interviews, they must be warned that it's a contractor being interviewed and not a potential employee, as the approaches are totally different."

Plus, warns Brierley, don't waste time in the interview on the 'soft stuff': "A contractor should come in, hit the ground running and do the job they've been hired to do and go. They won't be around long enough for things like 'will they fit with the rest of the team' to matter."

### Getting the contractor hired

Once the contractor has been chosen, it is generally a race to get the formalities out of the way and get the contractor to start working on the project as soon as possible. This means negotiation of both [contract rates](#) and [contracts](#), and the hard part in larger organisations – getting it past procurement.

"Contractors are a B2B service provider, so clients can often find themselves up against the procurement function in their organisation," says Brierley. "It's frequently an added layer of complexity they don't need, but one that they will just have to live with."

She adds: "When taking on a contractor, it's not just about the day rate. The day rate reflects the skills and experience the client is buying. One contractor

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Emma Brierley, Xchangeteam

might be twice the price of a seemingly similar alternative, but probably works twice as fast as they are so much more experienced, so costs less and does a better job in the long run.”

Once on board, the contractor will be working on an output-based project, so their progress and performance can be monitored by the client. But what about if they are not up to the job? “The beauty of contractors is that if they don’t perform, you [can get rid of them](#) as easily as you hired them as long as you have clearly stipulated the performance criteria,” says Brierley.

So, it is certainly possible for clients to hire their own contractors direct. But, as Brierley warns: “Clients intent on finding and hiring their contractors direct and not [using an agency](#) are creating a full time job for themselves, as the process is ongoing and time consuming. If they go down this route, they need to do it with their eyes open and be well prepared.”

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