

Entering the Workforce Through Freelancing or Contract Work: A Starter Guide to Resources

By Sally Power, Ph.D. - Career Consultant

Contract Work (defined as working through a staffing agency to get non-permanent employment)

Pluses: The job hunt and wage decisions are largely made by the staffing agency - more full-time assignments than part-time - tend to provide large employer exposure and experience - often provides the individual with a community of fellow workers to relate to and learn from

Challenges: Finding a staffing agency that places people that have your skills and abilities and whose work practices are acceptable to you - learning to manage finances when income is sporadic as well as more independent time management

Resources for finding a staffing agency:

1. At www.americanstaffing.net click "Job Seekers" and then "Find a Staffing Agency" - type in your state or zip code and occupational category -- this will give you a starter list of firms
2. Compare this list with the one at www.headhuntersdirectory.com
3. Search on on-line combining your work specialty and "staffing firms" or "recruitment firms"
4. Review the sites of local staffing firms in your occupational category as well as some of the big international firms and come up with interview questions - remember to ask about probable wages given your skill level
5. The International Confederation of Private Employment Agencies (<http://www.ciett.org/>) lists the nine largest staffing firms worldwide as:
Adecco - www.adecco.com Manpower - www.manpower.com
Allegis Group - www.allegisgroup.com Randstad - www.randstad.com
Kelly Group Limited - www.kellygroup.co.za GiGroup - www.gigroup.eu
Kelly Services - www.kellyservices.com USG People - www.usgpeople.com
Recruit Co., LTD - www.recruit.jp/corporate/english

Many contract workers indicate that they work with more than one staffing agency. Approach the staffing agency as you would any employer - review their web sites and follow their instructions. For an in depth look at contract work read: *Gurus, Hired Guns, and Warm Bodies* by Barley and Kunda (2004) - an ethnology for the workers, two staffing agencies, and the workers' experiences inside client employers.

Freelancing (defined as working more independently including getting your own work projects)

Pluses: The opportunity to be more independent in terms of who you work for, when you work, and where you work -- building a range of business skills including finding customers and building your own business - chance to focus on the work you love

Challenges: Many decisions to be made early on including setting prices, finding potential customers, and devising the materials to attract those customers - freelancing can be lonely so individuals need to figure out how they will reach out to peers for support and advice -- learning to manage finances when income is sporadic as well as more independent time management

Resources:

A very good site for learning more about the fine points of freelancing is:

www.freelanceswitch.com - they have a great series of blogs on pricing which you get for signing up, I think, other good pieces of info such as: (www.freelanceswitch.com/101-ideas-to-get-more-freelance-work-and-generate-new-client-leads/) and a list of freelancing sites (www.freelanceswitch.com/monster-list-of-freelance-job-sites-2011)

The website www.elance.com was a source of information about freelancing on the web -- they have done a survey of their users recently that provides insight into the audience (<https://www.elance.com/q/freelance-talent-report-2012>)

www.inkwelleditorial.com is a website for freelancers writing on line - this is just one of a number of specialized sites by type of work. Search for freelancing and a general term describing your work (for example, "direct marketing" or "business development" or "sales"); the search should lead you to sites by successful freelancers in that work as well as "service" sites listing work opportunities and providing support.

BEWARE of sites selling services to freelancers - for example, some selling health insurance sites have a spotty record for providing good value for the dollar