

Making the most of your contractor – useful tips for making the most of this flexible resource.

With an unpredictable economy and market place, many companies find that taking advantage of the flexibility of contract staff helps them achieve a balance between having the necessary resource to undertake critical projects without the overhead cost of actually employing someone on a permanent basis.

Taking on a contractor with the necessary range of experience and qualifications can work well for all parties, but there are certain things you should consider before you start:

1. Has a signed contract been received from the contractor or agency?

Ensure the engagement is agreed in writing with a 'Contract for Services' or a purchase order for smaller projects.

2. Have Terms of Reference been agreed with the contractor?

Agree the objectives; deliverables; timescales; budget; reporting structure and how the deliverables will be evaluated. These should be recorded in writing as a statement of work to accompany the contract.

3. Have confidentiality issues been covered?

If the contractor is likely to be privy to confidential or commercially sensitive information, ensure they sign a non-disclosure agreement.

4. Has a billing process been set up?

Ensure procedures are in place for authorising timesheets or signing off invoices.

5. Have you provided an appropriate space for the contractor to work?

Ensure there is a workstation for the contractor, that appropriate site security and parking advice is issued and that they know who to ask for on arrival.

6. What resources have you agreed to provide? Are they ready?

Ensure any required information or equipment is available and access to any required systems and networks is in place. This will ensure that the contract gets off to a flying start without unnecessary delays or interruptions.

7. Are there any issues with connecting the contractor's own equipment to your systems?

Ensure the contractor is aware of any technical requirements/restrictions when connecting their equipment to your network (eg security, PAT testing etc).

8. Have you provided relevant information on company policies and procedures?

Provide access to internal standards, procedures and documentation (e.g. company guidelines, document templates etc). and ensure the contractor is aware of any relevant security and/or specific health and safety policies.

9. Have project review points been scheduled?

Agree a regular communication schedule to review project milestones. Diarise provisional dates for periodic meetings involving key parties.

11. Has the wider team been briefed?

Ensure colleagues are aware of the contractor's role in the project and that relevant team members are expecting contact from him/her. Make sure a list of key contacts is available to the contractor.