



Searching for that perfect job?

Why you should consider contract work

Contract work! Isn't that where you take up a position for a fixed amount of time, with no extra pay and the chance you could find yourself unemployed 6 months down the track? Why do people put themselves through this?

I began working in contract positions nearly 3 years ago. A six-month professional contract was offered to me while I was working in a permanent job at the library assistant level. For me, the benefits of working as a professional — of expanding my skills and experience — far outweighed the security provided by the permanent, lower-level position, so I grabbed the opportunity with both hands.

Since making the leap, I have worked in three different contract positions in varying professional roles (cataloguing, reference and as a public library branch co-ordinator) and varying lengths of contracts (6 to 12 months).

But a number of people have asked me how I cope with the uncertainty of contract work and why I put myself through it. Here are some fantastic reasons why you should consider applying for that 6 or 12-month contract you've seen advertised recently.

Why consider contract work?

Contract work is an excellent way to develop or gain skills. When organisations advertise fixed, short-term contracts, managers realise they probably won't have highly skilled, experienced people applying, often because those people are looking for permanent or long-term contract work (3+ years). Managers are often prepared to accept people who come across well in the interview, show a high degree of initiative and energy, but are either unskilled or without all the relevant skills for the role. This is an ideal opportunity for you to get a foot in the door and learn a new skill or job.

Often contract work will lead to permanent or long-term contracts within the organisation. They have advertised a 12-month position but are hoping the candidate will be good enough to be offered an extended contract or be interested in applying for a permanent position should it arise. Also, as an employee you are generally eligible for internally advertised positions, and you now have the advantage of knowing exactly what the organisation wants.

I've found that through choosing specific contracts designed to enhance my abilities, my skill set has developed so when that perfect job comes up, my portfolio and application will look great and I will be ready to go for it!

Is contract work for everyone?

Contract work is only for those who feel they can cope financially and personally with the uncertainty of contract work. For people with major financial/personal commitments or who prefer security and knowing where they will be next year, contract work is probably not appealing. While working in a contract you will constantly need to look at the job section in the paper and consider your next move. You will need to keep your application up to date and consider what you will do financially and personally if the position comes to an end and you haven't found your next job.

But if you aren't fazed by job hunting, can cope financially with short-term work and view it as an opportunity to do something different, then perhaps you should consider taking up that next contract opportunity. And hey! What is permanent these days? Life is unpredictable. We're in an age of job insecurity, regardless of whether you are permanent or contract. Why stay in a job that doesn't suit you simply because it is permanent? Contract work allows you to proactively use, rather than ignore, job insecurity and change.

Executives are often on performance-based contracts; the careers of consultants and many other professionals are frequently based around variations on project/contract work. Considering a contract position? Don't view yourself as a contract lackey. Instead, think of yourself as an exciting, dynamic professional, on the lookout for your next career opportunity! ■



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...gives a voice to the new generation of library and information professionals. If you have any suggestions or topics for this column, please contact the column co-ordinator, Kate Watson, k.watson@cqu.edu.au.

Free use of map service

Multimap, one of the world's leading online mapping providers, today announced the launch of free maps and reciprocal links for small businesses across Australia and New Zealand. Businesses with between one and five outlets registering fewer than 5000 map impressions per year can now use Multimap's comprehensive street-level coverage of the region at no charge, in a few easy steps.

See the Multimap website at <http://www.multimap.com/> for a range of free, useful services to assist with everyday life. Some of these include: road maps of the world; door-to-door travel directions; aerial photographs; local information; weather forecasts; the ability to buy A-Z maps, historic photographs, high-resolution aerial photographs and SMS weather alerts and more... ■