

## What New Contractors Need to Know

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Whether you're thinking of bringing on a sub-contractor who is new to contracting or you're new to contracting yourself, there are some important mindset shifts you need to be aware of. Contracting is an exciting career that offers certain freedoms and opportunities that other professions lack, but it's not without its own challenges. Based on my experience growing as a contractor as well as working with new sub-contractors, I'd like to share some advice on how to make the most of this unique job.

### Style of Work

While responsibilities of a contractor may consist of standard business roles, rarely does one view a contractor as "just another employee". As a contractor, you're generally hired on for a specific objective. That might be anything from creating a marketing strategy to streamlining internal processes after a company reorganization. Consequently, contractors generally do not have set "working" hours. If something happens that falls under your umbrella of responsibility, you're expected to be available and ready to jump on a call or head into the office, if need be.

The tough part about this expectation, however, is that you often need to maintain a delicate balance between being viewed as available while also being on-call with other priorities (other clients, personal life, etc.) This all is based around proactively managing your schedule and remaining flexible. Your clients will not accept "I'm done working for the day" as an excuse if they have a pressing issue or question. This can be a tough mindset shift for contractors that were previously employees.

### Being the Expert

Even if you're new to contracting, you ideally do have expertise in the specific field in which you're specializing your consulting. Don't undervalue yourself. Your client is going to look to you to lead the work you were brought on to do as an expert. You're not hired to just take orders. Sometimes this is a conversation you need to have with the person in charge to set those expectations up front. Now, don't take this to mean that you can just do whatever you want without listening to anyone else at the company. You are the expert, but you also need to listen to the opinions of others and share your expertise in a way that doesn't come across as stubborn or bossy.

If you notice something appears odd about the way a company is running or how a project is heading, don't be afraid to ask the tough questions. You're there to offer suggestions and ideas with valid reasoning and desired outcomes. Sometimes, after presenting what you believe to be the right move, the business wants you to move in a different direction, and that's okay. Be at peace with the fact that you stated your opinion and that it ultimately is your client's call.

### Learn by Doing

Working in a variety of companies on multiple different projects, you're bound to encounter tasks or be assigned responsibilities that you might not have direct experience in, especially if you're new to consulting in general. And that's okay! Applying your knowledge of another topic/field to something new is a great way to learn and progress as a consultant. You have a plethora of tools and resources available to you through the internet, books, videos,

and so on that you shouldn't feel the need to shy away from or be afraid of something new.

Just because you don't have direct experience in something doesn't mean you're unqualified. I'm definitely not saying you should mislead someone regarding your abilities, rather, you should take the opportunity to round out your knowledge whenever you're given the chance. This also means you must be honest and realistic if you feel you may make the unfamiliar situation worse, and seek help from a more specialized sub-contractor. You can build credibility by admitting what you don't know.

In making these few key mindset shifts, you'll ultimately be more prepared to bring success to your clients and your overall career as a contractor.

Set up a [20 minute call here](#) to see if we are a good fit to spark your project!



A passionate organizer of people and initiatives, Erica Smigielski brings over twenty years of experience in project leadership to financial software and SaaS companies who want to launch their next big idea. She leads large-scale, complex projects like product launches and company mergers and acquisitions as well as focused efforts to bring structure and process to fast-track businesses. Erica holds certifications as a Stanford Advanced Project Manager as well as a Certified Group Facilitator, making her a master orchestrator of strategic planning, as well as a skillful communicator who can expertly navigate complex group dynamics.