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GUIDE TO

CONTRACTING



INTRODUCTION

HELLO AND WELCOME TO MY FREE GUIDE ABOUT CONTRACTING

A friend of mine who hires a lot of contractors said that one of the biggest determining factors about how busy you are with work, is 70% having good contacts and coming across well and friendly in the interview and 30% about your technical skills. From my personal experience, I completely agree with that statement. The longer I have been working as a contractor the fewer people try to test me about my technical knowledge and the more interested they are about how good I'll fit in the team and help solve their problems.

A contractor is often hired purely based on their skills and abilities to do the job. A manager with a deadline to meet will need to find someone with the right skills. This means that when you're trying to win a new contract half or more of the work is actually convincing people to like you.

This guide will detail the four most popular approaches that everyone wanting to get into contracting should do. This is not a guide about how to become better at your job or even how to do better, it's about 4 easy actionable items that you can start working on today that may not seem directly linked to your job but will indirectly influence your career massively.

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If you think your job has absolutely nothing to do with marketing you are wrong.

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DISTINGUISHING YOUR BRAND



CREATING A PROFESSIONAL IMAGE

As a contractor, you might think that you simply don't have the time for marketing. However, even when business is good, it is always important to dedicate a certain percentage of your time to marketing yourself as situations can change very quickly... trust me.

You may think that marketing when you are in a contract is a waste of time, but these simple steps can play a crucial role when the economy is down. You don't have to spend too much time or money in creating a really professional image of yourself online but sparing 5 minutes each working day can pay off dividends later down the line.

There are several important elements that can make or break your image online. It is essential to get them right.

An Image - The human brain is very quick at recognizing patterns or images compared to words. It is important to have an image associated with your business - it creates a brand that is instantly recognizable. Big companies spend millions of dollars every year to just update their logos in subtle ways. Your logo does not have to be fancy - just something unique and fresh.

You can create this easily by going to online websites and paying less than \$10 for a decent logo from websites like fiverr. You can even use your headshot, taken by a professional to project your brand.



Ditch that old Hotmail address - Now your stepping into the big leagues you need to present yourself with a more professional image. First off, if you have an old email an address like mysticsteve@hotmail.com ditch it.. it looks terrible and unprofessional

Most people use their name or their company name to help they build a brand and that's what I suggest as the first thing you should set-up if you haven't already. The benefit of using your domain will mean you will end up having your own personal email address as well.

The first thing you should do is register your own web domain and email address. If you are unsure about how to do this, I have detailed a step-by-step guide in the 'Registering Your Domain' section towards the end of the book..



Create a blog or your own business Facebook page - This is where you get to sell yourself. Once you create the first draft of your bio, find a great copywriter who can tweak it for you, so that it appears professional.

In your online space, you need to sell your skills. This space is your chance to tell your future customer about the services that you offer. Be creative, be honest and be descriptive.

Once again, find a good copywriter who can tweak this for you. Setting a blog is not as daunting as you may think. You can have one up and running within 30 minutes. As we are creating a professional image I recommend using WordPress on a self-hosted domain. WordPress is the most popular blogging platform on the planet.

WordPress comes with thousands of themes which means you can make a good looking website without having to do much at all. I normally use Theme Forest to buy my themes. For \$45 dollars you can buy an amazing looking site by simply clicking a few buttons.

The process to install the theme is pretty simple. You purchase the one you like and you will get an email with all the installation files you require. In WordPress you then navigate to the Appearance -> Themes section and use the install theme option.

Fully explaining how WordPress works would be a website in its own, instead, I have included a section on how on set-up WordPress using 100Webspace and I'm going to include some useful links to help get you started.TIP: My big bit of advice to you is to first get a basic prototype version up there and running.

At first you'll have no visitors so no one will see it. After you create a prototype and get it live you'll be in a lot better position to start critiquing it and figuring out what needs improving. Websites are build to be updated so go through as many revisions as you like.

When I created my first online presence it was a one-page CV that looked terrible. After a while I wanted to add tutorials to it, so I thought I'd switch to WordPress. My website has been live for about 3-4 years now and it probably on it's 22nd or 23rd revision.

Not I'm really happy with it but if I had just focused on creating some perfect thing straight away I don't think I would have made as much progress. For me, the motivation of people seeing something I wasn't happy with was the motivation I needed to keep me going

- 🔗 [WordPress](#)
- 🔗 [Installing WordPress](#)
- 🔗 [How To Set-up WordPress Youtube Video](#)
- 🔗 [ThemeForest](#)
- 🔗 [Speckyboy WordPress Section](#)

Creating a professional image online is not expensive, but is an extremely important step in branding yourself as well as your business and can be the stepping stone to a great future.



ESTABLISH AN ON-LINE IDENTITY

As a contractor, you know that the most important factor in winning more business is getting the word out about it. There are many other contractors in the same industry doing exactly the same thing. So what would set your business apart? The answer is you. You can differentiate your services from other competitors by marketing yourself. Here are 3 reasons why marketing yourself as a brand is important:

- 1) You have a new business in an already crowded space - The only thing different about your plumbing or lawn care or computer repair business is you. Differentiate yourself by highlighting your personal experience in the industry, even though you may have a new company.
- 2) People trust other people, rather than businesses - This is true of everyone and is actually your biggest asset. When you market yourself as the brand for your company, people see a person they can talk to. It is so much easier to trust the owner of a business telling you about the services that he is passionate about.
- 3) Your personal brand stays with you - Everyone changes jobs or start new businesses. If you market yourself properly, you get an extra push whenever you are starting fresh, since people already know you as the brand.

In today's market, marketing is extremely important to grow your business. When you market yourself as a brand, you are not only able to expand your business, but also create a name for yourself in your selected domain. If CEOs of all big companies can do it, so can you.

BECOME A RECOGNIZED EXPERT IN YOUR FIELD

In building your brand you will find more success by becoming a leading expert in a particular niche. If you try to be a generalist you'll get lost in the sea of other jackasses. This specialty needs to be something that is commercial attractive... e.g. if there's not a market for your work then you won't be winning many contracts.

You can be the specialist.



GET CONNECTED



If you read any book on marketing yourself the one thing will be constantly mentioned is networking. When I started out I used to think networking was for the other people but then I managed to win a contract based on networking and my whole opinion changed.

I'll now give you a great example of how networking landed me a job. In one of my recent contracts, I had a 15 minutes interview for a position. We had a quick chat and that was it. An hour later I was offered the position. The reasons things went so smoothly is that one of the interviewers knew someone that I used to work with. He skyped him and asked if they should hire me, he said yes, and the job was mine.

The importance of networking was something that didn't click with me when I was permanent. When you start to specialize you realize quite quickly that the number of people in your field is probably a lot smaller than you think. If you work with one person now, the chances are that in the next few years you'll be working with that person again or working with someone who knows him. When you contract you'll be swapping offices a few times a year so the chances of this happening increase. If you can go to an interview and you have a mutual acquaintance who can recommend you then you'll find life much easier.

A great way to meet people in your industry is to start attending meet-ups and industry related events in your area. I remember when working as an employee and the company I was working for started throwing a monthly creative meet-up. I went to the first few events but not seeing the value at the time I spent the whole time at the bar talking to my friends. At the time there didn't seem many points in talking other people I had a job and I wasn't planning on moving. A few years later I was looking for new work and I applied for a job the same time as a friend.

Now this friend had met and spoken to the hiring person a few times at these events and let's just say I didn't get the job. Now I'm not saying that the entire decision was based on this but it would have put me in a stronger position.

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I have no idea where to network with people?

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HOW TO MEET CAREER INFLUENCERS

One of the big reasons that I never attended events was I didn't know how to find them until I stumbled across a website called, EventBrite.

'We're passionate about bringing people together around live experiences, no matter what shape or size.' EventBrite is a lot like any other ticketing site but with one except... it's open for everyone which means you can create events from yoga to tech conferences. A lot of those courses are business related. If you work with a particular technology, in a specific sector then jump on there.

The last event I went to I ended up knowing half the room and this is from someone who's only been living in the area for a little over a year.

THERE AREN'T ANY EVENTS IN MY AREA... NOW WHAT?

Depending on where you live will depend on the amount of events being held in your area. If there isn't anything on at all then you might have to take the big leap and organize something yourself. Again with EventBrite you can create an event for FREE and then use Facebook or Linked in to spread the word.



MAKE YOUR CV STAND OUT

When you contract despite what a lot of people think you will still need a CV. If you want to get the best paying jobs you need to make sure that your CV is the best that it can be.

As I was born with zero creative talent in the graphics department I hired a designer to make my CV look good. I'm not a designer and I don't have the time to spent hours and hours. Other things I've done to improve my CV is to send it off for the free review courses.

The best tips I learnt in order to make my CV involved my company. As I own a company, I had a business address, email and a full website I can get recruitment agencies to send me a copy of my competitions CV's. It was this glimpse of other people's CV's that allowed me to start improving mine. Change our CV based on feedback. Track how many times you send your CV out in a week. At the end of the week count how many offers you have. If you have none tweak it. If you keep repeating and honing you will see a positive increase in the number of interviews you receive.

Constantly update your CV or create a list detailing what you've done. At the end of 6 months you might start forgetting all those wonderful things as they all seem to marge into one big project.

GET CONNECTED



THE ELEVATOR PITCH

Most of us have heard about an "Elevator Pitch". It is a very concise, to-the-point description about your business or service delivered in a practiced manner in the time it takes for an elevator ride (typically 30 to 60 seconds). It is crucial to have one prepared since it tells one about the essence of your business. Plus, you never know when you may need one. So how can you, as a contractor go about creating an elevator pitch? You have to first understand the elements that a good elevator pitch needs to include.

- It should begin with a "hook" that gets a potential customer's attention
- It should describe your product or service succinctly, without going into details. There should be a curiosity element left for the listener so that his interest is piqued.
- It should talk about who your customers are and what your focus area is.
- It should mention some details about you as the owner and your experience in the field.
- It needs to mention what sets you apart from your competition.
- It should end with a question. This indicates an action is required from your potential customer and makes him feel involved. It could be as easy as asking for his email address so you can send him more information via email.

A successful elevator pitch is not easy to create - there will be a lot of trial and error involved. But once you create a good pitch, it will greatly increase your ability to market yourself.

BUSINESS CARDS

I have to be honest I do have a bit of a love hate relationship with business cards. When most people give me theirs they normally get lost or end up in the bin.

The one thing I do know is true is that business cards make you more creditable. I've had so many chats over the years where people have asked me for a card. As a contractor your will be running your own business and you have to be prepared for every eventuality.

Creating 100 business cards can be done in under 10 minutes and can cost as little as £5.99! I use a service called Vistaprint to order my business card. At Vistaprint they have a business card builder that allows you to choose from a number of pre-built templates that you can tweak to suit your needs or you can design one from scratch.

My business cards took me less than 10 minutes to design and it's allowed me to win several thousand pounds worth of business all from my less than £10 investment.



MARKET YOURSELF USING LINKEDIN

If you do not have a linked in account then you're missing out on another form of marketing your skills. You should keep you linked in profile as up-to-date as possible. Invite everyone you work with or have worked with to connect. The benefit of Linked in comes when you start having lot of friends.

I've regularly had companies contact me directly asking me if I'm free, recruitment agents asking if I'm open for opportunities. Personally I've never actually won any work via linked in but it's also something that I've never aggressively targeted. I have been contacted easily over 100 times about work. The more visibility you have to potentially employers and contracts the quicker and more likely you are to get that net contract.

Here are a few tips to help you get the most out of LinkedIn:



TREAT YOUR LINKEDIN PROFILE LIKE YOUR CV. TAKE AN HOUR AND FILL IT OUT PROPERLY. ONE OF THE BENEFITS OF LINKEDIN IS RECRUITERS AND EMPLOYERS CAN SEARCH PROFILES BASED ON KEYWORDS. MAKE SURE ALL THE KEYWORDS RELATED TO YOUR PROFESSION ARE ON IT.



MAKE SURE YOUR HEADLINE STICKS OUT. I'LL SOMETIME USE 'LOOKING FOR WORK OR 'IN A CONTRACT UNTIL ETC...' AS I'VE FOUND THIS GETS PEOPLE MESSAGING ME WITH JOB OFFERS.

- GET RECOMMENDATIONS

- USE A PROFESSIONAL PROFILE PICTURE. IF YOU HAVEN'T GOT ONE GO OUT AND PAY SOMEONE £20 TO GET ON. THE MORE PROFESSIONAL YOU'RE PROFILE BECOMES THE MORE CREDIBLE YOU'LL BECOME.

- USE THE LINKED IN 'ANSWERS' FEATURE TO ADD CREDIBLE INFORMATION

- JOIN ANY RELEVANT GROUP IN YOUR INDUSTRY. INTRODUCE YOURSELF AND CONTRIBUTE IN SOME FORM TO THE GROUP

- POST RELEVANT BLOG ENTRIES IN YOUR GROUPS TO GET PEOPLE'S ATTENTION

- LOOK UP OTHER PEOPLE IN YOUR INDUSTRY AND NOTICE WHAT THEY'RE DOING.

- IF PEOPLE MESSAGE YOU... RESPOND! IN THE LAST TWO MONTHS I'VE PROBABLY HAD 15-20 PEOPLE MESSAGE ME. A LOT OF PEOPLE I KNOW WHO ARE IN CONTRACTS AND NOT LOOKING FOR NEW WORK JUST IGNORE THESE MESSAGES, I'LL ALWAYS REPLY WITH A SHORT NOTICE THAT THANKS THE PERSON FOR THE MESSAGE AND TELLS THEM I'M NOT LOOKING NOW BUT AROUND THIS DATE I WILL BE AND TO GET IN CONTACT NEARER THE TIME. THE AMOUNT OF EMAILS I GET IN RESPONSE SIMPLY THANKING ME FOR TAKING THE TIME TO REPLY IS



WHEN SOMEONE INVITES YOU TO CONNECT, MESSAGE THEM! SAY THANKS FOR THE INVITE'



ADD ANYONE YOU'VE WORKED WITH (REGARDLESS IF YOU GOT ON OR NOT) THE MORE PEOPLE IN YOUR NETWORK THE MORE BENEFIT YOU'LL GET. FOR EVERYONE YOU ADD YOU'RE BUILDING A CLOSER CONNECTION TO THEIR NETWORK AFTER ALL!



FIGURE OUT WHO USES LINKEDIN DAILY AND ADD THOSE INDIVIDUALS



MANAGE YOUR RELATIONS

All too often some LinkedIn members invite someone to be in their network, receive an affirmative, and break the link by not showing their gratitude. The sender is notified of the acceptance, and leaves it at that. This sends the wrong message to the new connection and essentially stops networking in its tracks.

To make professional online networking effective, you must keep the ball in play, keep the lines of communication open. This is made easier by extending civility and appreciation for being accepted as a new connection. A simple, "Thank you for being part of my network" would suffice.

Conversely, if you receive an invitation to be part of someone's network, reply to the inviter by thanking him/her for being considered. It's an honour if the inviter has chosen you, so show your gratitude. Don't let the momentum end. In effect, this is similar to walking away from a conversation at a social gathering. Would you simply walk away from a conversation without saying a word? Our parents taught us better than that. Manage Your Relations Invites can be one of our best reasons to communicate via LinkedIn. It's important to do the right thing, and that is to say, "Thank you for accepting my invite" and "Thank you for inviting me to be in your network."

MANAGE YOUR RELATIONS

Subject: Thank You For Connecting on LinkedIn

Dear

Thank you for connecting on LinkedIn. I look forward to getting to know you and your business. If I can be of any assistance to you or to introduce you to someone in my network, please don't hesitate to let me know.

Kind Regards,

This little simple tip will put you way ahead of the game although there was one main reason why I did this. When I first thought of this idea the thought of having to re-write the same message over and over again eventually got the best of me and I gave up. That was until I found a great little tool called 'Auto Text Expander' for Google Chrome . In the next section I'm going to show you how you can automate this process so it will take less than a second!



GET CONNECTED



THE POWER OF MAILING LISTS

You might not be looking for contract work at the minute but you will be sooner or later. One of the things I try to do is keep my CV on the job boards at all times. This means I get called and emailed a lot from recruitment people and employers looking for contractors.

One of the biggest mistakes I made early on in my career is not appreciating the size of my network. After 9 odd years in the industry I've spoken to so many people, recruiters, potential employers and what did I do with all this valuable data... zip!

I assumed that when I needed a new job I'd put my CV on a job board, speak to new people. One day after reading a book about the value of lists something clicked in my head and I decided to create my own 'Looking For Work list. I spent a morning going through my Inbox and adding any name I could find into an email group. By lunch time I had over 120 email addresses in that list. If you take a minute and think just how powerful that is. When I look for work I don't need to wait for people to get in contact with me, I can email a network I've people I've spoken to before to see if they have work.

When you contract you will need to look for new work.

The difference between being in and out of contract for even a week is a substantial amount of money. Anything that cuts down this time for me improves my business.

When people email I'll always reply and thanks them for the message but I'm not in a contract right now. Over time I've added up quite a big list of over 100 recruitment agents. When I look for work I can do one big mail-out and straightaway most people all over my area will know I'm looking for work. This type of marketing is very similar to the

To help you get started I've created a small list of agencies and job sites to get you started:

- Computer Futures: www.computerfutures.com/en/
- CV Library: <http://www.cv-library.co.uk/>
- CWJobs: www.cwjobsmail.co.uk
- Huxley IT: <http://www.huxleyit.com/>
- Modis: www.modis.co.uk
- Monster: <http://www.monster.co.uk/>
- My Job Matcher: <https://www.myjobmatcher.com>
- Oscar Associates: www.oscar-associates.com
- Premier IT: premierituk.com
- Progressive: www.progressiverecruitment.com/
- Reed: <http://www.reed.co.uk/>
- Senitor: <http://senitor.com/>
- Spring Technology: www.spring-technology.com
- Techno Jobs: www.technojobs.co.uk
- The IT Job Board: www.theitjobboard.co.uk/
- Total Jobs: www.totaljobs.com/
- X 4 Group: www.x4group.co.uk

HOW TO CREATE A MAILING LIST

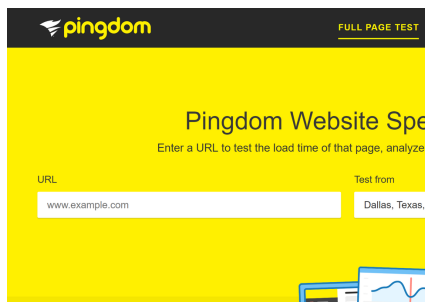
After looking for work you might get sick and tired of being spammed by recruitment agents. Instead how about using all those email address to good use. When you are looking for work you want to get the message out to as many people as possible.

For this I add anyone who contract me regarding work into a work email group. When I'm looking for work I can send an email shout out and it will get me in front of more eyes quickly.

LEARN HOW TECHNOLOGY CAN HELP YOU

So far this book has been very theoretical but from here on in it's all hands on. The following pages provide step-by-step tutorials to get you up and running using everything outlined so far. Everything from this point forward are tools and process that I use.

BENCHMARKING TOOLS



AUTO TEXT EXPANDER

[HTTPS://CHROME.GOOGLE.COM/WEBSTORE/DETAIL/AUTO-TEXT-EXPANDER-FOR-GO/IIBNINHMIGGEHLCDOLCILMHACIGHJAMP?HL=EN](https://chrome.google.com/webstore/detail/auto-text-expander-for-go/iibninhmiggehlcdolcilmhacighjamp?hl=en)

Auto Text Expander for Google Chrome is a tool that will replace a shortcut code of your choice, for example 'recruit@' with a snippet of pre-defined text... like an email message. First step use the link above and install the plug-in.

CONCLUSION

Ok so you now have your own blog that people read. You have a big Linked in profile where people constantly message you about work. You have a killer CV that when ou apply for a place you will be a lot more likely to actually get asked to the interview and through networking at small specific events in your industry you know some of the key people are you become known as one of the experts.

None of this directly will get you you're dream contract but you're now in a place that is a million times stronger to get one.