



The help you need

Northwest Software, Inc.

1800 NW 169th Place, Suite 150-B
Beaverton, OR 97006 USA

Phone 503-629-0303

Fax 503-645-5892

www.nwsi.com

Consulting FAQ

What is Consulting or Contracting?

Contract consultants are hired by companies, on an hourly basis, to use their skills for a specific project or for a set period of time - usually the time it takes to complete the project. Upon completion of the project, the contractor may be released to seek other opportunities.

Why should I become a consultant?

Typically, the pay of a consultant is higher than the pay scale for a comparable salaried position. Consultants are paid for each hour that they work. In addition to highly competitive pay rates, benefits are available to contractors that work with NSI. Although the earning potential could be higher, it is important to consider potential downtime between assignments.

Clearly, "job stability" for direct-hire employees is decreasing. Recent corporate and dot.com layoffs prove that not all "permanent" jobs are permanent. As a consultant, "career stability" is achieved through the advancement of technical skills, industry experience, reputation, and knowledge.

What should I look for when working with a consulting firm?

As a consultant, the challenge of securing your next assignment can be overwhelming. Improving your exposure to potential contract opportunities decreases the risk of unwanted downtime. Technical staffing firms have the network and infrastructure to make smooth transitions between assignments.

Your first indication whether you should partner with a contracting firm is the screening process.

- Are you treated professionally?
- Do they invest in innovation to increase the match between you and the job?
- Are you treated as a person?
- Do the opportunities match your skill set?
- Are you given full information about the position?

You should be told who the client is, detailed descriptions of responsibilities, pay ranges, and expected contract lengths. Additionally you should insist that you be informed before your qualifications are submitted to a client. When being submitted to large organizations, the job identification number or manager's name should be requested, and freely given.



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When selecting consulting firms that will best meet your long-term needs, you also should seek the answers to several key issues:

- What is the agency's track record?
- Does the agency invest in staffing innovation?
- What is their customer base?
- Do they specialize in industries that match your skills?
- What is their commitment to quality?
- Are you fully briefed on the client prior to an interview?
- Can they provide employment opportunities geographically suited to your needs?

Choosing contracting firms to partner with is an investment of your time. When chosen, they are an investment in your future.

What skills are companies looking for?

In recent surveys among our many clients the need for "soft skills" are frequently emphasized. Proficient technical skills are important but the ability to communicate, be a team player, and understand customer needs, will set you apart from other contractors.