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IR35 & REMOTE WORKING FOR CONTRACTORS

OLLIE WILDMAN

CONTRACT TEAM LEAD
ollie.wildman@maxwellbond.co.uk

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Introduction

Many IT contract roles that are deemed as 'outside IR35' are now primarily advertised as remote roles, and the roles that are not are becoming increasingly unpopular and harder to recruit for. This is likely because of reasons around COVID-19, changing working behaviour, and financial reasons around IR35.

Remote working, or the option of some flexibility, is now almost expected to some extent in many roles, so with these changing expectations, what are contractors views on remote working and working for a business who expects them onsite the majority of the time?

To help out some of my clients who are currently trying to determine how best to attract and engage with contractor talent, I conducted a survey to ask IT contractors "Nowadays, would you ever consider a contract role that requires you to work in the office most days of the week?"

53% of contractors would absolutely not consider a role that required them to work from the business's office most days of the week.

The Results

When I asked my network the question "would you ever consider a contract role that requires you to work in the office most days of the week?", more than half of respondents (53%) said that they would not consider roles that require them to be onsite the majority of the time. This was followed by 24% of respondents who said they would 'maybe' consider these onsite roles, and then 23% who said 'yes' they would consider them.
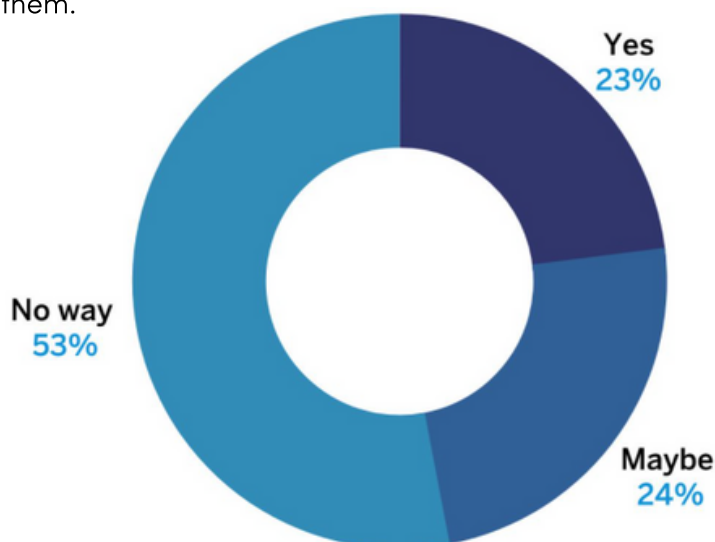
With IT roles becoming increasingly harder to fill, especially around software development, it's important for businesses to really understand contractor attitudes towards remote and onsite roles. With this insight, it makes it easier for businesses to create job opportunities that are attractive to that top tech talent they are looking for. It's important to get ahead of the UK talent shortage, and offering flexibility and remote options seems like a great way to expand your talent pool.

The Benefits of Working On-Site

23% of respondents said would consider a role that requires them to be in the office the majority of the time, as long as the requirement is their own and not imposed by the employer (as this would imply 'control' and therefore would risk their 'outside IR35' determination).

The main reasons respondents gave for this is that they prefer working in the office because "adaptation is always easier [and] communication is always easier" (Eyup, Contract Frontend Developer) and "interacting with people and teams is wonderful" (David, PO/BA/PM). There is also the argument that working fully remotely doesn't work for some people on a personal level (Ed, Technical Delivery Manager). It is clear that there are still many people who favour working on-site for a variety of reasons.

Communication and being able to talk to people in person are big draw factors for working in an office, but given the right amount of flexibility and the OPTION to work in the office also provides these benefits, whilst also offering other upsides which are explained below.

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The Benefits of Remote Contractor Roles

With the majority of IT contractors suggesting they would rule out on-site roles it's important for businesses to really consider the impact of not offering remote options. From a recruitment perspective, businesses who are open to offering fully remote options are immediately widening their talent pool as they are not restricted by geographical and travel obstacles. With the contractor IT talent pool already facing shortages, increasing your options is never a bad idea. Additionally, with the updated IR35 rules now in full play, it's important for businesses not to mandate when and where a contractor works if they want the role to remain 'outside IR35'. As Darren, Solutions Architect and Engineer suggests "if you are REQUIRED to be on site there's a good chance the contract is not outside IR35". Relinquishing all control of a contractors working location and hours makes this easier to manage.

Offering partial or full flexibility is also often more attractive to many candidates, because it reduces commute time, and allows for better work life balance where they can take full control of the hours they work. Many feel like unless the job physically requires you to be on-site there is no need for that requirement. For example, Paul, CEO and Lead Developer, suggests that "the only reasons for a service provider to do their work in your office is if they are cleaning it, outfitting it, or servicing machinery located in it. If they are required to be in your office otherwise, it's just disguised employment."

As well as avoiding complications around IR35 status determination and being more attractive to many candidates, hiring remote contractors can also lower your overhead costs.

Conclusion

Whilst there are contractors who prefer on-site roles, the general feeling is that they prefer the option to go into the office when they need and to work from home the rest of the time. Having this flexibility means they can take advantage of being able to interact and engage with the team in person some of the time, and then be able to fully manage their own hours and not have to worry about their commute the rest of the time.

As securing top IT talent becomes increasingly more challenging, it's crucial that businesses note these working preferences in order to ensure their job vacancies are as attractive as possible. Having contractor roles that are fully remote or flexible makes job adverts more attractive, opens them up to a global talent pool, lowers overhead costs, and ensures the business saves money and the employee saves money.

Recruiting Top IT Contractor Talent

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Ollie Wildman
Contract Team Lead
ollie.wildman@maxwellbond.co.uk
0161 359 3280

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