



Life + Money

How to Turn a Freelance Job into a Full-Time Career

By Judy Koutsky, The Fiscal Times

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The labor market [may be improving](#) (<http://latestnews.thefiscaltimes.com/2014/10/09/u-s-jobless-claims-fall-point-to-labor-market-strength/>), but it's still very much an employer's market. Even with hiring on the increase, the number of new full-time jobs being created continues to lag. This is partly why a third of workers are now freelancers, according to a [new report from Freelancers Union](#), which defines freelancers as everything from contract workers to temps.

There is good news, however. For many people, landing a full-time job may increasingly be a two-step process: Get on board first as a part-time or contract worker, then work to convert that to a full-time job. It happens more often than you think.

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Freelance and part-time work is important because it allows you to build your resume (and avoid employment gaps). It can also provide income while you're still in search mode, says Liz D'Aloia, a recruiter and founder of [HR Virtuoso](#) (<http://www.hrvirtuoso.com/>).

If you're already working as a freelancer or part-timer, you've succeeded with step one. Now it's a matter of closing the deal on a full-time gig. Here are smart tips to help.

Climb the Company Ladder

Working within a department gives you an inside scoop when a job opens up as well as insight into what the position entails. That was the case for Cathy Wilde, a communications director at the University of Buffalo who started out as a freelance assistant at Buffalo's school of management in 2008.

After a six-month trial period, she went from freelance to hourly to part-time, with her responsibilities increasing along the way. Her dedication paid off when a full-time position as assistant director of communications opened up in 2012. Wilde still had to go through a state-mandated application process and interview for the job, but her experience and knowledge of the department helped her get the gig.

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A year later, Wilde moved into her current role. "It was a slow, steady climb from being an assistant to being the boss," she notes.

Career tip: Always exude a positive attitude, D'Aloia says, even if the position is a stepping-stone. You never know when you'll need a reference.

Show Your Worth

In Sara Spencer's case, being assertive played a role in her progress from freelance work to a full-time offer. She was hesitant at first to take on temporary work, but the position was at a PR firm that intrigued her.

"The freelance position began with minimal pay but really flexible hours. I made it a point to show up every morning when everyone else arrived and stay until everyone left. I worked extremely hard," she says, "and was vocal about making suggestions on client initiatives."

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Being proactive helped her nab a full-time offer. "I requested a meeting with the company's owners and shared goals. I reviewed the work I'd done for them over the past three months and the value I could offer as a full-time employee." While this certainly won't work in every case, Spencer's gumption paid off and the company took her on full time.

Career tip: Regular meetings with supervisors can help remind others of your value – and strengthen your relationship with the team, putting you in good stead when a full-time position presents itself.

Join the Team

If you're freelancing at a company you like and want a full-time job, make a personal connection with your coworkers by "mingling with the team, going out to lunch, or stopping by their desk to chat," advises Aalap Shah, co-owner of the Chicago-based marketing firm SoMe Connect. Once your assignment is over, stay in touch.

"Our freelancers are working with other companies and organizations, and we love to hear about their work and their new roles," Shah says. "It gives us a clear picture of what they're doing and how they manage multiple priorities."

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Even if there are no jobs available at the moment, by staying in touch with your previous employers and grabbing coffee with former colleagues now and then, the

companies are more likely to keep your name at the ready when a position does open up.

Career tip: Think of freelance as an opportunity to see if you really want to work for that employer, advises D'Aloia. Is it a good cultural fit? Do you like the work? Are you in sync with the boss? Also, keep looking for a full-time job even if you're doing project work. While you may be hopeful that your current position will turn into something more, you don't want to put all your eggs in one company's basket.

Know That Starting Small Is OK

For Blakely Donohue, a move from Florida to New York was the impetus for accepting consulting work for a major PR firm. It seemed like a minor gig, but she took it as an opportunity to prove her skills to a potential employer. She received a full-time job offer not much later.

She's now a public relations account executive. The lesson? "Never turn down a small gig that might turn into a grand opportunity," she says. Getting your foot in the door is the first step to showcasing your skills. Employers don't want to have to start fresh for every project.

Career tip: Great contractors can help companies decide to free up budgets for full-time positions. Consider your freelance gig a probationary period and treat the job as if it were permanent.

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