***Contract 911! What to do when a consulting role isn’t working out…***

Consulting, otherwise known as contract work, has gained momentum in the current job market. It can provide many benefits such as flexible work schedules, opportunities to learn a new skill set, or the ability to learn more about a company before committing full-time. Another key advantage – You may perform the role of a salaried professional, however, you are compensated for the hours worked including overtime.

You’ve landed a great consulting opportunity and are excited about the road ahead. So, what do you do when you quickly learn that the position is not a great fit? Don’t grab your apples and run! Develop a game plan and strategize to leverage the opportunity to find a better fit. Some ways to make a successful change include:

1. ***Become Visible to Other Key Decision Makers Within the Organization***

You may be a consultant for one hiring manager within a particular department. However, why must you limit your exposure or contribution to one individual? Learn more about the company and how the departments work together. You never know when a hiring manager has a need!

*An example:*

Jim was a tax accountant hired to perform temporary financial planning and analysis work related to the Annual Budget of a private company. Within two weeks, he quickly realized that his hiring manager was difficult to work with, unorganized, not quite a professional fit. He worked with a recruiter to find this role and didn’t want to damage his or the agency’s reputation. He also knew that this was an opportunity to build his resume beyond tax, so this was a great position to gain experience in the discipline he sought to develop a career path.

Rather than quit, he started to develop ways to support the accounting department with their needs, created efficient analysis files, and offered to help others within the groups that worked closely with his department. After a month, a hiring manager within Corporate Finance recognized Jim’s positive attitude, commitment to teamwork, and overall desire to learn. After 3 months, when the consulting role ended, Jim was offered a permanent position within Finance. Jim happily took the role and was able to begin a new career that was outside of tax. A perfect case in point that networking within the organization can provide a better range of opportunities!

1. ***Work with Your Recruiter to Find A Different Role***

Sometimes a position is simply not a fit or accurately presented. (Hopefully, this falls within the realm of the company misrepresenting a position to the recruiter and not the other way around!) If that is the case, try to develop a graceful exit plan with your recruiter.

*An example:*

Janice was hired as a temporary senior accountant for a six-month project focused primarily on fixed asset accounting and analysis. Within the first week, she was asked to file invoices, answer the switchboard, type letters, and perform other administration duties. Accounting for fixed assets was a very small aspect of the position and she was not happy.

Janice contacted her recruiter and explained her dissatisfaction. Afterwards, it was discovered by the recruiter that the hiring manager misrepresented the role and previously made 3 hires - none of which lasted more than 1 week! The recruiter only found this out after being contacted by an employee that worked with the hiring manager and now was looking to leave the company.

The recruiter understood Janice’s predicament and more importantly, recognized that the position was not a great fit. Janice worked with her recruiter to develop an exit plan that would enable her to find an accounting position without quitting. The recruiter sold the hiring manager on the idea of getting someone with a lower price point that would be a better fit for an administrative role. Additionally, the recruiter was able to move Janice out of the company and into a consulting role that was truly an accounting position. A good recruiter will always work within the best interest of both his/her candidates and clients. Building a strong relationship with yours can help you out of a sticky situation if ever presented with one!

1. ***Speak With Your Hiring Manager Regarding More Responsibility***

Most reasonable hiring managers (and I will highlight the word ‘reasonable’) will gladly increase the responsibilities of capable and skilled staff. After all, the more that they can delegate, the more that they can take on and accomplish as well. If you find you are completing task ahead of schedule and have time available to take on more, let your manager know. Show your commitment to learning and growing in the role. A consulting role is a working interview. It’s your time to shine and show what you truly can do!

*An Example:*

Dana was hired as a consultant to assist a Controller with month-end closing and reporting requirements. After 4 months in the role, Dana was able to reduce closing and complete reports much more efficiently. She was a quick learner and eager to build her skillset. She didn’t want to be bored and focused on building her reputation so she would have an opportunity to pursue future permanent roles. Dana met with the Controller and asked if there were other tasks/responsibilities that she could take on to help. After a few months, the Controller recommended that Dana be brought on as a full time employee.

***Summing It Up!***

At the end of the day, our work is truly what we make of it. Attitude and initiative go a long way in building a career. If you’ve analyzed the situation and truly assessed that the role isn’t a fit, start to address it sooner than later. If a particular consulting role isn’t a fit, try to identify opportunities within the company or work with your recruiter to find something elsewhere. If there is no avenue of improvement and the situation is truly one in which you are miserable, don’t be afraid to exit gracefully! Just be prepared to write a professional resignation letter and answer future potential interview questions related to the departure.