

Interview with Kate Sykes, founder www.careermums.com.au

Returning to Work as a Contractor – Case Study

*Working as a contractor can be a great way to re-engage with the workforce after becoming a parent, tendering a host of flexible work options such as where, when and how often you work. I spoke with Maria Montesano, author of *Teleworking Mum*, about her foray into the flexible work domain via contract work.*

How Flexible is Contract Work?

Contract work offered me a great deal of flexibility. Negotiating a work from home arrangement, a flexible schedule and part-time hours was relatively straightforward, as contractors are hired to undertake a specific task or project. Your objectives, if well-defined, are easily measurable which can make the when, where or how you work irrelevant. This lends itself to a great deal of flexibility.

What other Benefits does Contract Work Offer?

As a professional, I found it difficult to source part-time hours in my specific line of work. Re-entering the workforce as a contractor provided this option. Furthermore, contracting opened up a lot of doors for me. Being setup as a small business meant that I could take on other work when or if I had the time, need or desire. This is a great way to boost your bank balance whilst also enhancing your skills and experience - without facing the tax hikes applicable to employees who hold more than one job concurrently.

What are the limitations of Contract Work?

There are several things to be aware of when considering contract work:

- (a) You are required to establish similar legal and tax frameworks to a small business, therefore you are liable for managing things such as business registrations, ABN and tax reporting.
- (b) One of the major inhibitors for some contractors is the lack of security, particularly when offered only a short-term contract. Contracts can range from periods of a few weeks to several years.

Contract Work Tips

- Avenues for finding contract work include job boards, recruitment agencies and past employers/clients/work associates.
- Treat your contracting status like a small business: build a web page, market yourself and network! This will help you generate further work, ensuring continuity of employment/engagement, and can expand your portfolio of active contracts.
- Some employers have specific time periods between the time you stop working for them as an employee and the time you can re-engage with them (or their clients) as a contractor, e.g., 3, 6 or 12 months. Check first before approaching a current or former employer about contracting for them.

Adapted from the book *Teleworking Mum : The Essential Work from Home Guide for Parents*, by Maria Montesano (published in 2010 by Red Bullet Research & Communications).

For more information visit www.teleworkingmum.com.au