

Is Independent Consulting For You?

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So what is consulting exactly?

- For the purposes of this talk, can be anything from junior contracting to expert services or management
- You're a hired hand, not a full-time employee
- You work for yourself, and have clients or customers rather than an employer.
- You can subcontract for a more established consultant, but you still work for yourself.

Why it might come up

- Job market difficulties
- Changing personal circumstances (caregiving, health issues, moves)
- You have the means and want a change or more flexibility
- You're feeling entrepreneurial but don't know where to start

Pros

- Much more freedom & flexibility
- Can use downtime to create new products or learn new skills
- Can earn a higher hourly rate than as a full-time employee, but it comes with caveats.

Cons

- No benefits or reliable salary
- Every dollar earned is time worked
- The consulting business requires overhead that has nothing to do with your core offering
- You'll probably need legal and financial advice

Things to Think About - Legal

- I'm not a lawyer and none of this is legal advice
- Consider hiring a lawyer
- I read NOLO press books on independent contracting and LLCs
- Drafted my own boilerplate contract, then got a lawyer to review

Things to Think About - Contracts

Consider the terms you want to use in the boilerplate:

- What kinds of relationships do you want to have?
- How much do you want to trust that the company will stay the same if your contact leaves?
- Hourly rate or project-based?
- Retainer, net 30 or payable on receipt?

Things to Think About - Accounting

- Depending on LLC requirements, may need to have a separate business account.
- I use GnuCash for accounting and to generate invoices, but there are many options.
- I have a tax accountant, but he won't do my LLC return.
- Is there a better structure tax-wise than LLC sole proprietor? Probably.

Things to Think About - Your Time

- Carefully consider the value of your time and whether you could better spend it generating revenue.
- Accounting and legal as discussed before
- Website/blog posts—hire it out, learn it yourself (takes a lot of time), or use LinkedIn or other turnkey options.
- Your hourly rate—research for your skills as much as you can (upwork, etc.), then weigh against your capacity and the project at hand. More than full time hourly because of business overhead.

Things to Think About - Networking

- Not the 2nd N in NANOG
- Colleagues who have done this before me got me going and gave me advice and contacts.
- Conferences like NANOG — conversations and contacts
- Various slacks are great ways to connect and learn as well: NTC, Network Automation Forum, Packet Pushers, etc.
- Is there interest in a dedicated slack/discord?

So is this for you?

- Only you can answer that
- The hourly rate is good, but there are caveats
- Do your research, get outside help if needed
- Value your time
- Always be networking



Thank you

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