

Working as a Wireless LAN contractor

by Jonathan Finney

For those of you thinking about working as an independent contractor in the Wireless LAN industry, here are some options and information that might be useful in your research into this field.

Net-new - market yourself on LinkedIn

- VAR Bench work (they usually take a 30%) Don't be afraid to ask for the amount they are aiming to make, it's a collaborative discussion on money, not one-way.
- Real net new, understand the pricing and price below VARs (Usually one-offs)
- Contract companies that are reached out to by a prime or a VAR for smaller quick gigs.

VAR "Bench/Overflow"

- There are contacts at WWT/CDW, etc., who are resource managers who hold the purse strings to find contractors/companies to fill backlogs.
- Might get thrown at hourly, understand the scope and force day-rate or a fixed-fee project rate at them but, if you ain't working that week, some money is better than no money.

Professional Services companies

- Same thing but they just need an extra surveyor or two. Does pay well from the right companies but it's boring but all you do is throw them the ESX file when you are done, no docs. Invoice away and you are done.

Professional Consultant

- The above is an example
- Escalation Engineer when no one else can fix a major problem
- Steer larger projects and act as a program architect
- You can prove your ROI and make discussions based on this.
- Sales - a lot of companies cannot afford a solutions architect, so you can work on deals with them as what I call a "fractional" solutions architect. If they are dealing with a whale and have limited pre-sales or lack anyone with foundational knowledge in wireless - this could benefit and understanding the revenue/overhead and potential could have you asking for some of that sweet sweet commission because with you, it's not a deal that could happen.

MSP work

- Some MSPs severely lack good wireless talent
- Retainer situations apply here, keep "x" network running, act as an SME for the network engineers/help desk/project managers
- Guaranteed monthly revenue
- Remote

Upwork/Field Engineer

- This is the bottom of the barrel work, Upwork is slowly dying but I use up work to get business contacts and take it offline. Don't bother with fieldengineer, people using that get what they are paid for.
- Sometimes, you can figure out the prime and contact the resource manager directly.

In presentation to companies, fixed-fee pricing with travel included is the easiest way to make it work easily for both you and the end client.

Contracts: You need to understand net 30/60/90 well and be able to eat costs for up to 3 months at a time. You can put riders of a % penalty of payment if not paid "X". Some companies do balk at that and will walk away so tread carefully.

You may need to hold a "*tech insurance*" - 600 a year as a requirement. If you can replicate and/or show background searches or easily provide things like vaccinations/drug tests and ramp up quick. I've gone through background companies that probably cost the company more money than my time (2-3 day) engagements.

Sometimes, you can also have a shelter company that's willing to "badge" you who may be a preferred vendor but they take their cut as well. (10%)

None of this is easy as it sounds, I've learned this through blood, sweat and tears and by marketing myself on LinkedIn and building connections. At the end of the day, your connections in the community/business can help. I do a lot of local work at a discounted rate since travel isn't involved but again, some money is better than no money.