

Going it alone...

Recruitment is a constantly evolving industry. A lot of people work in it for a while, then become self-employed or set up their own companies. So, what are the pitfalls and the possibilities?

If you set up your own company:

- pay as much attention to your own personality and abilities as you would in placing a candidate
- get your weaknesses sorted !
- create a support network
- ABN! (see below)
- decide on your selling strategy
- junk big company thought

The lure to go it alone is increasingly strong in UK industry. The recruitment sector is no different from others.

The motive can be freedom, big bucks or dissatisfaction at working for someone else (the old adage says " You join companies and leave managers"). You may want to work on your own, in a small team or build your own big company. The building blocks are clear : have a plan; visit the bank manager; get an accountant; rent an office or create one in your spare bedroom; register for VAT (you're optimistic).

But we know that businesses succeed or fail because of people. People moving from a company to self-employment often forget this. Of all people, recruiters shouldn't make this mistake.

- Working in a big company de-skills us. Your IT department will sort out computer problems (well, that's the idea !). Someone you may never have met does your VAT return and writes your brochures. Working for yourself means you're a jack of all these trades. Identify your weaknesses and things you just don't like doing. Sort them out first. Don't cherry-pick your favourites and leave the rest to chance.
- You'll need to think about your own style of working. Are you the sort of person who tends to work in short, sharp bursts then goes walkabout ? Do you get cast down by failures? That won't wash when your customers ring up and you are the only person on the phone!

- Many of us need sympathetic critics. There are opportunities for this in a big company: working on your own or in a small team reduces this flow of information. Some people depend on feedback for motivation. Others - and they're often successful - don't need someone to tell them how well they're doing. But even these self-sufficient types need third party information. They can get obsessed with the issues within their own new business and live in an ivory tower.
- ABN – Always Be Networking. You can forget this in a big company. If you don't do it naturally, force yourself, but get some feedback on your personality and preferred style first (you can use Thomas instruments for this). You can't pretend when you're networking but there are many different ways of doing it and one will suit you as an individual.
- Decide on Your Selling Strategy: this is not a problem for sales experts . For the rest of us it can be difficult to make contacts or close the deal. Don't get too obsessed with textbook selling techniques. It's your business, built around you. Do it your own way. Be different from the normal people walking through the front door. You'll impress customers with your fresh approach.
- Junk big company thought: You simply don't need a vision, a mission or a five year plan for a small business. You need to be out there in front of people. Your flexibility and ability to react to opportunities is precisely what marks you out from the big boys. You're a nippy motor boat; they're vast trundling oil tankers.

Great sales people say that customers "buy" the person doing the selling, not the product they're offering. This is true in spades in the self-employed and small-business areas. The temptation is to concentrate on the hard business disciplines like accounts and, of course, you have to check you're solvent. But the key to going it alone is YOU and to make the most of your best asset you need to concentrate on what you're best at, get other people to advise you and make up for weaknesses and, most importantly, dare to be different.

And finally...if you're recruiting for a small company, bear some of the above points in mind. Small companies need to employ self-starters who get "stuck in ". That's what we've been describing here.