

ProDataConsult

Tips for freelance IT Consultants

Intro

As a freelancer your livelihood depends on your ability to find and land the right projects. And to do so, you must be proactive and do the right things to optimize your chances of landing the perfect freelance IT project.

This ebook consists of a series of articles, which will provide you with practical advice and valuable input to help you market your professional profile, while also increasing your chances of finding your next dream project.

We hope you find it useful.

The ProData Consult team

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Win the
race to your
next freelance
project

Speed is everything

Companies who need freelance IT consultants often move quick, finding the right candidate in a matter of days, effectively leaving candidates with little time to react on job posts. Therefore, as a candidate it is important to know that consultancies or recruiters will close the hiring process as soon as they have the right candidates for the position. This is a process that often takes a few days, but can take as little as 24 hours, depending on the amount of interest the project receives and requirements of the client.

Speed is therefore a huge factor in determining your success. Do not wait too long before submitting your application to the dream project. Get your things in order and ready, so you can act fast once job opportunities present themselves.

Get the word out

When you are at the end of an assignment, it is crucial to get the word out that you will be available for new projects again shortly. Call up your

consultancy partner, be proactive and spread the word that you are looking for your next project and that you are ending your current assignment on a certain date.

Inquire about trends and find out if there are any courses or certifications that you might need, in order to sharpen your skills further and stay ahead of the curve, so you can stand out for your next project.

This is the best time to polish your profile and make yourself attractive. Remember the longer you spend between projects the less bargaining power you essentially have for any negotiation situation.

Update your business profile(s)

It can be a bit tedious to have to update multiple profiles across several websites. Therefore, we recommend focusing on the consultancy managed databases first. This is due to the simple reason that once companies reach a certain size, the procurement of consultants often goes

Win the race to your next freelance project



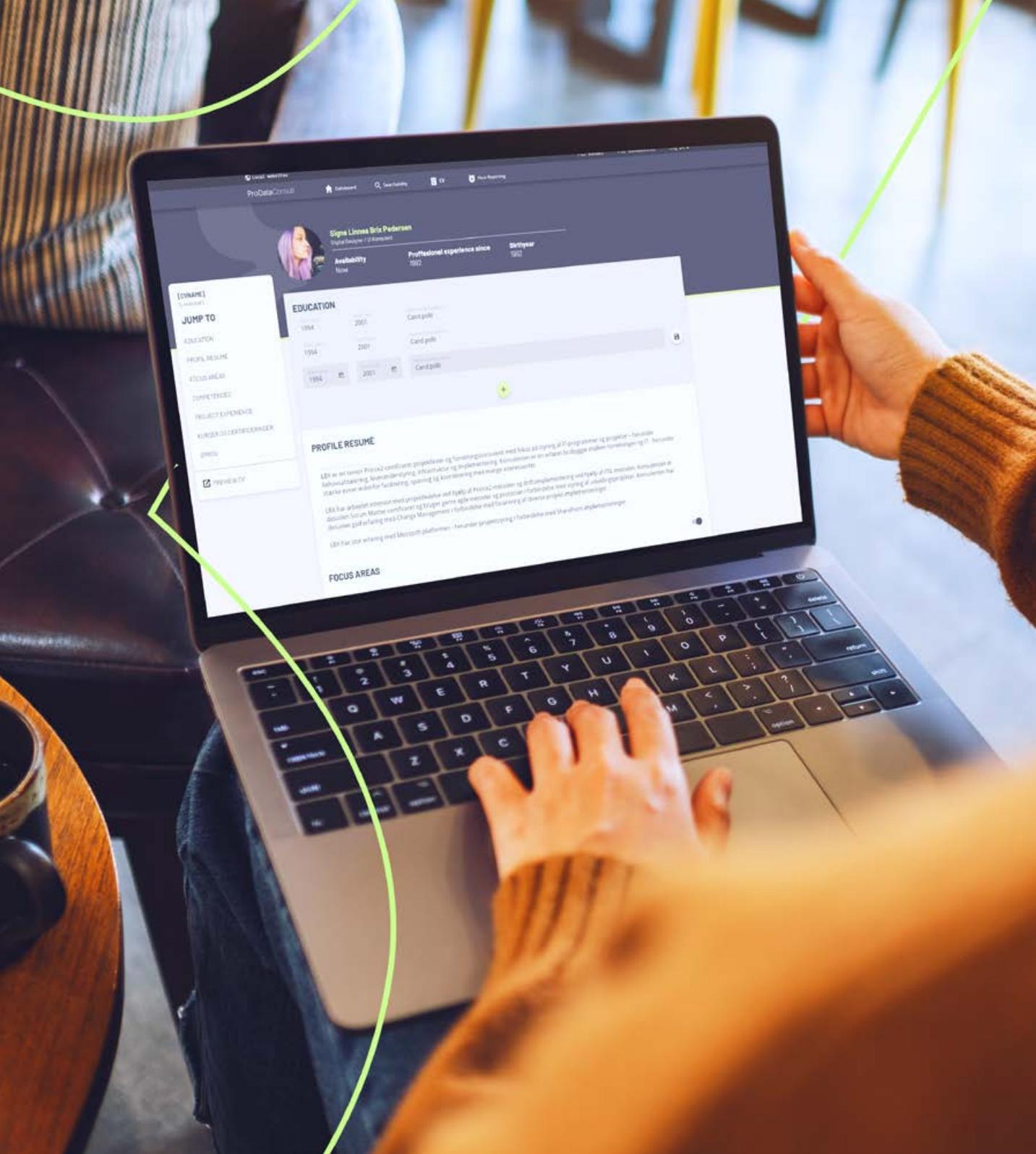
through Consultancy firms, essentially making them the gatekeepers for most freelance projects. Therefore, if you have registered a profile with a Consultancy Firm, start by updating it with your new experience and knowledge. Technologies constantly change and so does demand, make sure any new experience is reflected in your profile.

Keep your LinkedIn profile updated. One of the best tips is to update the Summary-section with information on when you will be available again, since recruiters actively search on select keywords like “freelance”, “available”, “opportunity” to find candidates. Update your list of competences and make your new experience and knowledge visible. Furthermore, if you possess niche knowledge and skills, make sure it is obvious from your LinkedIn page – those skills might just be exactly what someone is looking for. In other words, if you want to increase your chances of being found, then start thinking like a recruiter and optimize your LinkedIn-profile around it.

Take advantage of online tools

Knowing that the window of opportunity potentially can close at any minute, and the difference between getting considered for a project or not, can depend on the speed at which you apply, having tools at your disposal that can instantly notify you of new projects is a clear advantage. Many job sites offer features that will notify you by email when the criteria for the project you seek is met. Set them up so they can work for you.

Our free ConsultantApp for consultants is an option for all freelancers that will keep you covered with instant notifications related to new project openings, courtesy of one of its basic features. For instance, it will send you a notification whenever the project you seek is created, allowing you to instantly submit your profile by hitting one button. The app will automatically pull your consultant profile from our database and handle the rest.



The consultant CV:

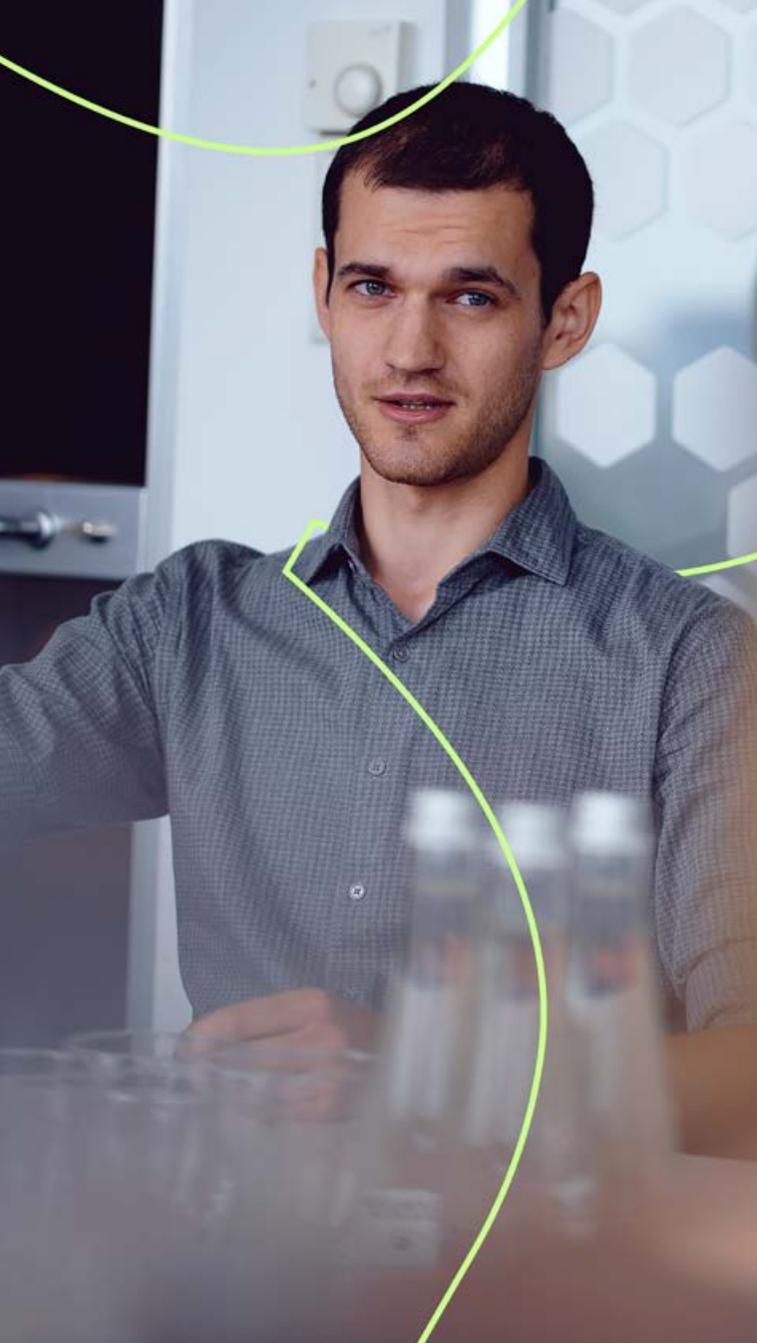
How to communicate your core expertise

A well produced CV will pave the way to the good projects, and it can prove crucial in helping you to the decisive interview. Sourcing Manager Claus Schack shares his tips on what you should keep in mind when developing your CV as a freelance consultant.

By Claus Schack, Sourcing Manager at ProData Consult with over ten years of experience in preparing consultant CVs.

Remember your audience

As a consultant, your CV will pass through many hands before it can get you to a project. At each step along the way, people who do not share your professional expertise act as gatekeepers who decide whether you will advance in the process or not. And they can be a mixed bunch – HR, recruitment



consultants, resource departments, purchasing, other coordinators. Even lawyers and financial officers can be gatekeepers.

You will find these gatekeepers both at the consultancy you are collaborating with and at the company whose projects you want to work on. And if you fail to communicate your CV in a way your gatekeepers understand, you will be out of the race for the exciting projects before it even begins. But how can you optimize your chances for making it through the process?

Start by acknowledging that your professional expertise is not general knowledge. Because it isn't – not at all if you are an IT consultant. Unfortunately, many consultants mistakenly believe the opposite, which is the root of the most serious failures of communication in working with a CV. Many consultants get

tangled up in a complex web of technical analyses and explanations which only raise more questions than answers – and this just won't do!

So how can you put your gatekeepers in a position to make a rational, logical decision without understanding your professional specialization? It's all about identifying a unifying theme and presenting data in a way your audience understands.

Where do you stand firm when the storm is raging?

A good consultant CV starts with a precise definition of what you are and what you can do. Cut away the fat and get to the core of your competences. Where do you stand firm when the storm is raging?

Clarify the nature of your expertise and the role(s) in which you have excelled in

the last three to five years. It's decisive that the core of your CV is centered on your experiences.

Does this mean that you can't be an expert in something you worked with five or ten years ago? Yes, it's certainly possible. But most gatekeepers will be reluctant to view you as a specialist if your experience with a particular competence isn't fresh and contemporary in memory and in action. For this reason, the core of your CV should focus on the last three to five years.

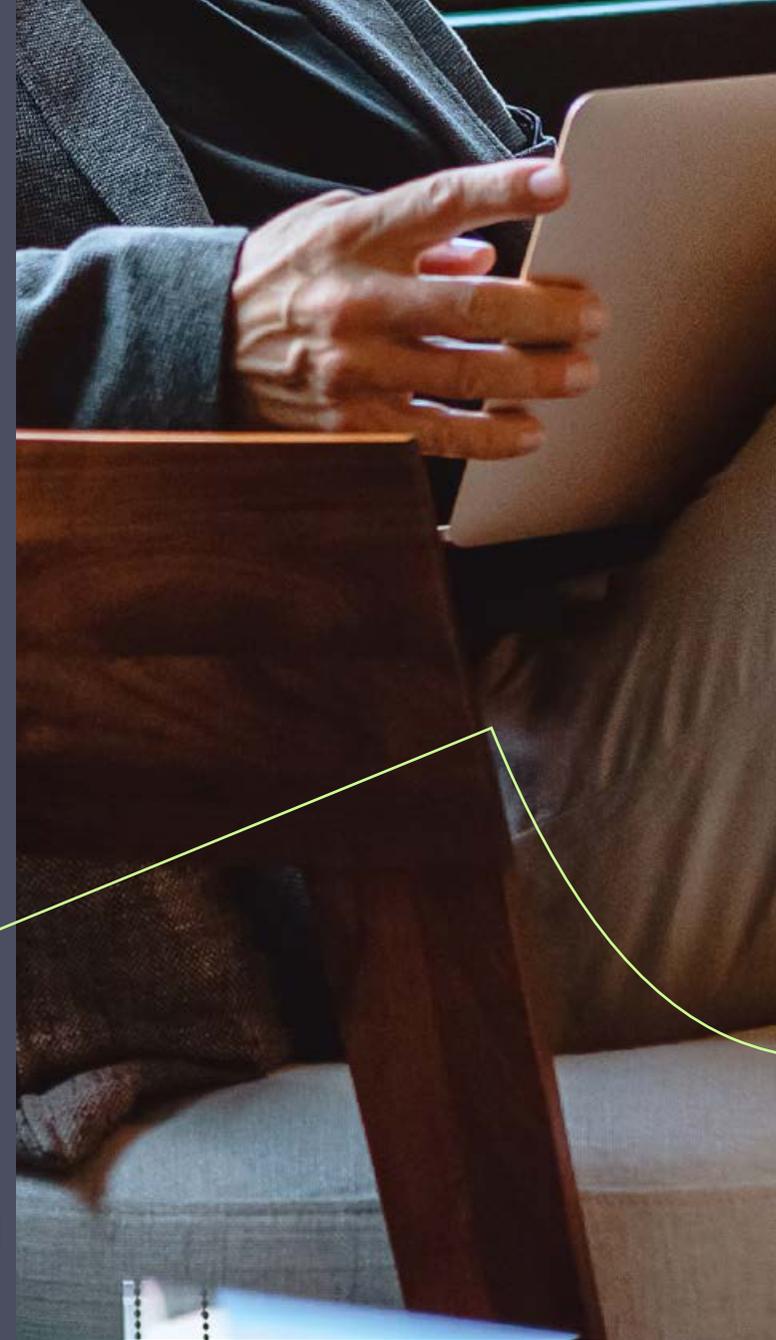
You should also cut away all superfluous information which might muddy the portrait you are creating. When you have identified your core, you have also identified the theme which should shape your profile, and which you should make your point of reference throughout the CV. Then it becomes a matter of demonstrating that you actually can stand firm when the storm gains strength – so that even people without your professional insight will be convinced.

A question of data discipline

Your CV has to present your core competences clearly and objectively. It's a question of data discipline. There has to be a credible correlation between the competences you claim to have and your experiences – and everything has to support your particular profile.

In short, you must present empirical evidence for your core competences through your CV. The data in your CV has to fit your profile and get a clear, consistent message across. This leaves less room for subjective interpretation on the part of the reader, and it also results in a more objective, credible and truthful CV.

Write simply and clearly, and avoid esoteric language and jargon. Use the same concepts and terminology throughout the CV, and don't be afraid to draw a bold line under the core competences which define your professional profile. You need to use repetition to make an objective argument for your status as a specialist to your gatekeepers.



The three essential elements of a consultant CV

A good consultant CV consists of three main components: A summary, a list of competences and project experience.

1) Summary

Establish the theme immediately with a precise summary. Introduce your role in the most general terms, along with your competences and the concepts from your field you will be referring to and emphasizing throughout the CV. The resume is where you establish the theme of the entire CV. Set the scene precisely, but keep it general. Avoid long, complicated descriptions: keep the summary brief and concise, and cut to the core of your profile. Twelve to fifteen lines is enough – no more.

2) List of competences

Compile a clear and organized list of your competences that quickly outlines your

key areas of expertise. Indicate your level of expertise in a particular competence, indicate when you last used it, and how many years you have worked with it. This will help you compile a well-structured list quickly which will be the foundation for your professional profile.

3) Project experience

Describe your project experience, starting with your latest project. Make sure that your description fits in with the profile you have defined for yourself, both in headings and in your explanatory text. The project experience section is where you present empirical evidence for the claims you make in the summary and the list of competences.

Specifically, you should include when the project took place, the client/employer, a project description, technologies used and your specific role.

In the project description, you should focus on what YOU have done. Avoid general descriptions of the unit you belonged to or other information which is not directly related to your competences. Focus on describing your involvement in the project in detail, and what competences you brought into play during the project.

Finish with a quality check

Finally, review your CV. Cross-check every section and makes sure everything is consistent with your profile. If you succeed in this, the result will be a strongly coherent CV consisting of relevant data which all contribute to communicating the same message. And even though different people will read your CV, they will all reach the same conclusion – and that's precisely the goal of a good consultant CV. •

How to optimize your **LinkedIn** *-profile* *as a freelance consultant*

When working as a freelance consultant, LinkedIn is one of the best places to market your professional profile. In this article, you will get some tips on how to optimize your LinkedIn profile and thereby increase your chances of being found for future projects.

By Sami Bødker, Senior Sourcing Specialist at ProData Consult

Use a proper profile picture

Let's take it from the top. And yes, a profile picture might seem a little irrelevant. How much can one really tell about your competences just from your picture? Maybe not much, but a professional picture gives a much better first impression and, to a greater extent,

point to professionalism. Use the time and resources to have a professional picture taken - it is money well spent.

Are you a CEO or a freelance consultant?

As a freelance consultant, you are CEO in your own undertaking, and it can be tempting to decorate your profile with titles such as CEO, CTO, CIO, or other flattering abbreviations. Although it sounds impressive, it does not help you to get contacted for a project – far from it. This kind of title rarely gives an idea of what you are good at.

Instead, you should focus on bringing out the role you excel at. Are you a 'Project Manager', 'Web Developer', 'Test

Manager', or something else? Then that is the role you should bring out in your title on your profile. Make sure to use common role names, since these are most frequently used as search phrases by recruitment specialists.

Even if your native language is not English, I recommend that you use English titles. Use the English role names – it will increase your chances to be found through searches, as most requests from clients will have common roles in English.

State that you are a freelancer

Remember to state that you are a freelancer. If you only mention your role/title, you do not stand out from the

number of permanent employees who share your title. This will make it more difficult for recruitment specialists to find you. If you do not care for the term 'freelance', you can also put 'external consultant'.

Make it clear if you are available for new projects

If you are looking for new projects or you know when your present contract will end, make sure to communicate it. There is nothing wrong with indicating that you are available and ready for new jobs. Indicate if you are available, what type of project you are looking for, and geographical preferences. This will also make potential inquiries more relevant.

Some choose to specify their availability in their title, others in their resume – both will work perfectly fine. Examples of common ways to demonstrate your availability could be: "Open/available/ready/looking for new opportunities/assignments".

Set the scene in your profile summary

A lot of people omit a summary on their LinkedIn profiles. But it is an important

tool to create a direction for your profile. The summary is your starting point for positioning your professional profile, and, other than your picture and title, your summary is the first thing people see when they visit your profile. Use the opportunity to set the scene of your profile by writing a catchy and strong summary. Keep it short, consistent, and objective, and get to the core of your profile. Further, avoid long and complex descriptions.

Point out your previous projects and clients

Spend time and energy on a description of your previous projects. It is not satisfactory to write that you have been employed in your own company for the past 15 years, without elaborating what projects you have worked on and what clients you have worked for. Also, it is not enough to just state the client, your title, and the period of time you worked there – the description of your projects should be detailed. It does not have to be a long essay. 5-6 short and precise points on your responsibilities in the projects can be plenty.

Make sure to have a credible coherence between your experience and the competences you emphasize in your summary and in your competence section. Again, use common terms when stating your role, technologies, platforms, etc.

Create coherence from top to bottom

When scrolling through your LinkedIn profile, there should be a coherence from top to bottom. And yes, it sounds simple, but it can actually be a tough discipline, as it is all about cutting to the bone and omitting information that could create confusion on your profile.

Basically, you should have the same approach to your LinkedIn profile as you have to your consultant CV.

Use LinkedIn actively

Obviously, the prerequisite for the above is for you to want to use LinkedIn actively to market your professional profile. And we recommend that you do this. Be proactive and expand your network – it will most definitely be beneficial for you in the long run



- 1 Use a proper profile picture
- 2 State that you are a freelancer
- 3 Set the scene in your summary
- 4 Emphasize your previous projects
- 5 Create coherence from top down
- 6 Use LinkedIn actively



How to handle the consultant-interview

As a freelance consultant, there are a few things one needs to be aware of in order to stand out and be the one that lands the perfect job. An important part of the process towards the next assignment is the consultant-interview. This is where the consultant has the opportunity to make a strong and personal impression. But how do you best prepare, and how do you handle the actual interview? ProData Consult Account Manager Lisbeth Sommer Knudsen gives her input, giving her tips on some of the key elements you should consider when preparing for your interview.

By Lisbeth Sommer Knudsen, Account Manager at ProData Consult

Familiarize with the organization

Before the interview, it is important to acquire an understanding of the type of organization and project you are dealing with. This way, you will also get an indication of how to make yourself relevant in relation to what the client needs. Therefore, it can be an advantage beforehand to look up who will participate in the interview, and how they relate to the project. It is also advantageous if you have knowledge of relevant problems or initiatives that the organization might have. Besides making it easier for you to navigate through the interview, it also makes you appear prepared, and this will give the client an initially positive impression.

It is also important that you, as a consultant, consider how you appear at the interview. Make sure to check if the organization has a dress code that you should follow when going to the interview.

Regardless if there is a dress code or not, it is always important to appear well-dressed.

Right to the point

During the consultant-interview, it is alpha and omega for the client to get a clear sense of the competences that you have, and how you will rise to the challenge. As a consultant, you should,



therefore, prepare for the pivotal point of the interview to be hard facts rather than soft issues. The approach to the interview is often matter-of-fact and well-structured, and the client wants to get right to the point. Thus, you should not expect the usual small talk but

instead be ready to give an expedient presentation of how you can help the client.

Prepare a strong pitch

Seize the opportunity when it is your turn to speak. The best way to do this



is to prepare a pitch, which shortly and precisely emphasizes your relevant experience and competences.

Be prepared to elaborate and go into detail about previous assignments that you have solved. It is a good idea to base this on assignments that are similar to the one you are interviewing for, so the client can draw parallels between the assignments.

In addition, it is natural that you base your pitch on the client's outlining of the project. Contribute to the facts that the client gives and use them as a stepping stone to make your pitch as relevant as possible. Besides presenting your assignments, you can advantageously emphasize what problems you have previously run into, and how you handled them. It is always about stressing what experiences you bring to the project.

Be honest and humble

At the actual interview, it is essential for you to make it explicit if your competences are not consistent with the

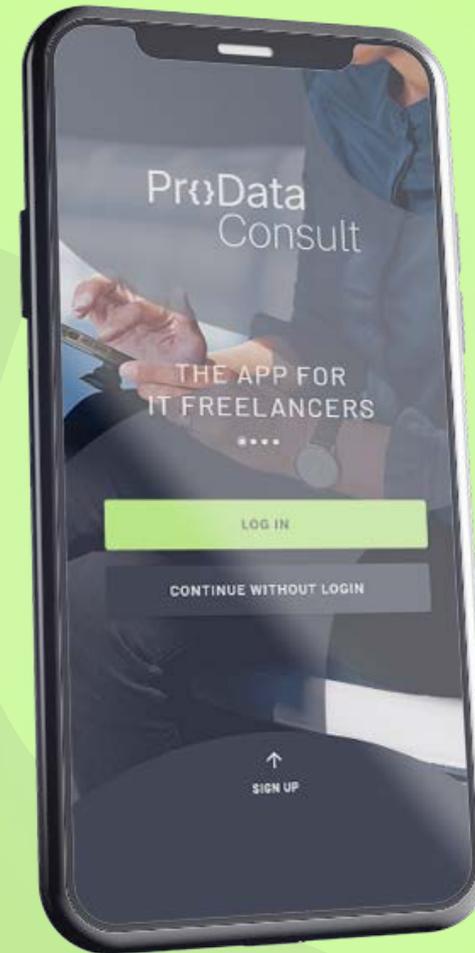
client's expectations. You should also be humble and show interest towards the client. It is all about listening to what the client says, being expectant, and contribute when you are encouraged to. It is also important that you answer relevantly and stick to the given topic. If you have any clarifying questions, you can profitably ask them at the end of the interview. This way you show the client that you have an interest in the project, and it also gives you an opportunity to identify the client's setup; what code is it, what platform do they use, etc.

In general, it is about showing that you have familiarized with the client's organization in advance, and that you know how you can help the organization. If the organization has English as its corporate language, you should be prepared to carry out the interview in English, if necessary. Thus, you should be adaptable and transparent throughout the whole process, and give the client definite, relevant examples of what you can do, and why you are suited for the job and the organization. •

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5 personality traits that characterize the good consultant

As a freelance consultant, your everyday life is changeable and constantly challenging. Therefore, you have to be of a special caliber to achieve success. Even though there is no fixed formula for successful consultants, there are some characteristic personality traits that often recur with the best consultants. Here, ProData Consult's Senior Sourcing Specialist Peder Andersen describes some of the personality traits that characterize a good freelance IT consultant.

By Peder Andersen, Senior Sourcing Specialist at ProData Consult

You are self-contained

When you start in a new organization, as a consultant, your charisma has great influence on the way you get off to a good start in the organization. If you radiate knowing who you are, and what you stand for – both personally and professionally, people tend to get more easily drawn towards you. When you are self-contained, people are more inclined to see you as a sparring partner because you automatically have a calmness that surrounds you and your work. Part of this quality is also knowing when it is necessary to step in and when it is not.

You show commitment

You are dedicated in what you do, and you have a positive and communicable attitude towards the challenges that you and your colleagues face. Your passion for your craft and the project you have taken on is not to be mistaken. And you are not afraid to show your commitment throughout the whole process – from the preliminary interview until the end of your project.

Your unmistakable engagement affects the people you work with, and it advances both the cooperation, but also the energy. You have a ‘can-do’-attitude which gives the client comfort in knowing that you have the competences and ability to reach the target.

You are self-aware and have self-insight

Most people who are self-contained also tend to have a great amount of self-awareness and self-insight. These are important qualities for a freelance consultant, as it is important that you are confidential with your limitations and also honest and open about these.

Thus, you know exactly what your strongest sides are, and you manage to properly bring them out. On the contrary to this, you also know and are able to compensate for your weaker sides and to be honest about them. As a good consultant, you are complacent in a humble way so that you give a clear impression of what your key



competences are, and how you can bring value to the client.

You are good at matching expectations

During the process from searching for a job to starting one, there will be several times where you will need to adjust expectations. Therefore, you know when to adjust both your own expectations but also the client's or the supplier of consultants'. If you manage to match expectations throughout the whole process, you more easily can avoid possible conflicts. A good consultant is also characterized by the ability to efficiently manage these situations.

You are professional

Naturally, professionalism is also characteristic for good freelance consultants. You are professional from

A-Z in your work. You familiarize yourself with things both before the consultant-interview, but also before starting a new assignment. You put the client's needs in front of your own, and you know that your foremost job is to create value for the client.

To be professional is also about treating your team as equals and to not degradingly talk about people. You follow the matter through, you do as you say, and you can handle criticism. You know how best to juggle the many aspects of the industry so that you leave the best possible impression. •

Get off to a good start on your projects

*Interview with Allan Leth,
Business Consultant with 10+ years of experience as an external consultant*

When working as an external consultant, it is important that you get off to a good start on new projects. In this article, Allan Leth points to some elements, which are significant when you land in a new organization and want to make a positive impression from day one.

Get to know the organization

When working as an external consultant, it is crucial that you are capable of landing in a new project and can deliver value from the beginning. This requires you quickly understand the tasks and the organization you are facing. According to Allan Leth who has several years of experience as an external consultant, it is necessary to do a solid preparatory work before starting in the organization:

“Before my assignment starts, I thoroughly familiarize myself with the client’s organization. What kind of organization is it, which stakeholders are important, and who should I make sure I have good relations to if I want to succeed. If you have to spend too much time in the beginning to get familiar with things, you will have a problem.”

According to Leth, it is essential to scrutinize the surroundings in the organization before starting. It offers you the opportunity to faster create the right connections and resolve possible problems, and at the same time you get a better insight to how processes and work flows are organized. To get this kind of insight before starting in the organization, it is a matter of using your network.

“If you know someone in your network who has worked in the organization, make sure to have a talk with them. They can give you some knowledge about the organization, which will help you understand where the focus should be and where in the organization the shoe pinches,” Allan Leth explains.

A thorough preparation gives an obvious head start. But it also becomes evident to the client that you know the organization and how the workflows work beforehand, and this gives the client a basic comfort and trust from the beginning.

Establish good relations

There are high demands for external consultants. More often, you will experience that your introduction consists of getting assigned a computer and a place to sit and then you can just get to work. These are the conditions for external consultants and you have to be able to handle this. It requires the consultant to retain independence and clout. A good start on a project is not only dependent on a thorough preparation, but also how you establish relations when you have started. And, according to Leth, relations are not established from behind a desk. You have to get out from behind the desk and create strong relations to the key stakeholders that are important for your project – by actually meeting and talking to them.

“It can be a challenge to create strong relations in a short period of time. But it is a necessity as an external consultant. I come across many who try to establish the relations through e-mails. But it is not enough. Strong relations are established by getting out in the organization and meeting people face to face.”

As an external consultant, you have to remind yourself that you are not permanently employed in the organization. In some organizations, this can mean that you might have to have a more diplomatic approach when establishing relations.

Comprehend the client’s needs and create value

First and foremost, you need to provide value to the client. You get hired based on the professionalism you can bring to the organization, but you also provide some personal value and it is important that there is balance between the two.

According to Allan Leth, it is basically being independent but without losing the sight of what the client needs. It is all about an awareness of what is most valuable to the client, and as a result you might have to take on other assignments than was originally a part of the job description. Furthermore, you should have a humble approach and make sure not to be too onrushing. If you show openness and listen twice as much as you talk, it will show an engagement that will help establish trust because the organization feels heard and understood:

“If you just come storming in without testing the waters to get an understanding of the client’s needs, it can give a negative impression as it can seem too turbulent,” Allan Leth explains.

Although you should be careful not to be too onrushing, you should still challenge in areas where there is potential for improvement. A premise for this is that you have initially listened to the client and taken the time to get an understanding of the situation. Last, but not least, it is important that you act on the things you say.

“If you are all talk and never follow through on your assignments, the client will quickly lose trust. You should be attentive and honest in your approach while executing at the same time – that will get you a long way,” Allan Leth elaborates. •





Tips from a colleague:

Flexibility is advantageous

As a freelance consultant, it can be difficult to navigate in a world that is ever-changing and , and where high pace, expectations, and commitment are some of the fundamental elements.

In this article, IT consultant Hendrik Hansen gives his advice on how to best succeed as a freelance IT consultant.

Interview with Hendrik Hansen, Developer

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Focus on the client

When you first take the plunge to become a freelance consultant and experience the many facets of the job, it can be overwhelming to figure out where to begin. With more than 10 years of experience as a freelance consultant, Hendrik Hansen has a clear notion of what it takes for him to get off to the best start:

“Before I arrive in the client’s organization, I always try to form a general view of the project. What are the challenges, and how do I best prepare for when I start. Maybe I have to read up on something or prepare in a more technical manner. For example, the financial domain may have some products that you need to learn about. For this, it can be an idea to try out the platform, so you get an idea of what the business is all about.”

Although it might seem obvious that you should prepare for a new project, it is about how you can bring value to the client. It is especially important that

you work from the base of the client’s terms: “In the beginning, it is important to listen to their expectations to your role and how it is expected you carry out the work. Although you might want to get started as quickly as possible, it is a good idea to sound out the situation and comprehend what your role actually is, who you will work with, etc.”

Be flexible

You should be attentive to the client’s needs and, thus, figure out what your role in the organization will be. In relation to this, it takes a great deal of flexibility to work as a consultant:

“I always make sure to be as flexible as possible when I either start or finish a project. As an example, it could be to arrange with the client that they can contact me after my contract expires if they have any questions about the project. I always ensure to hand over the project properly, and that my work is incorporated in the organization. It gives the client a kind of security to know that help is at hand even after the project



has ended, and they appreciate this. So flexibility is definitely advantageous.” Therefore, it is important that you are dedicated to the organization and to the work you deliver. You have to show some interest in the organization and the challenges it faces: “You have to be more than the person who shows up from 8-16 and work with no further interest. Basically, you need to put some feelings into the projects you take on. It is about knowing yourself enough to be able to know in advance if a project is not right for you. Otherwise, you are wasting the client’s time.”

Get inspired by others

The way to obtain this self-awareness is to feel your way and learn from experience. Make sure to use any opportunity to learn from other, more experienced in the field: “When you are new in the line of business, it is rewarding to start at a place where you are challenged, but I also found it very beneficial to be around people with a great knowledge that I could draw on

when I experienced those inevitable problems you come across as a freelance consultant.”

Especially when you are new, it is important to be around someone who can inspire you. It can be challenging to take the plunge from being permanently employed to working as a freelance consultant, therefore, it is only an advantage if you can draw on other people’s experiences. For Hendrik, who was already in the consultant line of business, the transition went smoothly when the right freelance project came along:

“I didn’t experience any pronounced challenges other than the obvious insecurity in not knowing when the next paycheck arrives, but that is just part of working freelance. You have to strive to help the client the best way possible while being honest, trustworthy, and flexible. Then you have good preconditions as a freelance consultant.” •