

# Online Services Consultant

2006-10-05 10:29:36

The internet has a fast growing group of semi skilled website and online services owners. These individuals manage their own affairs but often need assistance with specific software or programming issues. An online services consultant is part online consultant, part software consultant and part programmer. This profession joins the best of the online and consulting worlds into one interesting and dynamic job.

## Before The Start-Up, Let's Not Get Ahead Of Ourselves

While not a pure programmer as an online consultant you'll often be asked to sort out database and search engine related issues. A thorough grounding in PHP and MySQL is required. Beyond programming related matters you'll often be asked to assist in the setup and running of specific pieces of software such as bulletin boards and shopping cart programs. A good understanding of the most popular versions of these types of programs will allow you to provide an efficient service to customers.

## The Start-Up

If you already have a good grasp of basic programming and are familiar with popular service software such as bulletin boards, chances are you've already got a computer and office setup. If not you'll need a work space, desk and a computer and a high speed internet connection. As you might consult with people all over the world a headset is useful to conduct voice over IP or VOIP conversations (Skype is the most popular of these services and is free).

Dedicate a large portion of your start up capital to establishing a business website. Your website will likely become the centre of your online consultancy, it's the perfect place to procure new business and answer common questions.

## Making It Work

Online consulting is potentially a massive field. Don't try to be a master at every facet, rather attempt to gain a basic knowledge in the most common issues firms may hire you for and master a select few of those.

Some firms may require your assistance for a limited time only and others may require ongoing support and advice. Most consultants charge an hourly rate for once off services and a retainer of about \$10 (USD) a month for those clients that like to have you available at a moments notice but don't necessary require your services every month.

## Marketing

As mentioned in The Start Up your website should form the centre of your online consultancy. . If you're looking to expand your online presence a blog is an excellent idea. Use your blog to discuss current consulting jobs you're working on and the general issues that affect all of your clients, Wordpress.org provides excellent blogging software.

Ensure your site is well optimized for search engine traffic. To promote your site even further consider running a pay per click advertising campaign with Google's AdWords or Yahoo's Overture.

Always carry several business cards with you, while consulting at firms you might often have the opportunity to network and gain new clients.

## **Don't Forget**

A monthly retainer is generally expected to cover any eventualities. The more firms that keep you on retainer, the greater your monthly income is from this source and the more offset your risk is that one firm may require above average attention.