

# What Contract Workers Want

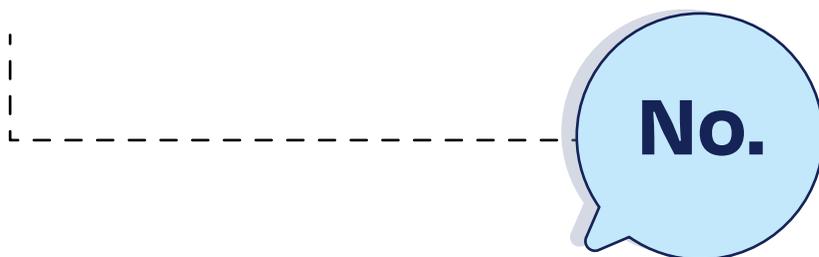
*Insights from HireArt's 2025 Contractor Workforce Survey*



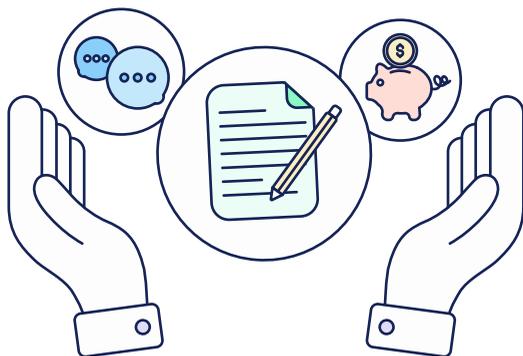
# Introduction

For years, the staffing and gig economy industries have leaned on a familiar and convenient story: that **workers choose contract work because of the flexibility it offers**. Unfortunately, many organizations took that headline and ran with it.

If a worker wants flexibility, then surely they don't want **good benefits** or **learning opportunities**. Surely, they're not interested in **professional development**. If workers wanted flexibility, did that mean they didn't want to be **treated like valued employees**?



While that may be true for a subset of gig workers picking up shifts for supplemental income, HireArt's contractor workforce survey reveals a different reality for professionals in long-term assignments. While it's **financially convenient** to conflate flexible, contract work with the cheapest labor available, it's also **missing the mark entirely**.



Workers see contract roles not as an end state, but as a stepping stone.

They want development, support, and—ultimately—permanent opportunities.

# Myth vs. Reality: The Flexibility Narrative



## The Myth:

“Workers want contract work because of flexibility.”



## The Reality:

**89%** of contractors said they were open to contract work but did not seek it out. Only **11%** intentionally pursued contract roles.

When asked about future preferences, the majority leaned toward permanence:

**62%**

Prefer permanent roles  
(though open to contract)



**24%**

Said their next role must  
be permanent

**14%**

Only 14% were open to  
ongoing contract work

This data challenges the narrative pushed by gig platforms and the staffing industry—that contract work is a preferred lifestyle choice.

In reality, most workers view contract work as a hopeful bridge to something longer-term.

# Professional Development: The Key Stepping Stone

Professional development emerged as one of the most important factors for contractors.

- **30%** of assignment-based workers said it was their top priority.
- It also ranked high among the top-10 rated priorities (4.23/5).

Why? Contractors **see training and skill-building** as the way to move from “just a contract” into the **next level of their careers**. It directly connects to the finding that most workers want permanent roles as their next step.

## Real insights:

“**The hardest part is making sure you’re not treated** like a second-class employee compared to FTEs.”

Investing in contractor development doesn’t just boost engagement. It signals that employers see contingent talent as **more than stopgaps**.



# Benefits: All Are Valued, But Communication Tops the List

Anyone who has held a job knows that **communication can make or break an entire organization**. The biggest (and costliest) organizational mistakes are typically borne from communication breakdowns.

So, it should come as no surprise that communication is top of mind for many contractors. And it makes sense! They want to know the **terms of their work**, when the **deadlines** are approaching, **communication channels** to use, and all the **nitty-gritty details** that make work, well, work.

When asked to rank benefit-related factors, all scored highly (4.0 or above on a 5-point scale).



It's notable that strong communication ranks as highly as core benefits like health insurance and PTO. Contractors want employers who are **present, clear, and responsive**.

## Real insights:

“Email communication has been solid, but I'd love faster turnaround when urgent issues pop up.”

This shows that communication isn't just a “soft” perk—it's a baseline expectation, as critical as compensation and health coverage.

# Final Takeaway

The data is clear: **contractors aren't chasing flexibility at any cost.**

They're also looking for **stability, development, and respect.** They want to be treated as valuable contributors, not temporary placeholders.

For staffing firms and employers, this means:



- Stop leaning on the flexibility narrative to justify treating contractors poorly.



- Prioritize professional development as a pathway for contractors.

**Invest in benefits and communication, recognizing both as** drivers of engagement and retention.

The future of contingent work isn't just about filling roles. It's about creating a workforce experience that aligns with *what workers actually want.*