

Adjust your billing rate to include all of your non-billable expenses, including Main Sail's Employer of Record service fee.

Factor your downtime into your billing rate. Traditional employees take off for vacations, sick days, personal days and national holidays. Why shouldn't you have just as much time off? Be sure to factor in all this down time when you calculate your billing rate.

Use the divide-by-1,000 rule of thumb to determine your rate. Are you selling yourself short? Find out by doing a little competitive market analysis. Scan jobs boards to research how much a full-time, salaried, benefited employee with similar skills and experience earns per year. Divide this salary by 1,000. This gives you an hourly rate that will generate an equivalent gross wage over the course of a year. And, once you do the calculation, you just might find that you are worth more than you think.

“Are you selling yourself short? Once you do the calculation, you just might find that you are worth more than you think.”

Market your value to the client, not your price. Provide specific examples in your skills profile of how you have used your skills to deliver bottom-line value to previous clients. Create a professional website and other marketing collateral that document specific instances where you have created efficiencies, saved money or increased profits for your past clients beyond the cost of your services. Use these to leverage for a higher rate and/or better terms.

The one who speaks first loses. When you enter into contract negotiations with your client, it may be tempting to provide your billing rate along with your qualifications and skills profile. However, you will be in a stronger negotiating position if you politely withhold this information until you are further along in the negotiation process. When the question of compensation comes up, say that you expect to be compensated the going market rate for your skills profile, then ask the client what hourly rate they can offer. When you pivot like this, the client is forced to speak first, and you receive valuable information that can help you leverage a higher rate.

Know your bottom line, and stick to it. Sometimes you wind up in a position where you feel like you can't say no to an offer. But once you enter negotiations, you must do your best to focus on your bottom line, and don't go below it. What are your minimum rate and contract terms? At what point are you selling yourself short? Before you enter into negotiations, identify your bottom line, and then stick to it.

It's better to quote a rate that's too high than too low. If push comes to shove, you can always come down a notch. You won't get a higher rate unless you ask for it. Initiate contract negotiations with a higher billing rate, supported by documented proof that you consistently deliver high value to your clients.



Negotiate a contract extension into your terms. Are you working on a long-term project, or have you worked on several projects for the same client? It might be time to include a contract extension clause into your contract.

Reduce your down time between contracts. When you learn that your assignment is coming to an end, you can make a few phone calls to your key contacts, and quickly set up your next assignment without even missing a beat. Increase what you earn by actively pursuing your next assignment while you are still working.