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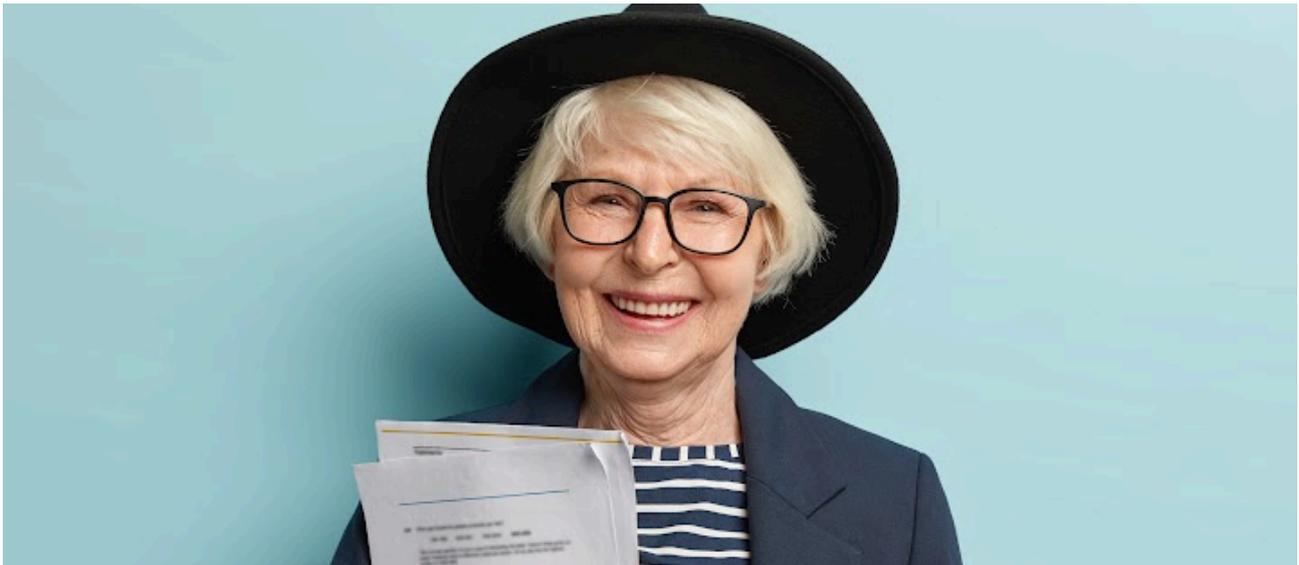
Winning a Permanent Role via Temporary Work

The Temp-to-Perm Strategy for Careers

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Winning a Permanent Role via Temporary Work



You're putting in the effort to land a permanent role, yet the silence from employers is becoming harder to ignore.

The good news is that this silence is unrelated to your individual ability. Vacancy levels across the UK have been declining for some time, and the Office for National Statistics reports that they now stand about 10% below 2019 levels.

Permanent hiring has also tightened as labour costs continue to rise, while temporary contractor opportunities have increased. It might seem like you're stuck in a job market that offers no security or stability, but really, you actually have another avenue for growth.

A temporary work strategy could help keep you closer to the work you care about and provide a path to future opportunities that better align with your long-term needs.

What You'll Learn in This Article

- Temporary workers often earn 20-30% higher day rates while building broader experience across multiple teams and systems
- Companies frequently convert temps to permanent staff once they've seen evidence of strong performance and cultural fit
- Key questions to ask your recruiter before accepting any contract: conversion history, manager expectations, and potential timeline restrictions
- Financial planning essentials include budgeting for missing benefits, maintaining a 2-3-month expense buffer, and choosing between umbrella companies* or a limited company
- *An umbrella company is a business often used by recruitment agencies to pay temporary workers.*

Why Temporary Roles Are Dominating the 2026 Market

The drop in permanent roles hasn't been as sudden as you might think. Employers have been dealing with rising costs for years, and the pressure to cut overheads isn't going away.

WINNING A PERMANENT ROLE VIA TEMPORARY WORK

Labour costs in the UK increased significantly in 2025, thanks partially to the 6.7% rise in the national wage. In the US, the rise is more subtle but still significant enough to concern employers. Contract or temporary workers are often seen as a less painful option for leaders trying to maintain their budgets.

There have also been structural changes in the workplace. Many entry-level and junior responsibilities have been absorbed by new systems or automation inside professional service companies. This has reduced the number of early-career roles to the lowest level in five years, and made organisations more cautious about training pipelines.

Flexibility is another factor.

When budgets shift from quarter to quarter, leaders look for ways to meet deadlines without incurring long-term costs. A temporary worker can start quickly, provide support during critical periods, and help a team before a business commits to a permanent position. This is not about avoiding stability. It is about buying time to make the right decision.

It isn't that employers are giving up on permanent staff entirely. It's more that they prefer to welcome full-time staff after they've already seen evidence that the person can thrive in the role.

That's why temp roles in 2026 carry more potential than people often assume. A well-chosen contract can be the first step toward a long-term role and unlimited future growth.

How Temporary Roles Can Accelerate Your Career

Many people turn to temporary work because permanent roles are harder to find. What surprises them is how much momentum they gain once they step into the first assignment. A good contract can strengthen your experience, widen your network, and often move you closer to a permanent outcome without forcing you to sit on the sidelines.

Contract positions give you:

- **A quicker route back to work:** Temporary roles usually move faster than permanent hiring. Teams bring someone in because they need help now, not after a three-stage interview process. That speed makes a real difference for anyone who wants to stay active.
- **More experience:** Temps or contractors often build experience far more quickly than people in permanent roles. A project might follow a six-month stint in forecasting, systems testing, or year-end support. The variety helps people become more confident in different environments and gives them more to share in interviews.
- **A bigger network:** New teams naturally introduce you to more managers, analysts, partners, and stakeholders. Many temps find their next role through someone they worked with months earlier. It is networking without the awkwardness.
- **Current skills:** In contract roles, you'll learn new skills fast. It can feel intense at first, but it's great for staying up to date on areas that matter to employers today, from AI management to automation and data analysis.

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- **Higher rates:** Day rates often land twenty to thirty per cent higher than the equivalent salary. You still need to plan for time off and the loss of benefits, although many temporary workers appreciate the extra budget space. It helps with savings, travel, childcare, or simply having more control during quieter periods between assignments.

A contract gives you space to see how a team works day to day before you commit to anything bigger. You learn the pace, how people communicate, and whether the workload feels appropriate.

Most candidates say it takes some pressure off by allowing them to settle into the role first and make decisions later. You're not waiting around for the market to improve either. You're staying involved, adding new experiences, and keeping yourself ready for the role that feels right when it comes up.

Turning Your Contract Role Into a Permanent Position

Plenty of people start a contract with one question at the back of their mind: could this become something permanent?

It is a fair question, and in 2026 it is happening more often than people realise. Managers might not promise anything upfront, although many hope the right person shows up so they can make the case later. If you want to ensure you're ready for a temporary to permanent transition:

Prepare Before Saying Yes to a Role

A good recruiter can save you from a lot of guessing. They see which clients convert temps into permanent staff and which ones do not. Every agency has stories of companies that hire a contractor every six months and end up offering a permanent post to most of them. Others treat contracts as short bursts of help and nothing more.

Ask your recruiter:

- Have people in this team been hired permanently from a contract in the last year or two?
- Is the manager hoping to bring someone in long-term once budgets settle?
- Is there any clause in the contract that might slow things down if everyone wants to make it permanent?
- What would the manager hope to see by the time the first few months are over?

These answers help you decide whether you are stepping into a role with real potential or simply taking on a short project to keep your experience fresh.

Setting Yourself Up in a Team

During the temp role, your focus will be on two things: getting to know the team and demonstrating your ability to excel in the work. .

You have a great opportunity here to explain how you handle pressure, communicate, and adapt to someone else's approach to work. It does not need to feel like an audition. Managers notice the basics long before they notice anything complicated

Concentrate on a few habits:

- **Keep your promises.** If you are unsure, ask. No manager minds extra questions early on.
- **Spend time with the team.** A short chat at the right moment often does more than a polished presentation.
- **Pick a few things you want to deliver early.** Three small wins are more helpful than one big plan that never lands.
- **Keep notes on what you have improved or supported.** It is easy to forget the numbers when you are busy.
- **Stay in touch with your recruiter.** They often hear hints about budget plans or headcount discussions well before the team shares anything with you.

People remember the workers who make life easier for everyone else. That is usually what pushes a manager to fight for a permanent slot.

Start Talking About Staying On

Most conversion conversations start quietly. A recruiter might hear that a manager is impressed. A teammate might mention plans. It often comes together in pieces. Your goal is to be part of the conversation.

A simple approach works well. Something like: "I've enjoyed working with the team. If the role continues, I'd be open to staying." Managers understand what you are asking; if they're interested, they'll open a door.

Just remember, bringing up future opportunities too early can make everyone feel rushed. Ignoring any restrictions in your contract can also slow things down later, even if both sides want to move quickly.

Managing the Financial Reality of Contract Work

Money is usually the biggest concern when people consider contracting. A day rate might look higher than a salary in the industry. Still, it's worth remembering that it usually covers the additional items a permanent package would automatically wrap.

Get your head around your finances early:

- Plan for the missing benefits. Holidays, pensions, and private medical cover aren't always baked in. You can still have them. You plan for them differently.
- Keep a small buffer. Two or three months of expenses are enough for most people to cover living costs between contracts, if needed.
- Understand how you want to be paid. Umbrella companies keep things simple and predictable. A limited company gives you more control but also carries responsibilities.
- Stay organised with lenders. If you are considering a mortgage or rental agreement, keep recent contracts and bank statements readily accessible. It saves time later.

The less you're panicking about your money situation, the more you'll be able to focus on the work and deliver the kind of results that open new doors in the future.

How Specialist Recruiters Can Help

Anyone who's explored temporary work before knows that a good recruiter ends up being the person who helps you make sense of the market when it feels crowded, slow, or unpredictable. They see what is happening inside teams long before any job ad appears, and that kind of information changes everything when you are trying to build something secure.

Recruiters speak to hiring managers every day. They hear when budgets tighten, when teams lose someone, or when a project runs hot and needs support. They also note which employers bring in temps with the intention of hiring them later. Some companies do this quietly. Others do it openly. You only learn these things if you are talking to people on the inside, and that is exactly what a recruiter does for you.

They help with negotiation, too. Contract rates, extensions, cooling-off periods, and renewal dates can feel awkward for candidates to raise on their own. A recruiter can handle those conversations without any tension. It keeps the working relationship with the manager clean and ensures you are not underselling yourself or agreeing to terms that don't make sense.

Good recruiters look ahead for you. They're often asking about future roles while you're still focused on your current contract. They check which teams might need help soon or whether a manager you liked is about to hire again. It's one of the reasons contractors with strong recruiter relationships rarely find themselves sitting between roles for long.

Finding Your Path to a Permanent Position

The market has been challenging for many people. The availability of permanent roles has slowed, budgets have tightened, and the usual paths into stable work have felt less predictable.

Even so, many professionals have found their footing again through contract roles. These temporary roles give people a way to stay close to the work they care about and to rebuild momentum when the permanent market feels out of reach.

Taking contract roles now doesn't preclude long-term stability. It actually does the opposite. It gives you room to show how you work, learn how a team operates, and build trust in a way that interviews rarely allow. Many contractors end up staying because the fit becomes clear once everyone has seen each other in action.

The market will move again; it always does. In the meantime, contract roles give you a way to keep earning and keep your skills in play. You're still in front of hiring managers, still part of the work, and ready for a permanent opening when the timing lines up.

A little about Sarah Bishop and Recruit Recruit Ltd



Whether you're a sole trader hiring your first team member, a VC-backed startup needing to scale fast, or a corporate looking for top-tier C-suite talent, one thing stays true:

Your business grows when your people grow.

I help founders, CEOs and business leaders build brilliant teams through:

- **Recruitment:** finding and placing the right people for the right roles or embedding a talent team into growing businesses
- **Sales & Leadership Training:** developing high-performing teams that sell, lead and deliver
- **Speaking & EmCeeing:** energising events and conferences with insight, humour and practical takeaways
- **Coaching:** supporting leaders to grow confidently, communicate better, and build culture that sticks

Over the years, I've supported businesses at every stage, from bedroom startups to scale-ups and established firms navigating change. What they all have in common? A vision to grow and the ambition to get the right people on board to make it happen.

I bring no-nonsense advice, energy, empathy and results, whether I'm:

- Hiring a game-changing leadership role
- Training a founder-led team to sell with confidence
- Speaking on stage about team-building, fearless follow-up, or people strategy
- Coaching a business owner through their first ever hire

So, let's talk if:

- You're ready to grow and want to hire with confidence
- You need training or coaching to get more from your team (or yourself!)
- You're planning an event and want a speaker or EmCee who brings both energy and value

Drop me a message or connect - let's build something brilliant together.

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Scale Up!: The Founders' Guide to Accelerating Growth by Building Dream Teams by Sarah Bishop

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