IEEE Consultants' Network of Silicon Valley Meeting

Consultants' Forum #2: Getting Paid

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Consultants' Forum #2: Getting Paid

- My Work History
  - In the Software Engineering Industry for 34 years
    - 5 years as an employee, 29 years as a consultant
  - Specialty is Storage and Storage Interfaces
    - Flash Memory, Optical (CD, DVD), Magnetic (Disk, Tape)
    - USB, SCSI, IDE/ATA/ATAPI, Serial ATA
    - Expert Witness (EW) work since 1994
  - IEEE-CNSV member since 1988
    - Board Chair: 2006 and 2007
    - Currently a Board Director (an "elder")
  - PATCA member since 1980

Consultants' Forum #2: Getting Paid

- The Goal: Getting Paid
- How to Do It:
  - The foundation
    - Look and act like a professional
    - Be a resource to your clients
  - Always have a contract

Look and Act Like a Professional

- Look like a professional, and get treated like one
- Operate under a business name
  - 116 of the 135 CNSV members do (86%)
- Have a professional-looking business card
  - ***Always*** have some on your person
- Have a website
  - 87 of the 135 CNSV members do (64%)
- Have a separate business telephone number

Be a Resource to Your Clients

- Be the person people think of re: your skills
- What I do:
  - Maintain listservers based on specialties and interests
    - With each posting, potential clients may think of you
  - Participate in conferences
    - Join organizing committee (I'm on 3)
    - Chair sessions and give talks (I've done over 50)

Get a Written Contract

- "Do you have a standard consulting agreement?"
  - Whether Yes or No, I offer to submit my own agreement
    - Includes 30-day payment terms
    - Having an agreement at-the-ready makes you look professional
    - Could become the central basis for your relationship

Written Contracts (cont.)

- T&M work: try to get a retainer
- Fixed-price contracts
  - ***Must*** include clearly defined Milestones
  - Each milestone has a defined payment
  - Milestone #1
    - "agreement to this contract"
    - payment of 15-20% of the total

Written Contracts (cont.)

- For fixed-price work, keep it current
- Include provision for addenda which can redefine aspects
- At any moment in time, you should have an accurate picture of:
  - What you owe your client
  - What your clients owes you"

Written Contracts (cont.)

- Worst case fallback (after-the-fact CYA):
  - an email that proposes something, and to which responsible parties have agreed
  - Turn it into a pdf and send it to your client
  - Establishes a "stake in the ground"

Conclusion

- To get paid:
  - Always have a contract
  - Look like a professional, and get treated like one