

Shaping the freelance landscape



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We are publishing this document in 2009, the year of PCG's tenth anniversary. The last ten years have seen PCG, originally founded as a single issue pressure group to contest IR35, grow into a mature association consulted by government and industry on a wide range of policy issues.

During that time we have achieved a large number of notable successes, one example being our landmark victory in the House of Lords when we backed Geoff and Diana Jones in their six year battle against HM Revenue & Customs. The ruling spared countless family businesses across the UK from having to unfairly pay thousands in additional tax. When the Treasury responded to our victory with an attempt to introduce a new Family Business Tax on what it called "income shifting", we fought that as well, and the proposals were later dropped from the Chancellor's Pre-Budget Report.

Thanks to PCG's work we are helping to define the sector, providing a concrete understanding of what it is to be a freelancer.

2008 was a year of consolidation for PCG, a time to reflect on the journey behind us and agree the path ahead. A strategy group consisting of the Board, key members of staff and volunteer Consultative Council (CC) members conducted a series of internal strategy workshops, to review and define our objectives for the next five years, subsequently seeking confirmation from the full CC, representing the membership.

This document summarises the key conclusions derived from that process. It is intended as an easy reference tool to remind anyone with an interest in PCG what we are about, where we are heading, and what we need to do to get there.



Chris Bryce
Chairman



John Brazier
Managing Director

What is PCG?

PCG is an independent not-for-profit professional association. Its mission is representing, supporting and promoting the freelance community, with specific attention to the needs of those freelancers who are members of PCG.

We aim to be the ultimate authority on the issues that affect the freelance community and strive for freelancing to be valued and respected as a legitimate option and a vital force for the UK economy.



For whom does PCG exist?

PCG is a membership organisation, funded by membership subscriptions. PCG exists to serve the needs of its membership, which has grown steadily over the years to encompass over 18,500 people at the beginning of 2009.

PCG members defined

No standard definition exists for the term 'freelancer'. The terms 'freelancer', 'contractor' and 'consultant' are often used interchangeably by members to describe themselves. There is also no standard legal structure as members variously choose to operate their businesses as sole-traders, partnerships or limited companies.

However, our members can be defined as those who offer skills and knowledge to other businesses via a commercial contract on a non-permanent basis for particular assignments.

PCG members therefore include: IT consultants, engineers, oil & gas contractors, project managers, business and management consultants, interim managers and media/marketing professionals, among other disciplines that meet the above definition.

Other stakeholders

PCG also maintains an active dialogue with the wider freelance marketplace, consisting of the following audiences:

- Policy makers - key contacts within government, opposition parties, MPs, MEPs and European bodies with the power to influence the fortunes of freelance workers, for better or for worse
- Client companies and agencies - who have an interest in the freelance workforce and who are variously affected by legislation regarding the engagement of freelancers
- Other professional bodies - organisations such as APSCo, CBI, CIOT, FSB, ICAEW and REC that share an interest in exchanging knowledge and creating a favourable business climate
- Media – any print, television, radio or internet outlets with an interest in the freelance sector
- Tax advisers – accountancy and tax professionals who can benefit from PCG Accreditation on the specific issues affecting freelancers, consultants and contractors

What does PCG stand for?

In 2008 we conducted comprehensive research into the personality of PCG's brand, which highlighted the key areas where the membership as a whole derives the greatest value from PCG. As a result we can confidently state PCG's values as follows:



Knowledge: PCG is an expert authority on current and continually evolving policy, regulatory, fiscal and business matters relating specifically to the freelance business model

Support: the organisation is focused on the needs of its members and strives to find solutions to improve the experience of freelancing

Innovation: stretching our imagination and daring allows us to come up with high quality solutions for members, both in terms of political campaigning and member services

Independence: the information provided by PCG is impartial, for the benefit of members, and not influenced by the commercial or political agendas of any third party

Honesty: PCG is trusted by its members to act in their best interests in a transparent and ethical way



What does PCG do?

PCG represents its members by:

- interpreting key items of legislation or regulation and campaigning with both passion and pragmatism for change where appropriate
- consulting with and lobbying government at national and European level, providing expert input into sector issues, thus helping to influence policy decisions
- funding key legal cases with the aim of maintaining a body of case law for the benefit of freelancers.

PCG supports its members by providing:

- tax and legal help-lines
- specialist guidance on freelance tax, regulatory and business matters
- downloadable contract templates to help mitigate risks, including IR35
- a community for members to share experiences and knowledge via on-line forums in addition to formal and informal regional meetings
- expert advisers during tax investigations and cover for professional fees incurred
- preferential rates negotiated with third party suppliers on key necessities for freelancers, to facilitate members' commercial development.

PCG promotes its members' interests by:

- consistently positioning freelancing as a legitimate method of working, vital to the UK economy
- providing best practice guidance to agencies and end-clients that engage freelancers
- raising awareness of the value of the freelance workforce through far reaching PR and advertising.

MISSION CHECKLIST: ten principles for staying on course

PCG's ten guiding principles provide a compass for the organisation to stay true to its mission of representing, supporting and promoting the freelance community. As we move forward we will measure any proposed initiatives against these principles: before implementing an initiative we will evaluate the extent to which it fulfils one or more of these principles, or indeed whether it risks compromising any of them.



PCG'S TEN GUIDING PRINCIPLES

We take our lead from the membership

Put the interests of PCG members before those of any other party. Continually review and develop better ways to serve our members, drawing on our core strengths. Develop effective mechanisms and communication channels for members to raise key issues of concern.

We must influence and effect change

Maintain strong, mature relationships with government departments, particularly the Treasury, HMRC and BERR, providing consultation to encourage favourable legislation and to prevent potentially damaging proposals from gaining momentum. Push for the abolition of IR35 and reform of employment status, working with Opposition parties where appropriate. Ensure that poorly designed and unwelcome measures are rejected. Help agencies and companies that engage freelancers to develop legal, practical and ethical relationships with freelancers. Develop a culture of respect for the freelance way in society as a whole.

We will raise the profile of PCG

Optimise our advertising, PR and event presence in order to disseminate the PCG message. Take ownership of one of our greatest assets – knowledge. Use this strategically to involve audiences in PCG's narrative, for example by presenting at industry seminars, organising events, or distributing educational material.

We must have strong alliances with key strategic partners

Explore joint initiatives with potential partners with an interest in the freelance sector such as website owners offering information to freelancers, accountancy firms and other professional bodies. Find ways to help both parties further their goals and encourage these partners to become advocates for PCG.

We have to understand the freelancing community better than anyone else

Meet members and freelancers face-to-face to discuss their issues. Conduct quantitative and qualitative surveys of the marketplace. Be the ultimate authority on the freelance universe.



We must be regarded as the respected primary source of all relevant, impartial information concerning freelancing

To position PCG as the first port of call for comment, insight and guidance regarding the freelance perspective within the small business debate. Live up to the attributes that stakeholders ascribe to PCG by remaining independent, knowledgeable, informative, expert, trustworthy, honest, professional, innovative and imaginative.

We will communicate effectively with all stakeholders

Different messages are relevant to different groups of stakeholders. Ensure we communicate with the full range of stakeholders in an engaging manner and with the appropriate frequency in order to build a relationship. Ensure communications are relevant and valuable to the recipient.

We must be a professional, effective, efficient organisation with skilled, motivated, knowledgeable staff

Attract talented people who are passionate about the subject matter. Nurture their passion. Recognise and reward talent to maintain a high morale.

We will continue to grow our membership

The more we are, the stronger and louder our voice. The greater the proportion of the freelance marketplace we are able to represent, the more seriously we will be taken by policy makers, and the greater our influence. Membership growth also enhances our financial footing, enabling us to augment our activities for the benefit of members.

We must develop an increasingly strong financial base

PCG is a not-for-profit organisation, but our capacity to serve our members effectively is dependent on having a robust financial footing. This includes having sufficient surplus to be able to fund key actions, such as the landmark legal battle that resulted in our victory for Arctic Systems Limited in the House of Lords. Whilst we must increase revenue through membership subscriptions, we must also seek to diversify our revenue streams.



PCG'S LEGACY: a perfect cultural, legislative and fiscal landscape

Our clear objective is for freelancers to enjoy the optimum environment in which to operate. Perfection is in many ways undefinable and even unattainable, but nevertheless the vision of a perfect world serves as our guiding light. We strive to bring about cultural, legislative and fiscal reform in order to fulfil and maintain that vision. This is how PCG wishes the future freelance landscape to look:

- freelancers understood by government and industry (both in UK and Europe) as people who carry the risk associated with being in business on their own account
- freelancers able to enjoy the full rewards commensurate with the risk
- freelancers unhindered by administrative or fiscal burdens that impact negatively on business and ultimately on lifestyle
- freelancers valued by industry as a vital workforce providing knowledge and flexibility when they are most needed to help their clients excel
- freelancing respected as a valid career choice, an essential ingredient of the success of UK plc
- respect for freelancing to permeate society, from policy-makers to recruiters and even to the families of anyone wishing to adopt freelancing as their business model.



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