

SAS® PROS and CONS: PROfits, PROfessionals, PROviders, PROMoters, CONtracts, CONSulting and CONjobs

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INTRODUCTION:

The SAS community is an excellent resource of technical information on SAS programming and development, but is typically lacking when it comes to information on the non-technical business side. On the one hand we need to know how to do our job and how to improve our skills; on the other hand we need to know how to maximize our profits while performing in an ethical manner. I consider both to be opposite sides of the same coin, so this paper is an attempt to provide some additional balance. Agree or disagree, there is always something to consider.

One "dirty little secret" is that we do it for the money. Hopefully we enjoy what we do or at least don't hate doing it, but we do it for the money. So if we do it for the money, how can we make larger **profits**? This is one person's perspective on making a living within the "SAS" industry. Some of the topics covered include how to become or deal with: **SAS professionals** (programmers and developers), **providers** (clients that provides jobs or contracts), **promoters** (recruiters or HR depts.), **contracts** (legally binding agreements), **consulting** (working for a third party) and **con jobs** (problems due to a lack of ability and/or ethics). This article is meant for anyone and everyone who earns a living working with SAS in one form or another.

Note: The views and opinions presented are my own and are based upon my personal observations and experiences. They should not be construed to being those of any other. The author is neither a lawyer nor a CPA. All information should be considered general in nature and not legal or financial advice. For the purpose of this paper, the term "SAS industry" applies to anyone who makes a living writing SAS code, selling SAS products or acting as a middleman for those that do.

PROFIT

In Econ 101 I learned that "Income is what you make, and profit is what keep." Actually I had learned this from my father, but who listens to their parents when they can pay for the same lesson. Profits are calculated by the self-employed by subtracting a reasonable salary for oneself and expenses from the total of all money earned (revenue). Employees can do something similar by comparing their total earning (wages and benefits) to what they consider reasonable. In both instances, what is reasonable for your time depends upon the individual and is somewhat subjective. Some insight into the income of your peers and an abundance of relevant information can be found on sites such as http://salaryadvisor.informationweek.com/tbi_html/iwsal00/, www.rates.com, www.sconsig.com and www.jobstar.org/tools/salary/sal-surv.cfm.

There are three factors used to calculate one's profit, so there are three ways to maximize your return. The first is to **increase your skills and abilities** to increase your reasonable earnings. The method is to **lower expenses**, something along the lines of "a penny saved is a penny earned." The third is to **obtain a higher rate** at the negotiating table.

Increasing your skills and abilities is a common topic at SUGs and is well covered. Most suggestions include learning additional technical skills and new products. To do so you can attend classes, study independently (proceedings are great text), or make an effort to learn through your routine tasks. Employers will often assist in the effort by paying for all or part of the

expense and making certain accommodations. Consultants must pay their own way and possibly make up for lost revenue (non-billable hours), but the reward is normally well worth the time and expense.

A suggestion rarely mentioned in technical forums is the necessity to increase your non-technical skills such as communication (verbal and written), organization, and relationship management. While normally associated with management, these skills are also essential for successful programmers and developers. During the interview process, it is quite common for the most substantial offers to be made for those with the highest interpersonal skills who can get the job done, rather than to those with the highest technical skills only. In most instances this is a correct judgment, as the better communicator requires less effort and oversight.

In order to improve upon your non-SAS skills, you may wish to return to school. Most community colleges offer inexpensive courses in speech, business writing, time management and various aspects of self-improvement. Organizations such as Toast Masters focus on specific skills for improvement.

Keep in mind that you are a commodity to be bought (hired), sold (subcontracted), or discarded (fired) according to how well you meet the requirements of another. Unflattering and perhaps insulting; but true.

Lowering expenses is a challenge and can be very personal. For consultants, staying at less expensive hotels and “bagging food” while on assignment may help in the short term, but will probably cost more in the long run as it takes an emotional toll. There are few items that employees can cut, other than the occasional course or work related materials. Therefore my suggestion is to cut expenses by negotiating them into your benefit package or wage.

To this end, employees and consultants should attempt to identify expenses that can and should be paid by the employer/client. Education is the first place employees should look to save. Most may consider this absurd, as they currently don't spend any money on education a clear sign that they are falling behind and don't realize it. Funds for classes and more importantly paid leave and permission to attend those classes are extremely important for upward mobility. Yet they are often neglected or overlooked when applying for a job. Working them into the original negotiations is a good way to insure that you have the option in the future.

Travel, lodging and some portion of meals eaten should be at the top of the list for anyone working on the road. This can be achieved by expensing the items or by negotiating an “all inclusive rate” that includes a fair estimation of the expenses. If the client/employer is unwilling to pay for reasonable expenses, perhaps it is best to look elsewhere. While I consider it unreasonable to expect a client to pay for most of my educational expenses, I consider it reasonable if the topic is narrowly focused and pertains directly to the task at hand. In this instance I would attempt to have all or part of the lessons included in the contract.

Obtaining a higher rate is the quickest way to increase your profits, but also the most difficult. In order to obtain a higher rate or salary, you must convince your employer/client that your efforts are worth even more than what you are requesting. Only by achieving the “win win” scenario will you really get ahead. This is where your communication and relationship management skills will be tested.

In this instance, it is essential that you know your worth and be able to accurately relay that information to the interviewer. While it is common for some to be “humble” and understate their achievements, this only serves to lower your worth in terms of your employers/clients opinion of your skill and your salary/rate. On the other hand, exaggerating your worth may result in a higher initial rate, but the duration may be (and should be) very short. From ethical and practical perspectives, both are deviations from the truth and should be avoided.

Knowing one's worth is a difficult task. Partially because the information is subjective, and more importantly, it is easy to lie to oneself when bad news is involved. For this reason, it is best to rely upon the actions of others and objective results. While some may verbally rate your skills at one level or another, a more important indicator is what tasks you are assigned and how those tasks are accomplished. Another indicator is what you are able to accomplish compared to your peers. It is this information that you must present to prospective employers/clients in order to achieve the high-test reasonable rate. One suggestion to this end is to keep a diary (resume) of your achievements. It should clearly list what others have had you do, and how the task was done. It should also include all of the extra effort that you have made to improve your skills; listing off the classes attended, papers published, and products/languages you are familiar with.

PROFESSIONALS

There are many definitions of "professional" and an abundance of opinions on how the term applies to those in the SAS industry. The least strenuous definitions only require that the individual receive payment for services. More stringent definitions require "great skill" and or "conforming to the standards of a profession." Judging from the **levels of proficiency and behavior** that I have witnessed, SAS programmer and developers perform across the spectrum.

I typically categorize SAS professionals into various levels of SAS programmers and/or SAS developers. Developers typically write dynamic code to be used by others as canned macros, stored procedures or as some portion of another application. Programmers typically write code for immediate results, perhaps to generate reports or for data processing. These categories are by no means mutually exclusive and many will perform in both to some degree.

Levels of proficiency within the two categories are often broken into: beginner, intermediate, advanced and expert. The highest level requires little or no supervision and writes code that is of high standard. Their code should be accurate, efficient, well documented, and complete in respect to the task. Lesser levels require greater supervision and although their code should function correctly, may not be able to perform to the same degree as that of the more skilled.

Where one splits the levels is a common topic of conversation and disagreement. Some determine proficiency by tallying the years where SAS was used. Although very simple, this method is often wrong. Some individuals may work on simple tasks for years and not achieve a significant level of proficiency for no other reason than that it is not required. Another individual may work on a variety of challenging tasks for short durations and become very proficient in a very short amount of time. Others rely on some form of testing, typically a verbal test of less than 20 questions. This process is better than most, but only provides limited insight into the actual level of proficiency. Still others (myself included) believe that the best determination is to observe the individual writing code and to request that they do so at various levels of complexity. While more time consuming than the other methods, I believe that this is the most comprehensive and accurate.

Behavior

There have been a number of articles written on the proper behavior in the workplace: "Good Consulting Manners" by Michael Davis, "The Don'ts of Consulting" by Charles Patridge, etc. These are excellent guides and should be adhered to by all. Most deal with personal issues such as the use of computers, space, phones, and dress code. There is also some mention of ethical issues such as inappropriate billing (padding and double billing). The first group is fairly straightforward, somewhat open to interpretation and offences are relatively minor unless taken to an extreme. For instance some may consider the appropriate length of personal calls to be a few minutes, while others may deem longer and others less. In most instances, professionals adhere to a standard higher than those you are working with and take constructive criticism when offered.

Padding and double billing are normally associated with legal consultants but are all too frequently associated with computer consultants as well. Simply put, padding is billing for hours that were not worked and double billing is charging two clients for the same time. Other inappropriate and unethical acts include falsifying documents (data, emails, etc.) and viewing or releasing restricted information. These actions normally result in termination when discovered and may be further processed in the courts.

One item I would add to the lists is to "be honest." After all, the client is paying for our services and expertise. They deserve to receive honest and objective information and notice of any conflicts of interest that may exist. This starts with the resume and first interview and should continue unabated throughout the length of employment. In return, we should expect the employer/client to be honest with us.

PROVIDERS

Providers, End Customers and End Clients drive the SAS market and comprise the following sectors: financials, pharmaceuticals, social sciences, government, manufacturing, health care, telecommunications and academia. The terms employer and client were not used because it is common to be employed by A which is under contract with company B to perform work for company C. Company A is your "employer of record" and is required to do little more than collect taxes for the IRS. Company B is a middleman who may or may not provide some managerial efforts, or may merely perform accounting transactions and pool resources from other companies. It is company C that provides the scope and funding for the work while A and B are relatively immaterial to the process. Therefore it is imperative to consider the needs, resources and traits of the providers when considering a career.

The differences in compensation are illustrated in the following reformatted extract from the "SAS Salary/Rate Survey" at www.sconsig.com. The full results include numerous breakouts, graphics and cover several years. Other traits to consider include benefits, potential advancement, job security, work conditions, work location, and educational opportunities. For someone starting to work with SAS or considering changing industries, significant effort should be made to determine what industry is the most appropriate. The best place to start is a frank discussion with your peers.

SAS SALARY/RATE SURVEY RESULTS from WWW.SCONSIG.COM

SAS Salary/Rate Survey Results

09:18 Tuesday, January 4, 2005

----- Type=1 Full Time Employee -----

Classification	Count	Salary or Rate Statistics			
		Low	Average	50th %	High
UNKNOWN	1	48000.00	48000.00	48000.00	48000.00
BANKING	28	23616.35	63977.31	64500.00	125000.00
CLINICAL RESEARCH COORDINATOR	1	20009.60	20009.60	20009.60	20009.60
CONSULTING	18	37000.00	63977.78	58625.00	97750.00
CONSUMER PACKAGING GOODS	1	82000.00	82000.00	82000.00	82000.00
CUSTOMER SERVICE REPRESENTATIVE	1	20000.00	20000.00	20000.00	20000.00
DATABASE MANAGEMENT IT FIRM	1	60000.00	60000.00	60000.00	60000.00
DIRECT MAIL MARKETING	11	62500.00	77363.64	75000.00	110000.00
DIRECT MARKETING	1	35000.00	35000.00	35000.00	35000.00
EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTION	17	22908.00	50685.29	55000.00	80000.00
ENTERTAINMENT	2	27600.00	33800.00	33800.00	40000.00
FINANCIAL	15	25000.00	60033.33	65000.00	83500.00
GOVT - GOVT	13	45000.00	74410.38	72000.00	113000.00
GOVT - LOCAL	1	73200.00	73200.00	73200.00	73200.00
GOVT - STATE	5	37704.00	53539.20	46992.00	76000.00
GOVT CONTRACTOR	1	62000.00	62000.00	62000.00	62000.00
HEALTH CARE	35	25000.00	54910.11	52000.00	85500.00
INSURANCE - HEALTH CARE HMO	5	40500.00	58500.00	67000.00	71000.00

INSURANCE - LIFE	1	30250.00	30250.00	30250.00	30250.00
INSURANCE - PROPERTY CASUALT	8	39500.00	74269.25	83833.00	100000.00
INTERNET	1	85500.00	85500.00	85500.00	85500.00
INTERNET COMPANY	1	10400.00	10400.00	10400.00	10400.00
LEGAL FIELD	1	66000.00	66000.00	66000.00	66000.00
LOGISTIC	1	61000.00	61000.00	61000.00	61000.00
MANUFACTURING	9	32000.00	68055.56	62000.00	109000.00
MARKET RESEARCH	1	50000.00	50000.00	50000.00	50000.00
MARKETING	1	64000.00	64000.00	64000.00	64000.00
MULTIPLE	1	57500.00	57500.00	57500.00	57500.00
NON PROFIT- POLICY RESEARCH	1	64500.00	64500.00	64500.00	64500.00
NONPROFIT	2	5984.00	34992.00	34992.00	64000.00
OUTSOURCING COMPANY, CLIENT	1	40400.00	40400.00	40400.00	40400.00
PHARMACEUTICAL	54	2609.00	63565.42	64000.00	120000.00
PHOTOPROCESSING	1	62000.00	62000.00	62000.00	62000.00
PSYCHOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT	1	45692.16	45692.16	45692.16	45692.16
PUBLICATION	1	65929.29	65929.29	65929.29	65929.29
RADIO TV	1	109000.00	109000.00	109000.00	109000.00
RETAIL	7	44000.00	70000.00	59000.00	105000.00
SALES	1	62500.00	62500.00	62500.00	62500.00
SAS	1	56000.00	56000.00	56000.00	56000.00
SHORT TERM DISABILITY	1	45000.00	45000.00	45000.00	45000.00
SOFTWARE	1	108000.00	108000.00	108000.00	108000.00
SUPERVISOR	1	40000.00	40000.00	40000.00	40000.00
TELECOMMUNICATIONS	12	20982.00	53750.66	50000.00	110000.00
TRANSPORTATION	5	43000.00	50814.00	45760.00	65310.00
UTILITY	1	80000.00	80000.00	80000.00	80000.00
WORKER'S COMPENSATION	1	64000.00	64000.00	64000.00	64000.00

PROMOTERS

Promoters match people to positions for a fee and are akin to real estate agents and used car salesmen. They are often disliked and avoided with most considering them a necessary evil. Resources such as the "Contract Employee's Handbook" at <http://www.cehandbook.com/> suggest that they should be avoided whenever possible and offer a list of alternatives. However I have found that promoters provide a service and working with them can be mutually beneficial. While it is possible to find full time employment or consulting jobs without them, they typically can find jobs more quickly and have access to positions that would not otherwise be available. With the advent of the preferred vendors list, this may be truer now than ever before.

Promoters may contract with programmer and developer as W2 employees, 1099 independents or through a "Corp to Corp" relationship. Each relationship has costs and benefits. As a W2 employee the wage rate is normally less, as benefits may be included. 1099s and Corp to Corps are responsible for their own benefits, so they normally receive higher rates and greater flexibility. The type of relationship you have with your "employer" / promoter will also affect your taxes and any write-offs you may have.

There are good and bad promoters. Common problems arise when promoters promise jobs but can't deliver, insist upon overly restrictive contracts, are slow to pay, or create conflicts of interest. In most instances common sense can be your guide. In respect to legal matters, it is best to get a professional opinion and assistance.

CONTRACTS

Contracts are legally binding promises and require compensation in return for services rendered. Both parties are required to perform according to what has been stated in the contract. If either party does not perform as required, the other may ask the courts to enforce the contract. Typically employers may be forced to provide unpaid salary, wages or benefits. Employees and consultants may be forced to refrain from certain activities or pay damages to the employer. What can and cannot be enforced is determined by the legal body with jurisdiction (often a contended issue) and the provisions of the contract.

When dealing with contracts, it is very important to remember that the “standard contract” is a myth, anything not included is irrelevant and you are what you sign. While it may be difficult to agree on what needs to be said, a contract may be modified with the agreement of all parties. While it may be possible to have a court may deem some provisions of a contract unenforceable, it is best to consider all provisions as binding. Once signed, you are committed. On the other hand, if the other side does not perform as required, you must also consider the cost of having the contract enforced. Legal fees, time and effort all considerations that must be balanced against what you **may** receive.

The **Independent Computer Consultants Association (ICCA)** (www.icca.org) provides sample contracts for their members along with some very relevant information. Sample contracts may also be found through other websites, bookstores or by contacting your lawyer. All will identify the parties and what each promises to do for the other. Additional provisions may include work place protocols (time and place, dress code, behavior, etc.), intellectual property rights (security, non disclosure, ownership of code), non-competes, and provisions for termination and requirements for arbitration. As a general rule, I have found that the longer the contract, the less desirable the relationship.

When faced with contractual issues that you are uncomfortable, you can try to have them changed to something agreeable to both parties. If that fails, you are faced with a serious dilemma with far reaching consequences. In those instances, I have found it best to walk away. Either the other party decides to compromise, or I find other work. Some of the most grievous contractual issues I have seen are:

Non-Competes: A typical non-compete will restrict you from working for anyone you have been introduced to for a reasonable amount of time (6 months to a year). Overly restrictive non-competes restrict you from working for anyone within the entire company or for an extended period (1 – 5 years). Another attempted to restrict employment by any firm that they have marketed to.

Payment: Most contracts call for payment within 30 or 45 days after invoicing. However those supplied by the other party almost never contain any penalties for late payment. Some also allow the employer to withhold or even take back funds already paid if they are not paid.

Conflicts of Interest: Who do you work for? Who is the client? What can you say when the client asks for your “professional opinion” on some aspect of your employers performance (another employee’s work, products, etc.). If the contract states that you must always act on the behalf of or in the best interest of your employer, you may be in a very uncomfortable and legally sensitive situation. While my approach of being as honest and accurate as possible has endeared me with some employers, it has yet to be tested in a court and has been greatly appreciated by the end customers.

CONSULTING

The most common reasons for transitioning from Employee to Consultant can be organized into three categories: Money, Power and Warm Fuzzies. Anyone contemplating independent consultant status should consider and weigh every item in each category to determine what is best for them. They should then reconsider and reweigh every item in a best and worst case scenario for various time periods into the future.

Money represents anything associated with net income. The most obvious benefit is that consultants charge more per hour/job, so there is the *potential* that they can achieve a higher net income. Less obvious benefits are that contracts may be negotiated more frequently than companies provide promotions, so the *potential* for advancement (per hour increases) is greater. Compensating for some of the additional expenses incurred, Independent Contractors may also

write off work-related expenses while employees may be limited to write off of only 2%*. The most common negative factors to affect one's income are business expenses and a lack of billable hours.

Business expenses include fees for accountants and lawyers, licenses, software, hardware, insurance, etc. Billable hours may be reduced for several reasons. In some instances you may be unable to find work for which you can bill, and at other times you may actually perform work for which you cannot bill. Non-billable hours may be the result of difficulties with a project, but more likely they will be spent performing business-related activities such as accounting, marketing, training, etc.

Power describes the ability to make and act upon your own decisions as well as being responsible for your own success or failure. As his or her own boss, a consultant can more easily act in his or her own best interest. However, if they ignore the interests of their clients, they are very likely to do more harm than good. A perfect example is in the selection of jobs. The consultant has significantly more control over which jobs they will accept and often can pick between multiple assignments. However, if the consultant chooses unwisely or alienates a client, they may limit the availability of future jobs.

Warm Fuzzies encompass everything that is left over. This includes more time with the family, more leisure time, the ability to work from home, reduced stress, and more personal recognition. Although Money is a primary motivator, a Warm Fuzzy is often the catalyst for the transformation from Employee to Consultant. The unfortunate few are able to realize the benefits they originally sought and many actually sacrifice what little they already had. Employees often turn consultant so that they can spend more time at home with their families. But in order to start, maintain and grow their business, they may spend significantly more of their precious personal time on business related tasks.

The most significant downside of consulting is the uncertainty. Another is that instead of receiving Warm Fuzzies, consultants may be given the Cold Shoulder. Employees may look down upon them or consider them to be outsiders.

Please keep in mind that the factors listed in the following box are general and dependent upon additional factors often out of the control of the individual.

Another Warm Fuzzy is social acceptance. "Half of your co-workers will hate you before you start. If the other half don't hate you before you leave, consider the job a success." While this is somewhat exaggerated, you should expect some of your co-workers to dislike working with a consultant. From my perspective, most of the dislike is due to either jealousy or fear. W2 employees may resent working next to a "better paid" consultant, especially if the work is similar. When budgets are tight, consultants are often blamed for inflating expenses. Consequently, consultants are often the first budget line to be cut when short-term savings are mandated.

COMPARISON OF PRO'S AND CON'S FOR EMPLOYEE (W2) AND CONSULTANT (1099)		
	Pro	Con
W2	Job Security Steady Income Less Responsibility Structured Environment Employer Benefits Corporate Support Limited Failure	Lower Income Limited Write Offs Less Flexibility Routine Tasks Lower Income Corporate Hierarchy Limited Advancement
1099	Higher Wage Higher Wage Can Write Off Expenses Greater Flexibility Challenging Activities No Corporate Hierarchy Unlimited Advancement	Less Job Security Business Expenses Uncertain Income Higher Responsibility Greater Uncertainty No Corporate Support Unlimited Failure

* See Disclaimer

Others may fear that one of the consultant's tasks is to judge their own work and to document their shortcomings to management. This fear may be well founded because consultants often act out of the normal hierarchy and social norms of an office, are trying to be as productive as possible in order to justify their compensation, and bring a wider variety of experience to the endeavor. Upper management is likely to request an "outsider's" option, especially if the consultant has work for other firms within the same industry or worked on similar tasks in other industries. My preferred method of dealing with this issue is to always provide my best service and advice to the client. If this causes issues with my co-workers, I reassure myself that I will only be there until the job is completed, and my true co-workers are my fellow consultants.

CON JOBS

I consider something a "Con Job" when someone knowingly makes a false claim in an effort to get more than they should. Some may resort to cons only when they are in a bind, others run cons as part of their business model. Regardless of which con is pulled, some form of deception or deceit is involved.

The most common con I have noticed is **forging or faking documentation**. From exaggerating the extent of SAS used to the positions held and degrees earned; lying on resumes is rampant. When looking through a large stack of resumes it is not uncommon to find two or more that are virtually identical with the exception of the contact information. In one instance I discovered someone had cut and pasted parts of my resume into their own. In most instances, a technical interview can expose this type of fraud. Emails are another document that can be easily forged. Creative editing of and exchange can substantiate false claims, cover incompetence or support additional fraud. Email fraud may be difficult to detect unless the supposed author sees a copy of the forged document. However most servers have backups that can be used to substantiate a claim once fraud is detected.

Other cons that I am noticing more frequently deal with **conflicts of interest**. In some form or another, trusts or obligations are breached in return for personal gain. It could be that the con artist offers to "scratch your back if you scratch theirs." In return for their financial assistance, you are expected to support them in some endeavor that breaches the trust or obligations you have with another. Examples include divulging proprietary information, overlooking poor performance and offering inaccurate or biased advice. If the con is played well, the con artist may not need to follow through with their commitments. Given the circumstances, few would complain about someone's unethical behavior at the risk of exposing their own.

Then there is a form of **bait and switch** pulled by unscrupulous promoters. Shortly before the official start date, the prospective employee / consultant is told that the job has fallen through but another position, paying less than the first is available. Rather than face the uncertainty of locating a new position on such short notice, they accept the new position. They may never realize that the original job was always secure and that they were conned into working for a lower rate.

Padding and double billing are cons related to how much is billed. Padding occurs when additional hours are added to the invoice. Double billing occurs when two or more are invoiced for the same time. In both instances the con artist is receiving more than they have rightfully earned. An employee, consultant, or promoter may pull these cons. Given the many layers that may exist, adding an hour or two here and there may not be noticed. On the other hand it is difficult to perform two jobs simultaneously and keep both employers happy.

CONCLUSION:

The SAS industry is a small world with few degrees of separation between even the most far-flung. Working within the industry allows us to produce products that can be very beneficial to others. It is also a business that pays our bills and affords us a nice living. To improve what we already have, we should improve upon both our technical and non technical skills while providing our services in an ethical manner. Regardless of the outcome, working in the SAS industry is always interesting.

Bio:

Gary McQuown is co-owner of Data and Analytic Solutions, Inc., a small consulting firm located near Washington DC. Over the past fifteen years, he has had the opportunity to work with some of the best ... and worst in the SAS industry.

Reference:

"The DON'Ts of Consulting!" by Charles Patridge at www.sconsig.com

"Good Consulting Manners" by Michael Davis at www.sconsig.com

"Contract Employee's Handbook" by James R. Ziegler, Ph.D at www.cehandbook.com

Appendix:

From <http://www.answers.com/professional>

pro-fes-sion-al ([prə-fĕsh'ə-nəl](#))

adj.

1.
 - a. Of, relating to, engaged in, or suitable for a profession: *lawyers, doctors, and other professional people.*
 - b. Conforming to the standards of a profession: *professional behavior.*
2. Engaging in a given activity as a source of livelihood or as a career: *a professional writer.*
3. Performed by persons receiving pay: *professional football.*
4. Having or showing great skill; expert: *a professional repair job.*

n.

1. A person following a profession, especially a learned profession.
2. One who earns a living in a given or implied occupation: *hired a professional to decorate the house.*
3. A skilled practitioner; an expert.