



Photo: Georgie Wood, Illustrations: Anthony Dimitre

# People Can Work In All New Ways

A FLEET OF ICONOCLASTS IS DISRUPTING THE 9-TO-5.

BUSINESS TALENT GROUP  
**Jody Greenstone Miller**

When Jody Miller worked as COO of Americast, the digital television partnership between Disney and the regional telephone companies, she would fantasize about walking up to Disney CEO Bob Iger and asking him if she could run a division. "But let me figure out how to structure it," she would tell him, "so that I can achieve the goals I want in the relationship between work and the rest of my life."

In 2007, when she left to start a consulting firm, she got her chance. At Business Talent Group, which connects senior-level independent workers with the projects of clients from a range of fields, half of the company's leadership team works part time. "Everyone is talking about flexibility and work-life balance, and I think those are becoming red herrings and are stopping us from solving the problem," Miller says. "Flexibility is not sufficient if you still have a job that is structured to require 50, 60 hours per week."

She created a culture where high-level work is broken down into jobs that come in truly different sizes, whether that's 40 hours a week or 20 hours a week. BTG contracts 3,500

independent professionals around the world—more than 80% have graduate or MBA degrees—and assigns them to clients' project teams based partly on how many hours they want to work. Companies get the talent that is most appropriate for each project, and workers get control over their schedules and workload.

Part-time employees at BTG are still expected to be professionally available—for example, answer urgent emails—when they aren't in the office, and they're paid less. But, Miller says, "that's a trade they're willing to make." And while BTG's model involves hiring and training a higher number of people than it otherwise might, that hasn't hindered growth: Revenue has increased 60% year-over-year for the past two years and is on track to surpass \$25 million this year. "Retention and satisfaction are very high," Miller says. "People tell us they can't find another job like this."

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Meanwhile, Miller is also helping clients such as Pfizer and the Carlyle Group devise better ways to organize and utilize their own workforces. BTG advises businesses to assemble small, fluid groups to take on individual projects (such as creating pricing strategies, assessing a new market, or developing a product) rather than rigid, pyramid-shaped hierarchies. "In the 21st century, organizations are going to put teams together for very specific projects and then disband them," says Miller. "It's going to be a faster, more fluid management function than what you see today." She isn't the only entrepreneur who thinks work is ready for an upgrade.

## ELANCE-ODESK

### Take the long view in thinking about your career.

E lance and oDesk, which merged this year, are freelance-talent marketplaces that connect people with project work that involves everything from translation to microchip programming. CEO Fabio Rosati says he wants to redefine what it means to be secure in today's working culture and move from "job security" to "income security." If someone focuses on keeping a job, he argues, she may focus on skills that are applicable at that company but are outdated in the rest of the world. If she focuses instead on earning an income as a freelancer to many companies, she'll learn skills that are most marketable across the board. "It forces you to ask yourself, How many companies are using this technology?" Rosati says. "Is this technology dated and old? Should I be learning new technology?" In order to facilitate such a shift in thinking, the company mines data from the 100 million job searches performed on its two sites each year to show users which skills are most marketable--and how much they should be charging for them.



## CULTURERX

### Work wherever and whenever you like.

Just get it done. Minneapolis-based consulting company CultureRx has helped businesses such as Best Buy and Gap implement a somewhat radical management system it created called ROWE (Results Only Work Environment), which gives every employee the independence to decide when and where they work. Instead of being assigned a particular schedule, they're asked to accomplish predefined tasks within a certain time frame. For example, a receptionist will decide to come into the office not because his manager demands it, but because that's the only reasonable place to get his job done. "Managers get clear with people about what their results are supposed to be, and they're managing those results," says cofounder Jody Thompson. "[They] have to switch their focus from worrying about where people are to the actual work."



## ENCORE.ORG

### Share your vast experience with not-for-profits.

More Americans than ever are working past retirement age--the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics reports that nearly 27% of citizens between 65 (the minimum retiring point) and 74 were still working in 2012, compared to 20% in 2002. Encore.org, based in San Francisco, is helping to steer these individuals toward "encore careers" at not-for-profits. It holds an annual "Purpose Prize" contest, in which professionals over 60 compete for \$100,000 and \$25,000 awards based on how they tackle various issues through their work. It's also started a rolling 6- to 12-month fellowship program that offers about 250 professionals with more than 15 years of experience full- and part-time roles at mostly U.S.-based organizations with a "social purpose"--i.e., not-for-profits, schools, and hospitals--that could benefit from their expertise. The hope is that they will transition to longer-term not-for-profit work after the fellowship ends. "It's almost like a paid internship for older adults," says Leslye Louie, who directs the fellowship. "Internships for young people are focused on development. This is about contribution and using skills developed over the years for a purpose."



## THE ENERGY PROJECT

### If your company is attuned to your needs, everyone wins.

"Energy is defined as your ability and capacity to do work," explains Annie Perrin, SVP of faculty and content at the Energy Project. "That's how it's defined in physics, so that's how we think of human energy." The firm, which has offices in New York; Amsterdam; Melbourne, Australia; and Godalming, England, teaches companies how to design workplaces that meet people's basic needs as human beings so that they have more energy to perform as employees. It splits "energy needs" into four categories: physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual. Improving physical energy might include healthy food in the cafeteria or a walking group that meets at lunch, while improving spiritual energy--as New Age as it sounds--might just be a matter of making sure the company is acting in a way that complies with its stated mission. In addition to its consulting services, the Energy Project has run seminars and classes for hundreds of clients, including Google and PricewaterhouseCoopers.



## BY SARAH KESSLER

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