

# Talent Redefined: Top-Level Independents in the C-Suite

COMPANIES ARE EXPERIENCING TOP-TALENT SHORTAGES, AND EXECUTIVES AT THE TOP OF THEIR GAME WANT TO WORK DIFFERENTLY. JODY GREENSTONE MILLER HAS THE SOLUTION.

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# Becoming a Supertemp

We know what the work of the future looks like for many industries and levels of employment thanks to robotics, automation, and my colleague Tyler Moselle's stellar piece on the same subject. But while robots are taking away some of the more menial and hard-labor tasks, what does that mean for the people at the top?

Company leaders will always have a job—no robots or software can take those positions over (yet). The bigger question, and concern, is whether those leaders want to be there long-term in the first place.

Traditional pyramid employment hierarchies aren't cutting it anymore: young workers at the bottom rarely stay with a company long enough to move up to C-level positions. As the workforce continues to evolve we have to ask ourselves, are there other, better, ways to the top?

"The model for so long was put your head down, work really long, hard hours for a long time, then rise up," said Jody Greenstone Miller, Founder of Business Talent Group (BTG). "We have to separate the quality of employees' contributions from the quantity. Right now, if someone is not working in a full-time, continuous role, they are often not considered to be an 'A' player. This mindset needs to change."

Enter the supertemp. While the idea of a temporary employee makes you think of a low-level player in the big game, more and more c-level executives and qualified individuals are turning to temporary work and project-based employment than ever before. That's one reason why BTG achieved an incredible 209 percent revenue growth rate between 2011 and 2016, earning it a spot on the Inc. 5000 list of the fastest growing companies in America.

A 2014 Freelance Union/Upwork survey said that almost 54 million people, or a third of the U.S. workforce, works independently. Bloomberg's Justin Fox cited Upwork's 2014 study to say that the fastest-growing segment of the "gig economy" are those making over \$100K per year on independent work.



Jody Greenstone Miller shared some career advice for anyone who was interested in making a career out of high-end independent work.

***"You want to be sure that you have real knowledge and skills that allow you to make impact really quickly. Challenge yourself: how can you continually advance yourself as an independent professional?"***

***You want to be sure your early training and expertise is giving you an opportunity to walk in and handle a variety of projects. Worry about the skills you're building more than your job titles on a traditional resume."***

Instead of working full-time—and let's be honest, most CEOs work far more than 40-hour weeks—people are finding positions that satisfy their need for career challenges and new environments through project and temporary-based employment and still pulling in six figure salaries.

"More and more talented senior people are looking for different ways to work," Greenstone Miller shared.

The majority of independent consultants in BTG's talent pool are men—most come from the top management consulting firms—and their reasons for wanting to work independently vary.

"Some want to work nine months a year to spend summers with their kids," she said. "Others just want to work on interesting projects without getting pulled into the politics of an organization. The common thread is that they want the ability to choose who they work for and what they work on. Our mission is to enable and support an individual's desire to do this."

Project-based work appeals to just about everyone, but a number of demographic changes are accelerating the trend. Women, who are being educated at a much higher rate than men, appreciate the flexibility of project-based work. Millennials, too, are showing a lot of interest in working in this independent manner as well. And high-level consultants who've earned the ability to command high prices for their experience and acumen want to dictate work on their terms.

BTG has disrupted company hierarchies and consulting in a big way. Greenstone Miller became aware of the changing demographics of the workforce in the U.S.—namely a talent shortage at the top—while working as a venture capitalist.

Baby boomers are starting to retire, creating a talent shortage among knowledge workers. Greenstone Miller knows that people's expectations about what full-time employment looks like is changing rapidly. The demand for high-end talent is increasing as companies buy into the new marketplace of supertemps.

According to Greenstone Miller, her most successful clients allocate money for independent talent in their budget. Not only does it change the way these companies hire, it changes the way they get work done. The marketplace mentality is becoming necessary for businesses where the pace of hiring has shifted from onboarding over six months to needing new, qualified employees yesterday.

"I presented at a summer business program at a leading business school. Two years ago students were coming up to me to see if they could work for BTG. This year, the students want to be a part of the talent pool. Our talent base is dominated by people in the sweet spot of their career."

Even with the success BTG has already seen, Greenstone Miller still considers it the "early days" of the business. Already, the brand has been named by Forbes as one of its "Most Promising" companies. Fortune named Greenstone Miller as one of 10 "Most Promising" entrepreneurs in 2015.

"Global companies are going to be facing top-talent shortages, and soon," Greenstone Miller warned. "If they don't understand how to tap into this new pool of talent, they won't get work done. The people who are choosing to be independent are the best in their respective fields. Our clients learned by working through us that we can take the friction out of a client's desire to harness talent."

The supply and demand of her business is a delicate balancing act. There has to be enough great people problem-solving for these companies for the big brands to really rely on this solution. And 25 percent of the Fortune 1000, including such clients such as Pfizer, NBC, The Carlyle Group, and National Geographic, are among those who've experienced the benefits of unleashing this talent pool to help boost their performance.

According to Greenstone Miller, "If you're not learning how to utilize this new marketplace, you're missing out. Companies can truly benefit if they can wrap their heads around this new trend." ■

# BTG Talent: A Snapshot of the Supertemp at Work



Former partners at top firms



Work on business plans for a  
major biotech project rollout



Run major pricing studies for  
tech companies



Lead supply chain  
management projects



Involved in financial services



Perform the duties of interim  
executives



Act as temporary CEOs