



The Corporate Matchmaker

With a stable of upper-echelon consultants and executives ready to jump in at a moment's notice, Business Talent Group keeps companies from getting lonely at the top, reports **Marcie Fried Weibgen**

Jody Greenstone Miller, founder and CEO of Business Talent Group

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“We’re not a search firm,” Jody Greenstone Miller is quick to point out. Over lunch at The Village Pantry on a perfect day in Pacific Palisades, her enthusiasm builds as she goes on to explain, “We’re creating a new market. Executives are increasingly dissatisfied with the traditional career track, and companies are struggling for profit-maximizing flexibility. We’re helping give individuals the control to craft the professional lives they want to have, and letting companies tap into extraordinary talent on an as-needed basis.”

What Miller’s firm does is match businesses in urgent need of talent with independent professionals. In just its second full year of national operation, Business Talent Group, LLC (BTG) has offices in New York, San Francisco and Seattle, in addition to its flagship office in Pacific Palisades. Along with founding partner Amelia Warren Tyagi, Miller manages a staff of 15 who locate, vet and place senior executives in consulting or project-based assignments – usually within just five days.

The idea took root while Miller was at the C-level herself. “Three or four times a year I needed help with a new business plan or project and had to search around. I knew great people, but often they weren’t available and the process was inefficient and unreliable. Then, later in my career, I was asked to do some consulting and I began putting teams together. That’s when I realized how much great individual talent is out there and how much demand there is for it.”

That talent comes from a variety of sources, starting with personal contacts. With a background in law, politics, investment banking and media, Miller came to the game with a Rolodex full of highly-placed contacts. Now, referrals come through BTG’s advisors, talent group members and even clients. “Everyone knows someone who is both talented and frustrated,” she says. They include fast-track professionals who want more control over their careers, those trying to balance their work life and home life, those who are looking for new career challenges, and some who are between jobs. Contrary to what some may expect, most of the talent is male, reflecting the makeup of the MBA pool. “BTG talent is of the highest caliber,” says Miller. “They wouldn’t be able to survive as independent professionals if they weren’t.” Most are at the top of their game, averaging at least a decade of experience under their belts.

Once a name is referred, BTG performs background checks, screening not only for quality, but for how well an individual will fit a particular company’s needs and corporate personality. The firm’s knowledge of the talent becomes more refined as executives are sent on repeat assignments, although some don’t come back – currently, 25 to 30 percent of them convert to permanent status.

Apart from the obvious advantages, this kind of flexibility can also help a company take on innovative projects. One of Miller’s clients recently stated, “If I can buy a team of five people for a few months, I can try concepts that would

otherwise be impossible to implement with my regular management, who are far too busy with ongoing projects.”

Clients are Fortune 1000 companies, private equity firms and major non-profits and foundations – industries with which Miller has solid ties. She currently serves on the boards of TRW, Capella Education Company and the National Campaign to Prevent Teenage Pregnancy. She lives in Pacific Palisades with her husband, KCRW radio host and commentator Matt Miller, and their daughter, a student in a local school.

Plans for BTG’s expansion are underway. “We want to add several more cities in the U.S. in the near future – then it’s on to the global market.” Countries in Asia are likely to be first, followed by Europe and South America. The firm has raised investment capital to help fund its growth by a “who’s who” of high-net-worth individuals from private equity, investment banking, industry, consulting and the non-profit worlds.

So is corporate culture changing? “Slowly,” says Miller. Corporate flexibility, telecommuting and the recognition that noses spent 24/7 to a grindstone are not the only options to remaining profitable are all starting to take hold. But time spent away from family in the service of a grueling career is not something that BTG’s employees need to fear. “We all work from home – by choice,” says Miller.

For more information on Business Talent Group, visit www.business talentgroup.com