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HOW I MADE IT: JODY GREENSTONE MILLER

Business Talent Group CEO places experts in short-term jobs

BY RONALD D. WHITE

The gig: Jody Greenstone Miller is chief executive of Business Talent Group, a firm that she says is changing the way companies obtain top business talent for consultation and project-based work. Miller's company, which she co-founded with Amelia Warren Tyagi, has a talent pool of more than 3,000 experts — including former CEOs — on whom she can call to work with client companies. In other words, Miller supplies super-temps.

The pitch: "We are providing an efficient market for immediately available, high-end business talent that can do project-based work," said Miller, 56. "Our clients are Fortune 1000 companies, private equity firms and major nonprofits. We identify, assess and manage a group of very experienced business professionals who are perfect for the job at hand."

Good timing: Business Talent Group began in 2007. "In the recession," Miller said, companies "were running lean. We were a solution. Maybe they no longer had the most senior guy in the marketing department, but we could get that talent for them for the project." The right people for the project at hand are assembled with the help of Business Talent Group's offices in Los Angeles, San Francisco, New York, Chicago, and Austin.

Key influences: Miller's mother, Lynn, "became a social worker. She wanted the stimulation of work." Her



"You always pay more for hiring wrong than you do for waiting and finding the right person," says Jody Greenstone Miller, CEO of Business Talent Group. Above, Miller at her Pacific Palisades home.

father, Hank, was the national director of a fraternity and "a tough taskmaster. I remember trying to work with him on the weekends, cutting articles out that he needed, and if I didn't cut them out neatly enough I'd hear about it." In addition, Miller pointed to Matina Horner's "Fear of Success," written in 1968; Germaine Greer's "The Female Eunuch," in 1970, and Gloria Steinem's Ms. Magazine, in 1972. "To me, being able to have an impact as a woman was very important. The three of them were the biggest influences on that."

Young workaholic: Miller started working at summer jobs when she was just 12 years old. While a lot of children her age were relaxing or playing during their summers, Miller was "working at the public library, working for the city

of Philadelphia, working at a kite store, working as a receptionist at a pool. I worked for an insurance company separating checks and invoice cards."

Many hats: After earning degrees from the University of Michigan and the University of Virginia School of Law, Miller worked as a lawyer for Cravath, Swaine & Moore in New York from 1983 to 1984. She was legal counsel to South Carolina Gov. Richard Riley in 1986-87 and helped launch a documentary division for Time-Life Television. She was a White House fellow during the presidency of George H.W. Bush and later was a White House special assistant to President Clinton and deputy to former presidential advisor David Gergen.

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New venture: From 2000 to 2007, she worked with Dan Levitan and Howard Schultz (now Starbucks Corp.'s CEO) at Seattle venture capital firm Maveron. The job gave her the ability to work from home, where she could spend more time with her daughter, Amelia, and husband, Matt Miller, another former White House fellow she met in Washington. "It was fabulous," Miller said. "I was more productive. I was more focused. I didn't have the commute. I didn't have to get dressed up everyday."

New capitalist: "If I hadn't been a venture capitalist I don't know that I would have thought about just jumping in and starting a company," Miller said. "It was that experience of having

watched all of those entrepreneurs. I'm sure I looked closely at well over 200 companies. And you learn. You see, and you get inspired." Business Talent Group employs 75 people and is expanding, having hired 25 workers in the last four months.

Never rush a hire: "You always pay more for hiring wrong than you do for waiting and finding the right person," she said. Miller remembers one mistake, when she was hiring for a position "and I got impatient. I knew they were not the right fit."

Other ventures: Miller also serves on the board of directors of TRW Automotive and Capella Education Co. She's a co-founder and board member of

the National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy and is on the advisory board of the Drucker Institute.

Personal: Miller lives in Los Angeles with her husband, a public radio host who recently finished fifth in the race to replace Rep. Henry A. Waxman in the 33rd Congressional District. Miller is an antique collector. One of her favorite items is a small Swedish Biedermeier writing desk. "It's in a corner of my living room," Miller said. "It's the desk I worked at when we started Business Talent Group."

Words to live by: "My father would tell me, 'If you are going to do something, do it right or don't do it at all.' I always remember that."