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Creating a Part-Time Work Solution

You May Have To Prove a Short Schedule Is Practical



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By *Rebecca R. Kahlenberg*
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For some, it would be nirvana: a professional-level job where you could be gainfully employed for less than 40 hours and have time left over for family, hobbies or relaxation.

Unfortunately, finding such a position is easier said than done. In her new book, "The Savvy Part-Time Professional: How to Land, Create, or Negotiate the Part-Time Job of Your Dreams" (Capital Books, September 2006), Lynn Berger, a career counselor and coach in New York, navigates the murky part-time waters and offers tips on attaining a part-time job.

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Here are some insights Berger provided in a recent interview:

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Q *Who is looking for a part-time job today?*

A Primarily, three groups of people. First, parents -- mostly moms -- with children living at home. Second, seniors who need the additional income but don't want to work full time because they want to spend more time on a passion or they may need to care for someone. Third, a group I call lifestyle-changers, namely high-power people who have burnt out or say they need something to do other than work at least one day a week.

How do you decide if a part-time job would be right for you? Do a self-assessment by looking at what place you want work to have in

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your life. Think about what you need income-wise as well as benefits. You often need to negotiate hard to get benefits when you work part time. For some people, however, even if the job offers less financially, it's worth it. . . .

Are today's employers open to hiring professionals on a part-time basis?

Smaller organizations tend to be more amenable to part-time work, though the larger corporate world seems to be starting to warm up to it.

Still, some employers see part-time jobs as cumbersome and disruptive because the employee won't be there all the time when others are present. They think, "If I could get someone full-time, then why not get that?"

How can you turn your current full-time job into a part-time position?

You need to be creative. Write a proposal and explain how it's a win-win for you and your employer. In the proposal, give a job summary and highlight your accomplishments. Propose a part-time schedule with a range of possible days and hours that you will work and include how you will communicate with colleagues and clients when you are not there. The key is to show your employer how you will still meet the organization's needs

How can you respond if potential employers object to your part-time proposal?

Before you meet with them, brainstorm about some of the objections they might have. For example, if they say, "We haven't done this before," you can respond, "Perhaps we can give it a trial run and reassess in three months." Or if they argue that the job can't be done part time, you can politely say, "I disagree," and show them a proposal in which you've divided up your tasks into clear and manageable parts during the time you would work.


Also, say, "If such-and-such happens and I'm not there, I'll have person X or person Y cover for me." Keep in mind that it's a give-and-take process and a negotiation.

How can you create a new part-time job, especially if you are returning to the workforce after being out for a while?

Use contacts that you have, such as colleagues or alumni networks, and sit down with those people to talk about your interests. Find out what a particular organization needs. Emphasize your accomplishments, such as writing projects that you have done if you are interested in a public relations job. Mention that you are available part time, and express a range of days that you are available. In some cases, such as at a nonprofit organization, offering to start out as a volunteer may help get your foot in the door.

What are the prospects for career advancement in part-time jobs?

If someone is out there every day working full-time, pushing and pushing, they are more likely to get ahead than someone working part time. So you do run the risk of slowing yourself down. But in the long run, that may not make a difference to you if working part time gives meaning to your life and opens up your world in other ways.

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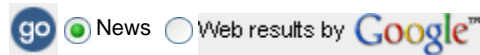
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