

Creating your job gains popularity

Self-employment boom one positive aspect of wave of corporate down-sizing

BY GILLIAN SHAW
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Bonnie Forey started offering accounting services from her home as a way to balance a career and family. That was almost 20 years ago, putting Forey well on the leading edge of a trend in which an increasing number of women create their own jobs.

"It gives me the freedom to meet people, experience new things and not to be in a 9-5 job," said Forey, who, with her son now at university, has expanded her business, combining contract on-site work for small businesses with her home-based accounting services. "No two days are the same," she says.

Kerry Jothen, a labour and human-resources analyst with his company, Human Capital Strategies, said self-employment is the good-news side of the story of down-sizing.

"It is part of a trend towards non-traditional work arrangements: self-employment, telecommuting, permanent part time," he said. "I think there is more of that going on than people realize.

"People are doing it at an early age out of survival, but also midcareer people are realizing, 'I have marketable skills and talent and I could be paid more in the market place than a government or small-business job can pay me.' Once they get into it they find it's better."

Frances McGuckin, author of *Business for Beginners* and *Big Ideas for Growing Your Small Business*, is a business consultant, speaker and entrepreneurial skills instructor. She sees an ever-increasing interest in self-employment among women.

"Women account for 38 to 40 per cent of all Canadian small businesses and in B.C., about 38 per cent of small

businesses are owned by women," she said. "What is driving it is both the economic factor and the trend among women whose families have grown to want to do something for themselves."

McGuckin said many women opening small businesses in such health-related areas as massage, wellness and reflexology. Professional organizers are also filling a fairly new niche demand market and virtual office assistants are providing business services on an as-needed basis. McGuckin said women are also tapping into the growing demands of baby boomers with services ranging from arranging geriatric care for aging parents to personal chefs, fitness trainers and assistants for errands and other tasks.

"These are businesses that are catering to the busy professional who doesn't have time to do all this stuff," she said.

McGuckin's advice for women thinking of creating their job?

- Define what your goals are; what you want from the work.
- Ask yourself, will the business or job you create satisfy your needs, both financially and emotionally
- If you're starting a business, have some expertise in the area and research it thoroughly before you take the plunge.

"The big one, I always tell women, if you are going to start a business, do something you love, don't just do it for the dollars," said McGuckin