

# Talent shortage among reasons for growth of part-time work

BY GILLIAN SHAW  
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Milinda Schulz was ready to re-enter the job market after a six-year hiatus from her career in marketing and operations for seniors' housing, but she didn't want to limit her options to a standard, full-time position.

Instead, she is pursuing her passion for marketing by signing on for part-time work with the boutique interior design firm, Graham & deAraujo Design Studio, answering the small company's need for her marketing expertise and still leaving Schulz time to juggle the other demands of her busy life.

"It's marvelous, it is a great balance for me," said Schulz, who balances her life in Vancouver with helping her aging mother who lives in the Okanagan and the demands of her home and her husband's work, which often has him on the phone to clients in Europe late into the night. "It is a wonderful combination of part-time, contractual work that enables me to better handle other things that are going on in my personal life.

"It has been great."

Schulz's story reflects a growing trend in part-time work that is driven in large part by Canada's increasing talent shortage and by employees who opt for non-

traditional working schedules, either because they are scaling down as they near retirement or they are just starting out and juggling several jobs, both for the money and the opportunity to acquire more skills.

Kerry Jothen, a human resources analyst and chief executive officer of Human Capital Strategies, said Friday's Statistics Canada's job figures that showed most of the some 68,700 jobs created last month were part-time positions, is the start of a trend that he expects will grow as baby boomers retire.

"This period is a start of where we will see more part-time, part-year and other non-traditional working arrangements," said Kerry Jothen, labour economist and chief executive officer of Human Capital Strategies. "As the workforce gets older, we'll see more people taking on part-time work rather than completely retiring, and it is also indicative of a hot economy and labour market — people see opportunities to take on more work and employers are having to be more accommodating around part-time and non-traditional work patterns to keep people.

"If you look at where the part-time employment growth is, it's not the single mother scraping together three jobs to get by; a lot are students who are taking on extra jobs to get more money, not because they need it, but almost as a form of entrepreneurship, where they are looking both to increase income and gain experience."

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Like many others in Canada's fast-growing small-business sector, Rena Graham who runs Graham & deAraujo Design Studio with partner Louis deAraujo, doesn't have the luxury of turning

to full-time departments or even full-time people to help in various areas such as accounting and marketing. But the small business needs marketing expertise and Schulz is filling that need with a two-day-a-week commitment, along with project work.

"We are a small firm and we have in the past hired somebody full time to do a whole bunch of things, like bookkeeping and marketing, but marketing is a specialty, it takes a certain kind of brain and a certain kind of expertise and Milinda has all that," said Graham. "But because we are a small firm I can only justify having somebody in here for part of the time."

While the size of her business means part-time and contract work arrangements best meet Graham's needs, larger companies are discovering they may have to settle for part-time employees simply because the workers are not prepared to take on more.

"I would say 90 per cent of the constituents in our group would clearly like to work part-time or on a contract basis that would give them flexibility," said Danna Murray, manager of the Minerva Foundation's Helping Women Work, a mentoring program that helps business and professional women seeking to re-enter the workforce or launch new careers. "Many of them don't want to go back and work 60-hour workweeks. They have already done that and they find that pace too difficult."

Murray said says that "Because of this whole drain of people with an incredible amount of skills starting to leave the workforce, employers are realizing there is a wealth of information of knowledge and they must try to keep them."

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