

Before You Jump in the Free Agent Pool!

By Tom Carlson

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by Linda Blew Carlson

A "free agent" used to be a sports figure, or entertainer whose contract had run out and was looking for a new one. But with the change in our economy and the survival mode that companies have switched to, a vast number of people have entered the arena of free agents. Recent books and articles claim we are becoming a "Free Agent Nation," within a "Free Agent Economy."

Are you ready to join the millions who have chosen to become free agents? If you have or are planning to change your work life and want more choice in what you do and how you do it, you need to consider two things. How good are you at working with others? Do you know what you naturally do best?

If you can answer these two questions quickly, think about whether these are skills you have learned or whether they come naturally. Many people think that being trained to do something well is good enough; others will buy this knowledge or skill from them. That may be true or it may be short lived. There isn't much today that you can learn that will not become obsolete about the time you learn it. People aren't very flexible when they learn a skill. They learn how to do it best and lack the flexibility to adapt when the skill is no longer required. How do you stay flexible? Identify what you were born to do and you easily adapt to changes!

Being a successful free agent depends heavily on people skills. The Income part depends on your being able to cut directly through the defenses of people who are inundated with info the minute they get out of bed in the morning. It is pretty unrealistic to think you will get enough work to support yourself by relying on others to tell someone else how good you are. So brushing up on your people skills is essential.

There are some great resources for you, the prospective free agent. For instance Dan Pink in his new book defines what you are feeling right now. He says that people by the thousands each day are fleeing the organization to become "free agents." He says; "This person is the independent worker who operates on his or her terms, untethered to a large organization, serving multiple clients and customers instead of a single boss." This is good information. You need to know where you fit in the scheme of things.

Toni Lonier wants to give free agents the tools they will need to succeed. Barbara Reinhold recognizes the personal fears and gives advice and resources to deal with them. Sara Horowitz has developed a place where free agents can get similar and sometimes better benefits than organizations offer. This takes care of the basics. But no one has asked or answered the really important questions yet. How good are you at working with others, really? Do you know what you naturally do best? (This is usually very different from what you have been trained to do.)

Many free agents recognize that going it alone does not mean being alone. A recent issue of INC. has its cover page devoted to an example of going "solo" and teaming. Newer web sites do recognize the need for building teams that share projects and personal support. These sites talk about the need to get along well with others, and how to make significant contributions to the team. But just getting along with others doesn't mean you know how to get the best performance from them, or yourself for that matter.

So, what we have going today, is a growing understanding of the role of the free agent. We also have an expanding amount of information generated by people who are free agents themselves to help us. We have existing groups and new ones forming that will share and support us. What is missing?

Recent ground breaking research, provides answers for the two questions you must face, before you really stand a strong chance of making it as a free agent. It explains how to get others to give willing cooperation consistently. It explains what you have as in-born skills, that not only showcase your learned skills, but also come to your rescue when you need help.

It is important that you create an environment for yourself that removes the uncomfortable stress you have felt in organizations, and provides the greatest opportunity for your success, while being yourself. That means you need to maximize your strengths and minimize your liabilities. It also means that you can capitalize on your natural skills and be able to help others do the same. This new research gives you the ability to do all of this, along with the insight into how to form powerful teams, that quickly gain recognition for outstanding performance.

There are two simple steps to take before becoming a free agent. First, I suggest you go to the web site at <http://www.styleworks4u.com> and get information that will make establishing your free agent status faster and easier. It will give you an opportunity to take some free assessments that will identify what you are naturally good at. This is the starting point.

The authors' books mentioned above, and many others, can be secured at any major library, or from most of the major Internet book sellers. Also a couple of key sites to get information on free agents and business are: www.fastcompany.com and www.business2.com. As you surf the search engines and directories, you will find many excellent sites and web pages. When you make the jump into the free agent pool - give yourself the very real chance for success!

Linda Carlson is President of Focus I. Inc. and has been a free agent all her life. She is dedicated to helping others work freely and powerfully. Her bio and "story" can be found at; <http://www.styleworks4u.com/cgi-bin/index.cgi/about/index.html>

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