



Think Like a Free Agent

By Mike Ballard

More and more of us are discovering the variety of ways to be “employed”, and significant numbers of workers aren’t employed at all. We work as temps, sub-contractors, free-lancers and consultants – on a permanent, part-time or temporary basis. Whether you get a W-2 or a 1099 (or both), there is one thing we all have in common: no one else will manage our career for us.

In today’s fast-changing world, job security is not guaranteed. Our resumes need to be updated our first week in the new job. We need to watch the trade journals for our industry, so we know who the players are. Do you work for a major player, or is your employer about to be acquired by the next industry power? Is my company leading the way, or are we barely a blip on the radar screen? If changes are coming (and believe me, they are), I’d prefer not to be taken by surprise.

Free agents are more entrepreneurs than employees. We must manage our careers in the same ways we would a business. We must establish multiple, diverse sources of income, and we must find ways to establish our own personal branding. If we market ourselves as a commodity that can be found anywhere, we will tend to be treated as such. If we discover and promote our unique experiences and accomplishments, prospective employers will see us as unique candidates that can make profound contributions to their team.

No matter who you get your paycheck from, you are the only one that can manage your career. If you’ve got work today so much the better, but keep an eye on the news. There are trade associations for just about everything – including the public sector. If you’re looking for work, be aware and open to all of your options. While you might prefer the “security” of employment, other avenues exist to find opportunity.

Mike Ballard is CEO of Turning Points, an education company based in Denver, Colorado. Turning Points helps college career centers and career counselors to be more engaged, satisfied and excited by providing online career tools and group curricula. Turning Points next Colorado provider training will held at CU Boulder on Wednesday, September 13th. For more information: www.TPNavigator.com