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FREELANCE NATION BRINGS MORE FLEXIBLE WORK OPTIONS TO INTEL

Written by [Paul Tawadrous](#)

MARCH 18, 2016



Freelance What?

"The idea behind Freelance Nation had been bubbling up in the Talent Organization for a while," says Kalani Ching, who helped launch the program in 2014. The innovative staffing solution was Intel's response to the growing desire—from both employees and business groups—for more adaptable work arrangements. "A lot of employees wanted to focus more on the work they loved, and business groups needed an easier way to find employees with specialized skills to work on specific projects."

So in the spring of 2014, Kalani, along with a small team from the Intel Talent Organization, sought and received funding for a pilot program—and Freelance Nation was born. The program started out with around 60 employees, and projects typically

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lasted between six and eight weeks. Today Freelance Nation continues to thrive and grow, as business groups from all across the company discover and utilize the unique resources it offers. The program continues to hire people who possess high-demand skillsets and a freelancer mindset.

Freedom and adaptability are at the core of Freelance Nation. Employees are free to choose which projects they want to pursue and then, if they're selected, negotiate the terms of the project—everything from responsibilities and deliverables to work schedule and project duration. Employees are free to take on multiple simultaneous projects and—in consultation with their client groups—set the schedule that works best for them at any given time. Compensation is adjusted to reflect the amount of time worked (for example, a full-time schedule earns 100% compensation, a 75% schedule earns 75% compensation, etc.).

Championing Exceptional Talent



Talent (and Fencing) Champion Vikki Mueller Espinosa

Each Freelancer is assigned a Talent Champion—a seasoned people manager with extensive experience and proven success in career coaching and employee development. Talent Champions counsel their assigned Freelancers, facilitate project-matching, and check in from time to time with their Freelancers and customers to ensure that both parties are happy with the work and projects are running smoothly. One of the program's Talent Champions, Vikki Mueller Espinosa—who works a flexible schedule herself—describes her light-touch approach. “It’s really up to the Freelancers themselves to figure out and go after the work they want to do. I encourage them to narrow their list of specialties to the things they really love. You know, one person’s trash is another person’s treasure. If you focus on the things you really love to do, there’s almost always someone else who enjoys and wants to do the things you don’t.” She also encourages Freelancers to think and work independently, like entrepreneurs. “I’m a bit like a Hollywood agent—I help match them up with engaging work that makes the most of their potential and helps them grow professionally. After that, I tell them ‘If it makes sense for Intel and for your career, do it.’ They don’t need to ask for my permission.”

Practicing the freedom and independence she preaches, Vikki negotiated a custom schedule for herself that allows her to pursue her passion for wheelchair fencing. She took up the sport in 2014, after injuring her leg playing soccer in 2009. Now the reigning national champion in women’s wheelchair sabre fencing, she takes 12 weeks off during the year to compete all over the world. She’s working hard to qualify for a spot on the 2016 US Paralympic Fencing Team.

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Sarah Moyle Goes Free-Style



Freelancer and Whiteboard Illustrator Sarah Moyle

Prior to joining Freelance Nation, Sarah Moyle had worked in Human Resources for four years. She heard about it from a mentor who was familiar with the program and enthusiastically recommended it. "I was really yearning for more creative work," says Sarah. "And I had gotten into doing some explanatory whiteboard videos and graphic facilitation to help people grasp ideas and processes. So I saw Freelance Nation as a way to continue focusing on that and building up those skills."

As a new mom, Sarah especially appreciates the flexibility Freelance Nation offers. "It's great to be in control of my own schedule—and it's been a real lifesaver at times. Like when my son's six-month vaccinations coincided with his first tooth. It was a Monday morning, and—as you can guess—he was not a happy camper. But I was able to stay with him and give him the extra attention he needed that day. Then I just finished up my work later that night."

Sarah also values the many development opportunities Freelance Nation provides. "We're often able to partner with other Freelancers who have different skills or levels of expertise, and we're encouraged to learn from them. So if there's a particular set of skills I want to grow or gain, I can choose to work on projects with people I want to learn from."

And if Sarah ever wondered whether working as a Freelancer would hold back her career growth in any way, she certainly doesn't now. "Oh, definitely not. I'm constantly learning new skills and getting exposure to different parts of the company—more than I ever would otherwise. And the work I do makes a real difference here." In fact, Sarah recently helped a client business group clinch a big contract with an important customer. "I received an urgent call asking if I could fly down to assist in a critical presentation. They said they could really benefit from having a graphic recorder there, so I quickly rearranged my schedule and was on my way. At the end of the meeting, the customers were all smiles—and I later heard that my visualizations played a key role in making a positive impression on our customer, positioning us to secure the contract. I couldn't have been more proud."

Maria Mihalko Finds Free-dom

Maria took a similar route to Freelance Nation—but with one bundle-of-joy-sized exception. "I had been working in HR at Intel for nine years, but I was actually on maternity leave when I heard about, applied for, and was accepted into Freelance



Freelancer and Visual Storyteller Maria Mihalko

Nation," says Maria. "My current job had been gradually shifting away from the things I liked to do most, so I was open to a change. When my maternity leave ended, I started up with Freelance Nation—and I haven't looked back since."

Like Sarah, Maria has found a lot to like as a new mom at Freelance Nation. "It's an incredible relief to have a flexible schedule and such a supportive team," says Maria. "Babies—especially those who are exposed to a lot of other kids in daycare—tend to get a lot of colds and other viruses in their first year or two, and my daughter was no exception. Knowing that I could go and pick her up right away whenever I got that midday call—that's very reassuring. You just need to communicate with your client and let them know what's going on. But as long as you do that, and arrange your schedule so you can get your work done, no one really bats an eye."

Asked about her most rewarding projects with Freelance Nation, Maria doesn't hesitate. "Getting the opportunity to find a place at Intel that's such a great fit for me has been incredible. So I'm excited when I get the chance to help others here do the same thing," says Maria. "One of my favorite projects has been working with Blue Hire—which helps place current Intel employees in new positions within the company. It's a great feeling when you can help people at Intel find work here that they really enjoy—work that really energizes them. That's exactly what I've been able to do at Freelance Nation."

ABOUT PAUL TAWADROUS

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2 THOUGHTS ON "FREELANCE NATION BRINGS MORE FLEXIBLE WORK OPTIONS TO INTEL"



Thomas J Merfeld I says:

March 22, 2016 at 8:01 am

I'm a little more than paraplegic so I understand how hard it is to stay motivated. And just how insensitive the general public is the adversity we face in everyday tasks. As well as how ready they are to take advantage of imbetterment programs they profess shouldn't be available.



Elizabeth Gibson says:

April 5, 2016 at 9:50 pm

Great idea. I've been looking to come back to Intel. I left years ago to raise my children and earn my PhD. I'll be completing this Spring and am pleased to see some of the changes and progressive programs. Programs such as this just might tempt me back.

Comments are closed.

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