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## A reducing agent

There have been a lot of changes at NCIS. The team looked slightly different during the last episode. It's not clear how long the new team will be taking over or when Gibbs will be back. Here's rundown of the new agents at NCIS. Special Agent Jessica Knight Agent Jessica Knight will join NCIS at the end of season 18. | Karen Neal/CBS via Getty Images Jessica Knight is part of the NCIS REACT team. According to Deadline, Jessica will be introduced during the last two episodes of season 18. Since her character is a hostage negotiation specialist, our guess is there's going to be a hostage situation the team has to deal with toward the end of the season. Jessica is played by actor Katrina Law. One of her early roles was in the 1987 film An Autumn's Tale. After that, she appeared in the 2000 movie Lucky Numbers. The following year, she had a role in an episode of Third Watch titled "Man Enough." In 2007, Law played Kate Wyman in The Rookie: CTU for six episodes. Law's big break came in 2010 after appearing in The Resistance, in which she played Lana for eight episodes. Her other acting roles include appearances in Arrow, the Training Day television series, and Hawaii Five-0. IF NCIS gets the green light for season 19, Law has an option to become a series regular, reports Deadline. Special Agent Veronica 'Ronnie' Tyler Victoria Platt plays Agent Veronica Tyler on 'NCIS.' | Bill Matlock/Walt Disney Television via Getty Images Veronica Tyler is first introduced during NCIS Season 18, Episode 1 (titled "Sturgeon Season"). During this episode her daughter, Jasmine, is kidnapped, and the team helps find her. Veronica's next appearance is during NCIS Season 18, Episode 11 (titled "Gut Punch"). She's one of the agents assigned to take over for Gibbs' team after he is suspended. The actor who plays Veronica Tyler is Victoria Platt. Her television acting debut was in a 1985 episode of The Cosby Show titled "Theo and the Older Woman." She made her film debut in the 1986 movie 'Round Midnight. In 1994, she appeared in her next movie, titled Alma's Rainbow. Platt rose to fame after appearing the daytime drama Guiding Light. She played the character Vicky Spaulding from 1998 to 2001. In 2010, Platt played Peg Mueller on the TV series The Gates. She is also known for her roles in Days of Our Lives, NCIS: New Orleans, and Star-Crossed. Special Agent Dale Sawyer Zane Holtz plays Sawyer on 'NCIS' | Roy Rochlin/Getty Images for Tribeca TV Festival We first meet Dale Sawyer during NCIS Season 18, Episode 11. Dale isn't very nice when he initially interacts with the team. He clashes with Bishop (Emily Wickersham) about lying to protect Gibbs. He also butts heads with Nick (Wilmer Valderrama). There's a major power struggle that goes on for most of this episode. Sawyer is quite annoying most of the time. However, he later apologizes and gives more respect to the team after they help crack a case he and Veronica are working on. The actor who plays Dale Sawyer is Zane Holtz. One of his early acting roles was in a 2001 episode of CSI: Crime Scene Investigation. He played the role of Dylan Buckley. The following year, he appeared in an episode of Judging Amy. In 2010, he joined the cast of Make It or Break It. He played the role of Austin Tucker until 2012. Holtz joined the cast of From Dusk Till Dawn: The Series, in which he played Richie Gecko from 2014 to 2016. He's also known for his appearances in Riverdale, Katy Keene, Percy Jackson & The Olympians: Lightning Thief, and Jodi Arias: Dirty Little Secret. Follow Shieresa Ngo on Twitter. Kinko's founder Paul Orfalea isn't much for fancy titles — or glossy photos. (He refused to be photographed for this article.) False modesty from a mogul worth an estimated \$225 million? Hardly. It is an authentic part of the grassroots spirit that has infused Kinko's since Orfalea began the company 27 years ago. Orfalea insists that he does not "run" Kinko's. His job, he says, is to "wander and wonder" — to visit as many of the company's 865 stores as he can, to spend time with coworkers, to soak up innovation, and to communicate new ideas across the Kinko's network. His favorite knowledge-sharing tool is voice mail. If Orfalea is at a Kinko's outlet and he hears about a good idea, he immediately dials into the company's voice-mail system, introduces the coworker who described the idea to him, and lets that person record a message — which then flows back across the system. Lately, Orfalea has had a second reason to wander: he wants to reassure the company's 23,000 people that its spirit won't change, even as its structure does. A big investment by Clayton, Dubilier & Rice, announced in June 1996, was a watershed moment for Kinko's — not only bringing in needed capital but also acting as a force for organizational change. Clayton Dubilier's "roll-up" plan transformed Kinko's from a decentralized confederation of locally managed stores into a smarter, sleeker, more disciplined global company. In return for its \$214 million, the Wall Street firm got about 30% of the company. Orfalea kept an estimated 34%. His 130 partners were allowed to swap holdings in their local operations for shares in the new company. Now Orfalea's challenge is to make sure that the Kinko's strategic roll-up doesn't roll over the grassroots enthusiasm and creativity that was so crucial to the company's early growth. "You can't take care of your customers unless you take care of your people," he says. "Everyone has good machines. Our coworkers are the only tie-breakers for us. I don't think the old feeling will change too much."Nor will Orfalea's approach to his job. "People think I'm busier than I am," he jokes. "Basically, I've got this job down to about six hours a week. The rest of the time, I'm wandering." Welcome to Free Agent. U.S.A. Federal census takers can't tell you how many people actually live here. Government mapmakers have yet to give it an official location. But if you go look for it, as I did, you can't miss it. It's out there, from coast to coast, and it's growing every day. The residents of Free Agent, USA are legion: Start with the 14 million self-employed Americans. Consider the 8.3 million Americans who are independent contractors. Factor in the 2.3 million people who find work each day through temporary agencies. Note that in January the IRS expects to mail out more than 74 million copies of Form 1099-MISC — the pay stub of free agents. So let's hazard a guess. If we add up the self-employed, the independent contractors, the temps — a working definition of the population of Free Agent Nation — we end up with more than 16% of the American workforce: roughly 25 million free agents in the United States, people who move from project to project and who work on their own, sometimes for months, sometimes for days. And if you're looking for a place to start making the map, you can mark Deborah Risi's home in Menlo Park, California. A 40-year-old marketing whiz, Risi worked for many years at companies like Apple Computer and Pacific Bell, climbing her way gracefully through their marketing divisions, securing ever-better positions at ever-higher salaries. Then, about two and a half years ago, she walked out of a company she'd rather not name and reexamined her life. "I looked back on my work history and realized I had never felt really, really good about it," she says. "I had maybe one boss I could both respect and learn from. I was tired of working incredibly hard for companies that lacked leadership and didn't share my values."So she declared herself a free agent, landed her first client four days later, and hasn't looked back. Today Risi operates out of a room in her house that overflows with computer gear, file cabinets, and a Magic 8-Ball ("my managerial decision-making tool"). She consults on marketing strategy for high-tech giants like Sun Microsystems, Oracle, and Cisco Systems, usually juggling four to six clients at a time and bringing in a lot more money than she earned during her years in corporate America. She feels more invigorated than she ever did in a traditional job. No surprise there. But — and this is one of the many counterintuitive truths of Free Agent Nation — she also feels more secure. She pilots her work life using an instrument panel similar to the one she uses for her investments: plenty of research, solid fundamentals, and most of all, diversification. Just as sensible investors would never sink all their financial capital into one stock, free agents like Risi are questioning the wisdom of investing all their human capital in a single employer. Not only is it more interesting to have six clients instead of one boss; it also may be safer. The concept eludes some. About a year ago Risi applied for a mortgage. The bank demanded to see every scrap of paper about her life and her finances, because a woman without a "job" was, in its old-economy view, an obvious credit risk. "I showed them my resume and said, 'You're kidding me! I've been at Apple, Pacific Bell, Cullinet Software — all these high-tech companies. You're telling me that I would be a safer bet at one of those than I am with six active clients?' If one of my clients goes away, I'm still going to make my payments. But if I'm employed by Apple and they let me go, I'm out on the street."She got her loan. "Unless you're into self-abuse, or you're incredibly lucky and avoid restructuring," says Risi, "being a lifer is no longer an option."As you take to the highways found on the new map of work, you'll soon learn the foremost rule of the road: freedom is the pathway to security, not a detour from it. Like many free agents, I'm looking for el dorado, el dorado, New Mexico, that is. That's where you'll find June Walker, 53, a free agent who lives in an adobe house in this tiny, nonincorporated area eight miles outside of Santa Fe. A tax and finance consultant, she advises other free agents on the intricacies and frustrations of the tax code. She says that if free agency changes the old equation between security and freedom — the either-or proposition of what Walker acily calls the "W-2 world" — then the next challenging issue it raises goes straight to the heart of the matter: Why work? Free agency forces you to think about who you are and what you want to do with your life," she says. "Previously, it was only those wonderful, flaky artists who had to deal with this."The old social contract didn't have a clause for introspection. It was much simpler than that. You gave loyalty. You got security. But now that the old contract has been repealed, people are examining both its basic terms and its implicit conditions. Free agents quickly realized that in the traditional world, they were silently accepting an architecture of work customs and social mores that should have crumbled long ago under the weight of its own absurdity. From infighting and office politics to bosses piggybacking employees against one another to colleagues who don't pull their weight, most workplaces are a study in dysfunction. Most people do want to work; they don't want to put up with brain-dead distractions. Much of what happens inside companies turns out to be about, ... nothing. The American workplace has become a coast-to-coast "Seinfeld" episode. It's about nothing. But work, free agents say, has to be about something. And, yes, instead of accepting the old terms, they're demanding new ones. Thus the second rule of the road for navigating Free Agent, USA: work is personal. You can achieve a beautiful synchronicity between who you are and what you do. "A large organization is about submerging your own identity for the good of the company," says David Garfinkel, 44, from his apartment in San Francisco. "People have their game faces on." A few years ago, when he was a bureau chief for business publisher McGraw-Hill, Garfinkel decided he couldn't play that game any longer. "The appearance and title of the job were exciting, but the job wasn't using the best part of me. I felt like I was out of touch with who I really was." He's now a free-agent marketing strategist and copywriter. Across the Bay, Sue Burish — a beefy, boisterous Oakland-based free agent who goes by the unlikely nickname of "Birdi" — concurs. "In traditional companies," she says, "people don't believe in themselves. How they act is so frequently not who they are. They put on masks for eight hours and then take them off when they're done."Free agents gladly swap the false promise of security for the personal pledge of authenticity. "In free agency," says Burish, who now designs training programs, "people assume their own shape rather than fit the shape of some corporate box."Burish, 45, knows about corporate boxes. She began her career in the mid-1970s, selling Parker pens. Since then she's worked at Southern Pacific Railroad, at Crocker Bank, and, for more than seven years, at Raychem Corp., the large electronics manufacturer. "I have been riffed, merged, and bankrupted into unemployment," she says of her corporate life. But as a free agent for the last two years, she's been something altogether new: she's been whole. "I used to think that what I needed to do was balance my life, keep my personal and professional lives separate," she says. "But I discovered that the real secret is integration. I integrate work and life. I don't seem to work as separate from my life. I don't seem to work as separate from my identity." The mask is gone. For this free agent, work is who she is. And just as the first rule of the road leads to the second, the second yields the third: Work is fun. For example, Burish came up with one of her best business ideas while taking that afternoon "off" to attend a day game of her beloved Oakland A's. "I don't know if going to a baseball game is business or fun," she says. "I've stopped worrying about it."Because in Free Agent Nation, work is supposed to be fun. It was the fun of her job that Theresa Fitzgerald missed when she rose from low-level designer to creative director at United Media, a New York company that syndicates columns and comic strips. She earned more and more money, got more and more responsibility, and moved further and further away from what she loved. Instead of doing art, she was managing people who did art. "I'd come into the studio and say, 'You guys are having all the fun,'" Fitzgerald explains. So, at the top of her career, she left to become a free agent. It's yet another way that free agents have reversed the organizing premises of work in America. Remember the Peter Principle? That old chestnut held that people rise through the ranks until they reach the level of their incompetence. Fitzgerald embodies the Paul Principle: people rise though an organization until they stop having fun. Then they leave to become free agents. Today Fitzgerald, 35, operates out of a 10×12 room in an apartment on Manhattan's Upper West Side. The ceiling is low, and the ceiling fan makes it seem even lower. A plastic Gummy dangles from the cord, dancing to the sound of the jackhammers devouring West 83rd Street. The Paul Principle propelled her here, where she designs children's clothing, toys, and promotions for clients including Playskool, Scholastic Publishing, and Major League Baseball. As much as she treasures her years as a corporate honcho, she knew she was losing touch with who she really was. "I'm a doer," Fitzgerald says. "I would have very busy days at United Media, but I wouldn't have done anything."She does not consider this boxy room the East Coast version of a Cupertino garage — the incubator for a large design operation of her own. "If I become a studio," she says, "I begin to lose me." Tacked above her drafting table is a newspaper photo of Norman Rockwell with a small knot of people. "Why do you have a picture of Norman Rockwell?" I ask. She points to a young man at the edge of the frame, almost cropped out of the photo. "That's my dad. He took drawing classes from Norman Rockwell." "Was he a professional artist?" I ask. "No," she answers. "He worked at General Electric for 35 years, but he was a very talented artist." Back then, freedom and security were a tradeoff, and with five kids to feed, he understandably chose security. Work wasn't personal, and it damn well wasn't supposed to be fun. "It was," Fitzgerald says, "a different world." "I'm wiped," says Joanna Baker from her cell-phone as she drives to a meeting somewhere near Chicago. "I've been working every night until 10."Baker, 36, is the founder of an executive search firm. She's off to see another client. Like many in her field, Baker has sterling academic credentials — an undergraduate degree from Barnard College, an advanced degree in management from Northwestern University's Kellogg School. But unlike the legions of squeaky-clean MBAs who make their way lemminglike from on-campus interviews to socially acceptable "jobs," Baker has been a free agent from day one of her career. Smart, talented, driven, she is a first-round draft pick who's opted to play in a league of her own. She recalls her B-school days as she pilots her Toyota Corolla wagon to her next stop: "Everybody was looking for that big plum job. Everybody wanted to be a brand manager." She too was tending that way — until she attended a few recruiting receptions. "They were fake, they were plastic." She was looking for authenticity. She had entered Kellogg's Class of '93 after working in social services in New York City. "I worked at a nonprofit. I didn't know what the hell a balance sheet was." But gradually Baker grew to love the world of business, in particular the talent side of business — hiring and recruiting people to join companies. By her second year of B-school, she figured she could do that sort of work on her own, but she covered her bets by talking to the megacompanies that were interviewing on campus. A pharmaceuticals company offered her a job as a recruiter at a juicy starting salary. But she decided she'd rather go it alone. Then, in the spring of her second year, the dean of Kellogg took Baker to lunch and told her not to do anything rash. Take the job at the drug company, he advised. You won't regret it. For a time, she considered it. Here was the dean of one of the nation's top business schools giving her private career counseling. But in the end, she turned down the offer. "I did a gut check. And my gut said that I'm going to be a little sick to my stomach when I wake up in the morning. I didn't want to give up Joanna Baker to be a cog in their machine." So, haltingly, she struck out on her own. She joined a professional association, The Research Roundtable, and visited other recruiters. She didn't always like what she saw. These recruiters, she says, "put a high value on having mahogany and brass. There's no mahogany in my house." In her Evanston, Illinois home office, there are two phone lines and a black Labrador retriever — elements that Baker considers essential to her free-agent success. The dean has become a friend and even introduces her to prospective clients. And when she attends alumni meetings and sees her old classmates, she realizes that she makes about as much money as they do but has fringe benefits they probably can't even imagine. "I get to do yoga every day in my house," Baker says. "Other people are commuting while I'm doing yoga." Deep in the Hudson Valley, across the abandoned railroad tracks, past the rural cemetery, beyond the stone lions, in a cedar-paneled house at the foot of the Shawangunk Mountains, Terri Lonier is working solo. Literally. Lonier, 45, is the founder of Working Solo, a consulting and publishing operation that advises free agents on how to navigate this new world; it also helps larger businesses understand and reach this growing new market. She is both evangelist and ambassador. She spreads the word, urging the growing flock of free agents to have faith — in themselves. And she journeys to the more established land of business to decode what's taking place in the strange new realm that she represents. At her home here in New Paltz, New York, one of the most compelling subplots in the Free Agent Nation story is unfolding in Lonier's basement and across her telephone lines. Throughout the country, small groups of free agents are helping one another succeed professionally and survive emotionally. These groups belie another of the central myths about free agency: that without that office watercooler, free agents become isolated and lonely. As Lonier puts it, "Working solo is not working alone."These groups — at once hard-headed and soft-hearted — are creating new communities. One part board of directors, another part group therapy, these small, self-organized clusters are part of the emerging free-agent infrastructure. Along with Kinko's, Office Depot, Staples, and Web sites too numerous to count, they are forming the foundation of our economic and social lives. Every other week, usually on a Friday morning, Lonier and three colleagues — including Elaine Floyd, 36, a newsletter impresario based in St. Louis, and Pam Davis, 47, a television producer based in San Diego — hold a conference call to discuss their microbusinesses. They solicit and receive advice, set goals for the coming weeks, and give one another an emotional boost. David Garfinkel, the free-agent copywriter from San Francisco, is the fourth participant in the biweekly call. He says that being accountable to peers has forced him to get things done that he might have let slide. "I have a lot of great friends," Garfinkel says, "but they haven't chosen this path. No matter how kindhearted they are, they just can't cheer you on. They're on a different emotional frequency." Adds Davis: "A lot of people don't understand what I'm going through. I see this look on their faces, and I say, 'I'm going to go talk to my group about it.'"A different Friday morning, a different group. This time I'm in Miriam Krasno's living room in Skokie, Illinois, with a plate of bagels to my left and her parrot BooBoo to my right. This is the Strategy Group, which includes Joanna Baker, the executive recruiter, and three other women: Krasno, 41, a career coach; Cheryl Rodgers, 41, an educational technology consultant; and Beth Sirull, 34, a free-agent marketing guru. The Strategy Group has fun, but it's structured fun. At their meetings, each participant has a maximum of 20 minutes to speak, with the time divided into four periods. The first period is called Accomplishments and Insights; here, a participant must talk for at least two but no more than five minutes about what she has achieved in the past month personally, professionally, and, yes, spiritually. Next comes Struggles and Lemmas, a two-to-five-minute chance to discuss problems while avoiding self-flagellation. That sets the stage for the nine-minute interactive session, during which the group offers advice (like a corporate board) and encouragement (like a support group). Then comes the one-minute finale, in which each woman makes commitments to herself that the group will enforce. For this session, Rodgers — sitting cross-legged on Krasno's couch — begins. She reports on her month, which has been a bit up-and-down. She likes some of the work she's doing, dislikes some of the rest. Midway through a sentence, Baker's black pocket timer screeches to signal the end of this period. "Struggles and Dilemmas," Baker says. "Let's go."Rodgers's main difficulty is that a contract she's working on looks as if it will take significantly longer than she expected. She feels she's not getting paid a fair amount. "I have no idea whether it's appropriate to go back to my client and say that I'm uncomfortable with this," she says. "Did you give the client a written proposal?" Krasno asks, peering from behind her birdlike glasses. Rodgers, head turned down, says, "No." "That's the problem," says Sirull. "You've got nothing to fall back on, nothing to point to. Rodgers also thinks she might want to work full-time for an operation for which she's now a contractor. Her group debates the merits of such a move. "If you can get health insurance, it might be worth it," Sirull offers. The rapid-fire squal of Baker's timer sounds again: now it's Krasno's turn. Then comes Sirull. Baker goes last, and she has a lot going on. She's secured office space because new business has flooded in. And she's landed even more work. But her report quickly turns personal. "I'm going to start teaching yoga soon." Later she adds, "I haven't had an actual date since last week we met." Her first struggle: for one large project, she's had to spend a lot of time in a cubicle inside a large company. "I remembered all those things I'd forgotten — pantyhose being stupid, commuting being stupid, not seeing light during the day. I want not to work there so badly I can taste it." Another struggle: her schedule is so packed that she's having a tough time doing things like shopping for groceries and sustaining a social life. The group helps her decide which time commitments to honor and which to discard. They also validate her decision to secure new office space, and they help her navigate an ethical dilemma that she faces with one client. All in all, they provide useful and compassionate advice. Baker's commitments for next time rule the gamut — from having lunch with a new business contact to cleaning her house. Unprovoked, Sirull offers a prediction: "I think you'll have a date in the next month too." In a spartan eighth-floor office of a manny building in the Union Square section of Manhattan, Sara Horowitz is busy writing the new rules of labor. Horowitz, 34, is executive director of Working Today, a two-year-old organization made up of nine professional groups and comprising 35,000 people — including 2,500 individuals who have signed up on their own. By joining Working Today, free agents can secure some of the economies of scale enjoyed by traditional workers. Working Today's \$10 membership fee buys access to health insurance, office supplies, computer software, and airline tickets, all at group discounts. What makes this idea so innovative is that it leads to the exact opposite of a labor union. Traditionally, labor unions have derived their strength from seeking to establish a monopoly on the sale of labor in a certain industry or region. In this radically new economy, Horowitz is establishing more or less a monopoly of buyers — in short, a consumer union. It's practically impossible for free agents to bargain for wages as a group. But it's relatively easy for them to bargain together for better prices on the things they all must buy. Free agents represented by Working Today can say, "Sell us health insurance and office supplies at a reasonable price, or we'll take our business — and there's a lot of it — elsewhere." Her work unsettles many in the labor establishment, because it abandons many of the movement's core strategies, revises its central vocabulary, and calls for a new architecture of laws and regulations. Horowitz thinks she has the standing to reinvent the game. Her grandfather was vice president of the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union. Her father was a labor lawyer. So is her husband. And so is she. When she graduated from Cornell University, she went to work as a union organizer at a nursing home. At a Manhattan coffee shop, Horowitz reaches across our table, grabs my notebook, and begins scribbling. "This is the structure of work," she says, drawing an enormous box. "The big building, the office." She then draws a stick figure. "This is an employee. An employee goes and works on a job. From that base, because they're called employees, they can unionize. They have labor rights, administrative benefits. This notion that you are working on your job — all these things flow from that. You get your health insurance, your pension, your unemployment insurance." She draws another diagram — a bunch of tiny, disconnected circles. "This is the 1990s. This is the new structure of work. Any rights you have come from being an individual. This job notion, which used to undergird everything, doesn't exist here." Horowitz pauses. "We need to look at the new ways people are working and say, 'These legal distinctions don't make sense. You don't tie these rights to the job. You tie them to the individual.'"She has a point. There's no economic or moral reason why Americans get health insurance and pensions from their jobs. It's an accident of history. During World War II President Franklin Roosevelt imposed a wage freeze throughout the economy. Companies faced a labor shortage, and since they were prohibited from raising wages, they enticed workers with fringe benefits. They offered health insurance, and the custom stuck. In the United States most people who have health insurance receive it from an employer. Horowitz is willing to upset the status quo with what amounts to a moral argument: we should get health insurance not because we have some artificial Industrial Age construct called a job, but because of our dignity as individuals. She cites Alexis de Tocqueville, who believed that what made the young American republic strong was its citizens' penchant for forming associations. Unions are declining, Horowitz says, but free agents "have been forming associations like crazy. This is going to be a new kind of democracy," she says. "But Working Today isn't building a big, gargantuan bureaucracy," she says. Instead, she's drawing lessons on building her organization from Dee Hock, who used complexity theory and the principle of distributed power to create Visa International. Yet Horowitz remains animated by the union ideals that seem imprinted on her genes: "If we're going to say that people are going to work on their own, then we have to put mechanisms in place so that more people can do that — and not just the well-to-do, the extraordinarily talented, or the extremely lucky." There's no way to know at first, no way even to suspect. The building is stylish — two sleek stories and lots of wood — but not much different from many here in downtown Los Altos, California. The office I enter is pleasant but hardly on the cutting edge. But the instant I meet him, the moment he begins talking, I know I've met Jerry Maguire — the pop culture icon of the free-agent economy. Actually, he's what you'd get if you genetically combined Jerry Maguire with Frank Zappa. His name is Bo Rinaldi. As executive vice president of the Trattner Network, which dubs itself the "Digital Talent Source," Rinaldi, 49, is the agent for some 1,000 software developers. In this land where lords and ladies of the digital renaissance construct their kingdoms, Rinaldi represents the traveling minstrels of software, the developers whose code can make or break a company. He finds them work, negotiates their contracts, and soothes their easily inflamed egos. Forget all the talk about Siliconwood — the convergence of Silicon Valley and Hollywood. Rinaldi is Siliconwood. He's brought the techniques of the Hollywood agent to the closed culture of Silicon Valley. And he's become a powerful force. But visiting Bo is not like visiting a power broker. It's more like having an audience with a Zen master. "We're in the center of the hourglass," Rinaldi explains in a voice that reveals his Southern California origins. "The sands are right in the center of the hourglass, speeding through it." Corporations have founded her, he says, because they have neglected individuals and their psychic needs. "But it's an error to think that you can be a different person depending on where you are," Rinaldi says from behind the red-tinted sunglasses that he's wearing indoors. "I'm going to go to sleep Bo, and I'm going to wake up Bo. And that is the ghost in the machine." This afternoon, the ghost is garbed in Silicon chic — a white guayabera shirt, a pair of jeans, and funky gray sandals pulled over rag-wool socks. "We are at our very best — whether we're spiritual beings or mechanized beings — when we are purely on our path. Work is part of our path just as home is part of our path. "Who you are and what you do should be in sync," I offer. "Amen," Rinaldi says. "I'm in church." Rinaldi saw the free-agent light about 10 years ago — after a stint as an executive at ComputerLand, an early PC retailer, and while working as a headhunter at the Trattner Network. His revelation was at once economic and emotional. He discovered that companies needed top-notch coders more than the coders needed them. And he knew that for these workers, the emotional value of work came from creating a product and making a difference — rather than from affiliating with a particular company. So he started exploring. He talked to sports agents and Hollywood types, and he figured out the rules — and then changed them. His first rewrite: software writers weren't geeks; they were artists. The software developers whom he represents work for companies like Sun Microsystems and Netscape Communications; they've designed products like Adobe Acrobat. To Rinaldi, they are "product architects" and "applied visionaries." "I believe in a talent-driven model," he says. He has in mind something like the film industry. "In a temp agency, you test 'em and roll 'em out. In my model, everyone is a star." The new realities of computers and networking make several of the old structures obsolete. "In the new metaphor of work, the loyalty factor is still very high. In the new metaphor of work, you have a smaller-team model and a greater sense of loyalty to the team than to this artifact known as a company. Companies do not exist. Countries do not exist. Boundaries are an illusion. But the team exists," Rinaldi says. "The loyalty is also to you. This is the summer of love revisited, man!" Our conversation is almost over, but Rinaldi is still grasping for a way to describe what he does. Then he almost bounces out of the seat he's been swiveling in for the last two hours. "I create code rooms — places where people can sow the seeds of great code, work with these great geniuses, and grow these tremendous products." I consider the implications: "If you bring enough talent onto this farm, you'll be able to build any piece of software that anybody needs." Rinaldi flashes an inscrutable grin. "That's the idea." The office is really an attic — an upside-down flower box of a room with wood floors and a sloping ceiling. Out one window is a neighbor's green roof; out the other is another neighbor's green tree. There's a nifty laptop on a desk and a fax-copier-printer combo on a crate, but not much else of economic value. The only things saving the walls from complete bareness are a Roy Lichtenstein poster and three snapshots of a stunningly cute little girl with her very attractive mom. This is where I work. This is where I work. I'm a free agent. A few months ago I was working in the White House. Now I tell people I'm working in the Pink House, since my office is on the third floor of our compact home in Washington, DC. For many years, I'd held down a job — often one that people considered a "good job." But I'd grown tired — tired of politics in general and of office politics in particular, tired of doing assignments I didn't enjoy on a schedule I couldn't control, tired of wingtips that felt like vises and neckties that seemed like nooses, and most of all, tired of seeing my stunningly cute daughter only when I was asleep and her very attractive mom only when I was complaining. So I left. On Independence Day I became a free agent. That makes me a bit like the guy in those commercials who boasts that he's not simply president of Hair Club for Men: he's also a client. I'm not just a chronicler of Free Agent Nation: I'm also a citizen. And what has surprised me most — both during my rookie season of free agency and throughout my dozen-city, 7,000-mile jaunt through Free Agent, USA — is the extraordinary distance between this new world and the one I left behind. For example, a new economic infrastructure is being built, and few people seem to notice. Since there's no well-stocked supply room here in the Pink House, I buy my wipeboards and Sharpies at Staples. If I've got major copies to crank out or a big presentation to prepare, I head for one of the three Kinko's within a four-mile radius of our house. Add email and the Web — plus a nearby Mail Boxes Etc. — and I've got as good a foundation to do my work as I'd have in a regular office. But still, people seem surprised that I'm able to function at all. Or take public policy. While the private sector eagerly fashions this new free-agent infrastructure (in 1996, for example, Staples opened two new superstores every week), the public sector barely recognizes the forces driving all this construction. In conventional political dialogue, most of the talk continues to be about saving "jobs" or rewarding "entrepreneurs," with little understanding that lots of us — and pretty soon, most of us — live somewhere between those poles. The tax code is still geared to employees, and it imposes extra costs and annoying accounting demands on free agents. For free agents, keeping health insurance is a pain; getting it is even worse. Labor laws don't apply to us — even though we make up more than one-sixth of the labor force. But majority public attitudes still can't see it. For example, during my first month as a free agent, I described my switch to a friend, and he responded, "I really admire you for doing that. Most people wouldn't be able to handle the change in status." On his map, the direction from the White House to the Pink House is straight down. Free Agent Nation is a land of exiles, an economic Elba. Many people like him ask me whether — sometimes when — I'll return to the other, more traditional world. It's a question that I posed to the 100 or so free agents whom I've spoken to in recent months. As it turns out, Deb Risi's answer is also mine — and soon, I think, it will be the answer of millions more. Would you go back? I can't imagine why. "Daniel H. Pink dhpink@gix.netcom.com, until recently chief speechwriter to Vice President Al Gore, is a Fast Company contributing editor.

a reducing agent is a substance that adds, a reducing agent gets oxidized as it reacts, a reducing agent gains electrons, a reducing agent quizlet, a reducing agent is a substance which can. a reducing agent is a substance, a reducing agent is expected to, a reducing agent is a substance which can accept electrons







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