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Kelly Services Study Finds “Free Agent” Workers More Satisfied, Less Stressed Than Traditionally Employed Counterparts

- *Cite “choose to” rather than “have to” philosophy about employment*
- *Group now comprises 22 percent of total U.S. work force*

TROY, MI – June 22, 2005 – A recent study of American workers points to a developing trend in which traditional employment – defined as being directly employed by a company or firm – appears to be increasingly sharing the workplace spotlight with the flexibility, personal convenience and personal satisfaction offered by “free agent” and entrepreneurial lifestyles.

Free agents – individuals who freelance, work on a contract or temporary basis, act as independent consultants, or business-owning entrepreneurs – now make up about 22 percent of the total U.S. work force, estimated currently at about 148 million civilian workers. According to the research by Kelly Services, more than 87 percent of surveyed workers defined as free agents are “extremely or somewhat satisfied” with their current overall employment situation.

“The combination of several workplace trends – including shortened job cycles, the increase of project work, the acceptance of a new lifestyle and the emergence of the Internet and other technology – points to this trend of free agent workers becoming much more prevalent and more of an employment norm in the coming years,” said Carl Camden, chief operating officer of Kelly Services, Inc. “The ‘myth’ of lifetime employment has touched all segments of the work force, and while this study points to several conclusions, it most notably tracks that satisfaction, compensation and a life-work balance can actually be higher for those who choose a free agent path.”

According to the data, traditional employees are generally less positive than free agents about their employment situation with respect to the following variables:

- Opportunities to expand their skill sets
- Annual earnings
- Formal training provided
- Work-life balance
- Stress
- Opportunities to grow and learn in the past year

In turn, and perhaps as a result, traditional employees are significantly less committed and loyal to their respective employers.

“Traditional employees are generally carrying a heavier workload than they would prefer, and many report job strain and stress as an area of considerable discontent,” Camden added. “Likewise, traditional employees fare less well than free agents when it comes to receiving personal gratification and recognition in their jobs, as well as growth opportunities.”

Among the broad cross-section of all groups that Kelly Services studied – which included currently employed workers, retiring workers, those recently retired, workers re-entering the work force after retirement, as well as the unemployed or those seeking employment – the top three factors that workers would change if they could are:

- Less stress, better work-life balance
- Improved relationship with company management
- Job security and assurance of continued work

“A dramatic shift has taken place in the last five to 10 years with regard to more individuals seeking and sustaining independent work lifestyles,” said Camden. “Reduced full-time employee work forces, a move toward outsourcing and an overall emphasis on reducing fixed personnel costs have created a new niche in the workplace. Free agents make up the fastest-growing segment of workers in America, with rapid international growth as well. These individuals are generally very satisfied in their jobs, satisfied with their compensation – often finding they can make more working on a contract or temporary basis – and seem to want to fit their work into their lifestyle rather than fitting their lifestyle into their work.”

Other key findings of the Kelly Services study:

- Demonstrating how encouraging feedback can positively impact job perspective and employees’ stated loyalty, significantly more free agents and entrepreneurs (58 percent) recall receiving “recognition for good work” within the past seven days, compared with just 38 percent of traditional employees.
- Although most employees (75 percent) consider themselves “committed and loyal to their employer,” more than four in 10 (43 to 47 percent) indicate some likelihood to switch companies in order to advance their careers, expand their skills and/or improve their compensation package.
- Illustrating the importance of distance and commute, most people (77 percent) work within 30 minutes’ driving distance from their home. More than 40 percent of all free agent workers actually work out of their homes, compared to just two percent of traditional workers.

- U.S. workers identify many aspects of their job as important to them. However, the top three items workers consider to be “crucial to impacting their decision to stay or consider another job” are “more challenging, rewarding work and advancement opportunities” (21 percent); “healthcare benefits” (14 percent); and “job security, assurance of continued work” (13 percent).
- The Midwest and Northeast count a significantly higher percentage of workers in the traditional employee category, while the West yields a significantly higher proportion of independently employed workers (free agents and entrepreneurs).
- Reflecting positively on the integrity and value system of the general public (and perhaps a remnant of recent corporate scandals), a company’s ethical standards and practices are the most important determinant of satisfaction with one’s current overall employment situation.

About Kelly Services, Inc.

Kelly Services, Inc. (Nasdaq: KELYA, KELYB) is a *Fortune* 500 company headquartered in Troy, Mich., offering staffing solutions that include temporary staffing services, staff leasing, outsourcing, vendor on-site and full-time placement. Kelly owns and operates nearly 2,600 offices in 27 countries. Kelly provides employment to more than 700,000 employees annually, with skills including office services, accounting, engineering, information technology, law, science, marketing, light industrial, education, health care and home care. Revenue in 2004 was \$4.98 billion. Visit <http://www.kellyservices.com>.

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