

Gaining Momentum

With twins at home and a husband also working full time, Jennifer Folsom (MBA '02) had a hard time juggling the often 60-hour workweek required of her at consulting powerhouse BearingPoint.

“Our twins were both 4 at the time, and we realized that they needed a lot more of us than we were giving them, especially in that time of their development,” says Folsom, 34, of that chapter in her life, about three years ago.

Folsom was unable to negotiate a part-time arrangement with the company and realized she needed to make a switch. Otherwise, she would end up missing out on key moments in her children’s lives, from sports to volunteering in the classroom.

Folsom worked freelance positions for a while until she reconnected with a former college classmate from Randolph-Macon College, Whitney Forstner, and Forstner’s business partner, Tanya Cummings. Folsom helped the two develop and launch Momentum Resources, a boutique staffing firm that helps women find part-time and flexible professional work.

Forstner and Cummings had the original idea, but Folsom wrote and implemented a business plan and strategy for succeeding in the Washington, D.C., market. She also evaluated a plan for partnerships with prospective clients and candidates, as well as created a corporate blog and social media strategy.

As director for Momentum, Folsom now interviews clients and candidates for positions daily, ensuring that it places women in jobs that are the “right fit, not the next fit,” she says. She fills positions with nonprofit and for-profit organizations across varied industries. Candidates range from moms to retired women who seek to return to work part-time.

“We’ve gotten a lot of résumés recently from people whose 401(k)s have crashed while other costs of living are rising,” Folsom says. “That’s not a niche we saw coming, but we’re able to fill it.”

Employers willing to offer flexible and part-time jobs also see the benefit, Folsom says. They can hire experienced professionals to take on tasks as needed without committing to a full-time salary. Still, not every employer is willing to consider part-time or flexible work for its employees.

“A lot of times, HR professionals would just say, ‘I think it’s great, and I’m a mom, but we don’t do part time,’ and that was it,” Folsom says.

“The door was shut. So I had to learn the hard way that if they aren’t biting, we’re moving on.”

Momentum also educates and trains women wishing to re-enter the professional market who have taken a break from the working world for a few years. The firm connects them with career coaches and stylists.

Today, Folsom is trying to live Momentum’s own business model and working a “flexible full-time” schedule. Five days a week, Folsom pitches new clients about the Momentum concept. She also follows up with candidates and leads. But most important, she’s there to see her twins off the bus from school and spend time with her 1-year-old. She’s also able to help with homework, fix dinner, and put the children to bed — simple but essential activities she otherwise would not be able to do.

“My hope is that we’ll prove once and for all that part-time and flexible work arrangements are a really smart way for employers to retain top talent,” Folsom says. “These women, and some dads, are proving that it works, and that will revolutionize the work force in five to 10 years.”

— Meredith Stanton



LAURA SIKES



Working mother Jennifer Folsom knows the importance of flexible full-time work.