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CONSULTING

M A G A Z I N E

**HOW SEVEN SMALL FIRMS
ARE ENERGIZING THE
PROFESSION'S
WORKFORCE**



POINT B

Billable Consultants: 200+

Headquarters: Seattle

Where Experience Leads Projects

Any important, cross-functional project begins at Point A and then collides with obstacles that impede its progress. That's when — and why — Point B enters the picture.

The Seattle-based consulting firm makes good on its name by guiding client teams around the pitfalls that routinely stymie internal project leaders. "We are a firm that specializes in one professional service, and that's project leadership," notes Point B partner Tim Jenkins, who founded the firm in 1995 with fellow partners Jim Hodge and Darran Littlefield. "We believe that this is as much of a profession as accounting, law, advertising, or engineering."

The firm has grown steadily since its inception. Between 2000 and 2004, Point B posted 25 percent annual revenue growth. In 2005, Jenkins reports, revenue increased by 50 percent, a level the firm expects to maintain this year. A San Francisco "practice" — the firm avoids the phrase "office" to emphasize its low-overhead approach to service — led by Point B's Keola Caindec, opened last year.

Point B's project work covers a wide range of post-acquisition integration, IT-related, and business projects of all sorts. The firm's success reflects the fact that project leadership remains an unstable quality in most companies, even within large organizations that contain a project management office. Many companies lack dedicated project management functions or experts, in which case important projects are awarded to executive leaders or line management — but

occupants of each level are often too busy with other responsibilities to provide sufficient project guidance.

Point B operates on the belief that seasoned third-party project leaders can maneuver through day-to-day organizational barriers that slow projects headed by insiders. Experts who reside within corporate project management offices report up to a vice president and, there-

"That didn't really make sense, because they knew more about their businesses than we did. However, we did see that we were adding value as outsiders because we really moved their projects along."

Launching Point B was "was our attempt to have our cake and eat it too," says Jenkins. He and his co-founders liked the project leadership profession,

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— Point B's Tim Jenkins

fore, have a real or perceived political affiliation within the company, says Jenkins.

"And I guarantee you that somebody else in the organization sees them as not particularly objective or aligned with their interest," he explains. "We can serve as a mediator. If we see a crucial issue that's being buried, we can bring it up to the C-level very quickly."

Point B's co-founders previously worked together at Andersen Consulting. The notion that they were expected to position themselves as experts, at that stage in their careers, bothered them. "We were in our 20s, yet we were supposed to be telling them how to run their business," says Jenkins.

but not the lifestyle. So they developed a franchise model whereby consultants live in the cities in which they work. "The three of us wanted to build a consulting firm that supported the life we wanted to live," Jenkins notes, "rather than have the firm dictate the life that we could live."

Caindec, another former Accenture consultant and longtime Point B-er, returned to San Francisco to launch the practice, and to return to his home where his extended family still lives. Assessing a candidate's cultural fit with Point B — and the Bay Area business community in which they live and work — reflects a top priority as he builds the new practice.