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FORTUNE SMALL BUSINESS

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EMPLOYEES?** >>PAGE 92

WORK SMART PLAY HARD

How 14 entrepreneurs
find time to climb hills,
race cars, and pursue
their other passions

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AMY SALZHAUER,
founder of Ignition
Ventures, uses inde-
pendent contractors
to free her up for
hikes, including this
one in Maine.

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■ Martial Artist **Bruce Fenton**

WHEN BRUCE FENTON WANTS A WORKOUT, HE HEADS for the gym, but not the kind with treadmills and weight machines. Instead Fenton, 33, opts for something more intense, something that involves, say, being kicked in the head. Twice a week the founder and president of investment firm Atlantic Financial drives 45 minutes from his Norwell, Mass., office to a Thai boxing gym, ditches the suit for boxing shorts, hand wraps, and gloves, and climbs into the ring.

Thai boxing appeals to Fenton, he says, because of its arduous workouts and coaches who “push you to your absolute human limit.” At the end of his two-hour training sessions he can barely move. “It’s punishing,” he says. “It’s the most strenuous workout I’ve ever experienced. I’ve trained for marathons, and that’s nothing like this.”

Fenton has always pushed himself hard. He was hired at Morgan Stanley right out of high school, and by age 22 he had founded Atlantic Financial, which became one of the first full-service investment firms on the Internet. His company now has 12 advisors on staff, and his average client balance is \$350,000. While building the firm, Fenton had little time for exercise, but he took some karate and kung fu lessons intermittently. Last year, soft and out of shape from sitting behind a desk all day, he decided to dedicate himself to improving his martial arts skills. Fenton converted the basement of his new house into a Japanese-style dojo, complete with wooden floors, screens, punching bags, kick bags, weights, and cardio equipment. Now he spends more than seven hours a week practicing karate, kung fu, and his current passion, Thai boxing. Four nights a week he takes sparring classes, and most mornings he does cardio workouts in his gym at home. In September, Fenton spent two weeks at a boxing school in Bangleepee, Thailand, where, for six hours a day, he did nothing but box.

It’s a big time commitment, but Fenton has strategies he uses to fit everything in around his company responsibilities. For example, he watches financial news shows during his morning cardio sessions, using a hard drive to skip the commercials. And he recently hired a tenth-degree black belt grand master—the highest level of martial arts instructor—to teach him during his lunch hour on Thursdays. “It helps me save time,” Fenton says. “A one-hour private lesson with him might be equivalent to six hours of normal instruction.”

On top of the physical intensity of the workout, Fenton feels martial arts give him a significant mental boost. “I find a kind of balance during really hard training,” he says. “Suddenly I am focused only on the boxing, not the employee agreement or the revenue projections. My survival instinct kicks in, and it’s a lot like meditation. I achieve clarity of mind.” —EILENE ZIMMERMAN

Photograph by Nathaniel Welch

■ Hiker **Amy Salzhauer**

ON A FRIDAY AFTERNOON THE PHONE RINGS AT IGNITION Ventures. Amy Salzhauer, founder and CEO, is calling from a mountaintop in Maine. “It’s a beautiful day,” she says. “Get out of the office! Go home!” Not many employees hear that from their boss on a regular basis, if at all. But it’s a frequent occurrence at Ignition, where Salzhauer, 36, doesn’t just believe in a work-life balance—she built her company around it.

Ignition Ventures is an incubator that helps turn scientific advances into startups. Salzhauer founded it in 1999 with a partner, Maureen Stancik Boyce, 41, whom she met while working at Bain & Co. The two had similar backgrounds—advanced degrees in both business and science—and wanted to create a business model that would enable them to have lives outside the office. To that end, Ignition has just five employees but works with a stable of several hundred independent contractors, mostly business consultants, professors, and scientists—all with either an MBA or a Ph.D. The contractors have different areas of expertise; Salzhauer and Boyce match them with clients and often temporarily run the companies themselves. Salzhauer has served as CEO of seven client companies.

The service that Ignition provides to its clients can vary widely. Ember, a Boston company that makes wireless-networking computer chips, needed help with financing. “I knew nothing about banks,” says Robert Pool, who founded the company in 2001. Ignition

My Favorite ...



Wood Plane

■ RICK KELLOGG, chairman of the LandWell Co., a Henderson, Nev., real estate holding firm that generates about \$50 million in annual revenue, savors the Saturdays that he can spend woodworking. His favorite bench products come from **Lie-Nielsen Toolworks**, which makes some of the finest hand tools in the world. Founder Tom Lie-Nielsen launched the company 24 years ago in rural Maine and now sells about \$5 million worth of planes, chisels, and saws each year. The most popular are modeled on tools once made by American icon Stanley. (Antique Stanley planes still sell on eBay.) But Lie-Nielsen casts them in modern alloys such as manganese bronze, which is harder than iron—and heavier—and can withstand a lifetime of drops. The price: five or six times that of tools at Home Depot. Kellogg says they’re worth every cent. “It’s the difference between trying to cut butter with a knife and trying to cut it with a spoon,” he says. —ANDREW PARK

wrote a market analysis and helped line up investors. Salzhauer also wrote Ember's business plan and ran the company until it could find a CEO. Today Ember has received \$53 million, mostly from venture firms, and has revenues of less than \$10 million.

The Ignition model offers a lot of flexibility for both employees and contractors. Workers on Ignition's staff are finishing graduate degrees or helping raise children. Several contractors (most of whom are sole proprietors) write novels or study Zen Buddhism. They commit to working at least ten hours a week with Ignition's clients. "Our clients know up front that if they call at five on a Friday, the consultant might not be available," Salzhauer says. "But our people are good enough that the clients are okay with it." She keeps her company's workload manageable by being selective, accepting just 2% of the companies looking to work with Ignition. "It's a very sophisticated model," she says. "It involves a lot of organizational strategies and management up front."

Outside the office, Salzhauer hikes frequently, especially in the Northeast (though she has also explored ranges in the Swiss Alps, China, the Pyrenees, and Scotland). Her greatest athletic achievement lies in the esoteric field of dragon-boat racing. Dragon boats are large vessels that can accommodate

During the treacherous Dakar Rally, Bailey carried a laptop to check his e-mail.

ten to 50 paddlers, with ornamental figures on bow and stern. The races are popular in China, and the sport is spreading throughout Europe. In 2003, Salzhauer's boat took silver at the world championships in Pozan, Poland.

—EMILY MALTBY



NATHANIEL WEICH

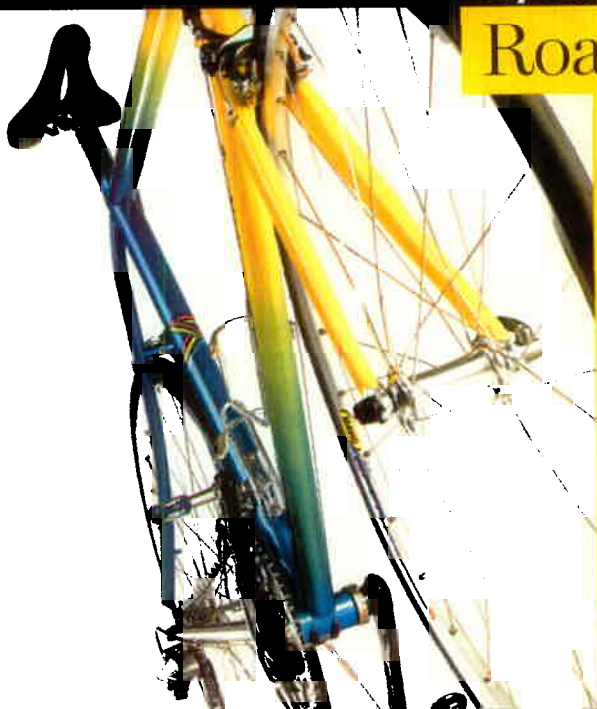
Salzhauer, co-founder of Ignition Ventures, at a state park in Camden, Maine

Off-Road Racer Ronn Bailey

BAILEY WAS 54, A MULTIMILLIONAIRE AND CEO OF A highly successful information-security company, when he drew up a corporate succession plan, updated his will, and started training for the Dakar Rally, the longest, most dangerous, off-road race in the world. He describes himself as an adventurer, and he likes his adventures on wheels. One of Bailey's goals is to ride his motorcycle on every continent in the world—he has ridden in the Mayan jungle and north of the Arctic Circle. The Dakar Rally seemed a good way to take on Africa, but after doing some research he decided it was too grueling for a motorcycle. "I thought, I'm 54. There's no way in hell I can drive a bike across the desert," he says.

My Favorite ...

Road Bike



BRADLEY GAST, CO-OWNER of Mangos, an ad agency in Malvern, Pa., bought his first bike from **Spectrum Cycles** 20 years ago, and he now owns three. Made by hand and costing \$4,000 to \$7,000, Spectrum bikes are a giant step up from your average Schwinn. "At first I thought it was indulgent," says Gast, 54, who puts in more than 100 miles a week and installed a shower in an office bathroom so that he could ride at lunch. "Then I couldn't believe how I lived without one."

While the bike industry has largely moved its production to Asia, Spectrum, founded by Tom Kellogg in 1982, crafts its products in a 170-year-old stone barn in Breinigsville, Pa. Some custom shops build 1,000 bikes a year, but Spectrum painstakingly produces just 85. From the start, Kellogg has consulted with pro cyclists at the nearby Lehigh Valley Velodrome, the top U.S. outdoor track. "Their feedback was incredible," he says. "They can't design a bike, but they know what they like." Kellogg's cycles have competed in the Olympics and won two pro World Championships, plus more than 35 medals in the U.S. Nationals. Their longevity—they're built to last 150,000 miles over 25 years—is perhaps Kellogg's greatest challenge. "It would be better for business if we didn't make them as well," he says. "But we can't do that."

—CARLYE ADLER