[Review of the Book Gurus, Hired Guns, and Warm Bodies: Itinerant Experts in a Knowledge Economy]

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Abstract

[Excerpt] Over the past three decades the nature of work in many American organizations has drastically changed. Alongside a general organizational restructuring, the traditional employment relationship is being redefined and is taking on a variety of new shapes and forms. In this masterful and insightful book, Stephen Barley and Gideon Kunda study the intricate and often counter-intuitive consequences associated with the changing nature of work. Specifically, they examine one of the clear manifestations of organizational restructuring—the shift to contracted work in the high-tech sector. Employing their ethnographic expertise, Barley and Kunda successfully reclaim the mandate of organizational studies to explore the complex and multidimensional effects of organizational transformation on the way individuals (in this case, technical contractors) work. By focusing in particular on the meaning contractors give to their emerging work arrangements, they illuminate why technical contractors choose a contractual relationship rather than permanent employment, the ways they cope with employment uncertainty, and their strategies for human and social capital formation.

Comments

Suggested Citation

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For example, in a review of studies on precarious employment conducted between 1984 and 2001, Quinlan, Mayhew, and Bohle found a negative relationship between precarious employment and occupational health and safety, concluding that it leads to a stressful and disorganized work environment. Contingent work relationships come in a variety of forms, involving various types of employment relationships and various types of worker benefits. 27 S.R. Barley and G. Kunda, 2004, Gurus, Hired Guns and Warm Bodies: Itinerant Experts in a Knowledge Economy, Princeton University Press, Princeton, N.J. Views: 7. Permission to reprint a book review printed in this section may be obtained only from the author. Crossref reports no articles citing this article. Close Figure Viewer. Browse All Figures Return to Figure. Previous Figure Next Figure. Caption. The University of Chicago Press Books. Note: Always review your references and make any necessary corrections before using. Pay attention to names, capitalization, and dates. Book Description: Over the last several decades, employers have increasingly replaced permanent employees with temporary workers and independent contractors to cut labor costs and enhance flexibility. Although commentators have focused largely on low-wage temporary work, the use of skilled contractors has also grown exponentially, especially in high-technology areas. Rather, occupational communities and networks of skilled experts are what grease the skids of the high-tech, "matrix economy" where firms become way stations in the flow of expertise. Chapter 13 ITINERANT PROFESSIONALS IN A KNOWLEDGE ECONOMY. Start your review of Gurus, Hired Guns, and Warm Bodies: Itinerant Experts in a Knowledge Economy. Write a review. Apr 29, 2012 Angela rated it liked it. Shelves: non-fiction, business. This book examines the world of skilled temporary professionals: how and why people become contractors, why companies choose to hire them, how the permanent employees they work beside view and interact with them, the role staffing agencies play, and what life as a contractor is like. It concludes with a suggestion of a new way to view the changing economy, outside of the traditional approach of organizations an... It concludes with a suggestion of a new way to view the changing economy, outside of the traditional approach of organizations and markets.