

Dallas Business Journal - July 6, 2009  
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# Dallas Business Journal

Friday, July 3, 2009 | Modified: Thursday, July 9, 2009, 4:39pm CDT

## Give and take

Career management and placement firm The Innis Company works with businesses to handle both job losses and advancement

Dallas Business Journal - by [Casey Smith](#) Staff Writer



Photo by: JAKE DEAN

**AFTER THE JOB LOSS:** Karyl Innis often finds herself sitting knee to knee with an executive just after he or she has been fired. This keeps The Innis Company. “very close to the emotional level of job loss,” Innis says.

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### Biggest Problem

When Karyl Innis disagreed with the direction the parent company, formerly BEI Holdings was taking, she decided to purchase the company herself. She says the trickiest and most difficult part of the negotiation was structuring the deal “so that I could buy my right to compete and move forward with the business I was starting.”

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**Karyl Innis** says most people go to work each day thinking they are taking steps toward their career goals. But in her more than 30 years of career consulting, the president of The Innis Company has often found discrepancy between clients’ perceptions and reality.

“It’s the mismatch that causes some of these separations,” Innis says.

Getting fired is not the only career bump businesspeople may encounter when they are unaware of the way bosses and coworkers see them. The disconnect could also

cause professionals to spend their energy emphasizing one trait they hope will lead them to job security or a promotion, when something else entirely is what gets them noticed.

“I call that my X, Y theory: working hard at X while being known for Y,” Innis says. “It doesn’t just happen once in a blue moon; it happens a lot.”

When a company lays off employees, it may hire Innis to work with those displaced workers. Innis contracts directly with companies, not individuals, to provide job placement and related career management services.

With its Dallas, Houston and Santa Fe, N.M., offices; 27 international locations through membership in **OI Partners Inc.**, a group of career transition firms; and licensed partners in Mexico and Germany, The Innis Company provides comprehensive career management to companies worldwide. Fees vary on the length and type of service, but range from \$2,500 for a one-day workshop for a small group to \$65,000 for several months of one-on-one guidance helping terminated executives find new jobs.

BEI Holdings hired Innis in 1988 as managing partner.

At first, companies only hired Innis and her staff to help laid-off C-level executives find new positions, but companies began buying the service for mid-level executives as well after crises in the oil, real estate and banking industries ended the stigma surrounding the emerging outplacement field.

When BEI, a publicly traded company, decided to sell the company in a transaction Innis disliked, she used her equity and bought the company herself. In 1994, The Innis Company, a certified woman-owned business of which Innis owns 100% of the stock, became private.

In the late 1990s, Innis grew the company by expanding services to include career advancement on a global basis. Because many clients, such as Royal Dutch/Shell Group, were international, Innis decided the company would be, too.

Diversification made Innis less susceptible to business cycles, its revenue no longer driven totally by corporate customers’ hiring and firing.

The career transition segment makes up 60% of its revenue, and the career advancement segment accounts for the remaining 40%. Innis says the company is on track to exceed 2008 revenues by better than 15%, and there is the potential to reach the \$5 million mark.

The economic downturn is not deterring companies from hiring The Innis Company, but some are scaling back on the services they buy. This may include terminated executives getting a less “robust” package over a shorter time period.

Innis says offering comprehensive services is part of what makes her company unique.

“There are people who compete in our different product offerings, but we don’t see anybody who’s made themselves the company we have,” Innis says. Some competitors in the area of outplacement are the publicly owned Right Management and Drake Beam Morin.

The Innis Company’s intellectual property also sets it apart. Innis applies strategy planning and marketing business principles to job success. Part of the approach consists of employees creating personal brands based on what will set them apart professionally.

Ellen Feeney, vice president of sustainability at **WhiteWave Foods Inc.**, has known Innis since she began leading employee development workshops more than three years ago at the Denver-based wholly owned subsidiary of Dallas-based **Dean Foods**.

Feeney first heard Innis speak at a workshop about helping professional women distinguish themselves in business. Innis’ advised enhancing rather than burying natural strengths, such as intuition.

“It’s so empowering because I think her perspective, her wisdom of 30 years in the business world really encourages and inspires people to look at what they have to contribute instead of how they’re different,” Feeney says.

Applying Innis’ counsel, Feeney altered her business conduct to “be really targeted in communication.”

Feeney said what she learned at the workshop contributed to her promotion.

“I think it had a lot to do with me being willing to see myself in that role and being clear about what I could contribute to that organization,” Feeney says.

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