

WE WOMEN'S ENTERPRISE™

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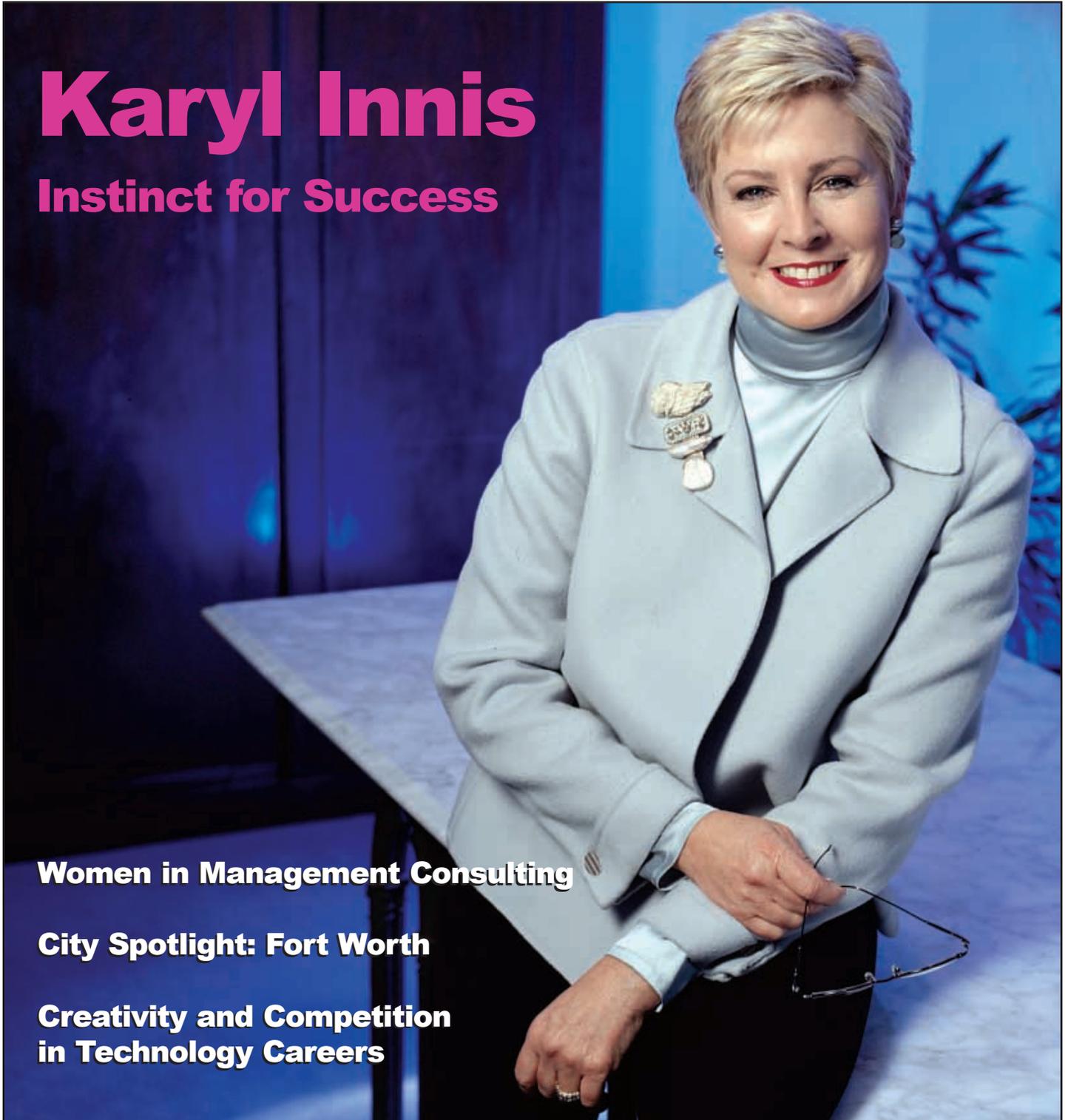
THE NEWS MAGAZINE FOR BUSINESSWOMEN

Karyl Innis **Instinct for Success**

Women in Management Consulting

City Spotlight: Fort Worth

**Creativity and Competition
in Technology Careers**



The Innis Instinct

Consultant Karyl Innis is literally rewriting the rules on how to succeed in corporate America.

By Shanna Boals

The old rules don't necessarily apply anymore, declares Karyl Innis, chair and CEO of The Innis Company, the largest woman-owned human-resources consulting firm in the United States (as rated by Kennedy Information). "The old rule was that if you work hard, you'll be a success. So people continue to go to work at 7 a.m., work until 8 p.m. with their heads down and pencil up, and then turn around and say, 'But I work harder, why didn't I get that promotion?'"

"We all know that today, hard work is not all it takes," Innis points out. "People who still believe that often get hurt by their profession. They become disillusioned and angry."

Innis grew up in Wichita, Kan., and as a student at Kansas State University was interested in the reasons some people perform one way and some another. She obtained a research grant from The National Science Foundation to pursue the idea while earning her bachelor's degree in sociology and psychology and a master's degree in business with a focus on human development — "a hybrid; it was very 1970s," she says.

The gift

"My personal gift is that I can literally see and know why one person has succeeded and another not," Innis says. "I can see it in what they say, how they stand and what they do. At first it was intuitive, then I studied and practiced."

At the age of 24, Innis found herself working as a manager of supervised redevelopment for Motorola in Chicago, where she viewed the company's 40,000 employees as her own personal laboratory. "I had a lot of opportunity to put my ideas into action," she says. "I worked for some wonderful people who gave me wide latitude — supported me in ways that only now I can fully appreciate."

After Motorola's management saw Innis demonstrate her training talents within the firm, she was appointed manager of professional recruiting and staffing. "I had never been a recruiter, a staffing person, never worked in an employment office, didn't know anything about it, except that I had — in the lingo — great potential," she recalls.

That appointment was an unpopular choice among the company's male recruiters, some of whom quit the same day Innis came on board. "This made it upsetting and chaotic," Innis reflects, "but management did not waiver. They let me get on with it and supported me."

"I was happy in corporate America, and found it an honorable, exciting and challenging place to be," she remembers. "Yet I saw so many people who were hurt by the very act of coming to work, because they felt they were underused, misused or in the wrong spot."

New beginnings

Later Motorola promoted her to a position in Fort Worth, and she subsequently founded EnterChange Southwest, an outplacement division of an Atlanta-based company, in 1987.

In 1994 Innis went through the difficult process of buying that division, then renamed it The Innis Company.

Prior to the formation of her company, Innis' future husband, John Alston, was working at a competing firm. When they married, Innis says, "he decided that the equity position was probably better here. We couldn't compete against each other — that wouldn't work." So Alston became president of The Innis Company.

"Since we got married, we are in this business together," Innis adds. "He is very talented, experienced, seasoned in the business of outplacement and career management and business development. Either one of us could run and own this business — but I got



Photography by Lisa Means

Karyl Innis

here first! We love working together. We don't really know any other way."

The vision

In 1998 the company engaged in some serious strategic planning, defined its three business units and became focused on developing products that address the career needs of corporate executives.

Based in Dallas, The Innis Company has offices in Houston and Santa Fe and more than 40 partners worldwide. Corporate clients hire the firm to provide customized programs and expert consultation in managing companywide change as well as transitions involving individuals, executive outplacement and career planning.

The Innis Company's Career Transition unit helps people move from one job to another, or to a new phase of life such as retirement. When employees are being terminated, the corporation can utilize The Innis Company's executive outplacement services to assist those employees in finding new employment.

The Career Management unit holds workshops for employees of corporations going through major changes such as mergers, acquisitions, layoffs or early retirement programs. Career Master helps the employees deal with career confidence and career uncertainty during the change. Career Manager is for the managers who must manage employees affected by the change.

Innis has coined the phrase "Smarts Buts" to describe employees who are smart, bright and creative, but for some reason are not being appreciated, recognized or promoted.

"In corporate America," Innis explains, "it's expected that you're smart, but that's no longer enough. 'Smart Buts' is about people who have everything it takes to succeed, yet haven't found the key to unlock their success." So the third business unit, Career Development, houses a coaching program that facilitates a development growth or change so the individual can realize his or her potential and achieve higher career performance.

Innis refers to CareerMax! as the capstone of everything the firm has learned about why successful people succeed. Although most of the company's work is with executives, this one-day workshop targets people who are much younger in their careers, who want to become executives and have the feeling of success and more control over their careers.

"We can never make them smarter, more handsome, prettier," Innis notes, "but we can make them more impactful, focused and knowledgeable about how executive careers are built."

Expert advice

Innis advises people embarking on a career to know what they want, noting that many people go out into the career marketplace with fuzzy goals.

"Fuzzy goals get fuzzy answers," Innis says, "but if you can be very clear about what you're trying to achieve, opportunities will come to you. There is nothing wrong with having as a goal earning lots of money. But then you have to recognize that the tradeoffs will probably be some other comforts.

"Then know how to ask for what you want," she adds. "If you ask the wrong person at the wrong time, through the wrong words

or the wrong methodology, you may not get it."

Deborah Cannon, president of Bank of America-Houston, met Innis nearly 12 years ago when the bank needed her outplacement services. The two then became friends through community activities, including The Dallas Forum and the National Association of Women Business Owners (NAWBO), which Innis then led as president.

"She is very bright, innovative, thinks outside the box and is able to assess situations separately [to determine] what needs to be done, and implement appropriate strategies and tactics without being locked in on a particular strategy," Cannon says of Innis. "She has been very, very helpful to us as a company."

Extra efforts

Together, Innis and Cannon have worked to promote The Greater Houston Partnership, which combines Houston's Chamber of Commerce, economic development and world trade activities under one organization.

Five years ago the Greater Dallas Chamber of Commerce licensed and instituted The Innis Company's unique and successful peer mentoring program, Of Council, to serve the growing number of woman business executives in the chamber's membership. The program has also been licensed by The Greater Houston Partnership.

"It is very rewarding to see an 'old girl network' in which women are creating opportunities and business for each other," Innis says. "Even women in competing businesses can admire and help each other."

Innis has been a member of the board of directors of the North Texas Commission since 1994. She serves on its executive committee and has chaired its nominating committee for three years.

"When I work with Karyl or watch her work," observes Dan Petty, president of the commission, "I think of five words that partially describe her: She's a *leader*, has an abundance of *energy*, is *decisive*, abundantly *fair* and very *pleasant* to work with. We have been blessed with her participation."

Innis is executive vice president of the International Women's Forum Foundation and will become president in May. The organization is made up of preeminent women around the world, including Texas members Sen. Kay Bailey Hutchison and Dallas attorney Louise Raggio.

Innis also serves on the steering committees of the Executive Women's Roundtable — an activity of the Greater Dallas Chamber of Commerce — and the Executive Women's Partnership in Houston. She is a member of The Dallas Forum, Executive Women of Dallas and many more organizations.

And soon Innis will be able to say she wrote the book on career success. Already the author of two career books — *In Search of a Job, Lessons from 10,000 Executives* and *It Isn't Easy, The Manager's Guide to Employee Separation* — she expects to complete her third, *The New Rules: Rules and Tools for Career Success*, this spring.

Shanna Boals is a Dallas-based freelance writer.



Career doesn't mean what it always has...one long steady climb to the top, one firm...maybe two...over a lifetime. It isn't that way anymore.

Careers are changing because corporations and the people that inhabit them are adapting to new competitive realities; the organization and career strategies that used to work just don't anymore.

We are experts in career trends and issues. For more than 20 years our firm's professionals have worked with thousands of executives and corporate employees to create stronger, more distinguished careers. Years of corporate career research and expertise lay the foundation to The Innis Company's thoughtful, creative solutions to your organization's toughest career challenges.

We specialize in:

- *Executive Coaching*
- *Career Management*
- *Career Transition*