

Career Transition, Training and Workforce Reduction Consultants for Organizations and C-level Individuals



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CEOCFO: *Ms. Riklan, what was the concept when you started Riklan Resources?*

Ms. Riklan: When I started I had actually left corporate. I was in corporate human resources at a Fortune 500 company. I had gone out on maternity leave and while I was on maternity leave, I received calls from colleagues at previous companies. This was when eCommerce was booming and they were in need of people who could come in and create an entire HR infrastructure. Therefore, I started doing some consulting projects while I was on maternity leave and decided not to go back to corporate. I began consulting, mostly HR consulting, helping companies that were starting up; everything from employment, employer relations, policy and development, training, recruiting, putting policies in place and so on.

CEOCFO: *What is the concept today?*

Ms. Riklan: Today, it is actually a result of the changing economy, so the HR consulting firm really had turned into more of a recruiting firm at one point, as eCommerce tanked. Then budgets got lost, there was no money for training, and I reinvented — started doing more on the recruiting end. Then, of course, when employment went south I needed to reinvent again and became an organization that assisted individuals and corporations that were going through transition or reduction in force. Therefore, today my company is broken into three main buckets; one being individual assistance for career transitions or those looking to just be prepared if an opportunity knocks by putting together all marketing materials, and working with corporations in need of outplacement. Therefore, we work with organizations that are going through reductions in force and layoffs. Then we have a training and development arm as well.

CEOCFO: *One of the things that I see on your site is “Layoffs are not personal, we are.” How so?*

Ms. Riklan: When a company puts somebody in the hands of an outplacement service many services can be provided. However, I always question how much really up to date knowledge is being imparted on the individual. Are they getting the education of how to really go about today’s job search; are the materials that are being put together, put together by an individual who really does have a good understanding of what is needed, what the trends are, how resumes need to be constructed, and how a person can actually market themselves. That is because there is a really big difference between someone who can take information and make it look nice versus someone who really comes up with a marketing strategy for the individual who is now in transition. Too often, I am rewriting resumes and LinkedIn profiles for people who just had them done through a large outplacement firm. We understand the need for treating individuals as if they are a product that needs to be branded, marketed and sold. (Without losing the personal touch!) Therefore, we always start out by saying that we really do create compelling marketing tools for the individual to be able to go out and be prepared. Then we do not subscribe to the nonsense that, while it is a difficult job market, it is not an impossible job market. Individuals just really need to be very, very proactive and go about things a little differently than you may have needed too many years ago. We help and guide through that process.

CEOCFO: *What might you suggest to a client that is looking at it from that marketing yourself perspective?*

Ms. Riklan: What I do find often is that when a person is looking to either make a move on their own or they are now in a position where they are forced to, they do need to get into that mind frame of, “I need to show my value and sell myself to a potential employer.” Often, I will be working with individuals that may have been in very stable positions for a very long time or at a very senior level and they immediately go into a defensive mode of, “Well, I have all of this experience, I have reached a certain place in my career and therefore opportunities should be knocking on my door.” Instead of trying to figure out, “Who is my potential audience and how am I going to best appeal to that audience, what am I going to say about me that separates me from, let us say, another fifty potential candidates that seemingly have the same

qualifications? How do I say me, I am the one that you want, because.” Instead of, “I want to work for you.” It is a different mindset. Therefore, instead of going in with, “I am looking for an organization that offers me this,” it is really getting out of that frame of mind and saying, “Here is what I have and here is the value that I offer and here is what I can do for you.” That is really what a potential employer is looking for. They want to know what the value is that an individual brings to the table, what they bring when they walk in the door and how they are going to work within the team and the structure that already exists.

CEOCFO: *Do you see much generational difference in peoples approach?*

Ms. Riklan: There is. I find that there is a definite difference with people that are much more mature. Also, there is a big difference with the people that are just coming into and entering the workforce. There are definitely individuals that are coming out, graduating and starting their careers that are on the ball and they are the kids that are going out and finding really good starting positions. However, there is a very large group that subscribes to the myth that there are not jobs and get very complacent. They are the ones that move home, that do not necessarily have the responsibilities, so therefore they are not necessarily as motivated, because they are not paying their own bills. They will convince themselves and then also convince whoever it is that might be footing those bills for them at that particular point that, “Well, I spend so much time looking for jobs, there just are not any jobs out there.” In reality, what they are doing is spending a few hours a day on the computer surfing through the job boards and then getting distracted of course by whatever else pops up in their email or whatever news comes up on the internet. Therefore, their three or four hours worth of searching is really not quite, when you subtract all of the distractions, but in truth only about fifteen percent of the jobs that are available are on those job boards. Therefore, they are really not hitting the majority of where jobs might be and to get those jobs is a much more proactive approach. It is really tapping into what is called the hidden job market; positions that may have not been advertised as of yet or positions that are only known to internal employees and creating inroads into organizations so that when an opportunity does open that you are top of mind. It is establishing rapport and a lot of networking. What happens with this generation more often is that they just kind of throw their hands up by saying, “I do not see it, so therefore it is not.”

“I am found in many different ways; definitely from Google searches, people that are searching for outplacement services in New Jersey, New York, Connecticut and Pennsylvania. Those would be the main areas where I stay close to home in case an organization needs me to actually come in and be on site and to help with that transition. Although, if I am working with individuals strictly on the marketing or potential coaching that can be done virtually, so I am not really restricted by area.” - Michelle A. Riklan

CEOCFO: *Are most people surprised to hear that only fifteen percent of opportunities are actually on the job boards?*

Ms. Riklan: I think that often people are surprised, but then again where are they learning that it is not that way? As I said, many of the people that are coming out of school or the people that are in the mature population that may not be as computer savvy do not really understand the value of some of the tools that are out there. For example, LinkedIn, which is business social networking, is the number one tool that employers, hiring managers and search firms use in order to both find and then vet their candidates. When you say to, let us say, a more mature worker that you must be on LinkedIn you may get some push back with, “No, I do not like the social media stuff.” They may equate it to Facebook or to something that is not strictly business social media. There is a lot of educating that needs to be had in order to explain the value of that tool. That is because it is not even that you do not have to like it or not like it, but you have to be in it. You have to be there, because if you are not, it is as if you do not exist.

CEOCFO: *Who is turning to you for services, both from the corporate side and from the prospective employee side? Are there common threads?*

Ms. Riklan: It is definitely a mix. I will get anywhere from very senior C-level individuals that will come to me and say, “I am not looking to make a move right now. I have been with my organization for the last ten years and it is pretty stable, but I should be prepared, just in case someone gives me a call and says I heard of something that I think you might be interested in, could you send me your most recent resume.” I get people such as that. I get director level and other senior level executives, who may be in that same boat or they want to start testing the waters, seeing what is out there, or may have heard of upcoming changes to the organization. They do not want to get caught in any kind of a reduction in force, so the want to be prepared. It may be someone that has been let go from an organization and were not offered outplacement services or were not satisfied with the outplacement services that they were offered. That would be my individual client base. Then on the corporate end, it could be anywhere from a small organization to a large organization that is planning a layoff / reduction in force. It could be one individual to one hundred individuals that need transition

assistance. Those services do range from just simply working with the individual to get their marketing tools in order or it may be coming in and doing some workshops to educate employees. It may even be doing some workshops for the affected employees that are actually staying and how the workforce and the work culture have changed.

CEO CFO: *How are you found? If someone were starting with a web search what would they key in to find a more in-depth company like Riklan?*

Ms. Riklan: I am found in many different ways, definitely from Google searches, people that are searching for outplacement services in New Jersey, New York, Connecticut and Pennsylvania. Those would be the main areas where I stay close to home in case an organization needs me to actually come in and be on site and to help with that transition. Although, if I am working with individuals strictly on the marketing or potential coaching that can be done virtually, so I am not really restricted by area. LinkedIn in is definitely another place that they might find someone like me. I would say that most of the people outside of referrals that do find me will find me on LinkedIn or just find me from some of the speaking engagements that I do or other workshops that I do that are out there on the web.

CEO CFO: *You mentioned earlier that you have made several transitions. How do you know when it is time? What do you look at so that you are ahead of the game?*

Ms. Riklan: I do try and keep my ears to the ground. If unemployment was dropping to one percent and that would be wonderful for the economy and wonderful for the workforce, but not wonderful for someone that is working to help people that are stuck. In that case I would be looking towards another revenue stream. Therefore, I do always like to keep several different revenue streams open. I do a lot of training and development in different types of career and soft skills. Then I would probably be concentrating more on that bucket. I think I am at a point where I am not necessarily looking to reinvent again, but I have left a few different areas open to either expand or to focus more on, depending on what is happening out there.

CEO CFO: *Would you tell us about certification from Women's Business Enterprise?*

Ms. Riklan: That is a recent certification. It is a difficult certification to get! It did take approximately a year of applications and paperwork and being vetted. It is a great network, particularly for people such as myself who are just looking for individuals that they can learn from as well as individuals that they can network and give back to.

CEO CFO: *Why choose Riklan Resources?*

Ms. Riklan: Why choose Riklan Resources? We have an excellent reputation. We work one on one. When you are working with Riklan Resources you will always have my personal ear, working through different phases of the project. It is my name on the business; therefore I am accountable for the satisfaction of my clients. I get to know each and every one of my clients personally.

Interview conducted by: Lynn Fosse, Senior Editor, CEO CFO Magazine



Riklan Resources, LLC

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