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A FORMIDABLE ALLY

BY BILL DONAHUE

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When executives and other working Americans face challenging situations in the workplace, **Transition Strategies LLC** founder Robin F. Bond guides them to a position of strength.

Throughout her career as one of the Philadelphia area's premier employment attorneys, Robin F. Bond, Esq., has helped working Americans in every iteration of the economic climate—up, down, and somewhere in between.

Current economic indicators may suggest a time of relative prosperity for workers, but she says serious workplace problems can arise regardless of which way the economic winds blow.

"A lot of people face complex, acrimonious, or otherwise challenging workplace situations that can have dramatic effects on their current employment status and/or future earning potential," says Bond, the founder of the Chesterbrook-based law firm Transition Strategies LLC. "We tend to spend more time with our bosses and co-workers than we do with our own

loved ones, so when something goes wrong in the workplace it can feel very personal.

"Something like getting passed over for a promotion, being treated unfairly, or facing a termination can be mentally defeating, and it can also have lingering effects that can follow you," she continues. "That's why it's important to take the right steps before whatever situation you're facing turns into something more problematic."

In her more than two decades as an employment attorney, Bond has played the role of formidable ally to approximately 5,000 clients who have sought her expertise in solving legal matters specific to the workplace. She specializes in situations tied to executive compensation, discrimination claims, and wrongful termination, as well as performance coaching and the negotiation of job offers and severance agreements.

"I always approach these situations with civility," she says. "I'm not a threatener; I try to explain the situation [to the client's employer] calmly and try to elicit cooperation. In a lot of instances, an employer has tried plenty of 'sticks,' but there also have to be 'carrots.' I think I'm good at being persuasive



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TRANSITION STRATEGIES LLC

and convincing [employers] to do the right thing, and that there's something in the deal that works for them—the 'What's in it for me?' factor.

"The work I do is very nuanced, and it tends to make a big difference," she continues. "My goal is to give people on the other end of the line the opportunity to be the hero. Most of the time they take me up on it. If not, then we can consider other options."

Bond takes particular joy in empowering clients to negotiate for pay, perks, and protections in new job offers and for enhanced severance deals. In fact, she wrote a book about it: *How to Negotiate a Killer Job Offer*, designed to help employees research their worth and demonstrate value to prospective employers when negotiating terms for compensation. Her situation-specific guidance is designed to help executives and other clients make informed decisions from a position of

strength, while avoiding mistakes that could weaken their financial position or even derail their future employment prospects.

A former corporate lawyer and military prosecutor, Bond became drawn to employment law after witnessing the imbalance in representation between two disparate "sides": in one corner, employees fighting for their rights; and in the other, deep-pocketed corporations with seemingly inexhaustible resources. She still loves the work—"part art, part science," in her words—in large part because she has the opportunity to make a measurable impression on each client's life and career.

"I like the fact that everybody who comes to me has a story, and every story is interesting and different," she says. "The work requires me to be a good listener and to have the ability to come up with a creative approach to solving whatever situation they're dealing with. There's no such thing as a boring or

cookie-cutter day. With every person I talk to, I see an opportunity to help."

Bond has represented or advised clients in civil rights discrimination claims, noncompete disputes, breach-of-contract claims, executive-compensation matters, and wage-payment claims, among others. While such scenarios have the potential to affect someone's professional life and earnings potential, Bond bears in mind the fact that employment-specific legal matters also take a heavy emotional toll.

"That's why you need someone like me in your corner, 100 percent—someone who is there for you and will advocate for you, and someone in whom you can confide," she adds. "What I try to do is tell clients, 'Something unfortunate is happening to you, so let me help you shoulder that burden.'"

"I recently had someone send me a note, saying, 'Thank you for being my angel,'" she continues. "Hiring me often helps my clients breathe easier and live a little more happily while they're going through something challenging and unpleasant."

Regardless of the situation, her initial advice to every prospective client is uniform: Rather than discussing the matter with their company's HR representative or sharing frustrations with fellow employees, seek the counsel of an external attorney who has experience in employment matters.

"There are no confidential conversations with HR, which is why it's so important to go to someone who is unaffiliated with the company," she says. "Share your story with someone like me, saying, 'This is what happened to me; what would you advise me to do?' Only then, after you have that external advice, do you then go to HR. Whatever you decide to do, you have to be very strategic about it."

In addition to her work as an attorney in the employment arena, Bond has earned praise for her work as an executive coach and a public speaker. In September, for example, she will be speaking to the Main Line Chamber of Commerce's Society of Professional Women.

While she very much enjoys the opportunity to share her knowledge through in-person speaking engagements, she remains laser-focused on her core mission: "sitting down with people who need help, listening to their stories, and helping them get through whatever brought them to me in the first place so they can move forward productively with their lives." ■



Transition Strategies LLC

88 Militia Hill Drive
Chesterbrook, PA 19087
(610) 640-5373

robin@transition-strategies.com
transition-strategies.com