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FORMER JOBSEEKERS GO TO PLAN B

How One Central Floridian is Making Lemonade out of Lemons

Orlando, FL – January 18, 2010 -- With the unemployment rate at its highest in 26 years and more individuals searching for jobs now than in recent decades, what's left for job seekers to do? Well for Carmen Cardoza it became clear that the time to become independent was now. "I knew that I wanted to eventually become an independent contractor, but I procrastinated because I was hesitant to take that leap with a teetering economy and my personal responsibilities." But one day she got just the push she needed to make that big leap – "I was laid off," she now declares brightly.

In January of 2009 when Carmen found herself in the trenches, the unemployment rate was on an upward trend at 7.6 percent. Nearly a year later, in December of 2009 the unemployment rate was reported at a record 10.0 percent by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. Among the unemployed, the number of long-term unemployed (those jobless for 27 weeks and over) continued to trend up, reaching 6.1 million. In December, 4 in 10 unemployed workers were jobless for 27 weeks or longer.

Moreover, the unemployment rate in Orlando-Kissimmee, Florida was higher than the national rate at 11.8 percent! In August of 2009, "Orlando was ranked 42nd among the nation's 50 largest metropolitan areas for the number of job seekers for each available position, said Indeed.com, a job-listings Web site. It found six would-be workers for every opening."

While there are some jobs out there, one of the biggest problems confronting job seekers is the low demand for senior managers. So professionals like Carmen have taken this challenge as an opportunity to pursue their calling. "My other alternative was to keep interviewing for jobs that I was overqualified for or settle for a job where I could not fully put my philosophy to work." Carmen launched a website, registered with temp agencies and announced her new venture to everyone she knew. Most of her business has been through word-of-mouth and referrals. But her biggest challenge is networking because "when I have a project I have to work and I don't have time to market myself. I'm the owner, the project manager, the business developer, the marketer, the accounts receivable. Thankfully, I'm the only staff member and I have a great boss!"

What about the security of a paycheck or benefits? "I have been more secure in the past year, on my own, than I have felt in the last three years. Whether I'm my own boss or working for someone else – these days – it's a risk." Carmen sees that she has actually been making better money as an independent contractor while at the same time saving employers money that they don't have to shell out on benefits or guaranteeing her 40 hours of pay per week. "If I am working on a project it has a beginning and an end. If I am doing an on-site assignment, we can arrange for me to telecommute, or create a part-time schedule – whatever works for both parties." It allows employers to focus on what needs to get done and for Carmen to give them measurable results. It seems to be a win-win situation.

Carmen believes that she has more leverage as a consultant than as a permanent member of the staff. "As a member of a staff, I'd find myself inundated with day-to-day tasks, pushback, too many chefs in the pot,

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distractions, unstructured meetings, more distractions, and you know that part of your job description that states ‘more duties as assigned’ – enough said. Sometimes you find yourself in a business culture that has issues much deeper than you can or want to struggle with. Now, as a consultant, I have more power and control of what I get into. Somehow, invoicing someone and not being in their payroll incentivizes your client to listen to you, support you and get things done. You were hired to push the envelope and they let you push it. Sometimes there’s some resistance and hesitation, but nothing like what you get when you are part of the staff. It’s like the difference between being a guest at someone’s house or member of the household - different expectations and different receptions.”

Carmen finds that by the time a business owner or department director has reached out to her – they are ready to listen, ready to act and they are excited about what she’s bringing to the table. She admits that it’s been a rather extreme ride of ups and downs where sometimes she’s eating tuna kobachi and other times she’s eating canned tuna. Nonetheless, she’s pretty sure this is right path for her. “I’m helping people, I have happy clients and I’m happy doing what I do well.”

So what are Carmen Cardoza’s goals for the near future? “My financial goals are modest and that’s so I don’t get overwhelmed with thoughts of money. As far as my career goals I want to help small businesses like me thrive and at some point I’d like to narrow down my market and specialize in a number of industries. I want to write a few books, be a role model for my daughter, travel, nurture my practice of yoga and meditation, grow a vegetable and herb garden, hone my graphic design skills and have many dinner parties with friends and family.

Carmen Cardoza offers small and mid-sized businesses, including non-profits, marketing support services and creative solutions for maximum business efficiency. Carmen Cardoza’s mission is to help these businesses find the key things they must do every day to significantly impact their development goals, market presence and work flow; and get them out of the rut of trying to do everything every day.

If you’d like more information about this topic, or if you’d like to schedule an interview with Carmen Cardoza, please call 407-738-8484 or email Carmen@carmencardoza.com.

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