

# ‘Be open to the messages of the universe’

Robin Bond puts her legal knowledge to work helping people survive painful layoffs

**Sean Scully**  
**Special to the Business Journal**

A funny thing happened to Robin Bond on her way to a career in journalism. Straight out of school, she was offered a nice job at NBC in Burbank, Calif. The problem? She couldn't afford to live in Southern California.

“One of the people I interviewed with said if you're really serious about making it in this industry, go to law school and then come back,” Bond said.

A funny thing happened there too. Instead of going back to journalism, she became a lawyer, serving as in-house counsel for a series of hospitals, most recently Hahnemann Hospital. In 1997, she left to help her husband build his financial services business.

Then another funny thing happened. A year after she left Hahnemann, the company that owned the hospital went bankrupt in spectacular fashion. Suddenly, her former colleagues started calling, asking to tap her skill as a dealmaker to get them good severance packages.

“I said, ‘Oh yeah, I can do these kinds of things.’ I had done a lot of employment contracts when I was in-house,” Bond said.

Fairly quickly she realized that hardly any lawyers were acting as agents for executives leaving jobs or negotiating new ones. A new, unexpected possibility opened before her –



opening her own firm in a niche that was seriously underdeveloped.

“I think I you have to be open to the messages of the universe, so to speak. You know that old saying about ‘Man Plans, God laughs’? I believe in that ... I've been pretty open,” she said.

That openness has led her to an expanding worldwide business negotiating employment contracts and severance agreements for around 1,200 clients over the past six years.

“When people are in danger of losing their jobs, it is one of the most emotionally traumatic times of their lives. It's just like losing a relationship ... I just felt like this was a really good way to use my experience and ability to make a very positive difference,” she said.

West Chester lawyer Mike O'Hayer has known Bond for about three years. “She's got a good blend of professionalism with openness and warmth ... the clients genuinely like her. That's what I find impressive,” he said.

With help from Maribeth Schmidt, president of FCF Schmidt Public Relations, Bond is expanding her profile nationally and recently began as a commentator on workplace legal issues for Court TV.

Schmidt said Bond is remarkable for having figured out how to manage a successful career while raising two successful children, both now grown.

“Anyone who can manage to pull that off with dignity and grace is, I think, a hero to all of us,” Schmidt said.

Bond is in a growing field. Hollywood stars and athletes have known for years that they need to be aggressive in negotiating employment contracts, but executives in other fields are beginning to realize they need agents as well. Clients seeking professional help include older executives caught in changing businesses as well as younger

## UP CLOSE

NAME: Robin Bond  
 AGE: Confidential  
 TITLE: Managing partner, founder  
 EMPLOYER: Transitional Strategies, LLC  
 PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE: U.S. Air Force judge advocate general's corps. and assistant U.S. attorney, western district of Texas; in-house counsel, Allegheny General Hospital; in-house counsel, Hahnemann Hospital (1994–1997); managing partner, Transitional Strategies (1998-present).  
 EDUCATION: Indiana University, BA in journalism; University of Pittsburgh Law School, JD.  
 HOMETOWN: Beaver Falls  
 RESIDENCE: Chesterbrook

workers facing a more fluid employment picture than their parents faced.

“[Younger workers] want help [negotiating a job contract] in a win-win way that doesn't burn bridges and doesn't make them appear to be all in it for themselves,” she said.

It also means helping older workers get good severance packages. “That's what we tried to help people do – get the most amount of protection and cushion to enable them to successfully move on to the next job without losing the house,” she said. ■