

Career Start learned from public sector experience

Tom Tobin, Staff writer 5:32 p.m. EDT October 10, 2013



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Lindsay Taliento, CEO of the fast-rising, Rochester-based staffing firm [Career Start](http://www.careerstartny.com/) (<http://www.careerstartny.com/>), learned the human resources trade in many ways and from multiple sources.

But her time in the public sector was especially instructive, she said. She began Career Start in 2007 as a pilot program for Monroe County's Department of Human Resources. Her task was to help those receiving social services benefits to land jobs to get them off public assistance.

It was an eye-opening experience, especially during the recession of 2008-2010. Government agencies were flooded with unemployed welfare recipients who, for the most part, wanted to work but who found mostly frustration and refusal.

It became, she said, such a rushed and generally impersonal process that she was led to think that the best way to get people into jobs is to get as close to them and their problems as possible.

"I don't want blame the county particularly but it was all too disorganized," Taliento said. "I didn't see the punch, the attitude of getting things done. People were sitting around job training or job readiness classes when it would have been better to get them out there working."

Government, she said, tends to place too much emphasis on getting people into its system rather figuring out if the system is effective. "They have something called the participation rate, and county employees can be judged based on whether they get people to participate," Taliento said.

Monroe County did, and is doing, its best to deal effectively with all the people who crowd its offices each day, she added. But Taliento saw a different way. "I understood that the best way to bring prospective employees together with employers is to understand the needs and strengths of both," she said.

Career Start took off from that point. It built its name on customer service, both for the companies in search of workers and for workers in search of employment.

It works across most of the artificial lines that divide staffing needs and job searches, between government and business. Career Start does contractual work with government agencies as well as work with private business.

It emphasizes the personal approach. In doing that, the company goes against the notion that job placement and human-resources work couldn't practically dial down to the individual.

Career Start's approach and its attention to the needs of both seekers and searchers helped Nima Tamang, who with his family arrived in Rochester in 2008. They were from Nepal and knew no English. They had no jobs, little money and a fair amount of fear.

"It was tough going," Tamang said. He went to Career Start and they worked with him through disappointments and false starts to a job six or seven months ago. "I'm working now and they helped me get there," he said of Career Start.

The idea gained the attention of Florida's Excelsis Investments this year. The company purchased Career Start for an undisclosed amount with the intent of expanding the philosophy into job training, risk- and safety-management programs and recruiting.

"They (Excelsis) didn't seek me out and I didn't seek them," Taliento said. "It was a matter of networking and their hearing what we're up to here and really liking it."

The acquisition by Excelsis means Career Start can take on more clients.

"We'll be hiring one full-time staffer in Rochester and several more as a result of a grant we received," Taliento said. "Being part of Excelsis means more freedom for us to do what we do. They provide great support in back office and other related services."

Career Start continues to work with government in connecting people with appropriate jobs. "We have a grant from the Department of Corrections to go into the Orleans Correctional Facility to work with inmates who will be looking for employment on the outside," Taliento said.

There are obvious obstacles to finding jobs for exiting inmates. But everyone has talents. And there are companies that have no barriers in hiring. Career Start's task is to find both and put them together.

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