

# '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 Hahneman, the company that owned the hospital went bankrupt in spectacular fashion. Suddenly, her former colleagues started calling, asking to tap her skill as a deal-maker 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 ex-



ecutives 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 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 workers facing a more fluid em-

### UP CLOSE

**NAME:** Robin Bond

**AGE:** Confidential

**TITLE:** Managing partner, founder

**EMPLOYER:** Transition 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, Transition Strategies (1998-present).

**EDUCATION:** Indiana University, BA in journalism; University of Pittsburgh Law School, JD.

**HOMETOWN:** Beaver Falls

**RESIDENCE:** Chesterbrook

ployment 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. ■

# 'I brought ... an all over different philosophy'

Philadelphia native Nicole Cashman has imported some stylish publicity tricks from New York

SEAN SCULLY

SPECIAL TO THE BUSINESS JOURNAL

**T**here are plenty of public relations firms in Philadelphia, but Nicole Cashman decided she had a way to make herself stand out — do the work with a little style.

When Cashman started her own firm seven years ago, what she saw in Philadelphia “was a very traditional approach to public relations. Just pretty much press releases and media relations,” she said.

But Cashman, a Philadelphia native, had seen a bigger world through her work in New York, first as an intern at Saks Fifth Avenue and later as the regional public relations manager for Bloomingdale's Inc.

“After the store closed, these elaborate events would happen — charity events,” she recalls. “There would be all these things I didn't even know existed.”

She decided to bring a dose of that glamour and activity to her hometown.

“When I came into the market, I brought a different philosophy of integrated special events with much more emphasis on community relations, cause-related marketing. Much more emphasis on cross-promotional efforts, cross promotion with other brands that are trying to reach a similar target and audience as



your brand, just an all over different philosophy,” she said.

The growth of her business has been phenomenal, particularly considering her youth, said David Hall, director of catering and conference services at the Lowes Philadelphia, where he has worked with her on many fundraising events.

“She's built a business from scratch — it wasn't inherited — it was from scratch,” Hall said. “It was new and she has taken it to tremendous levels in a short amount of time.”

At 27 when she started her own firm, Cashman brought her generation's technical savvy to the job, making full use of the Web, e-mail marketing and events.

“I'm very much a consumer-based

agency specializing in upscale lifestyle brands,” she said. “There were other PR firms in this market that did restaurants, but there weren't firms that did fashion, beauty, retail, restaurant, real estate.”

In the process, she's become something of a celebrity in her own right, earning a spot in the city's gossip columns through her aggressive marketing, elaborate parties and events, and her own glamorous sense of style.

She seems somewhat conflicted by that image, however. On one hand, she said, being a woman gives her an advantage when talking about beauty, fashion and the arts — and her youth can give her a fresh perspective. But it can get her attention she doesn't want, such as a catty profile of her last year in Philadelphia Magazine that still seems to irk her.

Her firm, more by accident than design, is entirely female. Her employees are well educated and highly professional, she said, so seeing them painted as party girls is bothersome.

“When we are presented in a way that life is a party and it's all about high heels, it's really unfortunate,” she said. “It's unfortunate for women as a whole and it's unfortunate for the very smart, brilliant hard-working women that work with me.”

Everyone at her firm, including herself, is devoted to making a difference in the

## UP CLOSE

**NAME:** Nicole A. Cashman

**AGE:** 33

**TITLE:** President and CEO

**EMPLOYER:** Cashman and Associates Public Relations and Special Events

### PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE:

Bloomingdales, public relations director

(1994–1996); Mays Department Stores,

director of fashion, special events and public

relations (1996–2000); Cashman and

Associates, president (2000–present)

**EDUCATION:** Drexel University, BS in design and merchandising, minor in marketing, 1994.

**HOMETOWN:** Philadelphia

**RESIDENCE:** Philadelphia

community. The firm donates probably \$500,000 worth of free work to local charities a year and all employees have to serve on nonprofit boards and committees.

“Community relations is a major part of what I do for my clients,” she said. “I am so grateful for the success I've had at such an age, and we've all worked so hard, but there is a certain amount, I believe, in good karma. I like to think good things come my way because we do so much good for so many people.” ■

# 'I always saw myself as a creator'

Julie Copeland brings her grandfather's business into the next century

SEAN SCULLY

SPECIAL TO THE BUSINESS JOURNAL

Julie Copeland came to head her family business the hard way — she had to earn it.

"When I came on board here I certainly saw [taking over the business] as the ultimate challenge; whether or not I would was not certain at first," Copeland said. "My father had to see that I had the tenacity and ability to do that."

After nearly a decade as marketing director and a vice president, Copeland stepped up in 2004 as the third generation to lead Arbill Safety Products, which manufactures safety products such as protective gloves, glasses and hard hats for companies such as Harley-Davidson and Caterpillar Inc.

She's put her mark on the company founded by her grandfather, expanding the business to include a service helping customers assess their safety needs, train employees, and keep up with the complex state and federal safety rules and paperwork requirements. She's added another 60 employees to run the new compliance business on top of the 80 or so in the older manufacturing business.

"Our mantra really is we're safely leading the world to work. But saying that, we

were just in the world of providing products," she said. "So after some feedback from customers ... we realized there was this huge opportunity that was not being solved or provided for our customer base. So now they turn to us as this one place to get everything they need to keep their employees safe."

Sometimes in family business, the older generation resists or resents the changes wrought by their children, but Copeland said her father fully supports the changes she's put into place.

"He's extremely supportive," she said. "It's really a wonderful relationship my father and I have. He sees so many wonderful things happening at Arbill as we evolve into this new organization. He's really quite proud."

Proud also are other women, said Jessica Lester of The Communication Solutions Group, a public relations firm that has worked with Arbill for several years.

"She's really been a proponent for other



women in the business world," Lester said. "She's really into mentoring."

Copeland hadn't always planned to take over the family business. In college, she was a broadcast journalism major.

But in her senior year, she was faced with a decision. "I was supposed to air this story, but the

person it was about didn't want me to air it for various reasons," she said. She decided not to air it, even though her professor told her he'd fail her. "That became a defining moment. I didn't think I had it in me to do the type of reporting I may have to do to pay bills."

With Copeland's future suddenly in doubt, she turned to business.

"I always saw myself as a leader," she said. "I always saw myself as a creator. I was the president of this, or the president of that — whatever things I was faced with throughout high school and college."

Now, she said, people ask her if the world of business has opened up enough

## UP CLOSE

**NAME:** Julie Copeland

**AGE:** 35

**TITLE:** President and CEO

**EMPLOYER:** Arbill Safety Products

**PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE:** Skyborough Associates, sales and marketing (1993–95); Arbill Safety Products, marketing director (1995–2000), vice president of sales and marketing (2000–2004), president and CEO (2004–present).

**EDUCATION:** Syracuse University, BS in broadcast journalism and marketing (1993); Temple University, MBA (1999).

**HOMETOWN:** Philadelphia

**RESIDENCE:** Elkins Park

to women that their daughters will have a fair shot at making it.

"If you have the right outlook your opportunities are endless. We don't have the challenges," that previous generations may have had, she said. "And yet, it's not done yet. There aren't enough women on boards. There aren't enough women in public executive positions ... there is just so much more that needs to be done. But if you want to be that person to prevail, you can today." ■

# 'We have a responsibility to our community'

Angela Dowd-Burton builds black female leadership throughout the region

SEAN SCULLY

SPECIAL TO THE BUSINESS JOURNAL

**A**ngela Dowd-Burton is something of an ambassador for her company.

As manager of government relations, it is Dowd-Burton's job not just to sell Rohm and Haas' products to the public sector and protect her company's interests in legislation, but to make sure that it keeps harmonious relations with the community where it is based.

When tour buses and other trappings of the tourist trade became a problem in front of Rohm and Haas' Independence Mall headquarters, instead of creating a stink, she helped engineer a regional compromise that left the city and other businesses in the area happy.

When the spiraling cost of natural gas began to press her company's bottom line, she worked with other interest groups in the city, including the School District of Philadelphia, to lobby City Council for a resolution urging Congress to pass legislation to promote exploration for more gas, which could lower prices.

"Our goal is to educate government officials — and those in our company — about opportunities that are aligned, where public needs intersect with our products and technology," she said.

Dowd-Burton came from humble beginnings in the corporate world — starting as an auditor for Mobil Oil — and has risen to a rank that is unusual for women, particularly black women.

"It's extremely challenging to wear a number of hats and it is a responsibility that I think most, if not all, African-American women wear," she said.

"I think we have a responsibility to our community. We have a responsibility to the company we work for, both as women to show that we can be very good at what we do, but also as African-Americans [to show that] we can be in challenging positions and positions of visibility."

Seven years ago, Dowd-Burton took a concrete step toward discharging that responsibility, helping to found her company's "Women's Leadership Network," devoted to recruiting and nurturing women in what remains a male-dominated business world.

And four years ago, she helped found the Women's Leadership Forum, an association of 10 area companies that all have



some sort of program similar to the Women's Leadership Network.

"Angela is probably one of the most fervent advocates for other women that I have ever come across in my career," said Nancy Gunza, a director at the accounting firm

Deloitte & Touche, who met Dowd-Burton through the leadership forum.

Women in senior positions, Dowd-Burton said, "have to act as role models to say this is what we've done. This is how we've done it. These are the pitfalls that we want you to avoid."

Sharing lessons, no matter how small, is critical to improving the number of women in leadership roles, she believes. "It's taking those kernels of knowledge and handing them back, so that the women who are in the pipeline can accelerate the process."

Her main goal, however, seems to be to be a role model for women, black women in particular.

Whatever's written or said about her,

## UP CLOSE

**NAME:** Angela Dowd-Burton

**AGE:** Confidential

**TITLE:** Manager of government relations

**EMPLOYER:** Rohm and Haas Co.

**PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE:** Mobil Oil, auditor (1974-79); Sun Co., various staff positions (1979-84); city of Philadelphia, procurement commissioner and deputy director of finance (1984-90); Rohm and Haas, corporate credit manager (1990-95), purchasing manager (1995-98), global business development manager (1998-99), commercial manager for North American region (1999-2001), worldwide purchasing manager (2001-2004), manager of government relations (2004-present).

**EDUCATION:** Drexel University, BS in accounting (1974); Drexel University, MBA (1980).

**HOMETOWN:** Rocky Mount, N.C.

**RESIDENCE:** Philadelphia

she said, "I would like it to show up in a way that will be an inspiration to them and a demonstration to them that an African-American woman is a true professional, dedicated and committed to not only doing a great job for the corporation but to the community." ■

# 'I'm all about relationships'

## Rainmaker-for-hire Nancy Alba Dunleavy helps organizations build excitement

SEAN SCULLY

SPECIAL TO THE BUSINESS JOURNAL

All her life, Nancy Dunleavy has been an insatiable networker. But it wasn't until 9/11 that she realized she needed to make that her profession.

"I could not shake this sort of gnawing thought about how doubly sad it was for any person either on an airplane or at a desk or in an elevator going to a job they did not love," Dunleavy said. "People stay in occupations that don't inspire them simply because it's the easy road. It really was a sort of emotional catharsis for me."

She turned her back on a career in accounting and finance and founded Dunleavy & Associates, a firm that helps non-profits and small companies build their brands, streamline their business practices, organize professional-looking special events, and build relationships with potential donors and sponsors.

"I am all about relationships," she said. "I love people. I just love people. It doesn't matter when I meet them, where I meet them."

Even before 9/11, she had had a taste of the "rainmaker" role. She had been chief financial officer at the Friends Hospital and Behavioral Health System when, in 1999, her boss asked her to temporarily

head a team looking to better integrate various parts of the business and to build the system's public brand.

She was reluctant because she had spent her career as an accountant, but the system's management persisted — her enthusiasm, knowledge of the business and uncanny knack for networking made her ideal in that job.

"Three weeks into the job I was like, 'What in the world was I thinking'? I never want to go back to accounting," she said.

She realized that plenty of organizations needed this kind of help, but probably couldn't afford to hire someone at her level of experience. Consulting was the answer.

Five years later, her firm has grown to a staff of 12 serving dozens of clients, including the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, the Urban League of Philadelphia and the school district.

"She's what I call a high-energy person," said Patricia Coulter, president of the Urban League. "Nancy is always in high



gear."

Coulter said Dunleavy was the key figure in her effort to streamline and professionalize the organization's business system when she took over four years ago. Since then she has relied on Dunleavy for several projects, including organizing the annual golf event.

"What I like most is her optimism," Coulter said. "No matter how dark it seems, Nancy always says there is a way to get this done."

Dunleavy doesn't like to think of what she does as "consulting" because in her mind, consultants "come in and tell you what to do." Instead, she is something closer to a building contractor, who works with you to design and build your project.

"It's way more than advice — we do the work," she said, whether that be designing a fundraising strategy, organizing a charity golf tournament, or putting on a Revolutionary War reenactment event, as she did for Whitpain, Montgomery County.

The eclectic mix of projects she under-

### UP CLOSE

**NAME:** Nancy Alba Dunleavy

**AGE:** 50

**TITLE:** Founder and CEO

**EMPLOYER:** Dunleavy & Associates

**PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE:**

Rehabilitation Coordinators, staff accountant (1978–1980), internal audit supervisor (1980–1982); Eagleville Hospital, controller (1982–1984), chief financial officer (1984–1988); John B. Franklin Maternity Hospital & Family Center, chief operating officer (1988), CEO (1989–1990); Friends Hospital, CFO (1990–2000), senior vice president of corporate development (2000–2001); Dunleavy & Associates, founder and CEO (2001–present).

**EDUCATION:** Shippensburg University, BS in business administration/accounting (1978).

**HOMETOWN:** Norristown.

**RESIDENCE:** Blue Bell.

takes gets her creative juices flowing as she considers how to build a team of experts to tackle a challenge or connect the names in her Rolodex to help her clients.

"It's always an incredible joy to be able to match the right strategy to the problem — or challenge," she said. "I don't like to use the word problem, because they're not problems, they're challenges." ■