Job Hunt: Episode 4 – "Downsized But Not Down and Out? *How to Transfer Your Skills and Reinvent Yourself"*

Host Johnson: You're great! You have talent! But your job went away when the company downsized and now you've discovered your kind of job has disappeared. How do you transfer those skills into a new career? Should you be your own boss? It's time to reinvent yourself on Job Hunt.

(Music Plays)

Host Johnson: Hey everyone I'm Tory Johnson. These days it seems like almost every company is downsizing its workforce. Not only did your position in the company disappear, but the kind of job you used to do is now harder to come by. There's no denying you have the experience and talent, how do you put them to work? Here with some answers are Ken Powell Vice President of Right Management; Barbara Weltman, an author and small business expert; and Commissioner Rob Walsh of New York City's Small Business Services. Welcome to you all. Thanks so much for being here.

Barbara lets start with you. Let's dive right in. And for a lot of people a pink slip is a permission slip to start a new business. You've had that dream, you've had that idea, but we know that if it's not for everybody. You have some specific questions and things that someone can go through to determine if it's right for them.

Weltman: The first thing you want to do is a personality test to see if you have what it takes to be a small business owner. And that means first knowing if you have the skills to do the business that you're thinking of. In other words, if you want to have a website business, can you design websites? If you want to run a restaurant, have you worked in the food industry? The second thing is you want to know whether you have the personal fortitude for it. You're going to be putting in long hours. You're going to have to do a lot of sacrificing in terms of giving up time with your family and attending family events. You want to know if you have communication skills because you're going to be dealing with the public, with your customers, with your

employees, with vendors. So you have to be able to do that as well. And you want to make sure that you have the drive and ambition, and the tolerance for risk because there's going to be an awful lot of ups and downs.

Host Johnson: Absolutely. I know that as a small business owner too. And Commissioner I know that for somebody who has all of those things and says okay they're interested in starting a business, the city offers a whole host of resources. Tell me about them.

Walsh: It's sometimes the best-kept secret. (Weltman: It is!) The mayor's made it easy by the creation of 311 to get the information first of all. And that good old-fashioned word free. (you like that!) Our services are free. You call 311, we'll connect you to business solution centers throughout the five boroughs. You can get information online, you can get through 311 or you can come and stop at one of our centers. Everything from putting a business plan together, to finding out where the money is, to getting pro bono legal services, we run the gamut for large and small businesses.

Host Johnson: So there's a whole bunch of things that somebody can have access to.

Walsh: It's pretty amazing. We've built it out over the years. When the mayor came out into office in 2002, we did not have a department of small business services. It's hard to believe with over 200,000 small businesses in New York. When you think of small businesses, you think of those mom and pop shops of three or four people, who need extra help, maybe its marketing, maybe it's putting a website, or it's a business plan. Or getting that extra money to either grow or in this economy, stay afloat.

Host Johnson: We can also know that, as much as we can talk about how fabulous it is to start and run your own business, Ken it's not for everybody. There are a lot of people, who are in a position right now where they can move into different directions and starting a business might be one for some. But for somebody else, who isn't quite sure that it's right for them. But one thing that they are clear about is that they want to a whole change in direction. They want to move to something different from what they've always done. What are some of the steps I can take, to know what my option might even be?

Powell: One thing I would suggest would be to survey your skills and also think of what are your strengths, what are your interests, what are your values? In terms of your strengths, you can start by perhaps sending an email to those who know you: Your friends, business colleagues and the like. And ask them a question, when I'm at my best what do I look like? That will help you uncover some strengths that you may not have heard of. In terms of thinking it through about what are your options? What I would suggest, is to write down three things that are very close to what you've done before. Three things that maybe push the envelope, maybe a change in industry or (job) function and the third thing is to spin all logic and think outside of the box. What are the things you are really passionate about? Things that really interest you and then take a minute to prioritize or pick three things across all those categories and find the ones that or find some way to synthesize them. For example, I had a woman who was not interested in going back to work as an office manager but she loved the outdoors and today she is being certified as a horticultural therapist.

Host Johnson: So maybe it's something that from a passion, she was able to turn that passion into a paycheck.

Powell: Exactly, one other quick example is: I had an individual who was a consultant and today he's creating bicycles/spinning bikes that put electricity back on the grid.

Host Johnson: Wow, great. So you find those silver linings that come with being laid off.

Speaking of… Commissioner, so you know someone that has that passion, they know something that they are interested in doing but they perhaps need some further training to upgrade some of their skills and for a lot of people cost is a big issue. Where could the city help with that?

Walsh: Well there are a couple of different ways. We have gotten into this business recently with the Kaufman foundation, where we have entrepreneurs who help those who are getting off the ground, who have this idea. We find a lot of people who have the passion to cook and open up new restaurants. Interesting, In New York last year we had over 4,000 new food establishments in New York and you can see them popping up all over throughout the five boroughs. We can help put a business plan together, through our business solution centers. We also have a lot of people that have unfortunately been laid off in the financial services, who are saying: "this the time and say I want to start a new business". We have a program with the Kaufman foundation, which is a nationally recognized foundation that helps new business get off the ground. We also have another track of classes called, "Growth Ventures" that takes people who are looking to grow to the next step. Let's use that food establishment: they got off the ground, let's say it is downtown Brooklyn and they're ready for the next step. They need extra capital, they need a business plan, and they need to find good people. We can help assemble that; we have some really intensive courses with experts that help us along the way. The second approach is to go to our career centers; we have training vouchers available for people and they are up to $5,000 in growth sectors. So someone might be in the health field and they want to go to that next step. Let's say they want to be a lab technician and they need certification in a certain area. The government through funds from the federal government pays for such resources. You just have to dig in and look for it.

Host Johnson: So Barbara, let me ask you: for the person that says they are ready to go for it. "I'm ready to go for it, I'm ready to start my business, I've got a great idea, and it's what keeps me up". They think about it 24/7. Do you have some specific tips for that person ready to take the plunge, "I'm ready to go"? Tell me about this.

Weltman: I think there are five things that you need to think about: First is, you do need to write a business plan and you don't have to be Shakespeare to do it, but as commissioner Walsh mentioned: There is assistance available to help you, because it forces you to think about things like: what's going on in your industry? Who are your competitors? What should be your pricing and all the other aspects of the business? The second thing you need to determine is how much is it going to cost you to get started and where are you going to get the money? And that can be very challenging thing today, that's a vital thing to do. Then you need to think about legal matters like: How are you going to form your business? Are you going to incorporate, or into a limited liability company? What's best for your situation? There's no one answer for every situation. How to protect your intellectual property? If you're going to trademark something, how do you go about doing it? Do you have the licenses and permits that you need to run your

business? You got to get your ducks in a row, when you start. Then you want to think about marketing, which is so vital. Maybe, you have to draft a marketing plan. Think about how you can do things on the cheap. Networking and social media today make it great for a business to get started and market themselves on the cheap. And the last thing you need to get together a group of experts to help you: your accountant, attorney, insurance agent, and a banker. All these people can give you advice and guidance and help you get started on the right foot.

Host Johnson: Sure, I think the marketing piece is also so critical, a lot of times people think: "if I build it, people will come".

Walsh: "you put the shingle outside, I opened up shop and they are going to come in". It's amazing; this job has afforded me to go throughout so many wonderful neighborhoods over 300 neighborhoods in New York. You see shops that open up and you hope and pray that they make it but, you see that they have not thought about their inventory or an emergency. You start digging away at it and a business plan is so critical. Putting a business plan together (what if) something happens, or "I'm delayed or can't pay that permit, do I have the money to cover it".

Host Johnson: Or to keep going.

Powell: I would also like to add, that since networking is so important, it's important that you develop an elevator pitch, something that you really hone it on exactly the essence of your business, so that people know exactly what you offer.

Host Johnson: The other thing I wanted to ask you Ken, there are a lot of people that have lost their positions and now they're looking to start a business and there are also people who have lost their position that do not want to start a business, yet they're interested in working for a small business owner or there are those who had to close up a business, and now after being an entrepreneur are forced to have to switch to being an employee, to have to work for another small business. How do you convince somebody, after being your own boss that you'd be a good employee for them?

Powell: First of all, it's important to recognize as an entrepreneur you have certain attributes: leadership, management, solving technical and difficult problems. All of these attributes are valuable to a company. The first thing is really understand the needs of the company and then link up those to the attributes to the needs of the company. The second idea, might be to start as a consultant. This gives you an idea or possibility of going in and trying or proving the kind of work that you can do and that you fit it as a good worker, that you show leadership (that kind of thing). And the last thing I might suggest is as an entrepreneur you might be used to being in control (I know quite a few people like control, you can imagine) in that case I would suggest alignment, with the boss and the objective of the company. Perhaps, pick some things that are entrepreneurial, like starting a new business or starting a new practice area or working in new product development. This may give you an opportunity to earn trust and autonomy in what you're doing.

Host Johnson: Last thing I want to talk about commissioner is money financing. Where is the money? We know credit is so tight and for a lot of people: "I would do it, if only I had the money.

Walsh: What many people don't know is that beyond traditional banks, there are alternative lenders. I'm not talking about loan sharks; I'm talking about non-profit organizations that look for the bank rejection letter on a loan (it's hard to believe). There are many organizations in the city such as "Axiom and Citgo", some of the best that will work with small businesses. One, on their business plan. One, in terms of credit and getting their credit restored and if there is a good idea or an entrepreneurial idea beyond the traditional banks. If you've been rejected, there are other resources and through our business solution centers, we can help a small business connect to those alternative lenders. Even saying sounds a little shady, but it isn't. And you know, what is making things happen in this city with many people that have a good idea, need to brush up on their business plan. They need a little bit of extra help, that's what's made this city great – entrepreneurs with great ideas and maybe they didn't have some of the other pieces in place, we now have a mechanism to do that.

Weltman: I might add that, in general the cost to start up a business is usually under $10,000 and most people start with their own resources or tapping into family and friends. That's really the financing or using their own resources. When I say their own resources, it might be high cost but using their credit cards or own savings to do it.

Walsh: A lot of that information is on the website, nyc.gov/sbs – for small business services. Go to 311, a lot of that information – It's amazing, it's there for you and much of it is free.

Host Johnson: Now we would like to introduce to you someone that is in the process of reinvention, he's Christopher Deignan. He was a production artist for mail-order catalogs, whose job disappeared back in 2008. He is part of an on-going series in the Daily News called "Hire Me". Every Monday in the "Your money" section of the newspaper.

Deignan: My name is Christopher Deignan and my last job was as a senior graphic designer at Hanover Direct Inc., in Weehawken New Jersey.

(When did you lose your job and why did you lose it?) I lost my job in November of 2008. Because of the economic downturn, I was laid off and subsequently the entire department was closed down.

(How long have you been looking for work?) I have been looking for work for 12 months and it's been a rocky road. At first my sense at what the job market was perhaps more optimistic of then I would be now. It's been an adjustment, especially the first couple of months. I definitely went into a bit of a slide emotionally but, like anything – you do get used to it. And I did take up a new hobby, in the first six months to kind of offset the fact that most of the work is done by myself. I started taking acting classes, so that was a very welcomed distraction from the daily grind of a job search.

(Have you made any changes to yourself while looking for work?) The biggest change that I've made is the realization that I can live on a lot less money and that's brought it back to my necessities because I am living on unemployment benefits. I can live on almost half the amount of money I was making before, so that's very positive.

(How does the future look to you?) The period of unemployment has presented me with the opportunity to explore new possibilities and to fully pursue my ambition to change careers into

the non-profit world. I've worked with the elderly, I've worked with children and I really do want to give back. I'm excited about the prospect of working into the non-profit world.

Host Johnson: Let's give Christopher some advice. First he is talking (Ken) about volunteering. How can you turn that volunteer experience into a paycheck at a non-profit?

Powell: Well having been a life – long volunteer, it's a great opportunity to hone some skills that you already have and learn some new skills and in the process people get to see you at work. It's also a great place to meet people. The boards of directors often have people from various fields that could be instrumental in hiring you in a private setting.

Host Johnson: So he's got to let it be known, when he is volunteering: I'm interested in a paid position.

And I know Barbara, when you were watching Christopher you thought that he could be making money as a freelancer.

Weltman: Absolutely, he has a skill that's in demand. He should be networking with people who own web-design businesses. There's a great demand for web-design creation and he can pick-up money now, while he segues into a new field.

Host Johnson: It also may be an opportunity to build a business from all of that freelance work, you never know.

Commissioner, how can the city help? Where can Christopher turn?

Walsh: Start at the career center, dial 311 and find out the closest location for your career center. Get up there and see what we have to offer, and after doing an assessment of his skills, we can make a match whether it's for profit or non-profit as he expressed interest in.

Host Johnson: The city has had some success there with placing graphic designers?

Walsh: We have, plenty of. It's sort of interesting, that we are talking about this; we still have many non-profit organizations and small businesses that don't have websites and are not good at marketing. He can be of great help to somebody.

Host Johnson: You also said perhaps, that there is additional training he could help with.

Walsh: We have training vouchers that after sitting down with him and talking about his skills could match him with, perhaps a training voucher that will advance his skill to the next level.

Host Johnson: And that would make him more marketable, even if he is looking to move in to a different direction. Whether he is looking to continue as a graphic designer, or he wants to get into non-profit work, children or the elderly and he could potentially combine all of that. Being that graphic designer for all those organizations that serve children and the elderly.

Walsh: My hope is that, he has a portfolio; people want to see the product, particularly in that field.

Host Johnson: Absolutely, he looks like he's got a lot of experience.

Ken Powell, Barbara, Commissioner Walsh – Thank you so much for those great ideas for people caught in a squeeze.

Now if you know of a good job for Christopher Deignan as you are watching this, you can contact him straight through our website. Just visit nyc.gov/jobhunt and we will feature another Daily News "Hire me" profile next week.

If you're interested in pursuing new opportunities, the city's Small Business Services can help you get training in computer repair, construction, green collar energy, healthcare, food services, TV and film production, and cable installation.

If you would like to enroll call 311 and ask for Workforce1 or go to nyc.gov/workforce1.

If you've opened up a small business in the city and you find it difficult to hire reliable employees, need financial guidance or advice with your business plan – a program called NYC business solutions is there to help. All for free; we paid a visit to their center in Queens.

Paula Bailey: NYC Business Solutions is a suite of services that through the Workforce 1, businesses can fill their openings to people who are coming here. What our top managers do is go out to find these businesses that have these openings and hopefully we make the match.

Host Johnson: As Director of the workforce 1 in Queens, Paula Bailey coordinates thousands of job seekers with employment opportunities, all over the city.

Paula Bailey: How can we help New York businesses get the right people as well as other services that they provide for a small business, maybe to ascertain loans or whatever they need? We can help with that as well.

Pintso Topgay: For example, if you are a start up business or a pre start up business – we emphasize on our workshops or classes. All of the services that are provided by us are free. If you are an operating business, we can provide recruitment. So if you have a job opening that you would like to be filled, we help you find the right candidate.

Host Johnson: GW Wheels on Jamaica Avenue in Queens, was having trouble finding reliable employees to sell the chrome automotive wheels that it manufactures. The owner turned to NYC business solutions.

Siros Khanali: They screen a lot of qualified potential employees and instead of me going through a different website to find out who is looking for a job, what qualifications they have, or getting in touch with them. It's a big deal with me doing it on my own, versus using NYC Business Solutions.

Pintso Topgay: So Siros is a good example of a small business owner, he has many responsibilities. One of the most tedious ones is trying to find the right candidate for the position that he is trying to fill.

Siros Khanali: They call me in advance and set-up an appointment with a potential employee. We screen them and if they qualify, we bring them in and we train them.

Pintso Topgay: When he heard about our program, he could not believe that we actually could provide that service.

Siros Khanali: I look at them like they are my agents, my private agents. They are actually great, great, great.

Pintso Topgay: So whether it is financing, recruitment, legal review of certain documents accessing training funds from the city, these are all services that we provide for free and that is very relevant for the small business community

Siros Khanali: When the recession actually hit in 2008 we grew about 35% , in 2009 we grew about 45% and in 2010 it's estimated that we are going to grow about 50%. We have a few good people behind us. One of them is NYC Business Solutions, to help us get off the ground.

Host Johnson: GWG Wheels started off with 300 alloy wheels, two years later Mr. Khanali says he's selling 3,000 sets. NYC Business Solutions was definitely part of that success.

NYC Small Business Services can help anyone start their own business. SBS offers legal review of contracts and leases, Financing assistance, to help you indentify lenders, incentives to help you save money as your business expands, help with recruiting employees, and business courses to help you achieve your goals, including the Fast Trac program among other resources. Just visit nyc.gov and search under "SBS".

So now we have a saucy story about how the city's Small Business Solutions helped one determined woman, turn her experiences as a bank manager into a hot new Caribbean restaurant. The spicy sauce is just part of the story.

If you want an example of how a good idea combined with business savvy can blossom in the borough of Brooklyn, take a trip with me to Super Wings. Colette Burnett started her business five months ago as a Caribbean version of fast food that she loves best.

Colette Burnett: I am a wing person, I've always been. So for me doing this was essentially the next level. Caribbean cuisine is quite common because we have a strong Caribbean community in Crown Heights. What we wanted to do is change the game a bit and also bring in a new element that hasn't been thought of before.

Host Johnson: The secret is taking fresh chicken wings and adding flavors from the islands, eight different flavors actually.

Colette Burnett: The Mary Mango is made from fresh mangos, so is the Pineapple Jerk and the Trini Tamron.

Host Johnson: Colette comes from Trinidad but her first career was here in New York City as a bank manager. When she was ready to become her own boss, she transferred those business

skills. With so many competitors out there in banking, it is important that you have to separate yourself from the rest, in order to make sure that you are consistently successful.

Customer 1: The wedges remind me so much of home (Trinidad).

Customer 2: My favorite flavor I would say is: The Island BBQ wings or The Ginger Buffalo Wings.

Host Johnson: With credit tight due to the recession, Colette had to bank roll Super Wings herself, and then she turned to a city agency called Small Business Services or SBS and a program known as Fast Trac.

Colette Burnett: I found out about Fast Trac by going on to the NYC website, NYC.gov. What was particularly interesting was that they brought in individuals who were in different lines of business. For example food service, financial accounting and so on, and that was very helpful to me to hear the individuals who are in the business already, as well as what challenges they were having. A lot of times they had great ideas. Many of us I believe in order to get those ideas operating, you need some direction. I would lead them first to NYC.gov to be able to figure out what that direction needs to be. It's been three years that this idea has been in my head and to hear someone calling me about a flavor that has come directly out of your own head… That's huge!

Host Johnson: The reviews are in and after six months Super Wings has the kind of neighborhood buzz that would make even the Colonel jealous.

Next time on Job Hunt: Staying positive even when your Job Hunt drags-on for months or even years. I'll have the must-do tips to keep you on track and ready to nab that next big opportunity. In the mean time, if you have any job search questions, just send it to me by visiting NYC.gov/JobHunt. I'm Tory Johnson, thanks so much for watching. I'll see you next week!

URL: http://nyc.gov/html/nycmg/nyctvod/html/home/jbht104.html