

## LI BUSINESS

# Helping companies retain employee expertise

### EXECUTIVE SUITE

BY CHRISTINE GIORDANO  
Special to Newsday

Gail L. Trugman-Nikol, president of Unique Business Solutions, has made a business out of helping companies document workplace information that could otherwise be lost when employees leave or retire. With 10,000 baby boomers reaching retirement age every day, there is a huge employment shift in progress — and a lot of experience and knowledge to be lost.

“I try to make a business owner think, ‘Who’s your most valuable asset?’ It’s certainly not on your balance sheet. It’s the people who walk out the door nightly,” she said.

Trugman-Nikol, 63, has a history of taking things to the next level. In 1988, after 18 years in advertising, she launched GLTN Computer Training and developed a roster of clients that included Weight Watchers, Doubleday and North Shore Health System before selling the firm in 1997 to Mentor Tech.

#### Considering the economy, what are the current retirement trends for baby boomers?

Most baby boomers are still employed, so businesses have really had a pass for the past few years. But over the next few years when the economy stabilizes, there is potentially a major issue as baby boomers retire in critical mass . . . HR companies have done surveys

and they’ve said that on a lower level [position], it will cost you 50 percent of their salary to get [a new person] up and running; [for] a very high grade or specialized job, it could cost you up to 400 percent.

#### How do you create process workflow models to capture employees’ knowledge?

You walk through it, and you audit it. We create work charts, job descriptions and process workflow analysis. We assess the tasks at-risk . . . When you look at a process, you can almost automatically see what (losses and mistakes) could damage the business. And then we . . . identify the people that are doing that job, so we know where the knowledge needs to be groomed from and gathered.

#### When you’re gathering information, how do you keep people from withholding information and calm nerves about layoffs?

You need the buy-in from your staff. Most of my clients have called a meeting and said, “Guys, I should have done this a long time ago, but with the changing economy I want to make sure we as a team are prepared and safe. You have been a part of the past of this company. It is thanks to you we have gotten to the present. I need your help to get to the future.” The buy-in is almost immediate.

### CORPORATE snapshot

**NAME:** Gail L. Trugman-Nikol, president, Unique Business Solutions in Hicksville

**WHAT THEY DO:** “Help businesses safeguard their most valuable asset — the knowledge your employees possess. We provide business executives with the tools to identify the knowledge, expertise and processes at risk when losing key employees.”

**EMPLOYEES:** Three part time, one on Long Island

**ROLES THEY PLAY:** Writing workflow manuals and transcription

**REVENUE:** \$150,000 to \$225,000

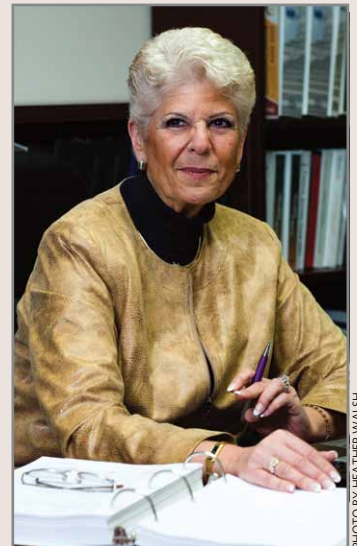


PHOTO BY HEATHER WALSH

**Gail L. Trugman-Nikol, president of Unique Business Solutions, helps companies avoid losing valuable information when key workers exit.**

#### What’s the most important part of the process?

The workflow, because if you don’t understand how a process goes from start to finish, how do you know that it’s being done correctly?

#### What’s your favorite workplace perk as boss?

Being able to take a Friday afternoon off if I want to and not feel guilty. But of course, that’s because I work on Sunday.

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