

SAN JOSE CHAPTER
EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE
MEMBER

Cherryl Sevy
Cypress Ridge Solutions &
Insurance Services, Inc.

Professional Category:
Human Resources

Member Since:
May 2007

“Our ideal lead is a West Coast mid-sized company with 50-500 employees who need professional Human Resources and Compensation expertise to help their company attract and retain the right people to meet their business objectives. We also welcome introductions to executives and boards to design Executive Compensation Incentive Plans, as well as Board compensation.”

As a Human Resources consultant, trainer and speaker, Cherryl Sevy, founder and president of the San Jose consulting firm Cypress Ridge Solutions and Insurance Services, Inc., is committed to attracting and retaining top talent for her clients. Fusing together her expertise with people and performance, Sevy has successfully accomplished Cypress's business objectives to achieve lucrative and valuable results for their clients, while growing the firm. In 2006, the firm expanded to offer personal insurance, life, small group, disability, and deferred compensation programs. Sevy recently met with *clique* to discuss her firm, the Silicon Valley and the San Jose chapter.

clique: Can you give our readers a brief overview of Cypress and its role within the business community?

Cherryl Sevy: We are a full-service human resources management consulting firm. We work with clients in the areas of hiring, retention and engagement to ensure they have the right people doing the right work to meet today's and tomorrow's business goals. We partner with our clients to create talent management programs to identify the skills, knowledge, performance factors and best organizational fit. We then create a strategic hiring process to allow clients to identify and quickly tap the best talent available, get them on board and performing at an optimal level.

We also develop and implement employee retention programs which include organizational surveys, pay-for-performance compensation programs, and professional development. Our leadership assessment and coaching ensure the right leaders and managers are most effective with their staff. Our compensation plans include job descriptions, benchmarking positions, and designing competitive salary programs. Specialized compensation plans include executive, management and sales incentive plans, as well as board of directors' compensation plans. We successfully partner with clients to align the performance and the pay with the company's business results.

clique: What are some of the benefits of the retention programs?

Cherryl: Retention programs ensure your employees are engaged in their work and more productive over time, in addition to ensuring future success through succession planning. Reduced turnover saves money and improves overall business results which positively affect the bottom line.

clique: How does Cypress stand out amongst its competitors?

Cherryl: We've been in the Silicon Valley for over 20 years. With a strong financial focus, our solutions are designed with the business in mind. We are highly sensitive to the impact decisions have on the people. Prior to starting the company, I held professional managerial positions in human resources in several high-tech companies, and later went back and received an M.B.A in finance. Always fascinated with the business side, I am able to align that human resources experience with the financial and business perspective to assist clients with their people issues.

clique: What companies does Cypress attract?

Cherryl: Our target markets are mid-sized market companies ranging from \$25 to \$300 million in revenue. We do some work with emerging companies, but our primary niche is the mid-sized market. Executives, business owners and human resources professionals who recognize the value of their people and want to ensure they have the right resources in place for their business both today and tomorrow.

clique: Is this similar to a brokerage situation? Going in to consult, and then possibly recommending other products from various companies?

Cherryl: At times, that may be the case. We have designed a 12-point extensive Human Resources Practices Audit report on all the various factors related to human resources. We do a detailed analysis of the company's HR processes to identify specific needs, core process issues as well as compliance programs. We also have diagnostic tools available: organizational assessments, survey tools, leadership and talent assessments. But we don't just bring in a recommendation, we work to provide implementation through the process and ensure that



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the solutions are woven into their business model. We tend to have long-term relationships with clients. I've worked with some companies from a startup at the kitchen table all the way through becoming a multi-billion-dollar company providing various levels of service throughout their growth.

clique: How has the business changed over the last few years?

Cherryll: We are seeing the challenges employers face with a multi-generational and diverse workforce, impacted now by the external economic factors coming into play. People issues are taking up more mindspace of business executives, in terms of time and resources. H.R. historically has been more transaction-based; processing paperwork, managing the process. It's become more of a business partner, stepping up to become more of a key part of the organization.

Some H.R. departments are really managing that well. But there's still a lot of professional development and focus in that arena. There also needs to be more training of managers. As more people are retiring from the workforce, the biggest challenge is retention. The organizational wisdom is leaving with these employees and figuring out how to transfer that wisdom is a challenge. Keeping the right people, while operating a lean, yet effective organization is becoming critical. You have the younger generations entering the workplace with a sense of urgency and intensity, and turnover is more of an issue than ever before.

clique: Congratulations on your recent appointment as co-chairperson of the San Jose Business Forums chapter. Can you explain to us how your chapter is dealing with the current economic climate?

Cherryll: In terms of economic challenges, one question we posed to the group a couple of months ago is how are we each realigning and refocusing our businesses and how can we help one another? In my case, let's say I may not be heavily involved in a hiring component, but as companies are looking, whether it's downsizing or mergers and acquisitions, there are opportunities there. Letting other chapter members know where the opportunities lie in the down times is really critical. Each of our members provided some areas in which they thrive during down times. We can be on the lookout for referral opportunities for the other members. I think that was a very valuable meeting.

As signs of the times, there was a merger issue shared, and a bankruptcy question was raised. One of our members had some valuable input in that arena. One of our members is a business strategist and works with executives in The Alternative Board-TAB. Often, executives feel alone and concerned, and TAB offers a valuable resource. All of us agreed this is not the time to disconnect, rather to evaluate opportunities even in challenging economic times.

clique: What do you predict for next year's economic forecast?

Cherryll: I think the Silicon Valley's economy really has become diverse. It is no longer one industry but multiple micro-economies in a variety of different places. With the ongoing external pressures on fuel, you see solar and alternative energy companies popping up, which is very positive. So with some of the negative messaging, there are also many positive things going on. The economy will still do well in pockets. It's important for people to be nimble and stay alert to what opportunities are available. In our chapter, we've had a couple of excellent meetings about where those pockets of opportunity lie.

clique: Going back to Cypress, what are some of today's challenges when going out and doing business development?

Cherryll: I think the biggest challenge is "wait-and-see", the tentativeness of some of the executives. While I'm not quite sure where the economy is going, there is always the need to have good people in the right places. We can come in and help identify weak spots and address those now. The cost of waiting until later can be very expensive.

clique: Any final comments regarding Cypress or the San Jose chapter?

Cherryll: Doing nothing is not a viable business strategy during times like now. It is important employers continue to identify their best talent, make sure they keep that talent. Companies need to continue to be aware that same philosophy holds true with organizations, networking, and getting out there. It's not a time to bury your head in the sand and not do anything. It's even more imperative to attend chapter meetings, stay involved and continue to stay active and positive.

If you want to contact Cherryll Sevy about Cypress Ridge Solutions and Insurance Services, Inc. and their services, call (408) 358-7794 or e-mail her at csevy@cypressridgesolutions.com.

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