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# Inside Outsourcing™



INTERVIEWED BY LARRY JANIS

## Jo-Ann Mendles CEO & President Thirty-four Park, LLC

Thirty-four Park complements its clients' in-place executive teams and expert resources to accelerate break-through outcomes. Unique from traditional management consulting firms, Thirty-four Park brings seasoned Chief Operations leadership to tactically lead organizations to be more nimble and effective amidst increasing complexity, ambiguity and marketplace speed. Private Equity clients of Thirty-four Park are provided objective and independent advice as well as operational management to achieve rapid performance improvement.



**LJ: Share with us some information about your current role and responsibilities**

**JM:** I own and operate a professional services company, Thirty-four Park. The mission of the firm is to complement its clients' in-place executive teams to realize impactful and sustainable business outcomes. Every business reaches junctures where the status quo no longer yields competitive results. To revitalize current operations while running the day-to-day business is a complex undertaking. Decisions and actions have to be taken in real time despite uncertainty and resource constraints. Thirty-four Park's seasoned hands-on leadership undertakes stewardship of client goals at such critical inflection points

**LJ: When you set up Thirty-four Park, what were your goals for the business?**

**JM:** I observed that most companies have in place extensions to their permanent work force (e.g. outsourced functions, consultants on retainer, external counsel and auditors, individual contributor contractors). However, to position themselves for ongoing disruptive innovative thinking and operating dexterity, I viewed that Boards and Management Teams could be well served by incorporating execution management executives into their leadership team as a standard practice.

Thirty-four Park was founded to help clients realize core outcomes in their businesses and be competitive in their industries.

FROM THE EDITOR

Inside Outsourcing's goal is to provide you with articles of interest and with a forum for the exchange of information in this rapidly evolving industry.

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***LJ: In the almost seven years you have been doing this, have you achieved your original game plan? What has been the biggest surprise?***

***JM:*** Yes and no. Thirty-four Park has successfully managed and transformed clients' businesses at the enterprise and unit levels. Clients have been well diversified (industry, size, ownership structure). However, market acceptance of hiring "pro tem" operating leadership remains conservative. I regularly have conversations with companies in states of paralysis. They're cutting costs, delaying new initiatives and not positioning themselves to compete in a global economy challenged with oversupply. Such companies could benefit from outside roll-up your sleeves operational assistance to help them regroup and reshape themselves for competitive recalibration, innovation and growth. There remains a hesitancy however to move beyond traditional consultants and legal/accounting firms.

***" They're cutting costs, delaying new initiatives and not positioning themselves to compete in a global economy challenged with over-supply"***

***LJ: We originally met when you were part of AT&T in what was their Network Outsourcing Practice. That was an interesting model, what did you gain from that experience?***

***JM:*** The philosophy of AT&T Outsourcing was one of "joining our client's business". Having had leadership accountability from transition through ongoing centralized service delivery provided me a front-row seat to all clients' industries, operating models and organizational structures. That diversified exposure and learning serves as a foundation for non-traditional outside-an-industry insights.

The experience establishing and managing globally-distributed Centers of Excellence continues to be highly in demand as clients initiate and expand their Global Delivery Models. A key value proposition is being adept in achieving positive outcomes for a company's customers and itself in a multi-provider and multi-geography marketplace.

AT&T Outsourcing practiced just-in-time efficient use of resources. I had to build my delivery teams in line with the winning of new client contracts. As centralized delivery, I had to swiftly scale those teams while realizing productivity efficiencies as the overall client base grew. Deep expertise in prioritizing, implementing and rationalizing ongoing operations is fundamental for Thirty-four Park clients who are at critical inflection points in their organizations – rapid growth phase, new market entry, globalization, pre/post M&A



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The needs of the Unit were dynamic and there were setbacks. One had to become adept at critically assessing performance and adjusting course as necessary.

***LJ: Conversely, do you find practices from other domains are applicable to advancements in the outsourcing industry?***

**JM:** Yes, two realms come immediately to mind. Outsourcing Governance practices can benefit from thought leadership in the domain of Boardroom Governance. Emerging thinking with respect to the composition and behaviors of governance bodies is one example. Another area to follow is the dialogue around asymmetric information, i.e. what information is relevant to the governing body and how best to acquire it. These concepts are apropos to organizations as they transition from manager of their operations to oversight of their service providers.

The more core and mission critical the business process outsourced, the heightened importance of Transition planning and execution. Mature best practices in M&A Integration serve as an excellent source from which accountable transition managers can borrow standards appropriate to the outsourcing scope.

***LJ: How do you see the progression of Global Delivery Models?***

**JM:** To narrow down this broad topic, I'll focus on Global Delivery Model (GDM) as it pertains to services. Companies still make location decisions for their service delivery personnel to a) maintain a presence in markets into which they sell, and b) achieve economies in the cost of labor. GDM planning continues to factor in: Operational Considerations (e.g. process quality, talent management, language, time zones, labor regulations) and Risk Management (e.g. market shifts, currency fluctuations, political and social environments, security).

In concert with global economic changes of the past few years, companies should consider augmenting their GDM strategies to incorporate: new norms of productivity (doing the same or more with fewer staff), surplus of talent in markets where shortages previously existed, technology-enabled modular talent in highly-educated disciplines, and balancing service agility while advancing substantive investments.

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***LJ: Your clients span size and legal structure. Can you share an aspect that is universal, but which entails different challenges?***

**JM:** A fundamental leadership mandate is prioritization. Typical with respect to product line and target market planning, the internal debate is frequently around what not to do vs what to do.

For big business, exiting a market segment or product will have complex legacy customer, operational, marketing and financial implications. While there certainly are notable exceptions, for the most part, the whole of the company is not riding on the de-prioritization of a single unit. Assuming consensus amongst the stakeholders, the challenge is one of cross-functional execution.

For smaller businesses, the challenge is often overcoming the trepidation of the road-not-taken. At expansion junctures, where significant investment relative to size is required, the de-prioritization of one or two products and/or markets may de facto alter the core mission and market space of the company.

***LJ: Was it difficult to move from a large environment to an entrepreneurial one?***

**JM:** From very early in my corporate career, I was assigned to start it, grow it, and fix it roles in new or non-core units. Other than needing to raise external capital, those roles required entrepreneurial skills and characteristics (hands-on contribution, wearing multiple hats, speed, risk-taking). I am therefore very comfortable with the professional demands of a small private company. However, I remain somewhat perplexed by the perception that corporate professionals are not entrepreneurial simply because they work in a large organization.

Of course, there are trade-offs. I do miss the inherent volume and complexity of big business – the large customer base, numerous regular interactions with fellow colleagues, sizeable impacts of decisions and actions.

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***LJ: Very much like the phrase “Beauty is in the eye of the Beholder”; success is measured by the person. What has enabled you to be successful?***

***JM:*** With a will to accomplish, I take accountability and deliver with approaches that are innovative yet pragmatic. Building coalitions of trusted colleagues, I remain engaged in relevant knowledge flows and uniquely connect solutions to problems. I love business and am incessantly curious about different businesses. Best is that I’ve been fortunate to work with interesting people.

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When you partner with us, you also benefit from our consultative, analytical, business, market, and executive search experience. Our expertise, combined with our total commitment to driving quality in every aspect of what we do, provides you with a talent acquisition solution that consistently exceeds your expectations.

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