

## Strategic Training and Development for Academy-Minded Organizations



**Stephan Wronski**  
President  
RJ Wronski Associates, Inc.

**CEOCFO: Mr. Wronski, what is the concept at RJ Wronski Associates?**

**Mr. Wronski:** We are a corporate training and development organization that strives to be a not just a training vendor but rather a strategic training partner to our clients. We are based in Boston, Massachusetts, but we are an organization that has a global reach. We deliver training and development experiences and solutions for academy-minded organizations. These are companies that are focused on both developing their people and on keeping a strong succession pipeline of talent within the organization. Many of these organizations tend to be large global companies and for that reason we really have a global reach ourselves, delivering our solutions here in North America and across the globe.

**CEOCFO: What do you understand about talent development that others do not?**

**Mr. Wronski:** We have a couple of different facets to our organization. Like many other training organizations, we offer standalone training classes. We have an extensive breadth of offerings in the areas of IT, interpersonal skills, leadership skills and project management. We also provide executive coaching and action learning coaching services. However, what really distinguishes us is our skill and our passion for designing and delivering succession pipeline enhancing leadership programs. We deliver these for most functions within an organization and deliver them across all experience levels from early career to mid-career and even at the senior level. As an example, an early career program may be a two-year rotational program for high potential candidates who have just completed their undergraduate degrees. We will work with companies to not only design an effective training curriculum but will help identify the outcomes, the required rotational experiences, the off-program placements, the competencies to be developed, the internal marketing of the program, the recruiting profile, etc. In order to maximize the impact for both the participants and the organization a program needs to be more than a series of classes. It is a multi-faceted experience that builds connections, builds confidence, and is embraced by the organization. We understand that training and development is not an event it is an integrated process.

**CEOCFO: Are you able to help a company identify the goals that they want before setting up a program?**

**Mr. Wronski:** We certainly do have that ability. Much like anything that is designed, whether it is a piece of software or a manufactured item, having good design and understanding the desired output, upfront is key. It is important to make sure the correct goals are identified and that those goals align with the organization's business strategy. It is also vital that key senior leader sponsors are identified and that the program has full organizational support. If the goals are not identified correctly and are not clearly communicated within the organization than at best it will not have the intended business impact and at worst support for the program will deteriorate and the program will fail. Conversely, if we can interview key stakeholders, evaluate the business need, assess the organizational culture and identify both organizational strengths and gaps, we can in partnership with the organization, design and maintain a program both from an experiential and training perspective that can be transformational for both the participants and for the organization.

**CEOCFO: How do you measure success?**

**Mr. Wronski:** Measuring the success of training and development initiatives has always been difficult. There are so many variables that it is tough to quantify. For our clients measuring success often is measured in both the short-term and in the long-term. Often metrics in the short term will include level 1 and 2 data such as participant satisfaction surveys and skill transferability from the classroom to the job. Long-term the metrics change to retention, employee job satisfaction scores,

promotion and performance ratings, and the success of participants' direct reports. However, the firms that have the best success... at measuring success are the ones who clearly identified upfront the goals and desired impact that the training and development initiative was designed to provide in the first place. If you design these metrics upfront, then you not only have quantifiable numbers to measure but you can effectively evaluate the stories behind those successes.

As far as the success of Wronski Associates is concerned – we only feel we are successful if the programs we deliver are having their desired impact. If the programs we create our successful than our clients are going to want to maintain us as a strategic training partner for the long haul. Based on the length of our client relationships, and year after year, the steady growth in the number of programs we deliver for each of our clients I would say that we are one of the most successful companies I know In fact, we do not do a great deal of marketing or promotion. New clients are generally brought on via referrals, word of mouth or are due to direct prior experience with our solutions. Regularly we see participants in our programs, who have risen through the organization and have moved into the C-suite in another area of that business or who have transferred to another company calling to ask us to help design comparable learning solutions for them.

**CEOCFO: *What might be an area where people learn from your programs something that you did not expect?***

**Mr. Wronski:** Organizations that we work with get really excited about how we get their people to really engage and personally invest in their own development. We do this by setting the bar high – really challenging participants to get out of their comfort zone by giving them the opportunity to apply what they are learning and by showing them how to approach a problem or opportunity from a different perspective. You can almost see the “ah ha” moment and the sense of accomplishment and confidence that they get from that. That feeling of accomplishment is going to stay with them even when they return to their jobs and it will motivate them to use the skills and perspectives that they have acquired. A couple of the greatest things that come out of many of our New Hire Programs are the deep networks that develop while they are completing the training. You build these lifelong networks by challenging people, making them work together and giving them that sense of accomplishment that really helps them transition from academia into the workforce. Our program design allows them to hit the ground running and be productively quickly because they just demonstrated to themselves that they could be successful, so now they feel like they can take on anything.

“What really distinguishes us is our skill and our passion for designing and delivering succession pipeline enhancing leadership programs.” - Stephan Wronski

**CEOCFO: *What has changed in your approach over time?***

**Mr. Wronski:** We have certainly seen a move from onsite delivery to virtual delivery. The whole industry has moved that way. With so many budget reductions, organizations have become so lean that you really have to maximize every minute that you have with someone. Therefore, if you can deliver a solution virtually and by so doing reduce travel time and costs, minimize time away from family and the job, then that is what companies are after. There is just no fluff time available. The key however is to be selective. Identify those components that are most impactful when delivered onsite and then identify components that can be delivered effectively virtually, whether it is self paced or in a collaborative virtual environment or via a single or multi-player simulations, etc.

**CEOCFO: *What might be different a year from now at RJ Wronski Associates?***

**Mr. Wronski:** In terms of our own growth we are looking at ways to start engaging with what we would call non-traditional audiences. One example would be preparing recent graduates with liberal arts degrees for STEM careers. There are so many talented college graduates struggling to get meaningful jobs not because of a lack of intelligence, communication skills, or work ethic but because of their choice of majors. They are very talented, so the challenge or opportunity depending on your perspective is to take them and transition them into candidate for the jobs that are available at our clients. Likewise, we envision working with associate degree recipients from Community Colleges and helping them make that same transition. Another program that we are piloting this year with our partners at positiveorgs.com is what we call a ReLaunch Program. This initiative is focused on women that have previously been in the workforce and have taken a break for whatever reason. We will help them relaunch their careers in the STEM fields in such areas as engineering, IT and operations. We are currently working with several of our training partners to bring together the appropriate curriculum, coaching components and the internship opportunities. The key to success will be getting the women back into the workforce and ensuring that they are productive quickly. Rather than work with an individual client as we traditionally do, we are pulling together a consortium of clients that will sponsor the internships for these women which will ideally end with a full-time job offer.

**CEOCFO: Put it all together for our readers. Why choose RJ Wronski Associates?**

**Mr. Wronski:** RJ Wronski Associates is a leadership development and training organization with global reach. We partner with academy-minded companies to design and deliver innovative learning and coaching experiences that will attract, develop and retain their top talent. We distinguish ourselves through engaging design, exceptional service and an unparalleled commitment to exceeding expectations with each solution we deliver. You need to look no further than the long-term relationships that we have with both our clients and our resource network as a testament to the value that we provide. Our very first client from thirty-one years ago is still our client today with many others clients in their second or third decade of service.

Interview conducted by: Lynn Fosse, Senior Editor, CEOCFO Magazine

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## **RJ Wronski Associates, Inc.**

**For more information visit:  
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