



Creating Opportunity for Our Clients Winning with Human Capital

An Interview with Ann E. Blakely, Principal, Baker Tilly



Ann E. Blakely

EDITORS' NOTE *As a leader of the firm's human capital services team, and with nearly 20 years of experience, Ann Blakely specializes in helping organizations optimize HR strategies, processes and technologies to reshape the employer/employee relationship to drive success and business returns.*

FIRM BRIEF *Baker Tilly Virchow Krause, LLP (bakertilly.com) is a nationally recognized, full-service accounting and advisory firm whose specialized professionals connect with clients and their businesses through refreshing candor and clear industry insight. With approximately 2,700 employees across the United States, Baker Tilly is ranked as one of the 15 largest accounting and advisory firms in the country. Headquartered in Chicago, Baker Tilly is an independent member of Baker Tilly International, a worldwide network of independent accounting and business advisory firms in 147 countries, with 30,000 professionals.*

What makes Baker Tilly unique and how important is the human capital area to maintaining this?

What makes us special is our ability to lift up our heads, look around, and understand what is going on in the marketplace. We listen to our clients and understand what problems they're having. We strive to be transformation advisors to our clients rather than simply software implementers. Business outcome is the end game and we have a knack for helping clients align their technology improvements with their overall HR and business strategies.

As HR methodologies have evolved and organizations have asked more of their leaders, the approach to human capital has also evolved. The fact that the firm showed commitment to me as a partner and asked me to lead this practice demonstrates Baker Tilly's commitment to specialized client service in this area.

What has been the evolution of Baker Tilly's human capital services since its inception?

As Valued Business Advisors, we know it's critical to understand the business climate and market and continually evolve as it evolves. In the last decade there have been three significant forces driving the human resource function within an organization to make some wholesale changes: economic pressures, changes in the employee value proposition and adoption of agile and modern technology.

After the Great Recession, organizations were faced with some tough choices centered around their workforce. Back office functions that weren't driving top line revenue were forced to cut programs and offerings – HR being one of the most affected.

What motivates an employee to build a career within an organization is very different today than in previous decades. This requires HR and executive leadership to look at development programs, compensation programs, career frameworks and employee engagement in new ways.

Technology is key to rolling out new programs to employees. Leveraging cloud, mobile and social are ways to engage employees in their day-to-day work lives.

These shifts are causing the business of HR to step up its game – change the way they deliver services to the company, change the way they help enable employee career progression and expand their own skill sets to support these changes. As Valued Business Advisors, we provide methods, paths and technologies to help HR leaders to identify and execute these changes.

Who is Baker Tilly's ideal client and what symptoms do clients need to exhibit to be a good fit for your services?

Every company, regardless of size or industry, employs people. Every company needs to hire, attract and retain the best talent. Every company needs HR programs, processes and technology to accomplish that. Fundamentally, there is no magic equation to where Baker Tilly's Human Capital Services team can help.

Typically, though, our clients exhibit some sort of scale and complexity that necessitate bringing in outside expertise and methods. Often this is driven through characteristics like high turnover, large volumes of disparate workers regionally or globally, industry requirements or compliance challenges. Changes in strategy or the need to re-think an HR function and its service delivery are also triggers that signal where we can assist with transformational improvements. Our services are designed to help an organization through those inherent challenges as they grow and to bring solutions to make these changes sustainable over time. ●