

HIA-LI's 27th Annual Trade Show Executive Breakfast:

# Kelly Riggs Shares Keys To Winning Business In Any Economy



Featured speaker Kelly Riggs, 2-time author, Thought-Leader and founder of the Business LockerRoom  
Photo Credit: Bob Giglione Photography

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HIA-LI's 27th Annual Business Trade Show & Conference got off to a great start with its Executive Breakfast keynote address by Kelly Riggs on "Winning Business in Any Economy: 4 mistakes you can't afford to make." Riggs, thought leader and founder of the Business LockerRoom, focused on what businesses need to do (and not do) in order to succeed.

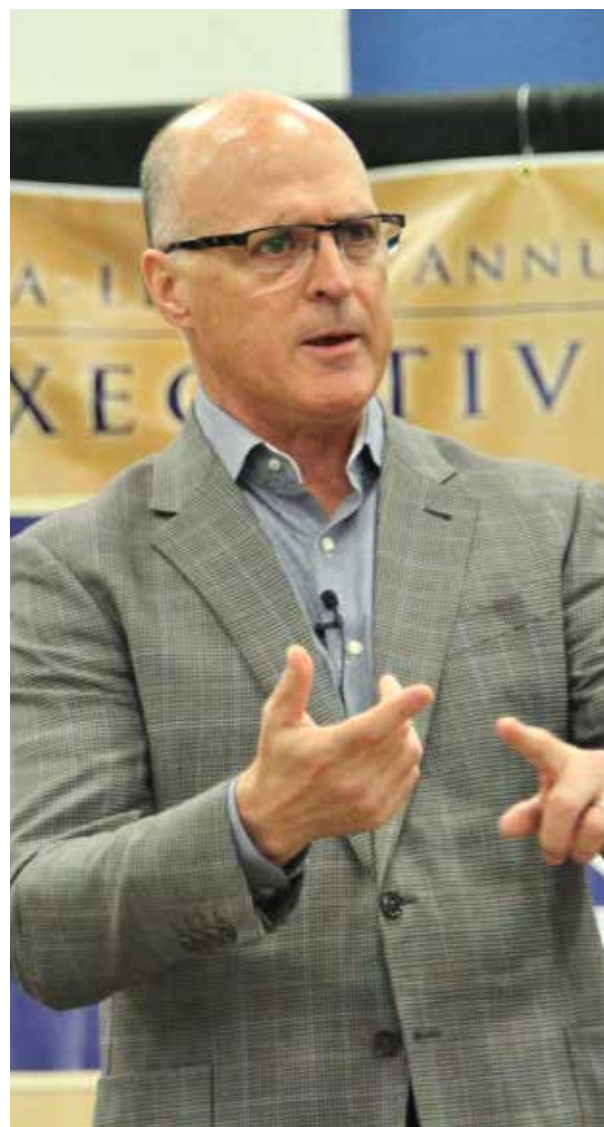
Do you play to win? "Business is a competition," explains Riggs. You have a winner and a loser. Because of this, he uses sports as his analogy to get businesses to think about how they are playing the game. Too often companies just show up to play the game. They aren't strategic. They hire reactively and think in terms of job tasks instead of planning and building company culture and values. Other companies play to win at all costs, breaking rules and behaving in unethical, immoral or illegal ways. Then there are companies that play not to lose. They don't take risks or invest. Riggs believes companies should play to win and that means doing these 4 things:

## Be intentional.

Have a strategic plan, metrics and goals. What would you think of a coach who goes into a game without a plan to win? The value of a plan is to give direction and to let everyone within the company know where you're going. You need goals because as Riggs points out "no one runs the best race if they don't know where the finish line is." Unfortunately only a small percentage of businesses have a real strategic plan. They typically complain that they don't have the time to create one. However, "leadership is about knowing how to invest your time."

## Be different.

Does your pitch sound just like your competitors? Everyone says they have a quality product/service, care about their customers, and have tons of experience. So how are you really



different? When you don't differentiate, then you're vulnerable to competing on price. What you provide becomes a commodity and you end up cutting your prices to get the business. To stand out, focus on customer experience as your differentiator, not your product or service.

And look to quantify that value.

## Learn to sell.

Unfortunately sales training is virtually non-existent, says Riggs. It isn't taught in school or at many companies. However, "selling is a set of skills that qualified people can teach." Despite the growing importance of social media in the buying cycle, salespeople are still a significant part of making sales. In complex sales in particular, they are involved right from the beginning. That's because there continues to be a need for a one on one relationship to build likeability and trust.

## Take care of the bus.

As Jim Collins said you have to get the right people on the bus. Pay attention to your company culture. The best business plan won't help if people are not motivated, trained, and engaged. Employees who feel emotionally connected to their job, believe in the company, trust leaders and feel valued are better in their job, more productive and loyal. Culture is a systemic issue and ignoring problems only causes more problems.

Riggs' message resonates with the HIA-LI community, says HIA-LI President Terri Alessi-Micelli. "His straight-forward points on staying focused, being intentional and examining your organization are helpful to all businesses. And his keynote struck the right chord to get the audience excited to start off the show."

**With more than 4000 attendees and 375 exhibitors, HIA-LI's annual event is the largest business to business trade show on Long Island.**