

## HR Cleveland Article, Summer, 2008

By Regina Olbinsky

### Lessons Learned

I began my career in human resources 20 years ago, when I was a sophomore in college. I was at a career planning seminar, with speakers from various corporate functional areas discussing the merits of their chosen fields. I heard a man talk about HR, what he did, how it all worked – and I was hooked. After the presentation, I had the audacity to approach him and ask for his business card, to which he happily complied. I further pushed the boundaries by actually calling him, and asking for a tour of his office (I had never seen a corporate office, much less an HR office). He graciously invited me to his office at the Ohio State University Hospitals. So a few days later, wearing my best skirt and blouse we met, and spent two hours talking about what a career in this field might really look like and touring the facility. At the end, he offered me a job in his office, as an HR Intern. I stayed there until I graduated two and a half years later, with a wealth of experience, great colleagues, and lots of lessons learned.

In fact, I learned more in that short time than in any other job I ever had. It is not a formula; no one size fits all. But here are some nuggets that we might take for granted, or have forgotten, or maybe never even learned before:

- **Networking** - My chutzpah in introducing myself to Michael P. Scott that winter evening, and then following up, while I didn't know it at the time, was networking at its finest. Learning to build relationships and your own knowledge in many different areas are the keys to long term success.
- **Professionalism** - that first day meeting his team, and every day thereafter when I showed up to work. Showing this, integrity and authenticity will go a long way.
- **Working hard** – and staying committed - Being there, being on time, doing my job, asking for more challenges) – I don't think I would have lasted so long if it wasn't for that basic tenant of business.
- **Doing good work** – different from working hard, but actually doing a good job; being thorough, doing it right the first time. Keeping current on innovations within your functional area and industry are a must, too.
- **Being nice** – getting to know the people I worked with and the myriad of prospective and working employees (doctors, nurses, med students, techs, janitors, etc.).
- **Mentoring** – it is hard to believe, but Michael is still there for me today. Through a multitude of career, life, and address changes for both us, he still finds me whenever I need a sounding board or sound advice – sometimes, without me ever having to call. Find a mentor, then be a mentor.

My career has taken me far through the years that followed. After eight more years in corporate HR roles and an MBA, I switched gears and have, for ten years now, been a career and leadership coach to others. My passions today are a little removed from those HR responsibilities I used to hold, but those threads weave through every thing I do. It is amazing that even while working with senior executives on complex business issues, I draw upon those lessons I learned so long ago.

I am very thankful to have learned these things and that Michael was such an integral part of who I have become. And, I continue to hone them daily, and pass them on to others, especially young people, as much as I can, hopefully as an inspiration of what could be, or just what should be. Every company. Every job. Every day.

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