



HR STAR



Director of Human Resource Services at Odyssey OneSource: Nancy Howell

[By Robin Salisian]

As the director of human resources services for Odyssey OneSource, Nancy Howell oversees over 8,000 employees and 350 companies, making sure they remain in compliance with all federal and state laws. She trains, recruits, audits, leads, and performs a myriad of other tasks, and on top of all of that, she is the mother of three sons and grandmother of three grandchildren.

"I am a workaholic," she admits. But because Howell believes that "you can truly make a difference in this field," it's easy to see why she works so hard. Making a difference means giving your all. And when Howell can credit her greatest accomplishment to "developing employees to their [fullest] potential," she's obviously doing something right.

Howell, like many of her HR Star predecessors, didn't begin in HR. After moving from banking, where she became the youngest officer at the largest bank in Texas, to IT outsourcing, she finally "landed in HR by accident."

"It fit," Howell continues, "so I stayed and worked hard." And throughout her career, Howell has served as vice president of HR for 6 companies. Her reasons for staying in the field are the same today as they were in the past: "[I] continue to enjoy [it] because of [the] challenges and impact the position [makes] in a company."

Today, Howell works for Texas-based Odyssey OneSource, a professional employer organization (PEO) founded in 1990. "Our goal is not to be the biggest, but the best!" says Odyssey's [homepage](#).

"Investing in Human Resources Outsourcing can have a huge impact on your company's

bottom line," the site continues. "For many businesses that don't have the time — or the resources — outsourcing is an effective way to gain access to the same economics of scale and expertise as those used by larger companies."

Originally hired on as an HR consultant, Howell thrived at the company and, eventually, was asked to stay full-time.

Q. What do you like to do outside of HR? Any odd hobbies/interests? Are you married? Do you have children? Can you explain a little about your personal life outside of work?

A. I have raised three boys and have 3 grandchildren. I am involved in oil painting and dancing.

Q. What CD is in your CD player right now?

A. Michael Buble.

Q. What is the last magazine you read?

A. *Newsweek*.

Q. What is your favorite TV show?

A. *Dancing with the Stars*.

Q. Who is your role model?

A. Everyone who finally succeeds. I learn something from every one of them, especially through their failures.

Two things Howell enjoys most about her job are the challenges and learning environments that accompany working with "all industries across the board." Nevertheless, "staying pro-active to minimize the liability for our company and our clients," says Howell, remains the most difficult challenge she faces today.

Beyond Odyssey, however, Howell selects a "shrinking labor force, diversification in the workplace, [and] immigration law, including HR in strategic planning for every company," as important issues she believes the profession currently faces.

But her greatest interest involves helping companies comply with all federal and state laws "in regards to all HR areas," which includes hiring, firing, and performance management. "Responding to EEOC charges, wage claims, and lawsuits," also interests Howell.

Howell's hard work and dedication extend beyond her company. According to a short bio, "She is designated as a Senior Professional in Human Resources by the Human Resource Certification Institute and is published in the University of Texas 2000 textbook, *Human Resource Management*. She has also served as a contributing editor to *Practical Supervision*, and has authored over 100 articles on management and human resources issues."



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So what kind of advice does this HR workaholic with a huge heart for people have to share with HR newbies?

“Do not make HR a career ‘because I like people.’ HR is problem solving, patience,

developing good communication skills, studying the six disciplines of HR (know your stuff!), remaining flexible, non-judgmental, decisive, and tough. This is not a field for the shrinking violet or faint of heart.”

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