

Leaders to Learn From

Cindy Patman

*Vice President of Human Resources
Orica*

“FOLLOW YOUR PASSION, BE PATIENT, AND ALWAYS HAVE A PURPOSE. So many people today don't listen to their hearts about their career choices, they go down a path because they think it's what they “should” be doing. But if you follow your passion, you will never regret it and you will never go wrong...”

Growing up in rural east Texas, Cindy Patman, Vice President of Human Resources at Orica North America, always dreamed of spreading her wings and exploring more of the world beyond the Lone Star state. Working from a young age at her father's company, she used her first job as an opportunity to talk to and absorb wisdom from a variety of employees. “Looking back, I would have never imagined the places I would go or the things I would accomplish in my career. I've always had ‘wanderlust’ and the desire to see what was “out there” beyond the horizon, but I never thought it would take me around the world, leaving everything that was familiar behind.”



Her Pathway to a Fulfilling Career

Starting with her entry level career in HR, Cindy continuously looked for advancement opportunities and ways to make improvements in her life, and with the companies she worked for. “My grandmother was a huge influence and she taught me the importance of having faith, and the rewards that come from having a servant's heart. I wanted to make a difference, and if I saw an opportunity either inside or outside the company where I could offer value, I often pursued it. I never waited for someone to come to me, I would always ask. Sometimes I was told no, but that never stopped me.”

Cindy spent 27 years in Oil and Gas with Halliburton, one of the world's largest oil field service companies, with operations all over the globe. For nine of those 27 years, Cindy worked on international assignments including a 5-year assignment as the HR Director for Eastern Hemisphere operations - requiring her to live in Asia, Africa and the Middle East. During her career with Halliburton she supported five continents in over 80 countries and more than 125 nationalities. In addition to working full-time and being a mom, Cindy received her Master's in Global Human Resources from the University of Liverpool in London in 2011, while on assignment internationally.

In 2016, she took a job at Orica to start an exciting new challenge and chapter in her life, a role that allows her to share her extensive experience with a growing global organization. Orica is the global leader in commercial blasting products and services. They also provide ground support solutions in mining and tunneling and are a leading supplier of sodium cyanide for gold extraction.

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The Qualities that Make a Great Leader

“Honesty and integrity is key...you must also be inspirational and real, be passionate and accountable, be a good communicator and empower others. I also think it’s important to have and show empathy.” Throughout her career Cindy continues to learn from others, “It’s truly important to me that I share what I have learned, while I continue to discover and grow myself. I love to engage others and help them to see their true potential. I want them to know that if I can do it, they can too. I love playing a part in helping others to shape their lives and careers, and helping people find their passion and purpose.”

How do leaders Manage Work-Life Balance?

“I believe that work life balance is different for everyone, and to me it’s a personal decision. You have to decide what that balance looks like for you. Understanding what makes your life more balanced is important, and companies should help as much as they can. It’s a two-way street, not one or the other.

Do leaders have to always make sacrifices? Yes, I believe they do. I believe that sacrifices are self-determined and come after some soul searching and look at the big picture. We shouldn’t sacrifice anything that we don’t want to, it can be a hard call - but sometimes sacrifices can be very good for you and for your family in the short and long run.”

Advice for Future Leaders

As in any career path, Cindy has experienced periods of stress and apprehension. Today, she looks back on those moments as strength and character builders. “I am most thankful for my experience as a female executive in the Middle East, and all of the challenges that opportunity created for me. It was not easy. There were many times that I wanted to give up and come home—but giving up just is not in my nature. In the end, I learned a lot about myself and the strengths I have within me. I will never look at the world the same after my experiences in different countries. It taught me that I can endure and do anything I set my mind to.”

The Value of Mentors

“I’ve had multiple mentors throughout my career. I personally believe that a mentor has to be someone that you look up to, whether it’s personally or professionally, whether it’s someone who’s your equal, or someone who sits at a more senior level than you do. I truly believe that you have to look up to that person, no matter what, and I think in different stages in your career you’ll have different types of mentors.

During my childhood my father was a huge mentor to me. He ran his own business and he taught me so much about running a business, about working with people and how you treat people, and it was definitely a mentorship for me. As an adult I still draw on his teachings.

I also believe that you can have sponsors. People who actually help and guide you through different stages of your career and serve as mentors and sponsors to you. I’ve had the opportunity of having a few people like that in my career, and I feel very fortunate.”

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