

Community Focused

An Interview with Annette Cyr,
Senior Vice President-Human Resources, BrightPoint

EDITORS' NOTE In December 2003, Annette Cyr joined BrightPoint as Vice President, Human Resources for the Americas Region and subsequently assumed responsibility for Global Human Resources. Previously, she led the Human Resources function for ILX Lightwave Corporation. Prior to joining ILX, she held a number of positions with BP-Amoco. Cyr's experience includes managing Human Resources processes in dynamic environments. Cyr earned a Master's degree in Personnel and Employment Relations and a Bachelor's degree in Political Science and History, both from the University of South Carolina. She is active in the local community and is a board member of nonprofit Aspire Indiana.



Annette Cyr

COMPANY BRIEF BrightPoint is a global leader in wireless device life-cycle services, providing a full suite of end-to-end supply chain and customization solutions to players in the wireless industry. The company (www.BrightPoint.com), with operations in more than 35 countries and employing approximately 4,000 people worldwide, provides innovative services including distribution, channel development, fulfillment, product customization, e-Business solutions, and other outsourced services that integrate seamlessly with its customers.

How much a part of the culture is corporate responsibility at BrightPoint and how do you focus your efforts with so much need out there?

Being a good corporate citizen is embedded in our core values. One of our values is community involvement, but others are respect and integrity and those things support our efforts. We understand that practicing our values is not simply "nice to do" but is critical to our long-term business success.

Over the past few years, there is a bigger need than ever and there are many organizations that require support. We focus our charitable giving in a number of key areas including education and social services, especially those that support children. About 50 percent of our contributions over the past several years have gone to support educational or youth services with about 20 percent supporting health care.

How critical is it that support starts at the most senior levels?

Our board of directors and Bob Laikin (BrightPoint's Chairman and CEO) set the stage and the expectation. Bob believes that each of his direct reports should be active in the community, so most of us sit on one or more non-profit boards. You see that not just at the corporate level but in our Americas region with Mark Howell (President), in EMEA with Anurag Gupta (President), and in APAC with Bruce Thomlinson (President). So it's easy to get our team members excited when they can look at Bob, Mark, Anurag, Bruce or myself

and say, they're walking the talk, whether it's a broad effort like our annual Week of Caring in the U.S. or more isolated events like adopting families for the holidays. We touch communities in over 35 countries around the globe.

How important is it to continue those efforts during challenging times?

Over the past several years, our spend has remained stable, which is great given some of the economic challenges. We're looking for partnerships and a lot of the organizations we support, whether they're public or private schools or universities, we have worked with for years. When you're working with a partner, you stick with them through the good and the bad, and their need is greater now than it ever has been.

Do you need to have metrics in place to track the impact of giving?

Yes, and we're adding more metrics. We look at where we're giving our money and we have ongoing discussions with some of the organizations we benefit to see what the impact is.

What I'm seeing with the charitable organizations we work with is that they're doing more of their own internal tracking. We're trying to encourage them to use some of the business processes we use every day such as strategic planning and score cards. We're seeing that it's beginning to catch on with some of the charitable organizations out there.

Is corporate responsibility and a community focus key to attracting top talent today?

It is. It's almost become a universal expectation that employees will only work with a company that is socially responsible. We all want to work for companies we can be really proud of. Candidates look at things like our Week of Caring and feel that connection. We understand that being a good corporate citizen makes it easier for us to attract, retain, and motivate the key team members we need to continue to grow our business.

We're a global company and one of the things we're emphasizing in 2012 is a further increase in terms of our community outreach in the local markets. We're going to introduce a global Month of Caring where all of our operations worldwide during 2012 will adopt an organization and do something for them.

How critical is maintaining a diverse workforce to mirror your client base?

Diversity leads to thinking outside the box – everyone's not looking at things just one way. We have customers all around the world so we need to be inclusive of all kinds of thought.

When we bring all of our team members together, our differences make us stronger because we approach a problem or a challenge that we're facing from different mindsets.

Coming out of the financial crisis, many companies are not rehiring. Is the workforce of the future going to look different?

With every new technology, we become more efficient as a society, so you see different jobs as a result of that. One of the reasons we believe so strongly in training and education is to make sure we have talented people with the right skills to take advantage of the current and future technologies that might present themselves.

In hiring people, what do you look for?

We look for a strong combination of personality and skills. Cultural fit is one of the most important things at any company, but at BrightPoint, you have to be passionate, hard-working, and customer focused – whether it's internal or external customers. Those that are here and give it 100 percent every day and work effectively with their coworkers will succeed, and will be here 20 years down the road.

In my career, I have seen people fail because of a lack of skills. But what I typically see is people fail because the skill is there but the cultural fit isn't. So managers and HR need to do a better job of making sure the candidates we're talking to understand our expectations and share our passion for the customer.

How critical is it to track employee engagement within BrightPoint?

It's very important. The tracking begins with the supervisor; it starts locally and works its way up.

We also do engagement surveys and every month, Bob Laikin sends out an all-employee message. About once a year, he asks people to respond to it and he responds to all of them, and we gain a good feel for the engagement of our team members by their responses. ●