

Chevron: Powering Human Progress Using Human Energy to Tackle Challenges of Our Time

by Richard Varr

Global leader Chevron has a commanding presence. The oil and gas giant is the country's second-largest integrated energy company and among the world's largest corporations. It holds the number three spot on the Fortune 500 list with more than 62,000 employees conducting business in more than 100 countries.

But a visit to the company's downtown Houston headquarters reveals another type of energy pulsing through the offices and hallways of the shining 50-story Chevron building. It's called human energy – the kind that inspires interaction in the community, fosters economic development to help communities prosper and empowers the company's vision and values known as The Chevron Way.

“Human energy represents who we are,” explains Melody Meyer, president of Chevron Energy Technology Company, responsible for Chevron's worldwide research and technical services. “We are deeply committed to providing safe, clean energy in an environmentally sound way for the nation and for the global communities in which we live and operate. It takes ingenuity, hard work and dedication – human energy – to deliver on that commitment.”

Chevron employs about 10,000 employees and contractors locally, owning or leasing more than 2.2 million square feet of area office space. For a closer look at Chevron's role as one of Houston's corporate leaders, this reporter spoke with five female executives for a fresh perspective — on such topics as community commitment and charitable investment, Chevron's diversity of global proportions, work-life balance, how women have made tremendous strides in a once male-dominated engineering and technical industry and providing energy now and in the future.

In addition to Meyer, the executives, who have had careers spanning up to three and four decades with Chevron through previous mergers, also include: Rebecca Roberts, president, Chevron Pipe Line Company; Wendy Daboval, general counsel and vice president, Land, Chevron North America Exploration and Production Company; Carole Young, general manager, Global Offices of Diversity and Ombuds; and Patty Loden, general manager, North America Facilities Management, Chevron Business and Real Estate Services.

The Chevron Way

Core to Chevron's corporate culture is The Chevron Way, a foundation built on values espousing honesty and integrity, trust and respect, diversity and inclusion, ingenuity in problem solving and trusting partnerships.

“Chevron is made from several different companies that have merged together and yet we have one way we do things,” points out Roberts. “It's well defined; it starts at the top and

permeates throughout, and people in other places recognize we have this unique personality as a company.”

“The Chevron Way defines who we are, what we do, what we believe, and what we plan to accomplish,” Young explains. “Our foundation is built on our fundamental values, which distinguish us and guide our actions.”

The company’s values also include protecting the workforce, its communities and the environment; a commitment to excellence in accomplishing company goals; and striving to continually improve and achieve results above and beyond expectations.

“Chevron’s values align with my personal values and are similar to the concepts that my parents instilled in me as a child – did they consult my mother?” jokes Loden. “Seriously though, for me, it’s a value system that is entrenched in trust, integrity and respect. I innately apply the principles and champion them throughout my organization. It’s a part of me and what I believe.”

“You can talk to our new hires six months to a year after they join the company, and they will tell you that when they came on-board they received The Chevron Way brochure, and they thought it was just a brochure,” says Daboval. “But after spending time with us, they understand it is truly a unique way of doing business.”

Diversity

Diversity is a crucial concept at Chevron, going above and beyond simple hiring practices and inclusion. Chevron embraces its global influences, respecting diverse cultures and the uniqueness of individuals with their own talents and perspectives, thus creating a diverse pool of ideas and experiences.

“It’s pretty amazing to stand in a hallway in one of our buildings and see the diversity of our workforce coming through. We represent a variety of nationalities and ethnicities from every continent,” observes Roberts.

Daboval expands on her point. “Diversity at Chevron is more than gender and race – it’s reaching out to the communities in which we operate,” explains Daboval. “That’s what it’s all about. We’re helping those communities and that goes back to what we do at Chevron.”

Young, as general manager of Chevron’s Global Offices of Diversity and Ombuds, is responsible for defining the company’s strategic direction, vision and philosophy concerning global diversity and inclusion.

“One of my roles is to partner and develop strategic alliances with key organizations such as the National Urban League, the National Council of La Raza and the NAACP,” she says. “We do this in an effort to assist in achieving their respective missions while simultaneously strengthening their organizational capabilities.”

The Global Office of Diversity also champions and supports the employee networks and diversity councils. Chevron's employee networks are initiated by employees around various dimensions of diversity and inclusion and are open to any employee who wants to support a particular group's mission and objectives. Chevron currently has 11 company-sanctioned groups organized by gender, race, nationality, sexual orientation, age and disability.

"I am proud to say Chevron has been acknowledged for its commitment to diversity," Young beams. "Our chairman was recently recognized by the U.S. Senate for our commitment to diversity and inclusion. And because of that, we have been asked by several Fortune 500 companies to sit down and talk with them about our diversity, inclusion and employee engagement best practices."

Chevron has received numerous local and national awards over the years for its strides in diversity and this year is no exception. Among the company's recent accolades, The Women's Business Enterprise Alliance of Texas honored Chevron as its 2008 Corporation of the Year and its national council named Chevron for the seventh year in a row as one of its top U.S. corporations for providing opportunities to women business owners; DiversityBusiness.com named Chevron among its Top 50 Organizations for Multicultural Business Opportunities; and the Human Rights Campaign Foundation scored Chevron 100 percent for the fourth consecutive year on its Corporate Equality Index, which reports on gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender equality in corporate America.

Commitment to Community

Whether it's supporting education and training, helping those in need or fostering culture and the arts, community engagement is a way of life at Chevron. Around the world, in every community where Chevron does business, the company seeks to make its part of the world a better place. Houston is no exception.

In 2008, Chevron contributed more than \$4 million to nonprofit organizations in the Houston area, while also organizing fund drives and charitable events.

Employees donated approximately 13,000 volunteer hours and are on the way to donating even more in 2009. Such commitment includes supporting nonprofit organizations like Neighborhood Centers Inc., Junior Achievement and The United Way of Greater Houston, and sponsoring events such as the Chevron Houston Marathon, the AIDS Foundation's World AIDS Day Luncheon and the Komen Race for the Cure – just to name a few.

"There are a myriad of programs in Houston – so many different opportunities for employees to donate their time and resources and to get involved in the community," explains Roberts. "And it's equally impressive when you get out of the Houston area. In every country where we operate, we have programs to engage with the local community

– from fighting the spread of HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria, to responding to a tsunami or hurricane. It’s just so encompassing and a big part of who we are.”

Roberts, like each of the others, takes a role in giving back to the community. She sits on the board of Dress for Success Houston, which collects gently worn suits and distributes them to women trying to enter the workforce.

“Women taking advantage of the program come from many different scenarios – from abused homes, for example, or those trying to re-enter the workforce for the first time after their kids are grown,” says Roberts.

“At Chevron, the Women’s Employee Network is a big sponsor of the organization, and the Black Employee Network is involved in mentoring the women,” she notes. “It’s so rewarding to be able to participate.”

Young adds, “Our employee networks are deeply involved in community outreach and participate in many volunteer projects. Each network develops a strategic business plan, which enables them to build and strengthen their capabilities to better serve the community. This has given us the opportunity to showcase our core values at Chevron.” Education also is a big area of focus for Chevron in Houston. Meyer is involved with the University of Texas’ GeoFORCE Texas program, which seeks out, recognizes and develops science and math skills of Houston high school students to inspire the next generation of geoscientists.

“We were very involved in bringing GeoFORCE to Houston,” says Meyer. “We helped to kick it off in the Houston Independent School District, and it’s going to motivate young high school students to go into the earth sciences and geology fields down the road.”

Chevron believes so strongly in making a difference in its local communities that it launched the Chevron Humankind program, which matches employee contributions to eligible charities dollar-for-dollar up to \$5000 and provides grants to charities where employees volunteer.

“Chevron’s employees are so generous that there are many different charities that employees want to support financially, and that’s great,” points out Loden. “It’s wonderful that Chevron supports our passions by matching our donations, dollar-for-dollar, to the organization of our choice. This provides us a unique opportunity to make a real difference in the communities where we live and work. It makes me proud that Chevron stands behind its employees and the community like that.”

For years, Chevron has hosted an annual fall giving campaign in Houston to spotlight various area charities and unite employees to make a difference by raising money for the organizations. Over the years, the campaign has resulted in millions of dollars going into the local community.

This year, the six-week fall giving campaign, which kicked off September 15 and runs through the end of October, will go beyond raising financial support for local organizations by encouraging employees to reach out to the community through volunteerism.

“My group, the law personnel in Houston, is planning a day of working together with the Houston Food Bank. It’s going to be a lot of fun,” adds Daboval. “It’s just one example of the company’s volunteer projects planned across Houston. This year we’re focusing as much on volunteerism as on traditional fundraising.”

“Our goal is to record 10,000 volunteer hours across 47 projects at 13 nonprofits during the six-week campaign period,” says Meyer. “In 2008, Chevron volunteered 16,000 hours throughout the entire year.”

Women in Energy

These five executives are impressive examples of how women are now on par with their male counterparts in the oil and gas industry. All mention how working at Chevron and embracing its values has led to a successful career and work-life balance.

“For me, being a woman in this industry has been a real adventure,” says Meyer. “I’ve had the opportunity to work all over the world with wonderful people who share the same values, culture and drive to perform at our best and work hard.”

The executives say that women making strides in the industry is no longer an issue. “It has changed a lot for women since I started in the industry 35 years ago,” reflects Roberts, adding there were very few women in operations back then. “I was the novelty anywhere I’d go; now when I’m in a meeting, particularly inside the company, there’s diversity of all types.”

Young agrees the gender-ratio is changing. “Women are making their mark in the business. There are far greater opportunities for both women and minorities than when I entered the industry 40 years ago,” points out Young.

Loden, recognized as the 2008 Corporate Real Estate Executive of the Year by CoreNet, an international real estate organization for professionals, takes pride in the achievement of women within her field and the company.

“As with the other women, when I started with Chevron, most of the employees in my division were male. In fact, men dominated most aspects of the business,” says Loden.

“Now, you will find women performing in diverse roles throughout the entire organization. And, many are in key positions making significant contributions toward our success.”

“We have quite a few women in leadership positions across the company in roles traditionally held by men,” adds Roberts. “I don’t really think the people who work for us notice it that much. We’re just part of the management team.”

“There’s no job in Chevron a woman can’t aspire to do. We work in a very high-tech industry and need the best and the brightest talent. We don’t hire people for a job – we hire people for a career,” says Meyer. “You can work on an offshore platform, in a laboratory, for the real estate services group, for the law function and anywhere in between.”

To ensure a work-life balance, Chevron offers a flexible schedule where employees work 80 hours in nine days and get every other Friday off. There are also some who share a job with a co-worker and work part time.

“If you’re only focused on work, you’re not going to be the well-rounded employee that we’re looking for,” says Roberts. “You need to have your outside interests to keep yourself fresh and to keep your attitude positive.”

“I’ve had 30 years with Chevron and a tremendously balanced career, with a working husband and three children and a chance to work all over the world,” says Meyer. “I look at my family as an extension of Chevron, supporting the company for many years through their support for me.”

A Bright Future

Chevron’s role in the future is something the company has pursued all along: developing new energy sources worldwide, researching alternative fuels, promoting conservation, growing the company and, at the same time, maintaining Chevron’s values and vision. And, in Houston, the company’s future looks bright.

“As the largest employer in downtown Houston, we take our role as a corporate leader in our community very seriously,” says Loden. “We are committed to providing a workplace where the best and the brightest want to contribute and make an impact. And, part of that includes maintaining facilities that are energy efficient and environmentally sustainable.”

Loden’s division is currently leading projects to ensure that Chevron’s new and existing buildings across the Gulf Coast, including here in Houston, are LEED certified – an internationally recognized green building certification system that stands for Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design. It also is the nationally accepted benchmark for the design, construction and operation of high-performance green buildings.

“It’s the best way to demonstrate that a facility or building project is truly green,” explains Loden. “At Chevron, we’ve had a long-standing global commitment to energy efficiency and conservation. What better way is there, but to lead by example?”

“Again, it starts right back with Chevron’s way of doing things,” says Daboval. “We aspire to be the company most admired for its people, partnership and performance.” Leaders at Chevron are now in the midst of hiring and training the next generation of Chevron employees for diverse technology pursuits, including challenging offshore deepwater projects and renewable energy forms such as biofuels.

“We have a big crew change coming with the upcoming retirements of our boomer generation,” says Roberts. “We’ve brought a tremendous number of young people into the organization, and their future is bright because the company’s future is bright. I think it’s going to be even more energetic and exciting in the years to come.”

“Over the past couple of years we have hired several thousand people, and they’ll have lots of opportunities to grow,” adds Young. “We’re going to tap into their talents and skills and apply our people strategy that includes developing, coaching, mentoring and providing innovative opportunities.”

The new generation, the executives agree, will maintain Chevron’s core values with the human energy that has made this company second to none.

“It takes tremendous technology, engineering and many, many groups to support that process,” she concludes. “We are very proud of what we are able to accomplish and to have a part in supplying the world with energy.”

Richard Varr is a staff reporter of Houston Woman Magazine.