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Alumni Profile

Sociable work

Paula Sydnor Hubbard's former classmates might be surprised to find out the diminutive social work student who took a domestic violence shelter internship wound up in a top position at one of the world's largest oil companies.

But Hubbard, MSW '84, vice president of human resources for British Petroleum Inc. in Chicago, says she uses her social work training every day. Whether handling emergency employee assistance or corporate downsizing in the top levels of management, Hubbard says the key is her ability to handle difficult people.

Hubbard recalls a former boss who asked her, "How is it that you can work with these difficult clients and nobody else can?" I said to him, 'It's all about the social work basics. It's starting with where the client is.' That's exactly what I got in the School of Social Work."




She remembers how nervous she was during her first role-playing exercise in a social work class at Mizzou. Despite some initial butterflies, Hubbard discovered she had a knack for helping clients identify the heart of a problem.

This gift led her from the domestic violence shelter to her current role, where she is often tapped as a confidante to top executives. She sometimes consults with managers who were promoted because they excel at their work, "but they don't necessarily have a clue about how to manage people." Business success, she says, is "less about knowing how to get the job done than being able to manage a team." — *Lisa Groshong*



Paula Sydnor Hubbard has spent 23 years working in human resources, but she still practices the social work skills she learned as a graduate student at Mizzou. "Our greatest asset is our people," she says. Photo courtesy of Paula Sydnor Hubbard.

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