

Investing in Talent

An Interview with Lynne-Courtney Hodges, Vice President, Human Resources, SL Green Realty Corp.

EDITORS' NOTE Lynne-Courtney Hodges has spent more than seven years with SL Green, first as HR Manager before assuming her current role in 2016. Previously, she served in senior HR positions at The Enterprise Center, Thornton Tomeasetti and Havas Worldwide. Hodges earned a B.A. degree from University of Pennsylvania and has also studied at Cornell ILR.



Lynne-Courtney Hodges

COMPANY BRIEF SL Green Realty Corp (slgreen.com), an S&P 500 company and Manhattan's largest office landlord, is a fully integrated real estate investment trust, or REIT, that is focused primarily on acquiring, managing and maximizing value of Manhattan commercial properties. As of September 30, 2020, SL Green held interests in 93 buildings totaling 40.6 million square feet. This included ownership interests in 29.2 million square feet of Manhattan buildings and 10.3 million square feet securing debt and preferred equity investments.

How do you define the SL Green culture and how critical is culture to the success of the company?

At SL Green, we keenly understand that hiring, training and empowering our employees is crucial for a company to run successfully. As Vice President of Human Resources, it is my job to ensure that each of these pillars is provided for, and to set the tone for a work culture that attracts and retains top talent. Since I joined the firm in 2013, the HR team has worked on implementing annual employee engagement surveys, a comprehensive performance management and goal-setting process, extensive employee training, a robust community engagement platform for employees, a market leading health and benefits package, initiatives focused on wellness and mental health, and a platform committed to creating a diverse and talented workforce.

How has the HR function evolved and how important is it for the role to be a part of business strategy?

Human resources is one of the core pillars that all successful companies require, where it impacts decision making at all levels, from the Chief Executive Officer down to the entry level employee. At SL Green, the strength of

our company and future success is dependent upon the team's ability to execute. For HR, that means providing staff with all the necessary tools, training, resources and care that will allow them to thrive. We want to keep employees happy and motivated, and we're seeing real results. Employee satisfaction is at an all-time high and our long-tenured staff continues to grow. This means that over 40 percent of all employees have been with SL Green for a decade or longer which is a testament to the culture and opportunities the firm provides.

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Will you discuss SL Green's focus on building a diverse and inclusive workforce in order to bring diverse perspectives and experiences to the table when making business decisions?

A diverse and inclusive workforce is vitally important to growing a well-rounded business. As a member of REBNY's Human Resources Diversity Working Group, I understand the importance of diversifying the workplace to generate a productive outcome for the company. At SL Green, 50 percent of all employees are represented by racial minorities, a number I hope to continue growing further.

How critical is it for SL Green to be a purpose-driven company and engaged in the communities it serves?

Volunteerism and philanthropy are at the heart of SL Green's core values, and I personally make sure to go above and beyond in implementing programs where SL Green can give back. As Manhattan's largest office landlord with the core of our assets in Midtown, we really try to infuse philanthropy and giving into what we do. Whether it's partnering with Chef Daniel Boulud on our Food1st program or donating money to the Madison Square Park Conservancy, we make sure from the top down everybody is doing their part.

I lead our Community Outreach Ambassadors, an internal group of employees who are dedicated to making a strong impact in the New York City community. Our COAs coordinate monthly volunteer events so employees can use their paid volunteer days. In 2019 alone, SL Green employees logged over 1,000 hours of paid volunteer hours. I also spearhead our involvement with external organizations including the Partnership for New York City, the Governor's Committee on Scholastic Achievement, Ladders for Leaders, and NYC Service.

Do you feel that there are strong opportunities for women to lead in the industry?

I firmly believe there are strong opportunities for women to lead in any industry. The real estate sector is no different. From my personal experience, it's all about the work environment that will allow you to thrive or not, so as an HR representative, I take it upon myself to ensure everybody, regardless of gender or race, has a fair shot. At SL Green, you know that everybody who comes through our doors will be given the support, encouragement and skills to help them reach their full potential.

What advice do you offer to young people beginning their careers during this challenging and uncertain time?

One of the things I always tell younger recruits is to stay positive. Take the time to reach out to your networks, arrange virtual coffee meetings, and most importantly do your homework about the person you want to engage with. Having that little bit of extra knowledge and history will go a long way to showing your dedication and drive. ●