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FACILITIES

Design & Management

SMOOTH OPERATOR

Nancy Ayers,
Director, Corporate Services
Houghton Mifflin

AMSOUTH BANKS ON A NEW CORPORATE CAMPUS
OUTSOURCING: FROM TACTICAL TO STRATEGIC
CAFM: A SURVEY ON THE STATE OF THE INDUSTRY

Resiliency Pays Off For Ayers

By **ANTHONY DeMARCO**
SENIOR ASSOCIATE EDITOR

There are many ways to describe the character of Nancy Ayers.

Enterprising is one word that could be used. Ayers has held a variety of positions with Houghton Mifflin, a \$700 million publishing house based in Boston, since joining in 1987 and has handled each job successfully by bringing automation and organization to her departments. In addition, Ayers has been given many tasks far and above her duties. One of those jobs, although she had no facilities experience, was managing the move of 240 persons to the company's new headquarters at 222 Berkeley St. The move took two years to plan and implement.

Respected is another word that fits. Both administrators and co-workers hold her in high regard based on how she can reorganize departments and how she treats others in the organization. "She's a well organized and productive person," says her boss, Paul Weaver, senior vice president and general counsel for Houghton Mifflin.

But the best word to describe Nancy Ayers is resilient.

This became evident in September, 1996, when the 39-year-old director of corporate services and mother of a five-year-old boy suddenly suffered a stroke. The attack left her with left-side paralysis so that she now walks with a pronounced limp, has limited movement of her left arm, and, on occasion, slurs her words because of numbness on the left side of her mouth.

She returned to work on a limited basis in December and is undergoing occupational and physical therapy. Despite her setback, she remains optimistic that she will fully recover and be back working full time soon.

"I think I've always had a positive outlook," she says. "I can't do everything I want to do, and that's frustrating. I take work home and think I might

**Loyal employees
and automation
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Houghton Mifflin
run smoothly while
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corporate services,
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stroke**

look at it, but I'm too tired. I look forward to the day when things will be back to normal, and I will physically be able to do what I used to do."

To Ayers' credit, during her absence the corporate services unit still ran smoothly. That's because since she took over the unit in March 1994, she formalized its organizational structure, put loyal and competent people in key positions, and most importantly, automated the department.

A surprising offer

Ayers began her career as a contract administrator for the company's College Division (which publishes textbooks and provides other educational services for two- and four-year colleges) and worked her way up in the division to contract and rights manager. Not long after the two-year experience of managing the move of College Division to the headquarters, she was offered the leadership role in corporate services. Weaver oversaw the process of moving the divisions to the new headquarters. "What we did was form a multi-divisional team. A person from each division was in charge of managing," he says. "Nancy was head and shoulders the stand-out person of the team."

"I was taken by total surprise with the offer, which was presented to me by our chairman (Nader F. Darehshori) as an offer I couldn't refuse, nor would I want to refuse," Ayers adds. "It was a wonderful opportunity. I don't think I had any fear that I knew nothing about the job. And he never told me what I was getting myself into."

What she was getting into was the management of 25 properties with approximately two million sq.ft. of space throughout the United States and Canada. Houghton Mifflin is divided into two industry segments: textbooks and other educational materials and services for the school and college markets; and general publishing, including fiction, nonfiction, children's books, and dictionary and reference materials in various formats and media. About half of the company's 2,300 employees work at its headquarters.

Photography by Kenneth Gabrielsen



Ayers began her career as a contract administrator for the book publishing firm's College Division. She was offered the FM position not long after managing a move of 240 persons to the company's new headquarters building. "Nancy was head and shoulders the stand-out person," says her boss, Paul Weaver, Senior VP.

Facilities are almost entirely made up of office space or warehouse space.

Almost immediately, Ayers knew she would have to automate the space information. She met members of ADD, Inc., a Cambridge, Massachusetts, architecture and design firm, at the first International Facility Management Association (IFMA) meeting she attended. A division of the firm, Applied, eventually designed the computer-aided facilities management and design system, called Applied FMS.

"In the beginning I spent a lot of time reacting. I had no files. I didn't have a full picture of anything. I needed a computer to do my work. The big question was, what did I need first—a drawing program or a facilities management database? At first, I was talking about a facilities management database. But, after two weeks of talking with ADD, it was clear we needed a drawing base too. We developed both simultaneously."

Although not yet fully implemented, Applied FMS is designed to maintain and track:

- space assignments, including offices, storage, conference space;
- personnel information, such as safety/life coordinators and employee information;
- furniture, fixtures, artwork, and equipment;
- rentable and usable square footage;
- open and available space; and
- lease information.

The system allows the corporate services unit to archive as-built and modify existing drawings to design alternative space plans, import electronic drawings from other CAD systems, and better control or expand space as needed. This is all important because the churn rate at the publishing company is high, partially because some of the staffing is done with freelancers and contractors. Also, for the past few years the company has been acquiring other publishing companies at a rapid pace while at the same time, downsizing other parts of its operations.

Applied FMS, the CAFM/CAD system, designed by ADD, Inc., allows the corporate services staff to keep updated data and drawings that help meet flexible space requirements.

Relocation and consolidation have taken up a great deal of Ayers' time. She estimates that the corporate services staff moves at least 25 persons a month.

"One of the very first things I did was plan a reconfiguration of some space in our Geneva, Illinois, office with workstations shipped from Boston," Ayers says. "I sat at a drafting table with floor plans and tracing paper and tried to figure out how to do this. We spent a week on the designs."

The two most recent acquisitions for Houghton Mifflin also are two of its largest. The company bought D.C. Heath and Co., a Lexington, Massachusetts-based publisher, in October, 1995. Ayers oversaw the physical integration of the two companies. She settled several people in an office in Wilmington, Massachusetts, outside of Boston and leased a floor at 500 Boylston St., next to its headquarters buildings. A wall on the fifth floor separating the two buildings was removed.

The company also purchased Evanston, Illinois-based McDougal Littell Inc., a secondary school book publisher, in 1994. Earlier, one of the divisions within Houghton Mifflin was spun off and moved, leaving an entire office floor in the home office available. Ayers was about to sublet the empty space, but instead, renovated it for McDougal personnel.

Automation drives standards

Even small moves can provide significant savings for the company.

"We're always trying to keep our operating costs down," says Ayers. "For example, we had offices in Princeton, New Jersey, only 6,000 sq.ft., occupied by three divisions. When a couple of divisions pulled out, we were paying rent on space we didn't need, so we moved to a smaller space."

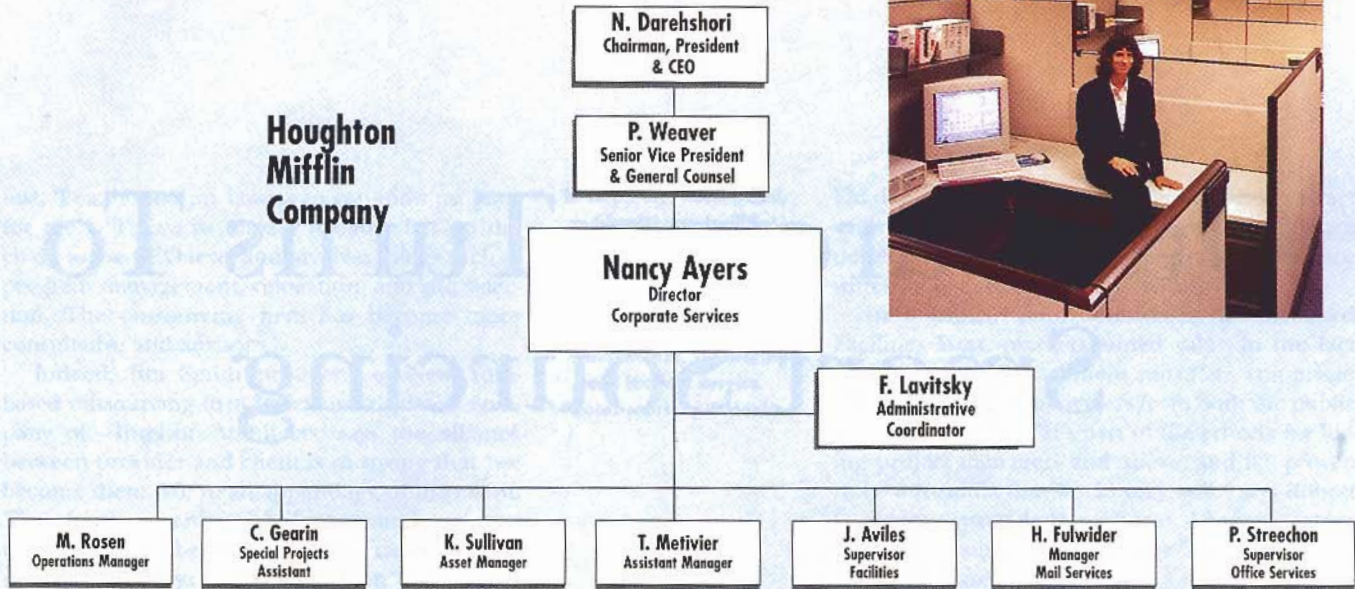
With the help of the CAFM system, Ayers has been able to develop and maintain furniture and space standards throughout the organization.



Key

Department	Units	S.F.
Hist/PS/ML/Bus	14	1084
Math/Science/Educ /Psych	38	3318
Contracts/Legal/Perm	14	759
Accounting	4	355
Multi Media	14	1390
Cost Accounting	10	711
Corporate Services	2	162
Planning Finance Operations	15	608
Existing		

Houghton Mifflin Company



Before moving to its headquarters, there were about 20 different workspace sizes. Now there are four. The typical workstation is 8 ft. by 8 ft. When there is a need to squeeze employees into limited space, workstations can be reduced to 6 ft. by 6 ft.

Also, the computerized system allows Ayers to formalize the process of making moves. "In each division, we have one person called the 'space coordinator,' she says. "This person was in place but we've now made it more formal. We've given them more authority. They help us keep floor plans up-to-date so that we can help them with their planning.

"We can show the divisions exactly how much space they're using and how much excess space they have available," she continues. "Now we're moving into a phase when one group has no qualms about going to another group and saying 'we really need this space for another person. May we use it?' We never had that kind of cooperation before."

Currently, only Ayers and Tracy Metivier, corporate services assistant manager, are set up to make changes in the system. But eventually others will be able to input changes. "One important aspect of this system is that it's easy to use. Someone with very little computer experience can use it with very little training."

Creating loyalty

Metivier, who is in charge of planning, has been the contact person in the corporate services department while Ayers has been recovering. Ayers hired Metivier five years ago, and they have become close friends, as well as professional partners. When Ayers accepted the corporate services director position, she asked Metivier to come along a few months later. Metivier says she jumped at the opportunity to work with Ayers again and knew what needed to be done.

"When we were in the College Division, we did an awful lot to computerize our operation,"

'I needed a computer to do my work. The big question was, what did I need first—a drawing base program or a facilities management database? . . . We developed both simultaneously.'

Metivier says. "When we came here, we realized we had to do the same thing for the whole company."

More recently, Ayers flattened the corporate services organizational structure. Now, nearly twice as many people report to her directly. And she added the positions of facilities supervisor and asset manager.

"I could not do the job nearly as well without the staff I have," says Ayers. "They are devoted and we all generally like what we do. I try to place people in areas that are best suited for them based on their skills, personalities, and motivation levels. There's a lot of crossover in the new organization. I have many more people reporting to me directly. That's so I can be sure we are all talking to each other."

Keith Sullivan, asset manager, has been in the corporate services department for one year. He had Ayers' position at D.C. Heath. When Houghton Mifflin acquired D.C. Heath, Ayers moved Sullivan into a management position in corporate services. He is responsible for the management of all of the company's fixed assets and its business contingency planning.

"It's pretty safe to say that Nancy, Tracy, and I clicked instantly," says Sullivan. "I had this experience to be personally and professionally eight steps forward. We get a lot done in a little amount of time. We work hard and we have fun. Nancy's guidance and leadership is there when you need it. Sometimes Tracy and I can get Nancy on the phone for a half-hour and get 30 issues resolved and feel good about it."

Because of having a staff she can depend on and a well-oiled organization in place, Ayers has learned during her medical leave that she is well on her way to achieving one of her most important goals.

"My philosophy for every job I ever had is that when I walk away, someone else can step right in and take over," Ayers says. "It's got to be organized and computerized. When that happens, I can step out anytime." ▲