

Your Business Just Got Smarter

# Women in Business

HOW TECHNOLOGY CAN  
MAKE A DIFFERENCE

JANICE BRYANT HOWROYD,  
ACT-1

CISCO SYSTEMS  
  
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# JANICE BRYANT HOWROYD

Founder, Chairman, and CEO, ACT-1



**FOUNDED IN 1978** as a staffing agency for the entertainment industry, Janice Bryant Howroyd's company today includes branch offices across the United States and customers worldwide. ACT-1 ([act-1.com](http://act-1.com)) provides staffing, human resources, and management solutions to Fortune 500 companies across industries. Today, the company has embraced technology boldly and successfully, and enjoys the fastest growth in the human-resources industry with its Agile-1 talent acquisition and management solutions.

**What were your early jobs?** I was raised on the principle that work is a blessing. Our family was very much run as a business, with our Daddy and Mama sharing the Chief Executive roles. They made certain that each of us 11 children not only had individual chores, but that we also knew and felt the responsibility of work.


Jobs outside of the home were rare, as I grew up in a segregated and southern town. One of my earliest memories is of working for our community's voter registration drive. So many of the older people were afraid to register, and many others thought registering might expose them to interrogation. I remember vowing that I would, one day, come back home and see everybody being happy to vote.

**What inspired you to start ACT-1?** My particular field of career happened by default. I did dream of changing the world to allow all people access to realize their own dreams. In my own way, I think the presence of faith in access and opportunity were as inspiring to me as anything. That, plus the strong insistence of our parents that we get an education and learn just how big the world is.

**How has technology helped ACT-1?** Our explosive growth over the last decade is a result of our emphasis on building technology that is truly designed around people. We bring almost three decades of experience to the technology we develop. Technology is only beneficial to the people who use it, so we design based on human behavior. Our commitment to our clients remains at the forefront, but through technology, we can serve people on every continent.

**How do you support your company's growth?** First, investment of myself professionally and reinvestment of resources. Everyone should learn to make their money work for them. My philosophy is "Work for pleasure and the money you earn can work for you!" Second, we have a culture of hiring entrepreneurial people into key positions, which allows strong leadership, encourages growth paths, and ensures multigenerational growth. Third, and highly important, is the continuing education of our workforce.

**Do you have advice for other women entrepreneurs?** One, never compromise who you are personally to become who you wish to be professionally. Two, you may feel that you are investing well when you invest yourself and your money in your business, but the greatest investment you make is in your family and friends, who are indirect partners in everything you do.

**To what do you attribute your success?** In my office, I have a quote from my mother: "You get your result from where you place your attention!" I think the penetrating, subliminal messaging that my parents gave us is what geared and sustained my siblings and me to become who we are. 

INTERVIEWED BY EMILY MARTINEZ-STEIN.

LISA BEVIS