



Enabling Extraordinary Results

More About the Author, Catherine Robinson-Walker, MBA

Women and Leadership in Healthcare: The Journey to Authenticity and Power “Burn with a Clear Blue Flame”®

About a year ago I launched full speed into a journey that is more exciting, fulfilling and scary than any in my adult life. With GLG's help, I decided to pursue, really pursue, what my dreams, my experience and even my own research declared I must do.

Let me back up. My name is Catherine Robinson-Walker, and I'm currently ending my tenure as Executive Director of the Academy for Healthcare Quality, a unique partnership between five leading universities across the country and the Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations. The Joint Commission accredits nearly 20,000 healthcare organizations nationwide. This position culminates a 25-year career in which I've been privileged to develop executive and leadership resources across the country, working with major national associations in healthcare, always in partnership with universities around the country.

In April, 1998, I attended a GLG program that exposed me to concepts that I had believed in and implemented for years—the difference was that GLG articulated them, slowed them down, emphasized and dramatized them. For example—the notion of creating the space for shared commitments. Sounds simple enough, but so often we think of working together on the basis of obvious commonalities. But finding enough of those in an increasingly diverse workforce is difficult and counterproductive! Instead, looking for shared values and commitments creates enormous "space" for co-generation and co-creation, while allowing the individual's passion to fuel the team's work.

This particular idea speaks directly to me because I've devoted much of my spare time in the last seven years to diversity—specifically, to conducting a major research project about women and leadership in healthcare. I've addressed such conundrums as why women make up 85% of the healthcare workforce, but only a small fraction of top management jobs. I've explored common myths such as "time will take care of this disparity." I've pursued this research with healthcare's top male and female leaders without a personal ax to grind—I have been incredibly fortunate in my own career opportunities.

When I arrived at the GLG program last spring, I had just finished my first book, recently published by Jossey-Bass, Inc.: *Women and Leadership in Health Care: The Journey to Authenticity and Power*. I was thrilled, but tired and not sure what was next. Some would call this state the post-partum blues. Whatever my state was called, I was looking for respite and reconnection.

GLG's wonderful ideas and energy helped me dig into myself. A year later, I've decided to devote myself full-time to my book, to speaking, to coaching and seminars, and to another book—all in service of the deep responses this work has generated inside and outside healthcare in the short time it has been available.

GLG's message was very similar to my book's conclusion—we must dig deep into ourselves and find the courage to fulfill our dreams. These dreams are what the world needs. We must develop the leadership skills that generate not just solutions to "problems" but whole new processes, products, organizations and services. For me, these dreams include building a vital leadership network and practice within and outside healthcare, with men and women and their organizations. The purpose of the network? To inspire continuing, sustained, courageous, visionary leadership. The metaphor? Burn with a Clear Blue Flame, the title of my next book!