

By Cynthia Martin

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**Y**ou were president and led British Columbia Children’s & Women’s into a merger, flirted with an expanding private company and are now CEO of the relatively new Canadian Blood Services (CBS). Do you seek out companies facing change?

I enjoy the challenge of working with organizations that need to change. Challenges motivate me but I’m not sure I understand why; probably because it is fast paced. I get bored easily so I always need to be pushing to improve things. I am motivated to leave a place better than I found it.

**At Children’s & Women’s, why was “children” put before “women” in the new name?**

“C” comes before “W” in the alphabet.

**Were you conscious of preserving the reputation and tradition of the Red Cross when you joined the CBS?**

CBS is an entirely new organization. We recognize years of service not just to CBS but to the Red Cross for both employees and donors.

**Thinking about the line that there are plenty of administrators, but few leaders, what is it about administration in the public sector that makes you cringe?**

How thankless a job it is to work in the public sector in Canada. Everyone pays attention to the private sector, but if you are working in the public sector or quasi-public sector no attention is paid and you are treated and considered “second class” because you don’t make a profit. It is assumed that you are less bright and that running not-for-profit organizations is easy. It becomes very clear what to do when one’s only indicator is profit. This is not so in healthcare, where we are asked to be everything to everyone and need to meet huge expectations from different interest groups, with virtually no recognition for doing so.



**LYNDA CRANSTON**

CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER  
Canadian Blood Services

**Your move to the private sector, after being entrenched in healthcare administration, was a surprise. What was it about the private sector that attracted you?**

It was different than what I was used to and I had been in healthcare for over twenty years, so the possibility of a change was not unwelcome. It wasn’t the best timing in the world, but after much thought I decided to go for it. Unfortunately it didn’t work out well but given the same set of circumstances and the same “head” space, I would make the same decision.

**You left Rogers in less than a year; did you miss healthcare?**

I left Rogers because the CEO who had “wooded” me had been fired four months after my landing there and the new CEO and I did not share the same value system. I missed healthcare from the perspective that I knew it so well. I met some wonderful employees at Rogers but I missed the warmth of my colleagues in healthcare. There is a difference in “soul” if you work for profit or to help someone else; but don’t misunderstand my point; I believe we need “profit” to support our social systems.

**What are the top traits a person entering healthcare management needs to have?**

Thick skin, an interest in healthcare, good interpersonal and management skills.

**There’ve been so many management theories, such as CQI/TQM and consensus models, they almost seem to be the flavour-of-the-year. What never goes out of style in management?**

People and passion never go out of style. The primary job of management is to work with people and get everyone moving in the same direction to the same end passionately. Everyone looks to short cut this ; you can’t do it. Management is not for the “faint” of heart.

**You are known as being a good leader, decisive and assertive, traits that are assumed in male leaders but ascribed to female leaders as unfortunately being unusual. Why is it female CEOs are still rare?**

Probably for a variety of reasons; a lot of women have removed themselves from progression up the ladder because they don’t want to be bothered; Boards hire CEOs and the majority of Boards are still comprised of men who are not yet convinced that women can do the job.

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**People ask women all the time about how they balance work and home life, when they don’t think of asking a man, still, both genders make sacrifices somehow. Did you?**

I don’t have children and although I didn’t consciously decide not to have them, the time never seemed right. I do wonder if I could have devoted as much time as I have to work and still have children; I doubt it.

**After working for many years on the West Coast, you’re now back east, where family is and where you started your career. What’s the difference in the pace of life?**

My pace of life is no different. I work just as hard as I always have, though I have significantly more travel in this job. My mother lives in Vancouver and for the first two years of this job my husband lived in Vancouver. He has just recently moved to take up a consulting assignment in Montreal. We love the West Coast and will return. We still have a home in Vancouver and a condo at Whistler.

**Does anything keep you awake at night?**

A lot keeps me awake at night, primarily the job. I worry about blood.

**What would you do with a one-year sabbatical?**

My fantasy dream job would be in New York City and something to do within the fashion world.

**What book(s) are you reading?**

I’m reading *Tara Road* by Maeve Binchy and just finished *Scarlet Feather* by the same author. I’m also reading *Monitoring, Measuring & Managing Customer Service* by Gary S. Goodman.

**What’s your desert island CD?**

ABBA’s Greatest Hits.

**Lynda Cranston** is the Chief Executive Officer of Canadian Blood Services (CBS), which is responsible for the collection, manufacturing, testing and distribution of blood, blood products and their alternatives throughout Canada including the Territories (except Québec). The organization has 4,700 employees with an operating budget of \$608 million. Previously, Lynda was Executive Vice President, Western Canada for Rogers Cantel and prior to that, President and Chief Executive Officer of Children’s and Women’s Health Centre of British Columbia. She sits on the Board of Cancer Care International, the National Quality Institute, the DIVA Foundation and the Ottawa Life Sciences Council. A member of the Premier’s Advisory Council on Health, Alberta, and the Faculty of Health Sciences Advisory Committee, University of Ottawa, Lynda received the British Columbia Business Award from the UBC Commerce Graduate Society and the Vancouver YMCA “Women of Distinction” award for Management and the Professions. She also holds the Canada 125 Medal for her contribution to the community.

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