

## Featured emPOWERed Woman Interview

Judy Walsh

Chairman of the Board, Midcontinent ISO;  
Vice Chairman of the Board, ERCOT



Judy Walsh had a long career with Deloitte, the international accounting firm, where she was promoted to partner. She has been involved in the telecommunications and energy industries since 1995, when she was appointed to the Texas Public Utility Commission by Gov. George Bush. At that time, both the telecommunications

and electric industries were moving from regulated monopolies to competitive markets. Along with Chairman Pat Wood, she led the way in setting the rules of the road for competition in both of these industries. Since that time she has served as a Senior Vice President at SBC Communications (now AT&T), and on the board of directors of ERCOT, MISO, and the Western Electricity Coordinating Counsel.

Judy graduated summa cum laude from Rice University with a degree in economics and business administration.

### How did you come to work in the energy field and how has the industry evolved?

I first became involved with energy when I joined the Texas PUC in 1995. At that time, large regulated utilities were the order of the day, but customers were beginning to demand some choice. At the PUC we worked out the principles for wholesale competition in Texas. Soon thereafter a push for retail choice began, and the result was SB 7 which opened the ERCOT markets. Now, in most parts of the country the huge value of markets, reserve sharing and other benefits are well accepted. The greatest challenges we face today are preserving these benefits for customers while complying with new environmental requirements, and making sure the system is reliable with the coming changes in resource mix and end of the wires technology.

### What opportunities do you see for women in the energy industry?

First, opportunity in the industry itself. Most people view electricity as a boring old industry – but nothing could be further from the truth! It is a tantalizing mix of difficult

technical and engineering challenges; many important, thorny policy issues, and it is one of our most crucial services. Add to that - the executive cadre is an aging one. I see tremendous opportunity for new electrical engineers, and our universities are not graduating nearly enough. If important policy debates are your cup of tea, or the ability to communicate effectively with policy makers, then energy is the place to be. If making policy is the thing for you, then great careers await in the public utility commissions and other parts of government.

And now for opportunities for women: Early in my career, every step up the ladder was met with: “Well you have been hired; become a senior accountant; become a manager - - BUT you will probably never be promoted to (you fill in the blank).” I had a lovely antique gold bracelet inscribed with the words “Nothing is impossible” and I adopted that mantra for each step upward.

The good news for women professionals now: The only thing left of the glass ceiling is shards of glass on the floor. With so much opportunity in our industry, the sky is the limit for well-qualified women.

### Based on your experience, what advice would you give women who aspire to reach the C suite and excel as leaders?

First, be sure that is what you want, because it will require serious commitment, and you cannot be all things along the way. Set the priorities that will move you toward that goal – and choose only three. If you choose more, you have no priorities at all. Write them down and keep them with you. Then check what you do against them. Make sure your work moves you forward, or change what you are doing.

Always be extremely well prepared, and when your moment comes to shine – draw yourself up to your full height and command the space. Speaking with the confidence that comes from really knowing your stuff will impress the leaders of your organization.

Learn how to deal with very contentious, emotionally charged situations. I always thought of “Grace under fire” or just said “Grace” to myself. It will help you to find an inner calm so you can help diffuse the situation in a rational, productive way.

Don’t let bad bosses derail your ambitious plans for yourself. We all encounter less than wonderful leaders on our way. It is important to work through them, or around them in the way that is best for your career. You may not be able to control the

situation immediately, but you can control your reactions and minimize damage until you can move to a better situation.

Catalog the characteristics of the best executives you have known. Take classes that focus on leadership skills. Good leaders are not all the same, but they all can communicate strategic priorities and inspire their people to willingly follow them.

### **What do you do in your spare time?**

During most of my career I enjoyed active outdoor activities. I had a turn at flying airplanes, showing Arabian horses, and snow and water skiing – to name a few.

Now I content myself with playing a fair amount of golf, and playing duplicate bridge. Competitive bridge must contribute to success in some small measure, because Warren Buffet and Bill Gates are great fans of the game. I enjoy reading and most recently completed Circling the Sun and A Tree Grows in Brooklyn. The first is about an independent woman before her time, and the other about a young girl growing up in extreme poverty.

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## **Book Review**

### ***“Act Like a Leader, Think Like a Leader” by Herminia Ibarra***



**Reviewed by Allison Wall  
CEO, Zonesty**

Finally! A book about how to lead!

In this well-written theoretical analysis / user guide to successfully becoming the leader you want to be, Herminia Ibarra thoughtfully analyzes the flaws in modern “leadership” wisdom by pointing out the (now) obvious errors: you cannot “think” your way to leadership. You must act.

What does this mean? In her opening paragraphs, Ibarra introduces the reader to the typical overworked manager, desperately trying to carve “me time” out of her demanding schedule in order to ponder and implement higher level philosophies about workplace management and productivity. In modern leadership self-help philosophy, this introspective think time is critical for assessment and plan formulation. Harried managers regularly decry the negative effects of office politics, and yet are hindered from rising to the upper ranks of their organizations because they become preoccupied with playing the political games they see others using to advance themselves.

Ibarra disputes the conventional wisdom about leadership and instead argues that only through acting like a leader can we learn and grow. Which leads to the question... how does one act like a leader? Ibarra redefines the process through development of what she terms “outsight” – a view of your job and self from the outside. Through carefully laid-out chapters, she reveals a new way for readers to view their jobs, networks, and themselves by raising their level of perspective and developing the ability to see the big picture that is so critical for leadership. Outsight centers around the importance of expanding your network to broaden your view and raise your level of perspective on the business. Outsight is a way to change how you view your job as fitting into the larger scheme, how you leverage networks, how you can learn to play politics in a meaningful, honest way, and how you can build consensus and formulate new solutions with your team.

As an example of redefinition, Ibarra shares stories of managers who, rather than trying to solve problems for others, instead provide invaluable tools for their teams that enable team members to solve their problems independently. As I read this book, I found myself taking notes and earmarking pages I wanted to go back and re-read in order to conduct her suggested exercises on myself. Ibarra is a researcher and professor, and her scientific thought process allows for a methodical, hands-on guide that can equip anyone with the specific steps needed to broaden not only their networks but also their minds. She furnishes readers with a workable methodology for developing outsight through redefinition of their jobs, networks, and themselves.

Hopefully this review has raised a few questions in your mind and piqued your interest. I highly recommend this book as a valuable read and an interesting approach to becoming a leader.

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## **March 1st Workshop**

### ***“Carve your Path to Success: The Power of Setting the Right Goals”***



**Workshop Moderator:  
Resmi Surendran  
Sr. Manager, Market Analysis &  
Design  
ERCOT**

GCPA emPOWERing Women’s committee hosted a successful goal setting workshop on March 1st in Austin. Following are some highlights from the workshop.

- Understand yourself!! Don’t be the leaf that drifts with the wind. Know your destination and harness the wind in the right direction!!

- Studies show that people who make consistent progress toward meaningful goals live happier more satisfied lives than those who don't.
- The demands of everyday life constantly pull you in several conflicting directions, forcing you to juggle a multitude of tasks that all seem equally important. Learning how to set the right priorities will help you focus on key tasks and make the most of your limited time and resources. The key is to understand your values and aspirations and, most importantly, define what success means to you personally. Understand that life can be divided into many focus areas. Define your relative priorities and the direction you want to take for each of these areas.
- The journey of a thousand miles starts with a single step. Set small goals that will get you going in the right direction for your focus area. Be successful in these small goals vs. setting big goals that could break you and pull you in the wrong direction.
- Understand your small steps - they are meant to send you in the right direction! Specifically focus on:
  - What is the one small change that can be made now to initiate the big change you desire?
  - What is preventing you from implementing the change?
  - Why is this change important for you?
  - What is your plan to implement the change?
  - What is your timeline for achieving the change?
- Set SMART goals that are:
  - Specific - what, why, who, which questions
  - Measurable - how to track progress
  - Attainable - Performance based goals that are stretching you vs. Outcome based goals that can break you
  - Relevant - Aligned with your values and ambitions
  - Time-Bound - Frequent deadlines to motivate you

[\*Understand yourself!\*](#)  
[\*Understand your priorities!\*](#)  
[\*Choose to focus and\*](#)  
[\*charge to your destination!!!\*](#)



## *Upcoming Events*

### Mark Your Calendar for GCPA 2016 Conferences

GCPA has announced the dates for its annual conferences for 2016. These annual conferences create great opportunities for networking, including golf, the golf clinic, the pre-conference networking dinner, and ample networking breaks between conference topics. As always, GCPA emPOWERing Women Committee will be organizing the annual spring and fall golf tournament with opportunities to skip the tournament and join us for a beginner's golf clinic for those not ready for tournament level play. Come join in the fun!

#### **GCPA 2016 Spring Conference:**

Apr. 12-13, Royal Sonesta in Houston  
Registration open now - [CLICK HERE](#)

#### **NEW!!! GCPA 2016 Mexico City Conference:**

June 2, Hyatt Mexico City  
Registration opens soon - watch for your email

#### **GCPA 2016 SPP Conference:**

Planned for August in Dallas  
Registration opens in June 2016

#### **GCPA 2016 Fall Conference:**

Oct. 4-5, Hilton Austin  
Registration opens in July 2016

#### **GCPA emPOWERing Women 2016 Conference:**

Nov. 15, ATT Conference Center in Austin  
Registration opens in August 2016

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