

**A Journey to a Career in Quality Management  
An Interview with Sheila Woodcock MBA, FCSMLS (D)  
Robin Barteluk, ART (CM), Editor and Web Manager, CMPT**



**Sheila Woodcock**

**D**o you ever think about changing the direction of your laboratory career? Is it possible to use your many laboratory skills, still be involved with a laboratory environment, yet be your own boss and become the president of your own company, be respected

and honoured by your peers, while enjoying freelance work and travel? Many of us will say *yes-sign me up!* Well, Sheila Woodcock is someone who has done all of this and more and her story may help you to get started on your journey.

**Sheila Woodcock** is the President of QSE Consulting Inc., the business she founded in May 2000 when she moved from Toronto to Nova Scotia to fulfil a life-long dream of living by the ocean. Her company, with offices in Toronto and Nova Scotia, provides a variety of clients with health care management consulting services, primarily related to quality, standards, and education. For the past year, Sheila has been consulting for the **British Columbia Provincial Laboratory Coordinating Office (PLCO)**, facilitating the implementation of quality management systems in B.C. laboratories. *Yes, you read that right*—Sheila commutes from her home on the East Coast to work on the West Coast, usually for two to three week stretches at a time and uses e-mail, telephone, and facsimile as needed to maintain a presence both east and west with stops in between.

**Her Career Ladder** Sheila's journey began in the laboratory as a medical technologist working on the bench in the Histology Department at the Toronto Western Hospital. While there she acquired her ART in histology, advanced to the Charge Technologist of the laboratory and set up a new neuropathology department. But after nine years in one laboratory it was time to find new challenges. For the next nine years Sheila

worked for the Michener Institute for Applied Health Sciences as the program consultant in continuing education responsible for the management and administration of continuing education programs. In 1988 Sheila became the Regional Business Unit Manager for MDS Health Group [MDS Inc.] with responsibilities focused on financial, operations and personnel management. One of her favourite quotes is "one must have the right education for the right job at the right time in one's life", hence Sheila enrolled in the University of Toronto's Executive MBA Program. She even completed the program as the 1993 Class President. Later that year, Sheila accepted the position of Registrar and Executive Director of the College of Medical Laboratory Technologists of Ontario.

**"one must have the right education for the right job at the right time in one's life"**

Under Sheila's guidance a full organizational infrastructure, including a membership database, publications, telecommunications and information technologies was established. Sheila was accountable for strategic planning to achieve the goals of the organization.

Never idle, Sheila also consulted on health care management issues for six years for a Canadian management consulting company with a North American client base. In the year 2000 with the desire to live by the ocean and with her family having left home, Sheila moved to Nova Scotia. Equipped with experience, education, and knowledge it was not long before Sheila started her own consulting business focusing on her topic of choice—Quality.

**Build Your Skills & Volunteer** Throughout her career Sheila has always attended workshops and meetings and has always found the time to volunteer in both professional development and community-related activities. Sheila credits her mentor - Audrey Whitney - for inspiring and encouraging her to pursue

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her goals and use continuing education to obtain them. It was during the 1980s when Sheila first became involved with quality, and quality issues. To name but a few, as early as 1984 and 1985 Sheila was presenting lectures to medical technologists and other health-care related employees entitled "Q.A. and Q.C.: Can both be Precise and Accurate?" and "Quality Assurance"; "Status of the Profession". Also during this time, Sheila was actively involved with the Ontario Society of Medical Technologists, serving a term as President and as an elected member of the Board of Directors from 1981 to 1991. In 1987 she received the Canadian Society of Laboratory Technologists 50th Anniversary Award in recognition of a continued commitment to the quest for self-regulation of medical laboratory technologists. In 1988 she spoke on a radio interview about "Setting and Maintaining Standards for Medical Laboratory Technologists". In recognition of significant contributions made to the growth and development of the Ontario Society of Medical Technologists and the practice of medical laboratory technology she received the 1991 Trillium Award. Her ten years of volunteer time promoting in talks and lectures i.e., "The New College" and "Update on the Status of The College of Medical Laboratory Technologists of Ontario" made her the logical choice (as well as her proven experience and work record) for the inaugural chief executive officer of the new regulatory agency (the College) established in 1993 by the *Regulated Health Professions Act*. Most recently, in May 2005, Sheila was awarded the Distinguished Fellowship by the Canadian Society for Medical Laboratory Science in recognition of high professional achievement in medical laboratory technology. She is a much sought after invited speaker at meetings and conventions held across Canada and the USA.

In 1996, while working for the College, Sheila answered a call for volunteers from the NCCLS (now the CLSI) to develop a quality system for the laboratory. She became the first non-American welcomed onto the committee the result of which was the first GP26 *Application of a Quality Management System Model for Laboratory Services*. Appointed in

January 2003 as Chair holder of the General Laboratory Practices area committee (CLSI), Sheila has been involved with every quality system guideline produced by CLSI since 1996. She notes that one of the challenges this committee is facing right now is determining what documents are needed to complement the ISO standards as they emerge. Recognized as a leader in her field and an authority on quality systems, Sheila was the first Chair of the Ontario Laboratory Accreditation Advisory Panel and is currently an Associate Member of the Canadian Standards Association Committee.

Sheila has a second quote, "Don't burn bridges." To her this means do your very best in every job you have and when it is time to move on leave with your good relationship intact. And to prove this her company has consulted on numerous projects for former employers. Sheila is a firm believer that volunteering is the key to expanding ones interests, discovering new and rewarding challenges, and meeting new people. Her networking has opened her company's doors to new clients in Canada and the USA. Sheila says someone has to be the leader – why not, yourself? All you need are the desire, the decision to do so, the determination to acquire the skills, knowledge, and expertise, and the discipline to make it happen. A career in Quality Management could do this for YOU too.

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