

EXECUTIVE PROFILE | Melissa Hayden Cook

Melissa Hayden Cook is president and chief executive officer of Sharp Health Plan, a not-for-profit commercial health plan based in San Diego.

BUSINESS PHILOSOPHY

Best business decision: Leaving the for-profit world and aligning with an organization that shares my values.

Best way to keep a competitive edge: Listening to and learning from our customers — and reading everything I can (even beyond the health care industry) to incorporate best practices into what we do.

Biggest missed opportunity: Not attending law school.

Biggest ongoing challenge: Transforming the health care landscape in San Diego by delivering more value as a nonprofit health plan — particularly in light of health care reform.

Essential business philosophy: Always be prepared; failing to plan is planning to fail.

JUDGMENT CALLS

Most important lesson learned: Trust yourself. If it doesn't feel right, it's not right.

Significant business mistake: Almost taking the wrong job and going against my gut when something didn't feel right.

Yardstick for success: Earning the respect of others and making a difference.

Most influential read: "The Alchemist," by Paulo Coelho and any issue of

the Harvard Business Review.

Most like to meet: Mahatma Gandhi.

Word that describes you: Purposeful.

How is business currently versus a year ago: A year ago we were anticipating great change in the health care industry. Now that health care reform is real, we're in the midst of transformation. It's challenging and promising at the same time.

How do you motivate staff: By caring and being invested in every facet of our business.

What is the secret to your success: Surrounding myself with the best people.

PREDILECTIONS

Favorite quote: "A journey of a thousand miles must begin with a single step." — Lao Tzu.

Goals yet to be achieved: The ability to change the world and still be home for dinner!

Guiding principles I will continue to follow: Having faith in people, trusting them and treating them with integrity and respect.

How you plan to grow the business: Demonstrating that all health plans are not created equal by showcasing the unique character and values of our organization.

Mentor: I'm fortunate to have had many brilliant and impactful people in my life. I've learned from them all.



RESUME

Name: Melissa Hayden Cook.

Organization: Sharp Health Plan.

Titles: President, CEO.

Education: Bachelor of Business Administration, University of San Diego.

Birthplace: San Diego.

Age: 48.

Current residence: San Diego.

Family: Married with two daughters.