

Frances Dare

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Impelled by intellectual curiosity, a sense of adventure, and the willingness to take risks Frances Dare plunged into a career that has taken her into diverse markets and around the globe. As a result, she has the ideal background for a global healthcare business consultant: deep in the fundamentals of business, IT, and healthcare, with broad exposure to many different businesses, cultures, languages, and different ways of doing things.

Dare grew up in a small town in northern New Mexico, amid the wide-open skies and mountain vistas. Like many small-town kids, she yearned to see the rest of the world. And see the world she has. While a student at Stephens College in Columbia, Missouri, she took time to work on Capitol Hill for then-Senator Harrison “Jack” Schmitt. After graduating summa cum laude with a degree in business, she went into New Mexico politics, recruiting candidates, fundraising, and running campaigns. Politics seemed like a way to pursue her desire to make positive changes in the world.

Dare loved the variety and intensity of politics, but when the opportunity came up to work in healthcare, she went for it with her usual zest, intrigued by the opportunity to learn something new. A summer internship at Mercy Hospital in San Diego had piqued her interest in healthcare management. The chance to return to healthcare full-time came to Dare unexpectedly. One of the state legislators with whom she worked was director of Marketing at a health system when she wasn’t serving in the NM legislature. She asked Dare to join her marketing team at St. Joseph Healthcare in Albuquerque.

“It was a really challenging time in healthcare in a highly competitive market,” Dare says. “And we were trying to strengthen our brand and expand our market share. I helped



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create some of the first strategic plans for our centers of excellence, including cancer, neuro services, and the rehabilitation program. With the decision to build a freestanding rehabilitation hospital—where we cared for people recovering from strokes, head injuries and spinal cord injuries—I joined the hospital executive team. As it turned out, I was the only executive involved from start to finish with the hospital project—designing, building and then opening and operating the facility.” It was easy to see that by helping to change healthcare for the better, Dare could contribute to making life better for patients—and for clinicians as well.

As part of her outreach to build a regional referral base, Dare became familiar with most of the hospitals and hospital administrators in the state. With those relationships and a strong background in policymaking, it was no surprise that the New Mexico Hospital Association offered her a position as vice president for membership services and operations.

“I took the job because it was clear that the healthcare in this country needed dramatic change, not just fine-tuning. You can only make significant changes by operating at the policy-making level. I was hoping to help make the system better—for patients, doctors, and hospitals,” Dare comments. At the same time she was attending Southern Methodist University, commuting between Albuquerque and Dallas, TX on weekends to earn her MBA. As she finished up her MBA program, with its emphasis on global business, Dare felt strongly drawn to work internationally. With few of the qualms that usually beset the first-time entrepreneur, she decided to start her own consulting firm.

Running her own business gave Dare the freedom and flexibility to pursue opportunities in far-flung places. She spent two months in Antigua, Guatemala, studying Spanish while living with a local family. She lived in Tokyo, teaching Japanese businesspeople about American business practices and customs. Finally, the time came when she decided to move back to the United States. She returned to Dallas, taking a job with EDS as a healthcare marketing expert. With EDS, she became deeply immersed in learning how IT permeates business operations, and how to use it to support business success. She learned the art of management consulting as a member of EDS’ internal consulting arm, specializing in healthcare and working with clients as diverse as the Veterans Health Administration and the Hong Kong Social Welfare Department. In her final years at EDS, she took on a global leadership role as group vice president of the Healthcare Global Industry Group (HGIG). During that time she led projects and teams working in Australia, Canada, Europe, and across the United States.

When Dare received a call from a headhunter recruiting for Cisco’s Internet Business Solutions Group (IBSG), she wasn’t looking for a new job, but she was intrigued. She enjoyed the customer-facing aspects of consulting, and her rapid rise at EDS involved her more in internal management. Speaking of IBSG, she says, “Everyone was so bright and so articulate, and had so much energy. I thought this was a group of people I really wanted to work with.”

Though Dare’s career has been eclectic, it all comes into play in her work with IBSG. Having traveled expensively, she is comfortable with people all over the world.

Sometimes, she can even speak their language; she jokes about being able to “mangle five languages —Spanish, Japanese, German, Russian, and English.” Her sensitivity to working and living within cultures other than her own allows her to shift into different modes of communication without really thinking about it.

In her work with IBSG healthcare customers, she does her homework, finding out everything she can about an organization. Then she “begins conversations,” looking for areas that are on the minds of executives. During this process, she brings to bear her wide exposure to many kinds of businesses, as well as her in-depth exposure to the healthcare field.

“I don’t think I consciously do this,” Dare remarks, “But I hope I create a kind of synergy between everything I’ve done and learned throughout my life. I’m able to make connections between disparate situations because I’ve seen something similar in another context.”

Dare lives in Dallas with her husband and two children. While her interests are still far-ranging—from Jungian psychology to travel, choral music to hiking—she says her free time these days is mostly taken up with her children’s soccer games. But she is true to her first passion.

“I want to be a part of helping effect positive change in the world,” she says. “I want to help people have a better quality of life. Good health is a prerequisite for people to live good lives. They can provide for their kids and raise healthy families. People should be able to have all the opportunities they deserve.”