

AGENT OF CHANGE


The sequencing of the human genome has sent the life-sciences industry racing forward. CATHERINE M. BURZIK '72 is at the head of the pack.



When researchers sequenced the human genome nearly five years ago, they exposed the blueprint that will enable scientists to isolate different genes and develop more effective treatments for diseases such as cancer, AIDS, even heart disease.

Among the promising treatments are targeted medicines specifically developed to an individual's DNA.

With the potential of so many medical breakthroughs on the horizon, the life-sciences industry is racing forward. CATHERINE M. BURZIK '72 is at the head of the pack.



Burzik is president of Applied Biosystems (AB) in Forest City, CA. The \$2 billion life-sciences firm develops instrument-based tools, consumables, software and services necessary for government, commercial and international researchers to make new scientific discoveries. AB created the instrumentation used to map the human genome.

As competitive as the life-sciences business is, today, one would assume it's vital for the leaders of such global corporations to have a strong science background. Not the case, where Catherine Burzik is concerned.

"I am not a scientist at all," she admits.

In fact, this first generation college graduate intended to use her math and classics degrees to become a school teacher. Life took the Jamestown, NY native in a different direction but Burzik was prepared.

"What I learned at Canisius was the ability to look at things broadly; to be multidisciplinary or multidirectional in my thinking," says Burzik. "I can look at a problem or situation and analyze it from many different directions."

Those were exactly the skills Burzik needed when she became president of Applied Biosystems in August 2004. The firm's future was clouded with uncertainty. Its long-time president left unexpectedly and revenues had flatlined.

"Our products were all used to sequence the human genome in the late 1990s and 2000," explains Burzik. "Once the genome was sequenced our clients stopped buying our instruments."

Burzik was challenged to reinvigorate the growth of Applied Biosystems and find a new market for its equipment. To do this, she recruited a fresh management team comprised of leaders from various healthcare-related companies. She sought out new technical talent from GE, Phillips and Medtronic. Burzik also introduced a Scientific Advisory Board (SAB) to recommend business strategies that would help grow the company. With a new team in place, Burzik focused next on ways to diversify AB's product line.

"First, we developed a number of new products aimed at fundamental life scientists, so that they could continue to explore the genome," explains Burzik, who notes that biotech companies, such as those sprouting up in the Buffalo Niagara Medical Campus, use AB's instrumentation in their research and development. "But then, we determined that AB no longer had to focus solely on research and we turned our attention to markets where our products could be applied."

Crime labs were among the many target markets. With DNA now commonly used to identify or exonerate criminals, AB developed human identification kits, for federal, state and local police agencies. Nearly all major post offices in the United States now employ AB equipment to test

for the bio-terrorist threat of anthrax. Food, water and environmental agencies from around the world utilize AB equipment to test for harmful pathogens. The most recent market for Applied Biosystems is avian flu testing.

Burzik's work keeps her crisscrossing the country – and the globe. She travels frequently throughout the United States and Europe, as well as Japan and China, while her husband, Frank, a retired electrical engineer, holds down the fort at home as "CEO of the household."

With his unwavering support, Burzik's exceptional leadership at Applied Biosystems has paid off. The company produces 200,000 instruments used by a half-million different research labs, hospitals, government agencies and universities. And it employs 4500 people, more than 1000 of whom are PhD scientists enlisted from all over the world.

"She really has transformed the company, the attitudes of the company and the way people deal with one another," says John H. Richards, PhD, professor of biochemistry at Cal-Tech University and chair of AB's Science Advisory Board. "Decision-making is more consultative. There is more discussion, more debate. There has been quite a change and a lot of it is due to Cathy's leadership."

It is on the business of leadership that Burzik spends much of her time. She says, "I am a student of leadership and believe that companies of the future are defined by really strong leaders."

Burzik's interest in leadership began with her first job out of graduate school. On a lark, she interviewed for a position as a software engineer at Eastman Kodak. The Rochester-based business hired her on the spot. Burzik was shocked but her former mathematics and statistics professor from Canisius was not.

"Businesses look for someone who is a math major because even if they don't use the mathematics, per se, in the position, they are well-trained in logical thinking and can quickly pick up new information," explains Richard L. Uschold, PhD, professor *emeritus*.

That was certainly the case for Burzik. Her career at Kodak spanned nearly two decades. During that time, she observed what worked and what didn't.

"In the research and development environment, a lot of good technical people tend to get promoted but sometimes that is a mistake because technical people aren't necessarily good leaders," she recalls.

Burzik began to ask: What is leadership? How is it different than management? How do you model leadership? And what does it take to develop leaders?

Kodak supported Burzik's interest in leadership and professional development at Northwestern University's Kellogg School of Management and Penn State's Center for Creative Leadership.

Her leadership abilities helped fuel Burzik's rapid ascent up the management ranks at Kodak and later at Johnson and Johnson (J&J), which in 1997 recruited her

PICTURED BELOW: Cathy Burzik's trademark pin. It is a gold replica of the Applied Biosystems logo and includes a diamond helix. Burzik's husband, Frank, had the pin made for her when she joined the company. Burzik wears it everyday.



to revive Critikon. In one year, Burzik turned around the Florida-based manufacturer of blood pressure monitors. J&J then asked her to do the same as president of its New Jersey based Ortho-Clinical Diagnostics division, which provides instruments, assays and consumables to the clinical laboratory and transfusion medicine markets.

"Cathy has a special mix of technical competence and interpersonal skills," says John Gallenberger, retired vice president of Kodak's Office Imaging Group and Burzik's first supervisor. "She is a very pragmatic and tough manager, but also sensitive. Cathy will set a goal and analyze very rapidly what needs to be done. She is an agent of change."

Today, this 'agent of change' is not only leading a \$2 billion life-sciences business into the future. She is also training its leaders of tomorrow. Burzik says she spends more than half her time modeling leadership at Applied Biosystems: setting a clear vision for the company, strategizing that vision, and communicating it to AB's employees and customers.

Burzik also models her leadership skills at *alma mater*. A member of the Canisius College Board of Trustees, this 2001 Distinguished Alumna Award recipient is

an enthusiastic supporter and fund raiser for the college's interdisciplinary science center, to be housed in the BlueCross BlueShield building. It's a place Burzik hopes will keep the scientific pipeline full for companies such as hers.

"In the new science center, students will be able to interact with students from different science disciplines to solve problems," says Burzik. "It's an interdisciplinary approach, and it is the way science is practiced in the real world and will continue to be practiced for the next 20 years."

For now, Burzik emphasizes the importance a well-rounded education from Canisius can have on students, no matter what their future holds.

"I didn't necessarily appreciate it at the time but I received a very broad education at Canisius," says Burzik. "I took science classes, liberal arts classes, classical language classes and as a result, was blessed with developing a lot of different skills. I learned to step back and look at situations with a more multi-disciplined approach. Those skills are what helped me throughout my life."

And their influence on the direction of the life-sciences industry is profound. So while researchers continue to explore the genome, Catherine Burzik will continue to provide them with the tools necessary for the next medical breakthrough.

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