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## People

### Executive class Halpin lives good life with minimal stress

BY ANGELA GONZALES

agonzales@bizjournals.com

**Y**ou get the feeling that you can confess to Katharine Halpin all of your darkest secrets, and she won't judge you.

Maybe it's her nurturing personality.

Or maybe she's just doing her job, serving as a model for her clients.

As an executive coach, Halpin helps corporate presidents become better leaders.

Valerie Manning, president and chief

executive of the Greater

#### PROFILE

Phoenix Chamber of

Commerce, said Halpin

has helped her develop her leadership, communication and executive skills.

"She's done this by being a keen listener, not being judgmental and offering clear and common-sense advice," Manning says.

"Katharine has helped me to open my mind to consider another's point of view without judgment, to try to find common ground for resolving problems and to nurture relationships for the long-term."

Herman Orcutt, a partner with Orcutt/Winslow Architects in Phoenix, was leery when he and the architectural firm's three other partners began meeting with Halpin several years ago.

"You wonder if anybody can really do anything; make a difference," Orcutt says. "We found that she was able to do that. She encourages everybody to speak honestly and directly to each other without getting into a fistfight or anything like that."

Halpin began her company, Katharine Halpin & Co. LLC, in 1995 after being a certified public accountant for most of her life.

The seeds for her CPA career began when she was just 12 years old, hanging out with her father, a CPA in Vicksburg, Miss.



JIM POULIN/THE BUSINESS JOURNAL

**Executive coach Katharine Halpin enjoys helping others take better care of themselves to tone down the workplace intensity.**

"He couldn't relate to children, but I'm like an old soul. I like to look older and look wise," she says. "He could relate to employees, and I got to see a side of my dad communicating his values to me."

Halpin's work ethic was modeled after her father, a workaholic.

"He got some needs met by working overtime," she said.

Halpin says her family life was eerily similar to the characters of novel and feature film "Divine Secrets of the Ya-Ya Sisterhood." She says she was best portrayed by the daughter, who was played in the movie by Sandra Bullock.

"In the movie, Sandra Bullock asks her

father, 'What was the deal?'" Halpin said. "We were ill-prepared," the father replied.

"That whole culture of the '50s and '60s was ill-prepared," Halpin says. "They had that cocktail-party society mentality."

When she was 7, Halpin took a leadership role within her family, even though she was the second-oldest of five children.

"Someone has got to make a few decisions around here," she remembers saying. "I was in charge of logistics. I was a young entrepreneur at 7. It prepared me to build a business."

At the age of 56, her father died of a massive heart attack.

"He wore himself out," she says. "He

collapsed at the front door at home on his way to the office.”

It was that tragedy that helped Halpin realize she needed to change her own workaholic lifestyle.

As a CPA, she was miserable. While she was good at her job, she always felt that she was trying to prove herself.

“I had an unmet need to get credit,” she said. “I was resentful when others

would get credit,” she says of her co-workers.

Finally, as she put it, she “ran out of gas.” And on her road to self-discovery, Halpin found coaching.

“Life is sending us messages all day and every day about how we can grow and develop as human beings,” Halpin says. “My gift is being able to see what’s possible.”

Jackie Bowers, former owner of

Worldwide Travel and Halpin’s mentor, says Halpin is energetic, positive and insightful.

“She never settles for the status quo, and I see her continually searching for better ways to enhance the services she provides to her clients,” Bowers said. “She has a genuine goal of giving her clients the tools to make the positive changes in their lives. She really cares.”

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## ■ KATHARINE HALPIN

**Title:** Executive coach

**Company:** Katharine Halpin & Co. LLC

**Age:** 43

**E-mail:** [kwh@halpincompany.com](mailto:kwh@halpincompany.com)

**Residence:** Phoenix

**Children:** None

**Education:** BS in Business Administration, major in Accounting, University of Texas, Dallas

**Associations:** Member, International Coach Federation; co-founder of the ICF Phoenix-Tucson Chapter in 1996; chairelect, Arizona Society of CPAs; member, American Institute of CPAs; member, Arizona Business Leadership Inc.; member, Greater Phoenix Chamber of Commerce and founding governing board member of its AthenaPowerlink Program.

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## ■ UP CLOSE

**When do you feel the most free?** “Any time I get to interact with children.”

**Biggest hypocrite:** “I don’t typically track this. When I find someone who appears to not ‘walk their talk,’ I trust that they are doing the best they can do, and I just try to disengage with them without making any judgments about them.”

**When have you needed the most courage?** “Leaving my family and home in Mississippi when I was 21 years old. I was the first person in seven generations to leave Mississippi.”

**What were you like as a child?** “Overly responsible, very shy and reserved.”

**What is your most important possession?** “Patio and pool at my home where I spend much of my down time.”

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## What is your most marked characteristic?

“The ability to connect with other people and the ability to see what’s possible for them and their companies.”

**Pet peeve:** “Technology breakdowns.”

**Greatest regret:** “No regrets, everything is an opportunity for growth.”

**Who are your real-life heroes?** “Anyone who is able to turn adversity into opportunity.”

**Motto:** “Be the best person I can be.”

**What has been your greatest achievement?** “Transferring my struggle as a CPA into a new career that I love. I’ve found my niche.”

**Favorite book:** “‘The Heart Aroused’ by David Whyte, and ‘Primal Leadership’ by Daniel Goleman.”

**Favorite saying:** “Everything is perfect.”

**Who would you most like to meet?** “Anyone who is open to sharing their story.”

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