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## Marilyn Tam, Healthwalk

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### Marilyn Tam, Healthwalk

June 9th, 2009 · [No Comments](#)

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Most of us don't figure out what our life's mission is until we're older, if ever. Not Marilyn Tam, Co-Visioneer of [Healthwalk](#). By age eleven Marilyn knew exactly what she wanted to do with her life – make a difference in the world.

Growing up in Hong Kong, Marilyn's childhood "was not a picture book." She experienced and observed living conditions that disturbed her. Marilyn couldn't believe that some parents couldn't even provide the basics for their children, so she committed herself to changing that. Since Marilyn's only frame of reference was National Geographic, the pre-teen decided that once she became an adult, she'd work in Africa, teach people how to provide for and feed themselves, and show them how to run their government.

Fast forward to Marilyn's college graduation in Oregon, where she was within reach of her dream career working for the World Health Organization. She applied for a job and waited, anxiously. But when Marilyn received a response, she was devastated. She had been rejected on the basis that the World Health Organization only hired people with at least ten years of work experience.

Although Marilyn was disappointed, she was a realist. Marilyn knew that she still had to eat, so she interviewed with May Department Stores International. She was pleasantly surprised to find out that at May Department Stores, people were promoted and rated based on the merit of their performance. After having experienced discrimination as a Chinese woman, Marilyn was excited to prove what she could do and be evaluated fairly. She also discovered that May Department Stores was concerned about bettering the community. Marilyn realized, "Maybe I can make a difference right here." She didn't have to travel around the world to effect change.

Surprisingly, Marilyn admits that she never plotted a career path. However, that didn't stop her from serving as the CEO of Aveda, President of Reebok Apparel & Retail Group and Vice President of



## LADIES WHO LAUNCH

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Nike. She is also an accomplished [entrepreneur](#), having launched three successful companies. They include corporate consulting & training, a web portal company and a web-based supply chain software business. Marilyn is currently the Co-Visioneer for Healthwalk, a cutting-edge healthcare services and products organization.

Marilyn also added author to her distinguished list of accomplishments with her 2003 book [How to Use What You've Got to Get What You Want](#). In it she shares lessons in making the best of who you are to achieve personal and professional success.

Marilyn's pre-teen mission to make a difference in the world has been the tenet that drives her. As a result of her business and humanitarian work, in 2006 Marilyn received a unique honor from the Greek government and the Euro American Women's Council - her likeness on a Greek postage stamp.



In addition to her numerous other awards, in 2007 she was honored with the Lifetime Achievement Award from eWomenNetwork and, more recently, participated in the organization's [GLOW Project](#).

Marilyn's ability to share her vision with other people, align her path with her dreams and follow them steadfastly has remained her guiding principle - a distinct perspective in a global society focused on what you're expected to do to make you happy, rather than pursuing what actually does.

**What we learned from Marilyn:** "If you're doing something for a living, you better enjoy it. Ask yourself, 'Is this what I want to do or what everyone expects me to do?' Make sure it aligns with your energy and goals. Whatever you do, it should be what you're most happy with. That way, having to get up at 5:00am for a job is OK. You should look inside yourself first to make sure what you're doing aligns with your mission, then look at the external factors."

#### Respected Humanitarian

"While I was at Reebok, I established what is now known as International Labour Standards for apparel workers. I made sure that workers have enough light, fair wages, proper ventilation and can support themselves. It was my way of giving back."

#### A CEO by Any Other Name...

"After Healthwalk launched in 2007, I became a client. Then I got more involved. The founder, Mark D. Hines, had a technical background, but no [marketing](#) experience. I offered to help, so I created the strategy, branding and messaging for free. When I presented it to Mark, he understood the need for it. Then I realized that it was like I just gave the most sophisticated scuba equipment to a person who has never gone scuba diving. In exchange, Mark wanted to give me shares, but at the time he was looking for investors. I believed so much in Healthwalk I ended up buying the whole first round. As a result, he wanted to make me the CEO. I told him, 'No, CEO is old school. Let's come up with titles that really describe what we do. That's how I ended up as Co-Visioneer of Healthwalk."

#### The Changing Face of Success

"I was on a radio show with Sandra Yancey, founder of eWomenNetwork. I thought, 'This is a woman I'd like to know.' A few weeks later, I got a call from Sandra. She let me know that she wanted to honor me with their Lifetime Achievement Award at her organization's upcoming 2007 conference. I immediately said, 'Don't I have to be older?' Sandra explained that she was changing the face of what success looks like."

#### Living True

"Although I never plotted my career path, I believed that if I kept with my mission, everything else would follow. I really evolved from a place of trust. And now, having founded the [Us Foundation](#) I'm able to impact social, economic and environmental issues globally. I'm just thankful."

This Featured Lady was profiled by [Megan L. Reese](#), a freelance writer in West Grove, Pennsylvania.

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