

A Walk with Purpose: Memoir of a Bioentrepreneur

Michael D. Becker

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A Walk with Purpose is an affecting personal story about handling both success and adversity.

A heartfelt memoir of an eventful life and career suddenly derailed by cancer, Michael D. Becker's *A Walk with Purpose* is a detailed, intimate look into the bioscience industry from a C-level executive and patient.

Becker's story begins with his discovery of a lump on his neck and the horrifying diagnosis of advanced cancer. He then narrates his life from childhood through to his marriage and family, also exploring his career leading several notable bioscience companies and creating his own consulting firm, all before arriving at the cancer diagnosis and his ensuing fight to survive.

The book's conversational tone makes the story accessible. Anecdotes about the author's experiences—from battles in corporate boardrooms to hiking mountain trails to withstanding chemo and radiation therapies—are written with specificity and color.

Structured chronologically, the story includes the exact dates of all the major incidents and experiences along the way. Those dates help keep the story anchored in time and make it easy to follow.

The narrative introduces a wide range of people who impacted the author's life, including family, friends, business associates, competitors, and medical professionals. Becker straddles a fine line between tact and honesty in his descriptions of his interactions, including his daughter's untimely "meltdown" and a business associate's failure to live up to a crucial agreement. He is similarly candid in discussing his achievements and missteps, including landing corporate board chairmanships and finding himself unemployed with a family to care for and a mortgage to pay.

A Walk with Purpose is almost like two books. The story of Becker's navigation of the bioscience industry makes for interesting reading on its own. It includes insider details of how medical products get made and marketed, and the millions and even billions of dollars involved. The story of Becker's battle against cancer is equally compelling. His account of the havoc chemo and radiation wreaked on his body is vivid. As Becker points out, the two stories link up with a certain irony. He finds himself depending, as a patient, on some of the same products that he helped develop as an executive.

The book's discussions of leading-edge products and the research required to create them sometimes seem more suitable for a technical, rather than a general, audience. Terms such as "monoclonal" and "pure active isomer" stand out in a narrative that is otherwise informal and even confidential.

A Walk with Purpose is an affecting personal story about handling both success and adversity. It offers no easy answers but manages to touch upon the profound.

GARY HENRY (September 12, 2017)

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