

# Cost Engineering

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*Promoting the Planning and  
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## THE 2008 AACE INTERNATIONAL ANNUAL MEETING



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## Spotlight on Women in Project Controls — Katherine K. Molly, CCE

**Editor's Note:** This series of articles from the AACE International Women in Project Controls Task Force will highlight the accomplishments and contributions of AACE International women who work in project controls. The series will be one component in accomplishing the mission of the Women in Project Controls Task Force which is, "to encourage women to actively participate in program/project management and project controls, and to identify avenues for the recruitment, mentoring, and recognition of women in AACE International.

The WPC Task Force includes: Valerie Venters, CCC, chair; Julie Owen, CCC, PSP, vice-chair; Kathy Garza, CCC, secretary; Jennie Amos, Headquarters representative; and Ginette Basak, P.Eng; Clive Francis, CCC; Marlene Hyde, CCE; Vera Lovejoy, CCE PSP; Alexia Nalewaik, CCE and Carole Venters, CCC, as advisors.



Katherine K. Molly, CCE

**K**atherine K. Molly is a managing partner at Blue Marble Risk Solutions—an advisory firm specializing in the strategic planning, risk management and dispute resolution for capital projects. Based in Houston, Texas, Blue Marble's clients are owners, contractors, engineers, private equity/VC firms in energy as well as real estate/infrastructure development.

Katherine is from South Texas where she grew up on a dairy farm and beef cattle ranch and inherited her family's hard work ethic. After high school, Katherine attended Texas A&M University and earned a B.S. in civil engineering. During college, she worked for Marathon Oil Company as a co-op in their marketing and transportation group for three terms. It was then that she discovered her passion for construction projects.

After graduation, Katherine continued to work in the oil and gas industry as a facility engineer for Chevron USA Production. However, it was her next position that turned out to be the turning point in her career when she went to work for a construction claims firm. She did not have direct experience working with claims or disputes but was intrigued by the prospect of working for a small company that helped large companies recover or defend monetary positions. According to Katherine, "It turned out to be a wonderful fit because I was able to use my communication skills in conjunction with my technical and analytic abilities." Knowing that she could significantly increase the client's chances for a favorable resolution drove her to develop a particular expertise in calculating damages, linking entitlement to those damages, and communicating it effectively.

Frustrated with seeing clients lose or have millions of dollars tied up with a legal contract dispute, she co-founded Blue Marble Risk Solutions. Blue Marble is unique in that it not only provides dispute resolution assistance, it actively promotes claims avoidance and operations excellence through project portfolio management. "Our services are designed to maximize the value of capital investments and minimize the risks of project execution. These project portfolio management practices have been proven to significantly improve project cost and schedule performance and deliver better-performing assets, which is better for all of the stakeholders in a capital project."

The main attraction in pursuing a career in the construction industry was having an opportunity to make a significant impact for a company. Successful capital projects enable companies to increase revenue, enter new markets, adapt to changing conditions and improve profitability. Too often clients are in financial distress or even on the verge of bankruptcy because of projects not performing as budgeted or upcoming arbitration/litigation. Katherine gains significant satisfaction from being an integral part of the client and attorney team, particularly with strategy development, that helps companies recover their projects and achieve their business objectives.

When asked about the impact of a mentor, she mentioned that her former employer kept pushing her to improve her analytical and communication skills, particularly by thinking outside of the box. She stated that the most important characteristic of her success is believing in herself and constantly stepping outside of her comfort zone.

Regarding the importance of AACE International, Katherine says, "AACE International's certifications have helped validate, benchmark, and promote project controls and construction claims within the engineering and construction industry. That in itself is good for all industries as it maximizes the leverage of capital investments in construction projects."

Her plans for the future are to continue expanding the company's international presence and build the firms' reputation as a premier consulting firm. She is also going to stay committed to AACE International and continually improve her technical skills.

We asked her what advice she had for other women in the industry. Katherine stated that she believes women have two particular strengths in project controls: ability to work effectively within a team and ability to communicate complex issues. "AACE International is a good place to gain perspective on the industry because of the diverse backgrounds and companies present. Most importantly, networking is vital to a long and ascending career for anyone."

In conclusion, she mentioned that she gained inspiration by a quote she read as a child: "A ship is safe in its harbor, but that is not what ships are built for." According to Katherine, "Life is too short to not fully enjoy your work and pursue your dreams. We only live this life once." ♦