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In this episode Taren Grom, editor-in-chief of PharmaVOICE magazine, meets with Colleen Carter, chief marketing officer Fingerpaint.

Taren: Colleen, welcome to the PharmaVOICE WoW Podcast Program.

Colleen: Hey, Taren. I am so happy to participate. Thanks for the invite.

Taren: It's our pleasure, and I want to congratulate you on your new role as chief marketing officer even though we know Fingerpaint doesn't really have titles, but that's really the role you're fulfilling there at Fingerpaint, so congratulations.

Colleen: Thank you so much. I'm so thrilled to be here, absolutely.

Taren: Wonderful. Colleen, I know that you are a seasoned advertising executive, and you've spent a great part of your career working with clients. I'd love to know what makes a great client-agency relationship.

Colleen: I actually think the same elements apply to the client-agency relationship as it would to relationships with those we care about – honesty, trust, respect, communication. I think about relationships and the responsibility that comes from them. We need to care about our clients. We need to care about these brands truly as much as our clients do, and when we make promises, we need to be prepared to deliver on them. Ultimately, our efforts affect our client successes. Their careers, their reputation can sometimes be affected by what we deliver or don't deliver, and at the end of the day we have to remember why we're doing all of this in the first place – to get lifesaving medicine into the hands of those who need it, so the strength of the relationships that we build with our clients and the work that comes out of those relationships help us do just that.

Taren: Fantastic. There are some who say that the agency is really the steward of the brand because on the client side, but sometimes the marketing people come in and out, but it's really when there is that trusted relationship that the agency acts as the true steward. Is that a fair statement even today?

Colleen: I think it is. Our clients move on, and hopefully we've worked with them to set the market on behalf of the brand and then launch the brand into the market, and there is a lot of history there and knowledge there that should be leveraged as the brand goes

through its life cycle, so I do think that a key role is to be the steward of the brand. That makes a lot of sense.

Taren: What are some of the biggest trends you're witnessing today in terms of innovation, media channels, and the overall healthcare advertising business?

Colleen: I think in a way, it ties back to what we were just talking about – building relationships. We're in the business of reaching customers and connecting in relevant and meaningful ways, and today's customers want and frankly expect to get content, information right when they're ready for it, so we can't and we shouldn't expect that simply putting content up on our website will shift mindsets and behaviors and build deep sustaining relationships. One size doesn't fit all, and so as marketers, we use data-driven platforms like Shift at Fingerprint to turn huge amounts of what is confusing and most oftentimes complex data into information that allows for a more efficient and effective means to engage with customers, in ways that are more personalized, more responsive so that those relationships can be built and built on the thing that is the most important to the customer, and data helps us understand just what that might be.

Taren: Wonderful. We can't turn around twice without bumping into something that's AI-related or machine learning-related. How is that impacting what you all do at the agency?

Colleen: Sometimes you feel like you just can't read enough or study enough or there is always something new. I personally love learning and love to see what's happening out there, but it can be overwhelming because back to truly understanding the clients, so machine learning and AI provide us with data that we might not have to be able to intercept a customer or anticipate a need or desire and be able to be there with the right message at the right time versus just putting things out there and hoping it's fixed. It goes back to truly understanding customers on a personal level.

Taren: You talked a lot about what healthcare advertising can do for careers and for bringing lifesaving medicines to patients. What else about what you do as a professional really excites you?

Colleen: I feel so fortunate to be in this industry. I woke up this morning, and I was so excited to come to work, and I felt that way in my career because of the work that we do. I truly believe that the work that we do allows medications and support and services to get to those who need them, and that feels really good. Our customers, patients, caregivers, and even healthcare professionals are turning more and more to the people that they know, to social channels, to advocacy groups, and even reviews to get health information.

We know that one in three consumers in the US checks social media, Dr. Google for health-related matters, and consumers especially those with illnesses and like rare

diseases search for people whose experiences mirror their own, so I'm excited by the investment that many of our clients are making in content marketing, influencer marketing and content creation, partnerships, and other means designed to deliver actual value to customers.

So having said that, we talked earlier about how fast everything changes and what we need to know as strategic partners to our client, we as their partner own the responsibility of understanding and anticipating or merging FDA and FTC guidelines so that the work that we put out there is responsible and compliant.

Taren: Those are the two big sticking points always, right – responsible and compliant – and it is a struggle to keep track and keep up with the FTC and with the FDA regulations, so again, it goes back to being that steward of the brand.

Colleen: Yeah, it goes back to relationships and being honest and authentic and transparent, so it's understanding the guidelines but also wanting to do the right thing and in what other industry is that more important than the industry that we're in. So it's complex, and there is a lot to know, and it's tough to keep up, but our clients depend on us to do that, and of course, anything that we put out there, we want it to be perfect, we want it to be responsible and compliant, we want it to have value, and so there are a lot of different thought processes that need to go into creating that.

Taren: Throughout your career, I'm sure you've had many memorable moments. Can you share one such wow moment with us, something that really kind of turned the trajectory of your career?

Colleen: I love that question. There are so many, but I will never forget this moment. Earlier on in my career, I was selected to attend an executive leadership program at Babson. It was fantastic. It was a great week, and there were probably a hundred people there, and we were learning all about marketing and all through case studies, and it was fantastic. In one of the courses, one of our professors asked us to think about all the people on our path that taught us what we needed to know to be the leaders that we were today or that inspired us to be a leader to grow into. It could be bosses. It could be old bosses, new bosses, colleagues, teachers, family members. I remember I had my grandmother on there. We were asked to put their names on a flip chart and then present back to the class what we had learned from each of them, from every single person on that flip chart.

It was really fascinating to hear other people's stories about how connections and relationships had impacted them. It was a really wonderful course, but the thing that was most memorable and that has stuck with me is after everyone had presented, she asked us to consider our own lives, and then she asked us how many flip charts would have our name on them, and that was a really powerful moment for me because we have so many opportunities every day to make it onto that flipchart, and so I think about that often in

small ways and big ways. That was a wow moment – that we don't get to where we are by ourselves alone. There are many people along the path that got us there, and I want to make it on to those flipcharts. I was that kid that always liked the star on the refrigerator, so for me, the flipchart is my star, and so that was a wow moment.

Taren: That's a great inspirational story. Thank you so much for sharing that with us. I think everybody should aspire to be on a flipchart.

Colleen: Exactly.

Taren: Now just to switch channels here for a second. You served as a board member for the Medical Advertising Hall of Fame. I had the honor of attending this year's event this month, and two women for the first time, which I couldn't believe, Charlene Prounis and Carol DiSanto, were inducted into the MAHF. I just was struck that this was such a significant milestone. Did you all on the board think that this was a milestone?

Colleen: Well it was milestone, and it was fabulous, and it was a long time coming. I was there too, and what a wonderful evening. I was so proud of both of them and for what they have accomplished in their careers, but what inspired me the most was how each of them talked about all of the women in their lives that supported them on their journey, kind of going back to the flipchart.

We are so much stronger together and so much smarter together and so much better together and listening to them and thinking about my career and how critical it is to have role models like them and mentors along the way because both of these women and many more have made a difference in my career over the years, so what I'm hoping for is that because of them and because of the efforts of organizations like the HBA that more women search out mentors either in the workplace or through groups like the HBA and then more women raise their hands to be mentors. I imagine that we'll see more women inducted into MAHF as we continue to build each up. It's time for that. I just love the fact that we're publicly talking about working together and helping one another. It was a great evening.

Taren: I couldn't agree with you more, and I do hope that this is the beginning of a trend where we do see more women and more women being inducted because there are so many worthy candidates out there, so kudos to you all for recognizing that this was something that needed to happen and making it happen, so congratulations.

Colleen: Thank you. I think it's a congratulations for all of us.

Taren: Agreed.

You are one of the leading women in the healthcare advertising industry. It's kind of tough to think about it, but how do you gauge success for yourself, and then how do you celebrate those successes?

Colleen: That's such a great question. I have twins who left for college this year, so I'm an empty nester and I have been thinking about, for a couple of years before they left, 'Oh my goodness, what am I going to do? How is my life going to be different?' They, for so long – as a mom, they were my focus also as my career progressed, but I started thinking about purpose about four years ago. I guess it aligned in preparation with Lyle and Sam leaving, and I thought to myself 'how am I going to have a more purposeful life.' I really took a while; I thought about it. I journaled about it, and I made a commitment about it because I think success for me is about having a purposeful life with meaning, but I need to define that, so I was really deliberate and thoughtful about that.

It's ironic because at Fingerpaint, we have these three core pillars that speak to the work that we do, but I think they extend into the lives that we lead. The first is what I'm doing – 'paint by number.' The second is 'can I see the difference this will make,' and the third is 'is it worth my signature.' The questions guide everything that we do at Fingerpaint, but I arrived here, and I said 'Well, wait a minute, these answers, they also guide my life,' so the answers to these questions would define success for me – am I thinking differently? Am I making a difference in the people in my life, in the lives of those I served, in the people that I know and people that I don't know,' and 'Am I proud of the work that I'm doing, so proud that I want to put my signature on it.' Those are the things that define success for me today. It isn't just success in a career. I think it's success in life. I'm the same person who shows up at work as who shows up at home, and so it has to work in both areas.

Taren: I think those are three great guiding principles. I'm going to start to think about my purpose now, so thank you for inspiring me.

Colleen: I have a great book for you.

Taren: Tell me.

Colleen: It's by Warren Berger, and it's all about the Beautiful Question. People who knew me know I'm crazy about this book. I think I've probably purchased at least 40 of them and handed them out, and it started me on this purposeful journey life because it's a book about creativity and how you can't solve a problem if you haven't defined the right problem. You might be coming up with an answer to the wrong question. So it's about interrogating the question, and it is about creativity and how to brainstorm differently and how to interrogate a question, but part of the book at the end that Warren Berger asked what is your question – What is the question for you, and my question became how do I live a more purposeful life, and that began this journey of making it thoughtful and making it deliberate and writing it down.

One of the things that I do every year, November-December, is put together a job design of sorts, and it is a commitment that I make to myself about what do I want to accomplish in my career and what are some things that I want to accomplish in my personal life. One year it was take violin lessons. Another year it was learn French. I can't tell you that I was successful in either one of those, but I tried. The reason that I think it's important to write it down is because it makes it real, and I think if I can't keep a promise to myself, then how can I possibly keep promises to the people that I love and care about. How to live a more purposeful life was my question, and I spent time and energy making sure that I do that today.

Taren: It's great advice, and as soon as we're done, I'm going on Amazon, and I'm going to have to do one click. So finally, what's the one piece of advice you would give to your younger self if you could go back in time?

Colleen: Make the life that you want, do work that you want with people that you respect, with people whose values you share and as importantly with people that you can learn from. Don't waste one day wondering what if. It just takes one brave step, so I would tell her to be brave. I would tell her to just dive right in and to do it one step at a time and that all will be well.

Taren: That's awesome. Colleen, I can't thank you enough for sharing some time with us today for our WoW Podcast Program. This was wonderful. Thank you.

Colleen: It was a blast.

Dan: Thank you for listening to this episode of WoW – the Woman of the Week podcast series. And thanks again to Fingerpaint for sponsoring this program. For more information on Fingerpaint, please visit Fingerpaint.com. We also encourage you to listen to additional episodes at pharmaVOICE.com/WoW.