

January 22, 2020

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In this episode, Taren Grom, Editor of PharmaVOICE magazine meets with Dr. Susan Dorfman, President CMI/Compas.

Taren: Dr. Susan Dorfman, welcome to the PharmaVOICE WoW podcast program.

Dr. Dorfman: Taren, thank you so much for having me.

Taren: It is our pleasure. Susan, you have been with CMI for almost 10 years and you have been president for almost a year. Tell me about your professional journey at the agency.

Dr. Dorfman: Oh my goodness, so I got to say that 10 years it truly flew. I often say to people I work with I feel like a child in a candy store. When most people on the weekends go away and they're all excited for Saturday and Sunday, I'm kind of sad because my candy has been taken away. I truly mean it; I love every single day coming to work and spending time with the crew here with our CMI/Compas family. I started, I had a unique opportunity I should say, of being able to define my own job. I mean how often do you get to work with the CEO where he says 'hey, here's an opportunity. Why don't you tell me what motivates you and define your job.' So I did just that.

CMI had this thing, this data thing called ByDoctor and I was really intrigued 10 years ago about data and what that data could mean to the pharmaceutical world of marketing coming at it from a CRM and field force effectiveness perspective and said to our CEO Stan Woodland "Hey, I'd like to come and do something with this data set that you have." And he said, "Come on in." And 10 years ago when big data wasn't a topic of conversation and certainly no one talked about agile marketing or precision or performance we did just that and it's evolved ever since, and as has my journey from owning the data, to ultimately owning more responsibility not just for the data but what we do with the data. So some of our performance marketing initiatives, such as Own the Audience, to ultimately being responsible for product and growth and now being responsible for the overall agency which is incredibly exciting.

Taren: I love that you used the term like a kid in a candy store. Tell me what is the thing you love most about your role. I heard you say data and all the great products that are coming out of CMI, but what is it that you love most about your role?

Dr. Dorfman: It's what I love most about a role but also I think it's what I love most about our company and it's truly the incredible people that make up this company. We're 600 strong – nearly 600 strong – and stinkers just really do not make it in this organization. We have a team of exceptional people, people who are here to support one another, to do things no matter how great your product is, no matter how strong your data is, no matter how strong your offering is. We're in the people business. It's the people that make every single day fun and exciting. We just have a great group of people who are smart, who are passionate, who are excited to roll up their sleeves as much as I am and do things and try things and innovate and iterate.

Nothing seems to be a challenge. It's always hey, let's go find that opportunity and I think that's frankly what I love most about coming to work everyday and why I feel like a child in a candy store because there are other children here with me and we're all just having a really good time and not just working.

Taren: That's wonderful. You mentioned Stan and he obviously had been an integral part of the organization for so many years. Coming in as president how have you put your stamp on the culture of the organization?

Dr. Dorfman: So people have often called me I don't know for good, bad, but have often called me a force of nature. So I tend to not necessarily take no for an answer and continue to push forward. I think our teams and clients are a little bit used to me now in doing just that. So there is no such thing as impossible. I also love people. So I am very much out there. I try to visit our different offices. I try to interact with every single person in our organization and listen to them and it's less about me putting a mark on Susan and being me. It's more how do I take the best of Stan and amplify that. We have a CEO who is just I can't say enough positive things about him. As a matter of fact when I talk about him I start to get this thing in my voice where it's this feeling of pride, it's this feeling of deep, deep, deep respect.

So I think first and foremost for me I'd like to emulate him. I'd like to be more like him. He's incredibly patient. When I started here I wasn't. So it's taking more from him and becoming a better me and I think it's taking that innovation side of me that everything is possible that I bring to the table. It's recognizing each and every person for their strength and sometimes when they don't know it, pushing them forward and being there by their side knowing that hey, we're never going to fail. The only thing that can happen is we'll learn together. So I think maybe that's the part of me that I think that people are starting to see more of that I'd like for them to continue seeing.

Taren: That's wonderful. As a woman president and let's face it, we're still in an industry that is far from having gender balance you are really role model to those with this new organization and outside of your organization. Can you provide any tips or advice on the skills you learned to ascend to that C-suite position?

Dr. Dorfman: I grew up with a very strong mother. I also grew up in Eastern European kind of culture and background and roots where women are far more dominant and I think ultimately that has helped me not to necessarily see gender, but always be me, always be real, always be pushing for the truth and to always do the right thing. Growing up, I was taught don't do to be right or do to do right and I think that's a really, really strong way of growing up. You could be wrong and that's okay, but as long as you're doing the right thing.

And as a woman leader, I have to say that as you get to the top, as you start narrowing down your circle of peers you do start to realize that there are gender differences, there are imbalances and we owe it to ourselves to make sure that we don't let them paralyze us. We owe it to ourselves to make sure we as women don't allow it to stop us from achieving what we need to achieve, but also we need to allow ourselves to be able to call it out in a kind, sensitive way because most people don't even realize women included when they're doing something that makes you feel like hey, you would not have done this if I was a male.

So I think seeing it, recognizing it and being able to in many ways communicate it back to say hey, this is what I've served and this isn't making me feel comfortable and this is how I'd like to go forward and this is why I think it's really important.

Taren: I think those are excellent points and you're right I think all of us can learn something from the unconscious bias that we may have and being open and courageous to pointing that out is important.

Dr. Dorfman: My I think unconscious bias before has always been well I don't see gender, so I don't know that others see gender and people maybe making more of it than it is, and if you call attention to it then maybe that makes it even worse. And that was kind of my junior years when I really didn't have that opportunity when we were all a mixed bag group of people all working together. But as you climb up the ladder and as you start to see there are, certainly were back in the day far less women leaders, certainly far less women sitting on boards or being in the C-suite.

You start to come across them. You start to say hey, this is real and I am a power of one and yes I as a power of one I can do something. I can make changes. I can have conversations. I can be a mentor and not just a mentor for the women, but also a mentor for the men. My number one person that I'm mentoring is my son. I want him to be a respectful professional. I want him to be a respectful human being and I want him to know that truly when he looks at people and he works with people he should be looking at them based on capability and opportunity and not on gender, not on race, not on religion, not on orientation, nothing other than what is my opportunity, what is my capability, what are my strengths and how can we collaborate together.

Taren: That was wonderfully stated. Thank you so much for opening up about that and it's personal because as you said it's your son, it's your family, but yet at the same time those lessons that you're teaching him will create waves that you won't even know about in the

future. So you start with a ripple. That's wonderful. Let's talk about your leadership style. I hear it to be very egalitarian. I hear you're very open. How would you describe yourself as a leader?

Dr. Dorfman: There's nothing that I would expect anyone who works with me and for me to do that I wouldn't do myself. As a matter of fact, I'd probably end up being there myself doing all of the work that somebody else would not want to do while giving them the opportunity to do some of the bigger things. So I'm as transparent and as open as a book. My door is always open. My email, my phone, I think everyone in the company has my cellphone. They can text me, call me, come into my office, send me notes whatever their preferred method of conversation is that's also true for our customers, our partners, media partners, anyone interested in the field.

So I love people as I mentioned, I love to socialize with people. I love to give back. From a team perspective, if someone is working until midnight, which no one should ever do, but if someone is I will be right there with them. When someone starts on our company, I always tell them hey, don't ever look at my title. I'm an *n* of 1. I am an equal. We hired you for your strength and your capabilities, so if you believe in something, have a voice. Allow others to have a voice as well, but have a voice, have an opinion and it doesn't matter who in the organization you're talking to as long as it's respectful obviously. Make sure that you're seen and you're heard.

So here we don't necessarily go by titles even though each one of us has it. Everyone has a say. Everyone has input and everyone brings value. That's what makes us such a great organization to be a part of.

Taren: Excellent. You are an expert in understanding physician and consumer marketing, what are some of the biggest trends you're tracking for each of these stakeholder groups right now? What's on your hot plate?

Dr. Dorfman: I think there's definitely the privacy, making sure that we're doing things as an organization, but also as an industry in a privacy safe way in a way that consumers and healthcare professionals get value, but don't see us being intrusive into their lives. I think the other big thing is personalization and precision. Those are two big, big items for us as an organization. So how do we make not just our clients more effective but also the consumers, the physicians, the patients, the caregivers and others who are part of the healthcare continuum? How do we give them information they need? How do we arm them in a way that is more precise, in a way that is more personalized and obviously in a way that is very privacy safe and do that so that it helps all stakeholders ultimately at the end of the day come together and help the patients live healthier lives?

Taren: Tell us what you do related to your mission statements.

Dr. Dorfman: So that's something that we track on a regular basis and part of our mission is to improve the lives of patients and we continue to look at data to make sure both from a client side as well as the data that we have access to make sure that every initiative, every communication, every stakeholder is that we are touching, reaching, educating and informing is ultimately contributing to healthier lives.

Taren: That's wonderful, and I think it's such a laudable commitment to patients. We would be remiss if I didn't ask you how AI and machine learning when you talk about data are going to impact what you do as well as the industry.

Dr. Dorfman: So that's a really great question. We've actually been using artificial intelligence and predictive analytics for the last 10 years and it's all in a privacy compliant way, all in a de-identified way, but it allows us to learn from the data that we have access to. It allows us to refine and continue to serve the big promise and deliver the right content to the right person at the right time using the right combination of channels and vehicles that will ultimately get that information in someone's head not just hey, I saw it, but I recall it and ultimately I'm going to do something about it.

And the tools that we have access to that we've been using over the last couple of years, they just keep evolving. So every year we invest deeply in additional tools. We invest deeply in people which are no easy feat to hire, finding the right people to be able to (A) stage the data, (B) mine the data and (C) be able to interpret it and machines can tell you certain things, but then you need to know what to do with that data, that interpretation and turning it into action is really critical. So we've been investing for the last 10 years. We will continue to invest more and more not just in the technology but also in the people who are then able to take insight and turn it into action.

Taren: Early on you had mentioned a couple of the programs that CMI has brought to bear. You had been instrumental in bringing several new marketing programs to CMI and you talked about some of them at the beginning, how do you approach the process of innovation? Can innovation be taught or is it inherent to people?

Dr. Dorfman: I think it's both. I think there are naturally curious people who never stopped learning. When you actually look at the process of diffusion of an innovation, it's a really lengthy process. It takes a really long time. Artificial intelligence is actually a machine learning. It's been around for a really long time. IBM was able to more or less bring it down to the masses. So when I say it's both, those true innovators we call early adaptors, they're going to be far and few. Those are the proactive let me go out there, let me – the innovators will go out there. They'll see where the gaps are, what's missing and they will either stumble into something or really design something that is based on unmet need, something that you can't necessarily get through market research because you don't necessarily know or someone doesn't necessarily know that it's missing. That's a very small percent of patient or physician or even pharma or agency population, so very small number of these people.

Then you have your innovators. From the innovators, you have your early adaptors. Those are the ones who start to see the innovation coming out and hey, let me try it. Again, far and few, but greater number and then you start to get to your masses. So the masses also have to recognize and for them something is an innovation they have to recognize it as an innovation and start to adapt it. Apple, iPhone is a great example of how that trickled until it had become part of the mass stream of users. So when we approach innovation we actually have an organization that we just rolled out and we had it before and a few key people that are responsible for bringing innovation to life.

This could be the shiny pennies, but this could also be meaningful innovation and ways of working and ways of doing things that have never been done before and those are the people who are – they are those that 1% who are capable of seeing an unmet need and capable of dreaming up the big ideas to be able to help with those unmet needs. But then the rest of the organization has to have some kind of an innovation bias in order to be able to adopt it as well as our clients.

I don't know if that answers your question, Taren. I hope it does.

Taren: Oh, it did. That was great. No, I appreciate it. Thank you so much. Obviously, through the course of our conversation I hear that passion you have for healthcare. Where did that passion come from because obviously you could have used your talent in any number of fields? Why healthcare?

Dr. Dorfman: So when I was growing up I had many family members who were healthcare professionals. I ended up getting a doctorate in health administration, but I was never too smart to be a doctor and have always had this desire to please my parents and be some kind of a doctor, but in all seriousness when we came to the United States my father had a mole on his back that at that time was diagnosed as cancerous. We didn't speak English. We don't necessarily know what cancer was and the seriousness of his condition. When I was about 13 years old, we were told that he had stage III, stage IV – I don't recall exactly what it was – malignant melanoma and it had metastasized and my dad had nine months to live.

And there was a clinical trial at the time and my father made it into the clinical trials and my father is 79 years old and he's still alive and from that moment on I knew that I wanted to do something to save people's lives and truly because I was not smart enough, book smart enough to finish school and go to medical school I decided to choose a different career and that is to amplify the message because in some ways communication, knowledge is the first start of health. If people don't know, they can't do and if my father didn't know, if my father knew at that time or if the doctors didn't know about the clinical trials we wouldn't be in the place that we are today. So I feel really privileged to have chosen a career in healthcare, been in healthcare pretty much my entire adult and wouldn't change it for the world.

Taren: I'm so glad that had a happy ending. So thank you for your dad and God bless him at 79, that's excellent. That immigrant experience had to be quite life changing for you I would think. How did that impact your journey?

Dr. Dorfman: Oh wow, yeah it was. We came to the US with absolutely nothing. My parents had \$200, that's it, and we were blessed to have people who through volunteers and through support helped our family, helped us make it through our toughest years and when you start from nothing and you have to work every single day to be better I think what it teaches you is that everything is possible. There is nothing that can't be done. You probably end up having a spirit, a work spirit about you that you keep pushing and you work really hard that many people may not understand, my son included, he's first generation American, probably doesn't understand why his mom works like a maniac in the way that she does, but I know what that alternative life was for us coming here and it just forces you to push harder, do more, never stop, always believe and truly always believe in your own abilities because sometimes there's just going to be no one other than you that will help you get out of where you are and go into where you want to be. And I think immigrant children, anyone who as we call ourselves OTBs (off the boat), we tend to have that mindset. It's very, very interesting and very different mindset of pushing ourselves.

Taren: Well, thank so much for sharing that personal side with us. I think it is important to understand what drives you and I think that's so part of your makeup that it is unbelievable. You're right, I think there is a difference in terms of that desire to drive and you come from a very different background and so many people and that has infused you with such passion and such commitment that you wouldn't be who you are without that experience.

Dr. Dorfman: Yeah. There is a picture that I carry of myself interestingly enough when I was 8 years old. Whenever I show it to anyone in the company and ask them to find me, they never ever, ever can and it's me with a chopped hair, definitely not looking like myself in a boy's outfit and just a very, very different person from what anyone thought I was and it always brings me to my roots. It always brings me back to remind me here's where I came from. This is you. And everyday that you want to go forward, everyday that you want to be better just remind yourself yes, you can.

Taren: Those are fantastic words of wisdom. Thank you so much. To switch tracks just a little bit, I'd like to talk to you about your board service. You sit on the board of JoyDew Foundation. Tell me about this organization and why it is important to you.

Dr. Dorfman: So the organization was actually started by someone I used to work for, Moish Tov. He and his wife were older parents and they had two children who were – are autistic, non-verbal autistic children. They were amazing, amazing children. They're talented in many other areas and the biggest concern and the biggest fear of both Moish and his wife not had were what happens to these kids when they're 18. Where do they go? What do they do? While they were in school, they had a place to go. They had a place to be social. They had a

place for life, but what happens to them when they're confined to their home when they don't have those friends anymore? What happens to them? What happens to the others?

So they had started this organization, JoyDew to be able to create an environment for these young adults and ultimately adults as they go through their stages of life where they can all go and prosper, where they can contribute, where they can work and where they can be together socializing in their own unique ways and I just found it to be incredibly heartwarming. I know these people. I know these young men personally and a lot of other young men and young women who fall into that spectrum and I think it's great to be able to do something for other people. As I mentioned, I love people. I'm an only child. I have one child. So I always feel like other people are the extension of my own personal family, so they became an extension of that and I'm really happy to have been able to support them while I was active.

Taren: That's such a nice story and what a worthwhile cause. If people wanted to find out more about this, where can they go? Is there a website?

Dr. Dorfman: There is. Yeah. Joydew Foundation, they just have to Google it.

Taren: Fantastic. Finally, can you tell me about an accomplishment or a wow moment that shaped your career?

Dr. Dorfman: So really, really, really early on in my career I was working for a new CTO, a new chief technology officer and I happen to have been working with him because apparently no one else could. He used to hover on the back of everyone and see what they were doing and how they were doing it and comment and suggest and I think everyone just was really bothered by the fact that he was so in the weeds and so active in what they were doing and telling them how to do things.

And I'm sure we've all had those types of people that we work with or for and for several months I actually had him sit behind me, hover and I never, again, coming from a very dominant mother who probably did the same thing it never fazed me. So I rejoiced when he was there and we work together and whenever he stepped away I would be like hey John, why don't you – come back here. Here, look at what we did together here. Look what I did and here's this direction and together we made this amazing, amazing product. At that time we were rolling out the first – I think it was one of the first interactive CRM systems.

This goes back many, many, many years and he was just overwhelmed with joy because he was able to do something that he was very passionate about with someone who was equally as passionate and not deterred by the fact that he was so involved. And months passed and I was working great with him and he had lunch with someone. At that time I didn't know he was a recruiter and he had pushed me to join them for lunch and there was a brand new B2B internet organization. It was the rise of the internet at that time. Yes, I'm that old. And the recruiter actually asked me if I wanted to go and interview for this amazing job that he was hiring for.

And I said, “Oh my God, I can’t do that. Are you kidding me?” Like I’m so – I work for John and he said, “Well, John is the one who actually recommended you.”

And that was a big moment. And when I went into John’s office and I asked him why. He said, “Susan, you have so much potential. You have so much capability. I really believe in you and being able to work with you here and seeing how you are and seeing how enthusiastic you are and how much you like to learn and how much you’re not afraid of new things, you need to go. There’s a future in the internet. He told me you need to go. And so that was my I think my big moment in realizing that (A) I should always continue to be as enthusiastic about new things but (B) that people are people and they’re going to be different and the fact that I wasn’t judgmental and the fact that I was tolerant and the fact that I – it didn’t faze me was something that really stayed with me as I work with so many other personalities all throughout my career is always to try to find their why and never ever, ever getting stuck in the negative, just letting it go, find their why and make it a reason for you to continue and thrive and bring them you as you’re thriving together.

So I think that’s been my moment and every month, every week, sometimes every other day I have one of those moments and I go back to John and I still keep in touch with him, and it’s something that I really cherished in my career.

Taren: That’s amazing and the positive situation is a testament to you, so kudos to you. What a great story. I have goosebumps. That’s amazing.

Dr. Dorfman: Oh, thank you.

Taren: And I can’t thank you enough for sharing your story, your insights and your personal journey with us on our WoW podcast program. Thank you so much Susan.

Dr. Dorfman: Oh, thank you so much for having me. It was a real joy.

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