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In this episode, Taren Grom, Editor of PharmaVOICE magazine meets with Mary Anne Greenberg, CEO, Diligent Health Solutions.

Taren: Mary Anne, welcome to the PharmaVOICE WoW podcast program.

Mary Anne: Oh, thank you. Thanks for inviting me and being interested in Diligent.

Taren: It's our pleasure. Congratulations as well on your one-year anniversary of being named CEO of Diligent Health Solutions. What has this first year at the helm been like for you?

Mary Anne: It's actually been pretty amazing for a couple of reasons. In 12 months, we've had some strong business wins and we have completed an acquisition. We've been fortunate. We have some real rock stars in the business and so as of today we have over, just a little over 100 employees and I could not be more pleased with our group's efforts and their accomplishments.

Taren: What has been the thing that has surprised you let's the most since becoming CEO?

Mary Anne: Well, I don't think I've been surprised by much, but I have been delighted with how people in the industry have invited us in to present our capabilities in some part based on the relationships that our key team members including myself have formed with people in the past. It's also been somewhat surprising and very gratifying that a lot of the companies are additionally interested in the fact that we're a privately held women-owned business.

Taren: And what makes that significant for you all?

Mary Anne: Well, because I've been in this space before. I was one of the owners of a company called Alliance Healthcare and we were acquired. And at that time there are about 11 companies in similar space. We've had maybe a different variation of services, but we're competitors on some level and if you look at the landscape now they've all been acquired by much larger entities and I think that – and they're typically not the highest revenue source for those bigger entities and so they may not get the level of attention. So I think people when they have programs they want to execute they want a company that's going to treat it as if it's the most important thing to them and for us it is.

It's a little harder. I think it's also easier to attract individuals in the industry because they know that that's the focus of all we do. So I think that's a part of it, and I think the women held there are some companies that look to have a percentage of their expenditure dollars with smaller or women-owned business or better-known business, and so we help them check that box.

Taren: So it gives you a little bit of a competitive advantage.

Mary Anne: It seems to, yeah.

Taren: That's fantastic. Diligent offers a number of services for patients and caregivers. What is the biggest area you believe that needs to be addressed that is currently not being addressed?

Mary Anne: I think in every area where we come in contact with both patients and caregivers it really boils down to communicating in ways that are impactful and convenient, easy to understand personalized for those individuals and that's true whether it's our hub services or patient engagement programs or medical information. I'll give you an example. We have a group of oncology nurses who are mostly texting with patients who are barely new in their diagnosis and are using a medication that has some pretty devastating side effects but only in the early weeks, it tapers off after that. But they're able to text our oncology nurses in a span of a day and evening because some of these things are harder to talk about or they're in the moment and they want to know if what's happening is within the normal range or should they be alarmed.

And the feedback on the program has been tremendous. The number of patients that have stayed compliant past the sort of early adoption of the – in getting through the adverse events has been fabulous. Now, if that had to be a phone call in this particular case I think – and it could have been, in some cases we end up talking to them, but I think in this particular case because people are alarmed and they want an instant and then don't necessarily want to talk about it. So it's just an example of making sure that for each program that communication channel and who is taking those, so if you know you're talking to an oncology nurse it certainly puts your mind at ease.

So it's all about that customization and also being it would teach them in the language that they understand not to have, frankly, a lot of big words that people sometimes are too embarrassed to ask what they mean.

Taren: Obviously, you get it and the patients get it. Do our pharma company partners get it, the need for these kinds of instant communication, this need for that patient connection beyond what is happening today?

Mary Anne: Oh, I think they do. I think part of what creates an issue and not always having it in the way that people would like is that often we go on regulatory our risk adverse about what's said, how the communication is handled, whether calls are recorded, whether things are written

and whether our responses of healthcare professionals that are highly trained and highly monitored there's always – there's often a range of how much risk someone is willing to take to have someone on our staff give them. I hesitate to say spontaneous because it's based on all the guidelines that we follow that are provided by the client. But I think sometimes that's what – I think the people that I'm talking to in terms of their budget they know what they want to do but sometimes legal have to do what they have to do.

Taren: Understood. You've had a very long career in the healthcare space, what drew you to the industry?

Mary Anne: I started my career actually in marketing and I was drawn to our healthcare clients. I mean early on I was helping movie studios to promote films. I did a lot of work in sort of the high-end computing, but it didn't – it just doesn't provide the same level of satisfaction. My first program I helped improve the enrollment in a clinical trial. I had another one where we help educating parents on how to prevent issues with their children by improving their environment for asthmatic children, and after I did those programs I was sort of hooked.

Taren: It's quite a difference going from movie studio to clinical trials.

Mary Anne: Yes, it is. But I have to say the tchotchkes that I got from movie studios versus some of the healthcare services when my daughter little were more attractive, but that's okay.

Taren: As I said, you've had a number of roles starting in marketing. So how did these different roles of increasing responsibility prepare you to be CEO?

Mary Anne: Well, it's not my first time at bat in that role. I've held senior roles in the past, including CEO, for more than a dozen years in healthcare focused companies. Certainly I've learned a great deal along the way. I continue to learn and along the way I've paid close attention to the people I've worked with. I've worked with some really brilliant individuals, maybe a few not so brilliant, but you can learn a lot from both. So I think that sort of what prepares you where you have a lot of – you make a lot of decisions – not all of them are good ones, but you have to be able to admit it and go back and fix it and surround yourself with really good people, people that are in most cases can be – much smarter than I am.

Taren: In addition to surrounding yourself by good and smart people, what are some of those lessons that you can share with other women who aspire to reach that C-suite, some of the things you've learned along the way?

Mary Anne: Women think differently. It's funny, I have long said half jokingly that the first thing when women come to me in the business or from outside the business and ask for advice I half jokingly say that everyone should get a cleaning service for their home and when I say half jokingly – no, it's true, is that you have to learn to ask yourself what's the most impactful thing I can do for the business and for myself and for my family and so if you go a little – if the house is

dirty, that's okay, but if you're doing much right by your family and the business then you're much better off. Women have a tendency to cross things off on your list. The most important thing is to get things done.

Taren: And I agree and it's true, if your health is in order then it puts everything else almost in order for you and it's one less thing you have to worry about.

Mary Anne: That's right, nothing like coming home to a clean house.

Taren: Absolutely. You are obviously a very driven and innovative leader, describe what gets you going everyday.

Mary Anne: You know what, I've been able to pull together a group of people many of whom I've worked with in the past or know by reputation and so I'm surrounded by incredible people who care a great deal about the business, about the value of what they do and so when you're in that situation you can't help but be energized and I'm also energized by how much we have accomplished. And we've just come out of our planning meetings for 2020 and have our goal set and they're pretty aspirational, but I am confident that we're going to be able to do what we're setting out to do.

Taren: And what's the thing that keeps you up at night. You set your goals. You got your aspirational hypes identified, what keeps you up at night?

Mary Anne: Well, first of all, I'm a big advocate of getting a good amount of sleep so I don't lose a lot of sleep about things relative to the business, but I am a bit restless now and in the past about wanting to think about what's the next improvement that needs to be made. We're always researching new technology, finding ways to attract the right people as we grow, those are always important decisions and making sure that whether – at every level, anyone that is working up a half of our client isn't just trying to tick the box that they've done what they have been told to do, but to listen intently and help find clever solutions and as the company grows that gets a little bit harder to do, but you want to make sure that that's what's happening. So see that your management inserts itself into meetings with all of our clients. We make ourselves readily available which helps to dissuade some of the anxiety that comes with a growing business.

Taren: Sure. And how would you describe your leadership style?

Mary Anne: Very collaborative. I have learned that it's not about barking orders. It's about making sure that you take your thoughts about ideas that you have or solutions for the client and really test them out with the people that you have around you and listen carefully to their recommendations and I think that's probably something I didn't do when I was much younger, but I have realized that that is in part a good reason for our success.

Taren: And speaking of your younger self versus your today's self if you had to think back and give yourself, your younger self a piece of advice, what would that be?

Mary Anne: Oh, it'd be a number of things. Probably, number one, eat less. Don't make decisions out of fear. I think when you go back and think of decisions you made and the bad ones usually were because you're afraid of something. Don't settle, treat people, all people with respect. Do the right thing in all things and be yourself. Work hard, smart, but be you.

Taren: That's great advice. And how do you define success for yourself? You've identified success metrics for the company, but how do you define success for you?

Mary Anne: To be able to gain and retain the trust of clients and colleagues, having a strong reputation for providing high quality. It's myself and the company's ability to attract and continue to retain great talent and the other thing is it's to help the next generation find their way and it's knowing that you've always showed them to do the right thing with clients and colleagues.

Taren: Excellent. So tell me about some of the volunteer activities that you're involved with.

Mary Anne: One of the organizations that I think is absolutely amazing and have always been involved on some level is an organization called HomeFront and they help families, oftentimes single women who are in the brink of homelessness and looking to get ahead and so over the years I've raised money. I've tutored on interviewing skills, excel skills – although people I work with would probably tell you I'm probably not the best person to teach the budgeting, but I think it's important to reach out and help individuals who had just in many, many cases of no fault of their own have found themselves in a bad place.

Taren: It's excellent. And finally, can you identify the one wow moment of your career that either changed the trajectory of your career or provided you with a new avenue?

Mary Anne: I think the wow moment have been about people. I made it a habit of when I would hire someone who would be sort of an executive assistant who wants to say to them you can only have this role for a period of time. A year from now I'm going to ask you what you want to do next and we're going to help you get there, but you're not going to get stuck in this role.

A wow moment in 2019, I went to a conference this year and a gentleman who I worked with awhile ago at the start of his career came up to me and gave me this big hug. He told me that I had written him a complimentary note about his participation in a client meeting and he said it meant the world to him. He kept it all these years. He still has it on his bulletin board and he now has a senior position in another company. And I have to say for me that was a wonderful moment. I was just thrilled. I couldn't have been happier.

Taren: Well, thank you so much for sharing your thoughts about leadership, about the importance of mentoring, about the importance of giving back and what you all are doing on behalf of patients. Thank you for spending some time with us.

Mary Anne: Thank you.

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