

December 4, 2019

Welcome to WoW – the Woman of the Week podcast series from PharmaVOICE. This episode was made possible by a generous sponsorship from Calcium. For more information visit CalciumUSA.com.

In this episode, Taren Grom, Editor-In-Chief of PharmaVOICE magazine, meets with Patricia Malone, Chief Creative Officer, Freshblood.

Taren: Patricia, welcome to the PharmaVOICE WoW podcast program.

Patricia: Thanks so much Taren. It's great to be here and part of this program.

Taren: Patricia, it's great to catch up with you again. I know that we connected, gosh, it's got to be going on 10 years ago or 12 years ago when you were at Strategem. We'll get into that a little bit later. So I'm so happy to get reacquainted.

Patricia: Absolutely, yes. You too have been in this industry and it's such an important part of it, so it's really great to connect.

Taren: You know I'm really intrigued by your background. I didn't know this, but you come from a critical care nursing background and thrown into that background with English literature, a kind of an unusual combination. Talk to me about how that diverse background led you to where you are today as an agency entrepreneur and executive.

Patricia: It's really interesting how you get where you get, but the combination really did and still does help me balance many things in my career and my life actually. As far as becoming an agency executive and how that's helped me throughout starting new as a copywriter in New York right from the start in my nursing career I quickly learned really that triage troubleshooting and really understanding clear roles and responsibilities or in our sort of agency term critical success factors and as I became more experienced in nursing and moved along that path they were part of leading a critical care unit. And so throughout my career they sort of have been foundational skills in working with people, leading people and leading an agency.

That combination of critical care nursing and English lit and creative writing helped me get in the door when I really had no experience in healthcare advertising or copywriting. I had done a lot of creative writing on my own. A lot of it is creative. It was my best subject all through my academic life but not ad writing or marketing communication. So I must add too that the other thing that helped get in the door was truly my first boss. When we met, we really connected.

For more information, please contact PharmaVOICE at feedback@pharmavoices.com
This episode is made possible by a sponsorship from Calcium.

1



She was amazing. She was open-minded enough, confident enough and truly willing enough to take a risk to hire me and let me through that door.

So lesson one that I carry with me throughout my career is look for passion and potential not necessarily senior experience or firsthand experience, really it's been important to see what you can help someone become, so that was very important. But once in the door, my background has served me well in a few ways. One, it helped me stay calm no one is critical ill because you know agencies can be crazy and when you're just starting in the business or if it's a launch or some multiple work stream deadline, all nighters happen or permission to enter as a newbie and then late nights and weekends are just part of advertising.

But coming from a critical care unit, there was a baseline that I was used to where there were true emergencies that took people's lives if you don't do things right, so I would always remember that. That background really helped me stay calm, buckle down the team, get the work done rather than just striking out and worrying about things that are truly beyond my control. When you live and breathe emergencies, agency emergencies are – I am not belittling them, they're there, but they're very, very different.

Taren: I think that's a great perspective, yeah especially as we women there's 24/7 lifecycle, right so it's a great perspective.

Patricia: Exactly. Exactly. And yeah the 24/7 lifecycle is really I mean you have to put boundaries around that too right. So that's been a really interesting thing from an agency executive standpoint. But my background also Taren, it made me understand, and we all say this and know this and do this, but it is truly about teamwork. Again, in the critical care unit, I was in the CCU, we ran cardiac codes in teams and had each other's back. There's no one person who saves a life; it's a team. And I don't mean that in any kind of discourse way, but truly it takes a team.

So that's my philosophy in leading creatives and leading an advertising agency. It's about teamwork. It's not necessarily about one person's idea because ideas come from people building on sparks or nuggets of thoughts and finally a big idea might come from someone, but it's been a building process to get there. So it's the teamwork sharing a load on those late nights and weekends or unexpected deadlines. It's really having each other's back. So it really was a foundation of helping me understand the absolute importance of culture in an agency and the need for team building versus team breaking down or idea breaking down because it wasn't yours or – we can get it done together.

So no matter what the hierarchy in an agency is it is about teamwork. You don't go home because you're a senior position and lead teams working late into the night. You're kind of right



there with them and you get to the end together. Nursing also – this sounds weird, I think it sounds weird, but nursing taught me to be nice. I mean you're always nice, but nice in times of real crisis, nice in patients understanding. They always say that about nurses and you don't always come into it that way. Sometimes you really do learn it because you're put under different kinds of pressures that you need to kind of rise to the top and overcome. So I think you need to be nice in this business.

I've had incredible hard bosses from whom I've learned so much and in the CCU when I worked there, when I was new there, things are really stressful and if you're an experienced charge nurse and all of a sudden this new graduate comes in and you're in a unit running a code and there's a new graduate in the room, it's very, very stressful. And yet my mentor when I first started in the CCU was so patient, so knowledgeable, so firm but so nice and kind of right there with me even in a crisis. She could be terse, but she gave – and here I go again, she gave clear orders and let me play a role that built my own confidence and clinical skills. She didn't like put me over in a corner because I was new and didn't know anything.

Wherever she could, she would allow me to feel like I had a role in it right from the outset and that was true when I started at Sudler & Hennessey. The creative director I worked for or the head creative director used to immediately take out the red pen when I bring my copy in. It was called copy then not content, but I think I would leave with maybe one line intact and I would be heartbroken because I felt like I was in first grade, but he wasn't mean and I learned from what he crossed out and what he – and he's literally had a red pen. I mean we had computers, but he wanted the copy document. He wanted to mark it up. But he'd also taught me to really care about every word, how they link together, the communication from an advertising standpoint and he'd be the first one to sit down with me and painstakingly explained how a sales it needs to flow, why it needs to flow the way it's had.

How every word in every headline has to link together, what goes into a campaign, a strategy. So those are defining moments. They were always I don't mean overly nice, but nice in how they brought me in and how they mentored me and these are the defining moments truly that are engraved in my memory and then I carry through as I moved up into a leadership position. So throughout my career I've worked with really great people. He took the time, invested in me, wanted me to grow because then everyone wins. So I really tried to do that with those I've led and mentored and that it does go back to the roots of start out being just nice because these are people learning and wanting to learn and there are moments where you have to be firm and constructive criticism and there are unpleasant moments as you move up into leadership role, but I still believe in being nice.

Taren: Nice never hurt. It will get you everywhere.



Patricia: Nice never hurt, that's right.

Taren: You know it's like when you said. What you learned in kindergarten still stays true. Be nice. Play nice in the sandbox.

Patricia: It does. It's very true and you do run across people in your career. I'm sure you have who just aren't necessarily nice. You kind of think why not, why not be nice.

Taren: Right.

Patricia: And I think more literally my clinical and nursing background with healthcare advertising and it's what kind of drove into healthcare advertising because I could understand the science. By being on the nursing sort of caring side of many of these categories and diseases I end up writing about helped me really bring firsthand insights not just market research insights and emotion to the creative outlet because you kind of lived with some of these people and families through their suffering. So I could often in concepting or in writing or working with teams you could almost come up. Me, I could see, visualize actual patients and families and that was a driving force to find solutions and shape the narrative.

So my science and nursing background helped me understand the mechanisms of therapies. It helped me when meeting with scientists and KOLs and of course, believe me when it's just looking at target audiences I'm the one raising my hand in the room saying what about the PAs and nurses and NPs, they're more important now than ever, the fellows, you know. So it was great. And of course, writing-wise and creativity, I've always loved creativity. Like I was saying English and creative writing were my best subjects, but I've always been inspired by nurses and people helping people in the hospitals and I worked on an ambulance, so the combination I think of the writing and nursing has really been a valuable one in many, many ways throughout my career.

Taren: Fantastic. Thanks for sharing that. I think those are great perspectives and awesome insights and again, perfect lessons that of being nice and that doesn't mean – that's not a weak character trait. It's a good character trait and something to be thought of positively.

Patricia: Yeah. And I actually just as a little side point on that, I have – I remember having one boss who said to me you're too nice. If I would listen to an account person or sort of consider something that maybe shouldn't have been considered from a creative standpoint and it was actually very, very constructive criticism because he wasn't saying don't be nice, but I think it was more be firm, move forward with what you believe in, do it nicely of course I guess. But I don't think you can be too nice, but you can't be wishy-washy and you can't be everybody's



friend all the time either, but I do believe firmly that you can move up, be successful and be nice.

Taren: Understood, I think you're absolutely right. You talked about being at Sudler & Hennessey and then you moved to San Francisco. I'm curious, do you see that there's a difference between East Coast, West Coast in terms of creativity, in terms of the business and what the focus is on?

Patricia: I do. I think they're definitely – it changed over the years, but today many of the healthcare agencies here in San Francisco are satellites of New York space agencies. They come and go. There's three fairly large pharmaceutical companies unlike New York where there's many. There's far fewer out here. There's the Amgens and Genentechs and Gilead but not as many as New York. So there's satellites out here to service those so creatively and those satellites I'm not – I don't think it's so different except you really have to learn to bridge the gap to keep a tight connection with your mother ship in New York if you're working in a satellite it can be tendency to feel isolated I think so you really have to work harder to make a satellite.

West Coast agencies feel to be an integral and important part of the larger agency. Talent has changed too. When I initially came here from New York, there was maybe one or two healthcare agencies in San Francisco, so it was really, really hard to get healthcare talent out here. Silicon Valley wasn't here. So people didn't want to pack up and risk moving to agency talent because there's no place to go if it didn't work out and it's a pretty significant move from New York to San Francisco and New York always had the talent because there were so many agencies and large pharma companies there, but that's changed and now there are many more agencies of all sizes and especially more and more boutique agencies because what's different in San Francisco and this has been true for the past two decades really are the number of startups, these entrepreneurial biotech health companies and just more lately emerging Femtech companies, which are really exciting, who are truly looking for a partner who can match their agility, their nimbleness and need for greater efficiencies. So there is a lot less appetite out here, in my opinion, for bloated teams and slow moving processes.

When I did work in one of the satellites you would sometimes maybe win a little piece of business, but it needed that agility and nimbleness and it just wasn't always a good fit in a large agency layered process structure. So as you know this is kind of a key niche for Freshblood with these entrepreneurial life science companies. Many times you're working directly with the C-suite to develop a foundational strategy and in New York I don't think I ever met anyone in the C-suite.

You'd go to Merck and I wouldn't need C-suite people. You'd work with the brand managers and product managers. And also I think what's a little bit different out here is many of the great



agencies in New York specialize –and Philadelphia and Chicago, I mean big, big agencies in general, specialize maybe in one category like they become known as the oncology agency, so big oncology brands tend to look at them and it's a real great thing for them because they can build a portfolio. But in working with the agencies here in San Francisco and then as we talk a little bit, co-founding my own for 15 years, what I found is that the portfolio has to be more diverse and they have a range of pharma biotech medical device and consumer healthcare and I actually really, really like that about the West Coast. It's incredibly refreshing from a leadership and especially from a creative standpoint.

Taren: Yes. I think when you talk about the diversity of the client mix it brings a different perspective and draws a different cadre of talent as well I would think.

Patricia: That's right. Exactly. And there are people, you know you might have an oncology molecule that you're working on and then you do bring in an oncology writer, but then you might have a consumer, so the consumer healthcare and that is a totally different kind of writer or creative which can be really fun even from a culture perspective. And then I think the other thing that's different is we are at the threshold or the doorstep of Silicon Valley and all that. It's happening there, so everybody benefits from that across the nation.

South by Southwest is such a fascinating thing to go to, but to have conferences like Dreamforce at your doorstep is really inspiring. I mean just to see what's happening everyday in the news or going to these kinds of conferences in other worlds that more and more are becoming such a larger part of my world. I mean sales force has become integral to all of our clients in many ways and their Dreamforce is really [inspiring 18:21] and it's right here. You don't have to travel. You can just – there's so much happening in Silicon Valley. So I think that makes it a little bit different. Sometimes you can get high tech talents for some of the high tech or Femtech clients and that's a really, a really interesting mix too from an agency standpoint.

Taren: Excellent. Obviously the fact that you had started an agency 15 or so years ago and now that you're – they're the precipice with Freshblood, what's the difference between starting Strategem and being part of Freshblood now? What's changed in terms of starting up an agency?

Patricia: Well, we know more, definitely know more. Both Bob and I have enormous experience having worked on the frontlines, starting our own agencies, coming up through an agency and then leaping out to start our own, our separate agencies, so we both were agency owners and truly you learn so much from your successes and definitely mistakes. So with Freshblood, we're going in more informed, more clear about who we are and want to be and much more importantly, which I can't say was true when I started Strategem, we are more clear



about who we aren't and I think that's really important. So our model is different than when we started our respected agencies and our goals are different.

Taren: Very good. And how are they different?

Patricia: Today, I think as we all know healthcare is rapidly evolving and the clients want something different I think than they did 20 years ago when I started my agency. They want a wider range of services for less and so you find in the news all the time and happening all over the consultancies are building up clear capabilities. They acquire them. They build them internally while more traditional agencies are offering more consultative services. We're focusing more on hybrid approach, a true hybrid approach in a more focused niche. So I believe there's truly a need for confluence of consultative and creative services.

So when Bob started Freshblood in 2015 it began as a peer consultancy, Bob Finkel who is the CEO of Freshblood and it was helping emerging – at that time helping emerging clients forge a strong strategic foundation on the road to commercialization. So it was working with C-suite more than brand and product managers. I mean often it was really working with actual scientists who discovered or developed the product. And I remember when Bob started it because he and I go way back in our careers and because Freshblood work closely with these core team strategies when it came time to commercialize what was happening was some of the larger clients were asking Freshblood to become their creative partner and to continue with them and help them execute on the strategy by creating full channel campaigns and moving through a launch.

So at that time Freshblood had limited creative capability. So two years ago due to this client demand Freshblood restructured and expanded and formed the Freshblood groups and at that time two years ago I came on board to help with this expansion of the creative services arm bringing more capabilities and an arm with the creative expertise and real fire power to bring a unified strategy to life. So I think that's definitely where we're different and certainly different from the agency that Bob started and the agency that I started prior to Freshblood. And today, we offer our clients its full value chain from consultative to campaign or they can tap into the parts of the value chain most relevant to their needs which I think has really been a great benefit to our clients.

We specifically focus on clinical stage entrepreneurial life science companies. We build bespoke teams sort of an agile custom collection of experts maybe you call it to fit the needs of our clients and then we support them in developing and perfecting the go-to market strategies, their differentiated positioning, branding and creative campaign execution. So we're true hybrid of market consultancy and creative ad agencies.



Taren: Excellent. So what do you think the biggest opportunities are for agencies going forward?

Patricia: I think a few places. I think there is an opportunity to continue what we've already started. I mean agencies continue to hone in on reaching people in the most relevant places. That's what it's about, reaching people in the most relevant places and the opportunity to not just create like this one campaign that's consistent in all channels but really an opportunity to identify and change the message depending on how people consume information, the more predictive analytics and greater insights from tools such as A.I. I believe are driving – well, they are driving new thinking and new strategies and we continually look to find new ways to solve problems with all these tools and not just sell ideas and I think that's a really important differentiation and agencies have come to really want to solve problems.

I think there's an opportunity to advance the agency model itself as I was just kind of describing about Freshblood, but to continue to create these more dynamic and fluid structures. By doing that, you can become more agile and you can refresh more quickly for greater interest and relevance to your audiences. So I think it's really an opportunity for more purpose built models that enable the scalability and agility and agency is willing to de-couple where it makes sense for clients to get clients more efficient and effective integration with other companies that might bring complimentary expertise in other areas that may not be part of your agency. So it's a real agile model and refreshing I think.

And I do come from the creative side so I know we – I have to say this because I really believe there's a huge opportunity for agencies to do it in better creative work. It is still about ideas. It's how those ideas reach people that I think has advanced and become much more effective, but that basic idea I still believe is so important and there are more and more tools and metrics to help us find those deeper insights which I think will drive us to push our creative boundaries and I think there isn't always an opportunity in healthcare advertising and specifically pharmaceutical to push creative boundaries.

Taren: So truly the art and science of creative, right. So if you're relying under the data insight but then you need a human to bring the art to those ideas, so how do you nourish creative talent in this age of data?

Patricia: That's a good one because it is all about data, but to your point. Creative talents are people. They are human. They are learning and growing and I think first and foremost it's critical to create a safe place for creative talents, an environment where all ideas are welcome.

We have a tendency I think the longer you're in this business to start editing right away because you know the FDA won't let you say this or the med-legal, but it's really a place to throw out



ideas in every channel. So I love starting a brand new creative off on a career journey because it's just really exciting to see them take off and I think it's important to provide them with the tools they need right at the beginning to give them the challenges to build their confidence and creative curiosity.

I think it creates if it is a muscle you have to stretch so finding ways to keep creative curiosity within an agency I think is really nourishing to creatives. And I can put the time in required from them to learn. If they're new, haven't done it before, but you know they have creative capabilities I think it's hard to find the time, but you're building structures that allow for creatives, new creatives to have the people to teach them and mentor them. As I go back to those who "nourished me" like we talked about earlier, they made me part of a process. A new creative could be part of a presentation if there's a part because it really builds confidence. I think the talent, really nourishing talent needs a balance of mentoring, truly constructive criticism, feedback, goal setting and most importantly like I was saying before this opportunity to feel safe and confident to really explore that create potential.

I think they need to see a vision for their path and this is true of non-creatives also, it's just talent in general. They have to see a vision for their own path and their future and then together to help nourish them. You put the stepping stones in place to help them get there.

Taren: Yeah. That's great. You've outlined the path that you – to help others become successful and recognize their success. How do you define success for yourself?

Patricia: Personally, it sounds over simplistic potentially, but if I inspire someone in any way I feel I'm successful. If someone says you inspired me to do this, I feel I've been successful and that not only includes people at work but my own family circle, my friends. Career-wise, as an agency leader I felt successful A, if I inspired someone including the client for any reason, but successful if I can truly create a culture or company where people thrive and a part of really building loyal and trusted relationships with our clients because if you can do that I think it means you're doing good, smart work and you're building really important relationships with not only internal agency teams but your clients as well.

Taren: Fantastic. And finally Patricia, you've had obviously a very successful career and a very diverse career, can you identify one wow moment of your career that either changed the trajectory of your progression or made an indelible mark on yourself?

Patricia: Okay. I may be honest here, it was really my first big win as the owner of my own agency Strategem. It sounds a little self serving. I should probably come up with something more humanistic, but it was truly the beginning of so much because my two partners and I had left the security of a large agency to see what we can do and we were art, copy and account.



We had passion and drive, but we also knew sometimes that that is just not enough. But through our connections we were invited to a pitch, and we were a small and merry band going up against a couple of Goliath agencies including the one we had left, which we didn't leave for any horrible reason; we just wanted to see what we could do, but we knew how big they were.

So our win was really exciting because it truly gave us confidence that we can do this and it was encouraging that really cool clients were willing to trust their brand with a more boutique shop. I think that was even back then that was, quite a long time ago now, but it helped me understand that smaller and more mighty and more nimble can win the day and that's still true today. So it was one of those moments that breakthrough from scrambling to find project work where we were still really just creative and account team to truly becoming an agency implementing processes and building a structure and a culture and it was also for me the beginning of learning the business side of it all.

Coming from the creative side, you rarely worried about accounts payable or profit loss, so it was really an important learning for me. So that win was the defining moment and definitely in my trajectory.

Taren: I don't think that's self serving at all. I think that's the entrepreneur story and I think that's wonderful and it sets you on a path to so much more. So I think it's a great wow. Do you think it's the first big win you wouldn't have any other win, so I think that is really important.

Patricia: That's right. And it was just that critical confident stage where if you didn't – you don't necessarily go in thinking you were going to because you were up against big agencies, but it just it was just that critical juncture. Are we going to make it or we're not going to make it and it was really important part of making it.

Taren: That's great. So I so enjoyed speaking with you for our WoW podcast program. I want to wish you continued success and thank you for joining us.

Patricia: Thank you Taren. It's great to reconnect with you again and thank you very much for the opportunity.

Thank you for listening to this episode of WoW – the Woman of the Week podcast series. And once again thanks to Calcium for sponsoring this episode. For more information visit CalciumUSA.com.

And don't forget to check out our other episodes at PharmaVOICE.com/WoW.

