

Galen sticking to its principles as it embarks on ambitious future



By Guy Martin

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Staying true to her values is not a secondary consideration for Dr Dennise Broderick in her career and leadership of Galen, but rather is front and central to every action she takes.

As chief executive of the privately-owned global pharmaceutical sales and marketing company, Dennise has played a pivotal role in Galen's growing success over the past 5 years. Under her guidance, the company has expanded into new territories and therapeutic areas, building on its previous successes.

To dig deeper into Galen's success, you must first look at its leader's own experiences in the industry. Starting out in academia and sales, she has been mentored and nurtured into a leader herself. Now, she pays it back by mentoring others, demonstrating that even in top positions, one can remain grounded and committed to supporting others.

Enduring passion

Having done a degree in biochemistry and a doctorate in oncology and cancer genetics, Dennise discovered her love for the business side of life sciences, and her first role as a hospital sales rep at Novartis (NOVN: VX), convinced her that a life in academia was not for her after all.

"Thus began my love affair of the marrying of science with business," she told The Pharma Letter. "I loved the sales, I loved everything about it, dealing with patients, doctors, medicines. It just really ticked a lot of my boxes. And that was the beginning of an amazing journey for me over the last 20 years."

Steps that have followed in Dennise's career since have included a spell with Johnson & Johnson (NYSE: JNJ) and a period in Australasia, and then moving back after being offered the opportunity to set up a pharma business for a company that had limited presence in Europe.

"I took the plunge and I haven't looked back," she recalled. "I very quickly realized then that building things is where my sweet spot is - I love the excitement of taking something, believing in it, growing it, developing it, working with patients and healthcare professionals, and that's been where I have focused my career."

Embracing failure and showing compassion

Enjoying what she does is one of the virtues that Dennise tries to embody as a leader. Another is embracing the possibility of failure as a step towards learning.

“When you’re not afraid to fail, you’re not afraid to take risks. And some of the risks I have taken in my career have really paid off, and some were the worst moves I ever made. But I never went backwards because I always grew and learned from it.”

A bold ethos

It’s this very outlook that led to the conception of Galen’s ethos ‘Dare to be extraordinary.’ Dennise explained what this means for the company’s culture and employees.

“It is a bold statement,” she admitted. “But the thing for me is, in the everyday world, and I’m thinking specifically of Galen, daring to be extraordinary can be, for somebody who really hates presenting, standing up in front of their peers and presenting a brand plan. Or, to somebody else, daring to be extraordinary could be securing a £10 million (\$12.6 million) deal.

“For me, extraordinary is no more complicated than going above and beyond and pushing myself outside of my comfort zone. It takes a lot of courage to stick your head up and say “this terrifies me but I’m going to do it anyway” or “I see that patient is in need and maybe there’s something more I can do”. So, we live it every day, we celebrate, and we talk about it every day in meetings, “how did you dare to be extraordinary?”

“When we rolled out our ethos, I asked everybody to commit to something that they were going to be extraordinary in for 12 months. It didn’t have to be anything work-related. And, oh my goodness it created such a buzz and there’s something magical about that, because if you can transfer that from your working life into your personal life, then you’ve definitely changed the course of your own journey, haven’t you?”

Open to business and confident in the future

Galen’s ethos goes beyond cementing a thriving internal culture, it extends to new partnerships as well.

“It starts with human interaction, with every relationship,” she said. “When I talk to potential partners, for me it’s really important that the culture is very aligned. It’s not just if we can take a product and sell it, it’s about “do you believe in what we are capable of?” or “do we believe in what you are capable of” when we out-license our product. That’s always the starting point.

“We are very fortunate in that we have both out-licensing and in-licensing opportunities, and I would encourage any partner who is interested in finding a European partner, and who is interested in taking our products through the rest of the world, to reach out to us. We are so open to thinking outside the box - Galen has a real, entrepreneurial spirit - we’re very adaptable and agile to what the partner requires.”

The strength of Galen’s culture and its partnerships meant that the company was able to keep growing even through the challenges of the pandemic. This trend has continued and now, as Dennise looks ahead to the coming year and beyond, she is full of optimism that the company will continue to develop.

“We’re continuing our geographic expansion in Northern Europe, and now we’re exploring new markets to enter into with a direct footprint. It’s really exciting in terms of growing and developing. When there’s a clear vision and a clear goal, and everybody feels like they’re moving in the right direction, it’s just magical.”

Inspiring tomorrow’s women leaders

Looking back on her career journey, Dennise is passionate about supporting younger women starting on the same career ladder she began climbing two decades ago. And with International Women’s Day approaching on March 8, Dennise shares some valuable advice for women in the industry.

“I say to girls that I coach and mentor, “Back yourself, if you’re waiting for somebody to be an advocate for you, you’re potentially going to be waiting a long time.””

Being kind, tolerant and open-minded are other snippets of advice that Dennise passes on when she mentors those coming through -something that she recalls benefiting from in her own career.

“I had some of the best mentors, some of the best executive coaches, and most of my mentors were men, actually, and they taught me how to stand up for myself in a healthy and respectful way,” she said.

“I’d also tell people to find some really good, strong female role models, even if they’re not in the industry. Find women in your life, be it personally or professionally, that allow you to be yourself, that teach you how to be strong, and that are there as a sounding board.

“I wouldn’t be where I am today without the people I have surrounded myself with, because leadership at times can be a lonely place the further up you get, so you have to have a very strong network and a very strong belief that you can do this.”

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