

# The Art of Engineering with Denise McIntosh

Episode 013: Lisa Kerner, Corporate Trade Show Manager at [CRB](#) in Kansas City

Lisa and Denise talk about the history of CRB and their work with Custom Powder. You'll hear Lisa's fascinating journey from her beginnings in administration to her current role as the Corporate Trade Show Manager. Lisa has had to take a completely different approach to trade shows in the last year, due to the global pandemic. She and Denise also talk about the importance of building business relationships along the way and how young women entering the field can help close the wage and gender gap.

*Denise McIntosh:*

*Well, good morning and welcome to the art of engineering podcast. And this morning, I am happy to introduce Lisa Kerner, who is the corporate trade show manager with CRB. Uwe who I know, we know as an engineering firm, I'm based in Kansas city, but I'd like Lisa, uwho's been with the company for 25 years, uto share some of the history of CRB and what you do as a company and, and the history of what you've seen in 25 years. Welcome Lisa. Hi, good morning. Thank you for having me. Uit's, ul'm excited to be participating in the podcast today. So, uthis summer I'll be celebrating 25 years at CRB. Uthey are just an amazing company and we're, so well-known for our design and construction services. Uwe offer, usustainable engineering, architecture, construction, and consulting solutions, uto the global life sciences and advanced technology industries.*

*Lisa Kerner:*

*Next month, CRP will be celebrating its 37th anniversary. So throughout those years there's been so much growth you know, to be in such an amazing industry that we're in. You know, CRB has been very successful and right now we are at 20 offices. We've got 17 in the us two in Europe and one in Canada. And we're currently at about 1500 employees globally. Wow. And you are coming to us this morning from North Carolina. Yes. Southeast part of the country. And as a company we've enjoyed working with CRB over the years in the life sciences arena building equipment. What one of my first encounters with CRP was with your San Jose office and Derek and Kim. And we got to do the Cylindra project in California, which was, which was really fun.*

*Lisa Kerner:*

*I worked with John fickin and several others in the city office to build equipment for. So Edison, Lincoln, Nebraska, so okay. Of our relationship with CRB over the years, but so tell me, Lisa, you started almost 25 years ago. What's your journey with CRB been like, oh gosh, it's, it's been amazing. When I was hired, I did not start in the role that I'm currently in. I started doing administrative in an admin, an administrator role at the time.*

*And you know, I can remember the interview just like, you know, it was yesterday. And they told me, they said, you know, we're a very entrepreneurial company. It's really what you make of it. And I have to say it's been such a blessing to work for, not just a company, that's just so well-known in our industry, but they truly do support and encourage their employees with their own professional growth and personal growth.*

*Lisa Kerner:*

*I mean, they just I've been very fortunate. I, I think I transitioned into a, a marketing role around 1999 or 2000. That sounds so like forever ago, but but I transitioned into that role just supporting mostly the Southeast with marketing you know, proposals and whatever type of marketing was going on. And then just through the years, things evolved where I sort of got engaged in some more corporate responsibilities to support marketing. And you know, we were a much smaller marketing team back then, of course, but gosh, we've grown so much in that regard too. I mean, we're now at about 30 marketing staff throughout the company, which is incredible. So all of this amazing stuff you're seeing on social media right now they do an amazing job. I swear that they just are hard at it all the time.*

*Lisa Kerner:*

*It seems so. But about, I would say for 10 or more years, 10 or 15 years, I started supporting some of the trade show efforts that the company was doing while it was still, you know, supporting Southeast with marketing and just as things kept growing in the trade show world for us, that we kept engaging us in different markets and finding new things to to get involved with new organizations. It just gradually, I think we decided, you know, I found a niche, you know, with our, with the trade shows and events. And so we made that a full-time position for me. So and I think that's been about full-time and I, I think it's been about five or six years that I've been in that role. I remember meeting you at several trade shows, so yeah.*

*Lisa Kerner:*

*Yeah. So, yeah, so I mean full time. Yeah. I think it's around that time, but yeah. So yeah, it's a lot of, it's a lot of fun and you know, just getting out there and being that, you know, planning all of those events around trade shows. I mean, there's there's so much that goes on with just like the booth dynamic of putting everything together with that. And I, and I have to say Lisa, I, that I, that I wear every day with my get in the building card. Yes. The, what do you call the lanyard? The Blaine lanyard, the bling lanyard. I have a black one. I love it.*

*Lisa Kerner:*

*I can send you more. Yes. That's just such a fun thing that several years back, you know, when all the trade show giveaways, I mean, it was, I was just so bored to tears with the next flash drive or a fancy pen, you know, things like that. So I went out on my end and I was like, Hey, I have an idea. Let's just do something different with these lanyards. And and so some people were, you know, not so sure what these Blaine*

*lanyards, but they've just been amazing. And I will describe them further there they're shiny black. There are very classy pink ones and, and very stately silver ones if I reorder it. Yes. Yes. Well, thank you for that on that. Yeah. That's a lot of fun. Well, it can be reused and repurposed. That's what I like about them.*

*Lisa Kerner:*

*Yes. Tell me about how this pandemic and all have, have affected how you are approaching trade shows. Yeah, so right. All of last year, I mean, fortunately we got a few shows in at the beginning of the year, but then right. Everything quickly changed and you know, there was a stand still for a little bit, and then everything just started evolving into the virtual platform. You know, how right. I mean, it's, it's, it's good, but you know, and organizations, weren't quite sure how to do it in the beginning. And so there were just challenges in that, you know, just like, we're not really getting the value out of that. I mean, you want to support the organizations because I mean, there there's organizations are good to us, you know, and you don't want to, I mean, you want to help them get through it as well.*

*Lisa Kerner:*

*You know, so we stayed with our commitment to all of our organizations, you know, to, to help keep that. And thankfully you know, I tried to work with a lot of the organization planners ISP specifically and a couple of other on the food and beverage side. That's another market that we cover. And so it was just trying to give them feedback and some pointers, and I worked with some of them to be their, their test run of just how the platforms were coming together. You know, so, and, and with that, we tried, we've tried really hard to get our SMEs to you know, to speak at those virtual events so that you get more exposure that way. Because honestly, I don't know that, I mean, people especially are just getting sort of burned out on virtual events. I don't know if they're really gonna take the time to go over to the exhibit hall, the virtual exhibit hall, what, yeah. So we had to be creative and, and try to do some new things with our, you know, what our online booth will look like. And like I said, getting our subject matter experts engaged and speaking, I mean, that's been really great, good. We we've done the same and I, I liked your description of ho-hum.*

*Lisa Kerner:*

*Yeah. And then being able to engage, but I will say that, like you were saying, getting your subject matter experts to participate and be part of the presentations, we've pushed our young people here to do virtual lunch and learns. Yeah. Okay. Yeah. Yeah. That's really proven though. That's proving to be successful. So that's something we may continue. Because that is from a, just from a logistical standpoint I think it helps on, on your end with your people and, and allows us to do more of them. And maybe even more specific to what people are needing to learn about. So that that's one, one good thing I've seen. Yeah. Yes. So missing people. Oh, for sure. I mean, there's just nothing*

*that replaces that in-person contact and the, the relationships that you build that way and then networking. I mean, it's just, you just can't do that virtual.*

*Lisa Kerner:*

*I mean, you can, but not really. Yeah. It's just not the same. Tell me about your journey with ISPE because you have are the past president of, I believe it's called the Carolina south Atlantic chapter of, and I'm going to say what ISP is, which is the international society of pharmaceutical engineers. Yes. And so tell me about that experience and, and that journey. Yeah. So, you know, I guess I've been a member probably for about 20 years with ISPE. CRB is very supportive of that organization and we have members all throughout our company that are engaged at their local chapters and things like that. And we get very involved of course, internationally. So, you know, I had my membership and I would say, you know, I wasn't totally active, but, you know, I would say around 2000 and maybe more, 10 or 15 years ago, I started getting more involved with the local chapter here and started getting involved in committees and supporting some things going on events and things like that.*

*Lisa Kerner:*

*And and then they had you know, the, they had asked me if I wanted to sort of get involved more on the, on the board level and, you know, so I took the easy way just that they had an at large director, if you will, you know, and and then things just evolved. And I was just totally surprised when people approached me at, you know, getting more on the executive level because I've always seen people, you know, that were president of the organization were more technical there. You know, I had not seen a marketing person at least at our local chapter supporting that role, you know? So yeah, I was really honored and nervous at the same time, but you know, you have a progression, you kind of start out as a secretary and you move up.*

*Lisa Kerner:*

*And so it was 2015 that I was elected for my first year. And they actually, the the following year, they had the board, we had some issues going on with the incoming precedent so that they weren't able to support the role. They were just too busy. So they had asked me to run for a second term. So yeah, so I mean, it was, yeah. So two years as president and, you know, getting involved in ISPE, I mean, really internationally locally, I mean, it has been such an amazing thing for me personally. I mean, not only does ISPE support CRBs business goals, but for me personally, I mean, it is a family to me, you know what I mean? Like the relationships I have they have just, you know, building that network and maintaining those relationships and just getting involved.*

*Lisa Kerner:*

*I mean, you really, it really helps build your career if you put the time into it. And, you know, it takes some work of course, you know, and it's a commitment to get involved. But there's so much value that comes out of it. And it's very rewarding and I contribute a lot of my success to ISPE and those relationships that I've been so fortunate to have.*

*Well, and, and I want to share just a fun story with you about CRB and about how we, you know, we sometimes are sort of reluctant to get involved in those things, because we think a we're not technical, or we're not, we're not bonafide or whatever, which I decided at this point is your bunk, but one of the first well, I do believe it was the first time I met Derek in the CRB office with Kim Duncan and I am so totally not technical.*

*Lisa Kerner:*

*I mean, I can, I can talk high level about what it is we design and build and do, but I'm always the first one to say. And then if you ask me to ask me technical, we're going to call Bob or CRB office. And Derek was sitting by himself in one of the small conference rooms. And he had just a drawing on a piece of paper. And, and so we sat down and he said, I'm really struggling with this. I'm really trying to figure out who could help us with this project. And he, so he points to, I think it was a blender that he, I mean, this was, these were hand drawn and he said, so Denise, could you do that? I said, yes, Derek, we can do that. And there was a lift. And then there was a, I don't think, I think it was an envelope booth or something. And I said, Derek, we can do all that. And he said, oh, there you go.*

*Lisa Kerner:*

*Yeah. I tell that story to salespeople who are coming in to say, you don't have to know everything about everything. Right. Learn, learn what you can and develop the relationships and, and you can be successful. Right. I, I totally agree with that a hundred percent. I mean, yeah, I can, I can stretch it a little bit, but yeah, I can't go too technical and too many conversations and we don't have to. Right. Yeah. And that's one of the, you know, the great things, you know, being at all of the trade shows and events and, you know, when clients come up, I mean, you know, obviously my number one goal is, is how can CRP support that client? And you know, I may not have the answer, but I can do a pretty good job at finding the right person. If they're not there at the event I can connect them to the right people.*

*Lisa Kerner:*

*And yeah, I mean, that's really valuable to, you know, well, and I think Lisa, you are so well-spoken and coachable which was one of the reasons I wanted to, to visit with you this morning. But I think that's one of the things that women bring to what really is still considered pretty much the male dominated world nearing, and, and the industries, where in is, is that ability to build relationships, right? I mean, they are everything, whether they're, I mean, internal relationships, external relationships, equally valuable, you know I, I treasure them all and, and, you know, they, you know, going back to women, I'm a big fan of women supporting women, you know, and you want them to be successful. And, you know, I just I, I find that just, I've been supported by so many amazing women and, you know, I hope I'm doing the same in return, you know, so yeah.*

*Lisa Kerner:*

*Things that are happening within CRB for mentoring, whether it's on a formal basis or an informal basis. So yeah, CRB is a strong supporter of you know, women in the industry. So they do have some focused women, internal groups where they're having monthly meetings and you know, trying to really become champions and you know, just to show a stronger, you know, you can be more, you know what I mean? And especially in a more in a male dominated industry, but you know, CRB is yeah, very supportive of those organizations. Well, you are, you are a good example of that.*

*Lisa Kerner:*

*You are one that having started with what was probably mostly an engineering firm 25 years ago just to start in administration and move up to a corporate responsibility is, is to me the ultimate journey of, of what can happen with smart women. Oh, well, thank you. And it's, it's yes, you do have to put in the work, but if you are, you know, fortunate to be surrounded by amazing people who are going to help you grow and, and help you get there, you know, the possibilities are endless. And I think that's where I've been so fortunate. I mean, not just within CRB, but externally to those amazing people that, you know, so, so I do want to go back just a little bit because did you get to the interview with CRB? Oh gosh, this way, this totally dates me, but I answered an ad in the newspaper.*

*Lisa Kerner:*

*Okay. That's how you did it back in 1996. Yeah. Yeah. You are. Yeah. If you didn't apply for jobs online. Right. So, yeah, I mailed in my resume and so interesting about it. Well, I had worked at an engineering firm previously. I'm not in this industry, but I had some experience in that. And I guess, you know, you saw engineering company and it just was a draw for me. So I guess that's kind of how it got started, but plus they had a really good ad, you know, it sounded great, you know that makes it, you know, that, that helps too, but yeah, that's how, yeah. So that's how it worked back then. Like I said, very crazy to think of that. Very good.*

*Lisa Kerner:*

*You share with young women and even young men. Because part of my intention with these conversations is to encourage young people, to find engineering, manufacturing, construction, to help close the gender gap. And most particularly to close the wage gap in this country, any, any advice you would give to young people looking for what to do with their lives? Well, first of all right, find something that you're passionate about. You know, that's going to interest you, I think and finding an, a, a great company that you know, is going to support your personal growth. I think that's critical. I mean, to me, it is, and I mean, personal growth and professional growth I think are equally important and, you know, they're going to take, you know, be good to you, you know, it just sort of helps your whole progression and you, you know, you have to fill it to be with an organization that you feel empowered, that you can do things, and you're not like have somebody like, oh, I can only go this far, you know?*

*Lisa Kerner:*

*But you gotta put the work into it too. I mean, you know, you, it doesn't come on a silver platter, right. You have to do the work and you know, put in the effort and you know, it's going to come back to you if you're, like I said earlier, if you're surrounded by good people, I mean, that's, to me, that's the first start. I mean, yes. Well, and the marketing part of any company is so critical to the success of that company. And that was one of the reasons, one of the other reasons I wanted you to join me is, is exposing that part in engineering and manufacturing and construction and all of that, that is just as critical on that side as it is being an engineer, or yes, absolutely. I mean like I said, we have a team of 30, that's doing all of our marketing and they do amazing work.*

*Lisa Kerner:*

*And, you know, for me personally, I guess, you know, being at all of the events, you know, that I'm organizing at the trade shows and off-site client events that I may be putting together to me. I mean, I'm representing CRB all of the time and, you know, you always want the best foot forward. You know, you always want to have that best image for the company. And you just, you know, I feel strongly about that, that I, you know, always want to represent well, and I take a lot of heart and, and doing all that. And I am very passionate about it because, you know, yeah. I want CRV to always look its best and you know, and that'll just rub off on me naturally. Hopefully you have done a fabulous job in my opinion. Well, thanks. Thank you again for joining us this morning and helping us to let young people explore all the opportunities that are within our, our reach. Well, thank you. This has been a real honor, and I appreciate the time and have enjoyed*

*Denise McIntosh:*

*Talking to you, the art of engineering engineers, talking about their process principles and personal stories on the next episode for when the way to increase your position was to jump companies. Yes, yes. That's coming up next on art of engineering presented by custom powder systems, the containment company, custom-powder.com.*