

The Art of Engineering with Denise McIntosh

Episode 017: [Jen Clark](#), Vice President, Sales and Account Management at [CAI](#)

Denise:

Tell me about how you got into this industry and what you do and what CAI does,

Jen:

How much time do we have?

So I am our vice president of sales and account relationship management. And as you said, I was promoted earlier this year and I will have, I'll be celebrating my 10th anniversary with CAI in January. So I've spent my entire thirties at CAI learning, growing as a person, as an employee. And it's been, it's been good. It's pretty interesting how I got involved. My dad was in the industry and he told my sister and I, we needed to get into pharmaceuticals. You know, this is where the money is. This is where you'll do well and be able to succeed. And when I wanted to go to college, I wanted to be a teacher. My mom was a teacher and my dad was an engineer and my sister was an engineering school. And my parents refused to pay for me to go to school, to be a teacher.

Denise:

Interesting!

Jen:

It was kind of like, you can apply to engineering school or you can apply to engineering school. And so I mean, I had a little bit of freedom of choice. And for those of you that know me know that, like I don't listen to anyone. But I listen to my parents and I'm glad that I did. And so I have an industrial engineering degree and when I was a junior, my dad said, come to the annual meeting. And so my first ISPE annual meeting, I was a junior in college and it was in New Orleans. And it was back in the heyday when ISPE threw a party. And I think I was 20, so I wasn't even 21 yet, but it was, it was so amazing. And it was so wonderful. And I walked around and I just collected business cards.

And at that time, a lot of students didn't come to the in meeting and everyone wanted to talk to students. And so I met so many wonderful people. So fast forward a year later, I went to apply for jobs. And I literally sat down in December, just like I had been told everybody, you know, I listen and, you know, mentored by these people. And I just started emailing and said, Hey, I'm graduating. This is my degree. Here's my resume. Do you know anybody? If you don't know anybody, can you forward it to somebody? And so I had planned a month long trip to Europe. The day after I graduated, I, I was leaving and literally going backpacking through Europe for a month. I had never been, it

was amazing. I was spending my entire life savings and I had no job. Oh yeah, that's important.

I had no job. And so I was, I was doing it because when in your life, are you ever gonna be able to do that again? And so my first boss, his name is Bruce Cravin, he's still in the industry and he called me and he's like, what do you do in the next couple weeks? And I had already actually turned a job or two down, cuz it just didn't feel, it didn't feel right. And so I said, well actually I'm gonna be in Europe and he immediately, oh my gosh, you have to go here, here, and here. These are my favorite places. This is call me when you come back. And I was kinda like, I wanna work for somebody like that. Yes. I was like, go live your life, go have an opportunity. And then come back and let's talk.

And so I did and I had a couple offers and I chose and I always tell a story it's it was less money than some of the other offers. And I was most comfortable going and working with them. And so I went and worked with them. And then I went on my honeymoon with my husband and on the plane, we saw a man from Yonkers Industries. And I'm like, I know that guy. And my husband's like, we're in Pittsburgh. You don't know anybody. And I'm like, I do. And so it ended up being Terry Costello, who was the president of Yonkers at the time. And my parents picked us up from the airport and they knew each other cuz they'd worked together and it's all these ISP connections. It's, it's all these ISP connections. And he's like, come work with us. So two months later I'm working with Yonkers and I loved it.

I was a project manager and I was a grunt and I learned everything and I absorbed everything. And any time I got to go in the field, I was out in the field. I hated sitting in the trailer. I wanted to go and do. And it just gave me so much experience. And then through I S P E volunteering on the unprofessionals committee, I met some folks from CAI and they started to recruit me and I didn't even know I was being recruited. I was so naive by it. I had no clue. I always looked at CAI as just this organization that was beyond me.

Denise:

So tell us about CAI.

Jen:

Yes. CIA is an organization that's been in business for 25 years this year and we help our customers design deliver, operate, and maintain quality, critical manufacturing, or mission critical facilities. And we focus on operational readiness and operational excellence. And what that means is we want to come help you so that when your facility gets turned over on day one, you can start manufacturing and you can actually start making medicines for patients much faster.

Denise:

Yes. And so this, it's commissioning agents, right?

Jen:

No... erase that Johnny erase that!

It used to be, I mean, we, you can say this it's it used, it used to be commissioning agents. And as we have evolved over the past 25 years, we have been using CAI the past five years because there's so much more that we can do than commissioning. We have eight different vertical markets and, and we support anything from helping facilities do due diligence. If they wanna buy a property to PAI audits, to human performance plans, writing SOPs and actually training the operators in that operational readiness state and really integrating with the value streams of our clients. So commissioning just, it wants to buy quality service limited from conditioning. So we have rebranded as CAI and so yes, CIA. 25 years. It's amazing.

Denise:

Very good. So what, what does your day look like?

Jen:

Oh my goodness. Every day is, is different. And it's amazing because if you went and did the same thing every day, you'd be bored. And so I, I support a lot of internal folks. So as the head of sales and account relationship management, I wanna make sure that our sales team, our business development folks they are a equipped with the tools with the sales training, with our services, that they really understand everything that we can do because where I think CAI adds value and where our jobs are fun is that we're helping solve complex problems. You know, a client calls you and anyone can go and just qualify something. You know, this is, we don't need to just qualify this. We need to do it in this timeframe while we've coordinating this, this and this. Oh. And we've gotta develop all the SOPs, the maintenance plans.

And we gotta do all this by yesterday. And so our teams have the knowledge of, okay, how do we, how do we integrate that? And how do we find out what they have? And I help develop that and develop that model for how we go and, and support our clients to be able to come up with those solutions together. And we don't just say, oh, here, this is it. We wanna work together. And on the account management side, it's teaching people, I've started presenting at new employee orientation of we from day one. You're an employee-owner. And as an owner, we act like owners. And we, we manage these relationships from day one and just building and embracing that culture of relationship

management. And I love it. People, people are my business, people are my passion. And I think you, as, as you've gotten to know me, you see that bleeds through. And so it, it, it works well with the clients and I'm also an account manager. So I manage an account and I travel and go visit job sites and do meetings with them. And these awesome, these days, I try to as few Zoom calls as possible, I wanna be face to face we're back. It's happening.

Denise:

I talked about that with somebody earlier today that the opportunity to get in front of people personally, again, expands the conversation.

Jen:

Oh, I like that expands the conversation.

Denise:

There are just things that come up. If you're face to face that wouldn't necessarily come up. If you have that Zoom or Teams agenda, and you're, you know, following those, those ticked off marks, it, it allows for a bigger,

Jen:

It does. And this I can see you. I can touch you.

Denise:

Yes. You know, and doing a podcast in person is even more fun than doing it on Zoom.

Jen:

The connection is there. And I think, I think people will hear that in your, in your podcast. And I think they'll, they'll, they'll feel the joy they'll feel the smile, you know? And it's, it's good.

Denise:

Yes. So who would you most like to be stuck on an elevator with?

Jen:

Oh my gosh. You never made Lindsay answer that. I think I would most likely be stuck on an elevator. Oh, I'm, I'm just gonna go like George Clooney. Not gonna lie.

Denise:

Awesome. Awesome. What fun? I mean, I can just see the fun.

Jen:
Yeah.

Denise:
So what brings you joy?

Jen:
Oh my gosh, my kids, my family, I adore my girls. They, they bring me joy. And as a parent the joy that tiny humans that you created out of love and what they, when you see them and they, they emulate you and they are the best versions of ourselves. We've had some, some struggles. And what I talked about a little bit this morning at the women of pharma thing, and it's, it's been a challenging year. And so the smiles that I see on my kid's faces right now, it is the most joyful thing. And the laughter and the cuddles that is that's my jam. Those are my girls, you know, and I just absolutely love them.

Denise:
Well, you are one of those people that, that is effervescent and engaging and is so well suited to the promotion of women in far. And I wanna thank you for joining me.

Jen:
Thank you very much for having me. It was, it was a pleasure. Thank you.