

Denise:

Welcome to the Art of Engineering, where we speak with some of the top women in engineering about their processes, principles, and personal stories. I'm Denise McIntosh, CEO of Custom Powder Systems, the Containment Company. Today I'm fortunate to be in the [ISPE](#) Career Center and at the annual meeting of the International Society of Pharmaceutical Engineers in Las Vegas. And this morning I asked to join Shannon Goodson, who has been on our podcast before in a previous position, and we've stayed in touch and through the ISPE Midwest chapter, got to read a book called [Everybody Matters](#), who is by Bob Chapman with Barry Wehmiller, and Shannon has since joined Barry Wehmiller, [The Design Group](#) as the life science leader in the St. Louis office. And I've asked Shannon to join me again to talk about that experience and how our book club, who got to read this awesome book and now she gets to live it

Shannon:

I do.

Denise:

So tell me first of all, what you do as a life science leader in the St. Louis office for Barry Wehmiller Design Group.

Shannon:

So I joined Barry Wehmiller Design Group about two years ago, and I was brought in I was specifically asked to come in and lead this life science group. So Barry Wehmiller Design Group is we have 44 offices across the United States and two in in India. So we touch all sorts of markets. So we do food and beverage, life science and industrial and equal parts, mostly food and beverage and life science. And most of the life science is out on the East coast, west coast, like we all know. Yeah. That's where life science lives. But in the Midwest there is, we do have life science in the Midwest.

So the St. Louis office has kind of tried and, you know, kind of filtered out and everything like that a couple times having life science really out of the St. Louis office specifically. And so I was asked to come in by our, the managing partner of our office, Robin Pike had asked me to come in and lead the life science group in St. Louis. And so as the life science leader. So my background is process, project, and validation, kind of in equal parts or quality systems validation in equal parts. And so I'm able to work with clients to provide all of those services

and really all of the services that we have as design group. So the automation, I am not an automation engineer, but I definitely have an awesome team with the St. Louis office. We can do control panels. We have a control check automation group that builds the panels with the automation. We have process packaging, all sorts of different disciplines out of our office. And so this way I am able to interact, speak to speak, if you will, with the life science firms in the Midwest or in St. Louis specifically, and really bring those services and the projects and everything, kind of interact with them and get all of that lined up so that we can actually help service those companies.

Denise:

What we talked about was the culture. Yes. That's so different. And so important. And I've read a couple of articles about culture and one of the things that stuck out to me was by Johnny Taylor who wrote a, a book about culture called Reset. And he said, culture is the glue that holds together an organization. So tell me what that looks like, feels like, is like in a Barry Wehmiller Group,

Shannon:

Just in general. And I know we read the book after I joined the company, so I was able to kind of give some insight. Yes. The Everybody Matters book is so impressive and George, really that culture is just so impressive. There's just, people ask me all the time, and especially like new hires and new grads ask me all the time, is this like legit? Is this just a poster on the wall? What's going on? Because I've worked for the company that has just the poster on the wall that changes every year. And here's what's important this year. Yes. but it's, it's very legit. And it's, you know, we have heart count, not head count.

Denise:

I love that. So what does that mean?

Shannon:

That means that I'm looking at people as people, not just, well, it's just a number on the wall. It's, you know, we have, you know, heart, you know, 80 professionals. Professionalism is another one that really stood out to me. I don't have colleagues, I don't have employees. I have professionals, which to me gives it a whole other level.

Denise:

Wow. Yes. You know,

Shannon:

We're valuing the fact that you're a professional, you have a professional degree, you are you, you matter. Let's say it that way. You know, we talk about let's see, what else do we do? You know, I have team leaders. I don't have a boss, I don't have a manager. You know, we do talk about managers and everything like that, but it's like, I am the team leader. So I'm the team leader for life science, not, you know, whatever. Yeah. But it's, you know, the team leader. We also talk about, which I've worked for a competitor of ours in the past, you know, and if you were low on work, it was, well, you better go find some or you better go hunt it down or go network or whatever. You know, I had a conversation not too long ago, 'cause I have a newer employee who has started, your professional has started in our group.

And you know, the comment, the conversation was, it's my job as team leader to help find you work. So if you're running low, it's my job as the team leader. And that's all of our jobs to find work

Denise:

To help you.

Shannon:

And so on Monday mornings we have a meeting where we go through what professionals, every person in our office in the St. Louis office, we know what they're working on every week. And we can forecast for the next couple weeks. Like, who's got some availability, who's got time, who's out on PTO, who's out on maternity or paternity leave, who's, you know. So we really, like every leader in our office has that visibility every week. So if I know I have a project coming up or, you know, it goes out to the national board that's called the ops council. Okay. And it goes out and they kind of look at the overall vision of all the offices to see where availability is.

So when somebody comes up and goes, I have a project and I need 50 professionals two weeks from now, they can see that and we can share visibility,

Denise:

Shared resources, wow.

Shannon:

There's a lot of shared resources. You know, I used to joke when I started that if I didn't know, I knew a guy, and actually people in our office started saying that too. I, I know a guy because I could, you know, yes. I felt very comfortable that I could go call somebody if I said, Hey, you know, hey, I am looking for somebody with this experience or has this knowledge, or can help with this process or something. It's like, I think I know somebody. Let me give somebody a call and get and connect you. You know, we have 68 partners across our firm. Yeah. And we, I feel comfortable that I can call any one of 'em and say, Hey, my name is Shannon. I'm out of the St. Louis office. You know, we're looking for this help. Can you help me? I'm sitting in a booth today in Las Vegas with three partners who I've never met before.

Denise:

Great.

Shannon:

And so, and a, a professional, you know, out of college, you know, professionals out of Philly and you know, like of the seven of us who are there, I know one, you know, I've talked to a couple of 'em on the phone, but I haven't met them in person. And so walked right up, had a conversation, worked kind of, you know, getting that groove in. And so it's just, that to me is, it's just a lot of, to me it's just a group of really like-minded people that you just feel really comfortable with. And it's just because that is what we look for. That is what the company looks for as they go, is people with that kind of, that same, you know, willingness to work and the willingness to, to embrace that culture, to be like that.

Denise:

So that was gonna be my next question, <laugh>. What does that hiring process look like and how is it different from other places you've been?

Shannon:

You know, so my, it was interesting. I was actually approached for my position and just kind of had that conversation. There's a lot of emphasis on relationships and developing those relationships, not only with professionals, prospective professionals, and then also our clients and the vendors who we work with as well. You know, having, it's all about the relationships. And so, you know, we do do the career fairs. We do go to the colleges and that, and we do, but you know, all of them are given, you know, our recruiters send them, here's the TED talks of Bob

Chapman's, TED Talks, here's some links great. That you wanna look at. Here's all the information about this. Here's all about the book.

And just all of the stuff. And you can really tell if people have read it. Yeah.

Denise:

That's always a good clue.

Shannon:

You sometimes, and sometimes actually our team leader, you know, our office leader sometimes if she's in an interview and she'll be like, oh, so did you look at all this stuff? And you know, sometimes they, they'll be, oh, oh my gosh, yes. It's the coolest thing I ever, and I love it. And oh my gosh, I can't wait. So it'll be like, yeah, no, I didn't have any time. And to me, oh yes. And it's like, oh, okay. And you can almost tell the ones who just don't embrace it or don't get it or just aren't fully involved, are the ones who maybe don't read that. Right. Or watch the videos and stuff. And so it's been really,

Denise:

or who haven't lived in a culture like that.

Shannon:

Right. Well, it's interesting. I've been recruiting been talking to a prospective professional to come on and she's a new grad, but she worked for one of our competitors. Not sure outta which office exactly, but it doesn't matter. But she very keyed into the pro to the culture. That's the part that excites her the most because the work is very similar. But she's like, the culture is what clued her in. And that's what she's most excited about is being a part of that culture and being part of that, you know, that's the opportunities and stuff.

Denise:

So you also mentioned that you design your own career development.

Shannon:

We do.

Denise:

So tell me about that.

Shannon:

So it's called the individual development plan. That's what it's called. IDP. We like acronyms like everybody else is. Yes. So instead of having a review where, you know, you fill out the questions or you know, you have your goals for the year, and you fill out your questions, blah, blah, blah.

And then you send it to your boss and they fill out theirs, and then you sit down and have that awkward meeting where here's all the things you did right. And here's all the things that you can work on. Which mine is usually the same thing, you know, that I've had for 20 years. So Yeah. No surprise now. Yeah. you get to do, there's a set kind of a framework around it of this presentation, and you talk about your goals that you had set for yourself for last year and where it came in kind of where you are, where would you like to be, which is really nice for like a lot of our younger professionals who maybe are a couple years out and have, you know, I've worked and I've kind of seen and I've talked to and kind of had a little bit of exposure and all of a sudden it's, wow, I'd really like to do more on the packaging design side.

Hey, I'd really like to get into project management. Hey, I'd really like to travel more, or I'd like to travel less or whatever. But it's an opportunity. And you design your presentation, you give it and you get to invite whoever you want so you can invite anybody in the company that you want to

Denise:

Interesting. To this presentation.

Shannon:

To this presentation. They may or may not all attend, but yes, you are, you are, you control your destiny on that. So you can, you know, send it to every office leader if you want. You can send it to, you know, the people who you know, or the people you interact with or whoever to have a conversation.

Denise:

So it gives you an opportunity if you wanted to move into another area to invite that area to hear you.

Shannon:

Yeah.

Denise:

Wow.

Shannon:

You know, and you can report on the financials, you can report on, you know, your, whatever, your education or your involvement or whatever you are, you control your entire destiny on that, you know, and then obviously your your leader will give feedback and there's conversations that happen.

It kind of is prompting conversations during that. And maybe, maybe later there's a closed door conversation just to kinda say, Hey, I get that you're doing this, but there's a couple things that we need to work on before we get there. That they're not gonna highlight in the middle of big presentation. But it definitely opens up that conversation. Or it could be even, oh my gosh, I had no idea that you wanted to get into life science. So here we go.

Denise:

Yes. Because a regular review, unless it's structured that way, doesn't get to that. Where do you, where would you like to go from here?

Shannon:

Oh, that's nice to hear. And it doesn't matter.

Denise:

Yes, yes. Yeah. But it gives you the opportunity to be really specific about how and why and yes. What,

Shannon:

And there's a lot of emphasis in our company to, you're the master of your domain. You're the, you know, the choose your own adventure, if you will. You know, we have three specific kind of path steps to go. And you can, it, there's not one set. So once you're on a path, you stay there.

It's like, you can start here and go, you know, I kinda like to be up here. I'd like to be here, you know, a project director project, you know, a director or maybe a program director where you're, you know, overseeing a major client or maybe you're an SME, maybe you're the, you know, the relief valve guy for the company or whatever. So you can kind of develop that and you can switch lanes as many times as you want. Our team leader calls it a career car. You're driving your career car,

Denise:

you're driving your own car,

Shannon:

and you get to switch lanes if you want and come back. And, you know, and it makes sense that you get to, you know, okay, here's where I'm going, here's where I wanna be. How do I get there? And the, you know, again, the team leaders and the, you know, just everybody in the office is, or in the, the company, they're working with you to make sure that you, that's ultimately the goal is to get you where you need to be.

Denise:

Great. On the occasion that someone gets hired who turns out to be a little toxin in the soup. How, how is that handled?

Shannon:

I am not really sure. I haven't seen it.

Denise:

Oh, good.

Shannon:

I haven't seen that. A lot of times it could be that they just you know, no, we need you to do this. Or, Hey, this is how it needs to be in kind of the quiet firing as they call it now.

You know, where it's just, this is what your expectation is. And, and that, I don't think anyone, you know, it's like, okay, now you're traveling a hundred percent of the time or anything like that, but it's more, you know, you, I think that person just maybe doesn't feel that this is a good fit. Maybe it's not the right atmosphere, or they may even have that conversation with their

leader that, you know, I need you to, you know, come into the fold or maybe this isn't the best fit for you. But there is a lot of vetting that's very we are very deliberate about hiring. I've seen that, you know, to make sure there's, you know, when we bring somebody in in life science, there's a lot of, you know, we try to get them to talk to a lot of different people to just make sure that Yes, you know, even though I think they're amazing, you know, other people may be like, eh, I'm not really sure this is really gonna be a good fit kind of thing. And so, you know, I think there's, there's a lot of that too. Just making sure that, because we do want people to be a good fit. You know, we don't... You know, our company is not, I don't think we've ever had a layoff since we started our company.

Denise:

Well, I do, I do remember reading that in the book because you just look for,

Shannon:

we're very deliberate,

Denise:

all those contingencies and where do we pivot and where do we, how do we do it? And if we do bring somebody in, and it's been, you know, we're very deliberate about how we bring people in and, you know, making sure that okay, if they're not, you know, if business turns down here, is it something we can use them in a different area or have them fit in somewhere else, or, you know, they may have to travel or something like that. You know, kinda making sure

Denise:

or learn or learn something new.

Shannon:

Exactly. Making sure that that Yeah. Makes sense.

Denise:

That's, that's really important. You and I have also talked about Brene Brown and how sensible she makes being vulnerable. And I just happened to see a short podcast I think it was on LinkedIn where she said she's, she's suddenly come to the fact that she belongs to, she said, I belong to me. And if I'm in an organization that doesn't let me bring my heart, then it's not a

good fit. And it's the same with our families and our community. If we can't be our real selves, we're not our most productive selves.

Shannon:

Exactly. Exactly. It's taken a long time to really understand that.

Denise:

It has, it has.

Shannon:

And to be in an organization that, you know, I, people ask me all the time about this, they're like, well, you know, are you, is this your last company? And I'm like, well, hopefully so. 'cause I'm getting older. That would be nice. You know, I've always said that I wanted to get back into consulting at some point in time towards the end of my career. This is a little bit earlier than I wanted to, but it's a great fit and a great company. You know, we had all of our partners, six, we have 68 partners, and obviously we're based in St. Louis, which is where we are. So all the partners came in a couple weeks ago to our office. And it was great. I loved it. We got to meet, you know, I met partners that I've only seen, you know, emails from, or maybe I've seen on a WebEx or something, you know, I got to meet 'em in person, have a conversation with them, really, and meet so many that I've never talked to, or I have no idea who they are.

And it's just like, just meeting all these people. And they were so excited to meet all of us too. Just have those conversations to have, you know, just a quick conversation, Hey, what do you do? What is your, oh my gosh. You know, everything. It was just really a lot of fun, you know? 'cause You just didn't feel like, it's like, oh, you know, I've worked for the company where it's like, oh, you're not a high enough level for me to talk to. It's just like, they're like, what's going on? How you being Yes. Kind.

Denise:

Well, I mean, the, the, it says on the cover of the book, Everybody Matters. The extraordinary power of caring for your people like family. If we could all get there. Yeah. Wouldn't that be a great thing?

Shannon:

Yeah, it really, you know, and just talking to people. I mean, the people at the booth here, you know, I'm two years in, but you know, one of the guys was there 27 years. One of them been there, 17, one of them been there 16. You know, a couple of us were

Denise:

people come and don't leave.

Shannon:

That's right. They really don't. You know, and it's just amazing to me. It's like, I was an intern and then I got hired and here I am still. And it's like, okay,

Denise:

First of all, I wanna thank you for joining me again, because I wanted to have this conversation about how critical culture in organizations and even in our families, in our communities are. And, and I ran across. I ran across another question that, oh gosh, that took me, took me back. And, and the question was, would I want to work for me?

And I thought, boy, you know, I, that's a question I need to ask myself every day. And it's not just the tone of our voice or the facial expression we have. It's, it's the connections we make with people. Every day. Mm-Hmm. In every way.

Shannon:

Yes. And I am very, I work very hard to make sure that I am that person. You know, 'cause sometimes I can get stuck in my own world. And you know, I talked about the thing that you get caught on that, you know, you review every year. You know, when I get stressed, I get a little crabby for. And so I have to remember that. That's great. That's not how you need to be with other people. Regardless of who they are. And so sometimes I, you know, something may be stressing me out, but I have to, I still need to interact in a friendly way and I still need to have people work with me.

And I still need to make sure that I'm not coming off like the, you know, the wicked witch of the west. And so, you know, you have to take that deep breath and say, put it aside. We get it. You're stressed. That's great. That's not, that's how you need to be. That's not the armor.

Denise:

You still need to be kind.

Shannon:

Yes.

Denise:

And the question really is, would I want to work with me? Yeah. Because it takes that other piece out of it. Well, we're working together. We really are. We really are. So, three quick questions.

What brings, what brings you joy?

Shannon:

Oh my goodness. Oh wow. You know, my family, my husband and my son. I have an 11-year-old son who just crazy kid and getting taller every day. But definitely spending time with him. And then my extended family too. You know, I'm fortunate to be very close to my extended family. And so definitely that. And then just, I do a lot of crafting. I do.

Denise:

Oh, you, yes. So tell me about your craft group.

Shannon:

I do. Oh gosh. So I have a whole office in the basement, and I do a lot of, I love making gifts for people. And so I have the three crickets and I do all sorts of things, but I do a friend of mine who I met through, actually she worked for another pharmac, or our competitor also at the time. But I've kept in touch with her for the last 17 years. But she just opened a yarn store in St. Louis called yarn com. I will shout out for her. But she has developed this following and this just community. So it's yarn, community, yarn com, in St. Louis that it's just, you know, come as you are. Her whole philosophy, and her whole mantra for her store is, I don't care how old you are, what you look like, what you feel like, who you, who you love, what you're doing, where you work, how much money you make, it doesn't matter. We all unite by having fiber interests. So it's needle point, it's cross-stitch, it's yarn or knitting, crochet.

Macrame anything you want, you're welcome to, you know, she says you're welcome at the table. So she has, I think five or six knit night or knit groups that she has, and then opens her tables for whoever wants to have an organ, you know, have a, a meeting or whatever. But, so

usually on Friday nights I show up, who knows who's gonna be there. There's usually 20 or 30 people All around the store.

We have the craziest conversations. I think we played Cards Against Humanity a couple weeks, which was very exciting. But it's just a lot of fun. And there are some really, and sometimes there's some really heavy conversations that happen because people are coming from all different walks of life and backgrounds and jobs and everything like that. And there's some really interesting conversations. And it's just,

Denise:

they're bringing their hearts.

Shannon:

They are. And so, you know, and there's some conversations that, you know, I, I found myself being very vulnerable about a topic that was coming up a couple weeks ago. And it was, luckily it was a smaller group of people who I had spent a lot of time with. So I felt I could do that. But it was hard to be, and I said, I'm sorry. I don't agree with necessarily what society says I should feel, but here's what I feel and here's why. And I am not apologetic about it. I am, this is it. And I get it. I don't broadcast it. I don't yell it from the house to, you know, make sure and it's like that. But, you know, just to be able to be vulnerable that way. It's just, it's, it's special to be able to have,

Denise:

it's valuable.

Shannon:

It really is. Yeah. It really is. But it's a really awesome community. And I, I think I've done more than Knit in the last year because of that. I'm like, always got a project. In fact, I have a project in my bag I've been working on a little bit too. So.

Denise:

So if you got stuck in an elevator, who would you like to be in there with?

Shannon:

Oh goodness. Who would I like to be with? Brene Brown, for sure.

Denise:

Oh yes, definitely. Oh, would that be fun?

Shannon:

That would be fun. Gosh, I don't even know. I that's a, that's a really hard

Denise:

I'd go with Brene.

Shannon:

Yeah. Yeah.

Denise:

And what's your morning, your routine?

Shannon:

My morning routine. Let's see. Get up, take a shower, make sure the kid's ready to go. Usually make lunch or figure out what I'm gonna do for lunch, get anything else ready to go. And then take him to school. So I drop him off at school, which is a lot of fun. It's only a couple minutes, but some days we listen to music. Some days we are conversation. So my 11-year-old is on the autism spectrum. And so conversations can be wonky. Sometimes it's, he gets really talkative and he wants to tell me a story. And some days it's, mom, I just wanna listen to nothing today. Or it's, Hey, can we listen to this song?

So he loves music and he loves, his favorite podcast is Greeking Out. Which is great. It's made for Kids. It's the Greek mythology for kids, but fun. So we'll listen to those a lot. So I know all the Greek mythology because of that. But great. So it's a lot of fun, but that's kind of a really special part of my day too, that it's just he and I, you know, come into And so one-on-one with a lot of fun.

Denise:

Shannon, thank you so much for joining me again and having this conversation.

Shannon:

Absolutely. This is fun. I, gosh, I think we ran into each other back in Oklahoma City when I was there.

Denise:

Yes. Years ago. 10,

Shannon:

2010 maybe. I don't even know. And have stayed in touch.

Denise:

It's all about relationships. It absolutely is.

Shannon:

Absolutely. Thank you. Well, thank you. I appreciate it.