**HOST: DOUG SIMON**

**GUEST: WENDY LUND**

DOUG: Wendy, when you started at Organon and it was very unusual, a spinoff with 10,000 employees as a startup, can you explain that a little bit?

WENDY: Yeah, great to be here today to talk to you about these things, I'm looking forward to talking about Organon in the transition. Yeah. So when I joined, you know, one of the things I was most excited about is that we started with ten thousand team members, ten thousand employees. And now that's a wonderful opportunity when you're building a culture. Eighty five percent of the team came over from Merck and they were incredibly excited and inspired and passionate around starting Organon out of being at the beginning piece of setting up our company. So it's a bit of a unicorn. I always say that when we look at Organon in terms of as a startup, because we had so many people and we have six and a half billion dollar company, but it's been going very well.

DOUG: Yeah. Now, you're also trying to establish perhaps a new culture for the company specifically as you're so focused on health care for women as a business. What are some of the challenges to creating and shifting the culture?

WENDY: Yeah, I think there's probably two challenges that have probably been most prevalent.

The first, of course, being Covid, setting up a company and launching a company in the middle of Covid. And I will say that folks from around the world, whether they're essential workers in manufacturing plants to folks that are behind a desk, have really done an amazing job in terms of looking for ways to connect to each other and be together. And that has led to other challenges, I think, around how we work with our customers, how we work with media, how we work with various stakeholders around the world. The second I wouldn't call it a challenge, but it was certainly, you know, you're setting up a brand new culture in the midst of bringing 85 percent of the people over from another culture. So, you know, what I was just so inspired by was the fact that I had worked with so many people at Merck who came over. Many of those folks have become part of my team, which I was really excited about because they were my clients for many years. And people have just been amazing, really embracing this vision that we have around women and their everyday health.

DOUG: Great. We'll get to that vision in a moment. But I think an important point that so many people wrestle with during Covid and ongoing is sort of creating a culture within a Zoom environment and doing this in a new way. You probably learned a lot of good lessons of how Zoom might be able to be used even more effectively, or what are some of the pitfalls and challenges. Can you talk about that a little bit?

WENDY: Yeah, so we're on Teams and one of the things we've been doing is just taking full advantage of all the assets Teams brings to the table. So the team that came over from Merck, they have been working on different platforms for a long time. And so, you know, kind of making that transition over to Teams. A number of us who came from the outside had a lot of experience working on Teams. But, you know, Teams offer just a significant amount of flexibility and offers the ability to file share and all these things that we were able to really take advantage of. We know that we've been any different than any other company in terms of getting together. We do embrace using our video. So we're not hiding behind screens. Friday’s, we have our no film Friday where we're asking people, OK, you know, you've been doing four days of this. You don't have to do it on Friday. But one of the things I have really loved about the work and working on our videos is that people actually show their faces and want to get to know each other via, you know, the video.

DOUG: Yeah, we found you can mitigate a lot of the effects if you're strategic. And I should apologize for Mike to Microsoft for not giving them the plug that they deserve in this process. Research has been really important for your business, researching into ways to communicate with women about health care. Can you talk a little bit about what you're doing, might give some ideas for other people about how to proceed? Obviously, that's such an important topic even before Covid during and hopefully after.

WENDY: Yeah, so one of the reasons I joined Organon was this deep commitment to putting women at the center. And, you know, my career has really been centered around patients and people and putting them at the center. So it was just such a natural opportunity for me to work with a company that was embracing this. So we did quite a bit of research in the early days in January and February and March when we were still operating within. Merck is sort of a company as a company. And there were two big inspirations that came to us through that research. One was that women feel like they're doing a lot of talking, but no one is listening to them. And so especially exacerbated by COVID 19, you know, the stress, the anxiety, the mental health issues, the fact that women are taking on more and more and more and more during this period with very little relief. Women were exhausted. The women we spoke to and we talked to multiple, multiple stakeholders, and it just kept coming back to that. Women are exhausted. They need a platform to speak about. The other that other thing that came back to us as a company was that don't talk about yourselves. So, you know, most companies that are in the pharma space tend to sort of talk about what they're going to do, how they're going to do it, what it means to them, blah, blah, blah, blah. We actually made a very deliberate decision to really just focus on her. So our tagline here for our health, focusing not on Organon, on the fact that it's for her listening, our whole platform around our launch was all about listening to her. And it was a really important insight for us because it turned our spin activities upside down, usually a spin as a financial transaction. And that's what you expect. So launching a company. Yes, that's one thing. But launching a commitment, that's a whole other thing. And that's really where we focused our attention, launching a commitment to women. And that was basically communicated through all our various stakeholders.

DOUG: Yeah, it's so interesting you say that it seems so basic, but so many overlook it. And we sort of maybe lucked into that because our focus with Covid started was to talk about what the media wants to help our companies, not about. Look at us. Whoo hoo hoo. And it's been a much more effective strategy than we could have hoped for. Yeah. So you've really shared some of the great challenges and opportunities of being with a startup that is 10,000 employees. How important is having a vision to be successful in those challenges?

WENDY: Our vision has meant everything a better and healthier every day for every woman is our vision. And this has been such an incredible force in the startup of our company, the values of our company. Our vision has been a big part of setting up and pushing through on our culture and creating this amazing culture that we have. That in many ways is very purpose driven, which is so appropriate for the world we live in today. So it's played a major role in recruiting staff, keeping staff and just building the culture that we live in.

DOUG: Yeah, and especially since Covid, we hear so much about having that purpose driven culture is so important for the employees when they're deciding to join or how they perform.

Finally, you also bring a really unique perspective as CEO roles at major agencies, G.C.I. Health, Publicis, how has that informed the transition to the client side and learned anything about the divide that might be able to help others who are watching the video?

WENDY: Definitely a lot of learnings, all the things that I thought I knew so well from being so client centric my entire career from when I worked on the nonprofit side to working on the agency side, I always put the people I was working with and supporting really at the center of everything. And I loved working with clients. So, you know, I definitely have had some EYE-OPENING thoughts around that. First thing is that, no, on the client side, you go so much deeper. Right. So it's really important that as clients, we help explain to agencies, you know, exactly what we're experiencing, trying to create that connective tissue, but also creating a little bit of empathy to around working and all the different things that we need to do to do things on the client side. I think one of the things that, you know, has been a little EYE-OPENING for me is that on the agency side, I think clients sometimes tend to think that agencies just like wake up in the morning and they have this great huge burst of creative ideas. And, you know, it's a process. It's a process to come up with great thinking. It's a process to come up with creative. It's a process to execute. So having the patience and giving agencies the space to really make sure that they put everything in place. I will say on the client side, you know, it's during Covid. I definitely think there's been an impact on agencies on a lot of levels and making sure that your client really knows, like you're all in for the client. Right. And that you're still seeing each other as partners. And that's the thing I think we really want to embrace and focus on is that having agency partners, not just saying those words, but having them be part of our world, understanding our culture, understanding our challenges, understanding our opportunities and making them part of our larger world, because, you know, we need those arms or legs, but we also need those brains and those support networks.

DOUG: The best agencies are more than arms and legs. I'm thinking you probably spoiled your clients when you were on the agency side about lending money. There was that burst of creativity on that one. Thanks so much for sharing and also providing the importance of contacts between the client and agency in the relationship, because sometimes agencies can be flying a little bit blinder than they think they are and go down the wrong path. So it's really been helpful, the advice you shared. Thanks so much for being part of the discussion.

WENDY: Thank you. Glad to be here.