



Lisa Armstrong

VP for Marketing and Branding at Pentair

RISING STAR AWARD

Q+A on J. Crew with Pentair's Lisa Armstrong

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How do you market products around a basic human need like water? For Lisa Armstrong, recent winner of a Rising Star award at The CMO Club's CMO Awards, this is only one challenge on a long list of marketing initiatives. As the VP for Marketing and Branding at Pentair, Lisa is in charge of educating consumers about water conservation, while simultaneously helping to create solutions for communities without access to clean, safe water.

In the interview below, we talk about how she's learned to tackle key initiatives like this, how to manage priorities in a changing organization, what the future of marketing looks like at Pentair, and how she tackles a topic that keeps many CMOs up at night: building credibility with your CEO.

Drew: Drew: What's been your biggest challenge as a marketer at Pentair and how have you tackled it?

Lisa: One of the biggest challenges I have is getting everything done on our bold list of initiatives. I recognized that dedicating time and attention to building processes, sharing knowledge and developing capability will help sustain all of our new initiatives.

Drew: Is there one marketing initiative in the last year or two that you are particularly proud of and if so, can you please talk a bit about it?

Lisa: I'm proud of the work our team did to launch our new external website. There were a lot of new paradigms and new thinking that went into the design and development of the site. We mapped out a cross-business view of our solutions from the customer point of view instead of from an inside-out perspective. We also evolved our case studies to be impact stories that focus on the effect our

solutions have on our customer, our customer's customers and the environment.

Drew: What is the most important lesson you have learned during your career, and how has it helped you get where you are today?

Lisa: I've learned that adaptability is a critical skill of being a leader. I keep myself open to new ideas, continuous learning and re-invention. I keep a pulse on the market, up-to-date on new trends and am continuously up-skilling to ensure that my skills and experience are relevant for today and rightfully positioned for the future.

Drew: Water is so fundamental to life that we often take it for granted, certainly here in the eastern part of the US. Does the role water play in our lives impact your marketing at all?

Lisa: Absolutely. Even though most places in the U.S. have an abundance of water, at Pentair we do have marketing efforts aimed toward educating and promoting the need for conserving water and water re-use. In other areas of the world, however, access to safe clean water is still a struggle and becomes a human and women's rights issue. In these markets we try to help build safe clean water solutions through our CSR efforts and community partners.

Drew: In your experience, how do you know when it's time to make changes to an organization or department?

Lisa: You know the quote..."Insanity: doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results." Anytime an organization or company goes through a fundamental change (growth, expansion, and/or maturity), you can't apply the same organizational model. In my ex-

perience, I realize it's time to make changes when I start seeing gaps in what needs to be done and the ability or capability to get it done.

Drew: What advice would you give to fellow CMOs when it comes to building credibility with your CEO?

Lisa: A CMO builds credibility by being connected to what the C-suite and board are facing each quarter and asking how marketing can help. You can lose credibility by proposing initiatives at the wrong time. The challenge for marketers is that we often face the “what have you done for me lately” pressure so we have to be consistently maintaining our credibility.

Drew: What marketing nut would you like to crack in 2015?

Lisa: Two major areas I'd like to tackle: #1 is Digital – Integrated Marketing. We need to build a robust roadmap with the emphasis on leveraging digital to drive growth. And #2, Marketing Excellence. I'd like to build a process and curriculum to help build a world-class marketing organization that delivers innovation, revenue and leadership talent for the entire organization. (OK... so this one may take longer than 2015).

About the author

Drew Neisser is the CEO and founder of Renegade, the NYC-based social media and marketing agency that helps inspired CMOs cut through. He is the champion of Marketing as Service, a philosophy he espouses in his writings on [FastCompany.com](#), PSFK, TheDrewBlog and The Cut, a much-appreciated monthly newsletter. If you have a CMO success story to tell, let Drew know at dneisser@renegade.com.

