Genentech’s Carol Wells: Training’s Shining STAR

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As a former president of LTEN, most members know Carol Wells, senior director of commercial training and development at Genentech, or are at least familiar with her work. She’s a standing presence at the LTEN conferences and she frequently speaks on panels and leads workshops at LTEN events.

Her contributions to life sciences training aren’t gaining notice solely within the LTEN community. Earlier this year, Wells received the prestigious STAR award from the Healthcare Businesswomen’s Association (HBA), a nonprofit organization designed to further the advancement and impact of women in the healthcare industry. More than 2,500 industry professionals gathered in May to watch Wells receive the annual award and listen to her acceptance speech.

For those LTEN colleagues who know her, it was a just reward following an impressive career helping others achieve their full potential and for those unfamiliar with Wells and her award-winning work, it was an inspirational introduction to the importance of volunteerism.

“The HBA has also provided me with the opportunity to pay it forward by helping the growth and development of other women. I have been lucky to have people help me in my career and now I feel it is important to help those that are earlier in their careers,” Wells told the crowd at the awards ceremony. “Receiving this award touches a very personal chord for me. When I think about my upbringing, I was pretty much destined to be a person who volunteered. I was fortunate to have grown up with parents who raised a family where volunteering was in our fabric.”

It’s that spirit that led the HBA to honor Wells, and it’s that same spirit that makes her a valuable resource and connection for all LTEN members. Like all great success stories, it began humbly.

Rising Star

Wells has been very successfully leading commercial training and development efforts in her current Genentech role for 11 years. Her impact at the company is such that CEO Ian Clark was on-hand in New York to introduce her at the HBA award ceremony.

However, her work in sales and in life sciences goes back farther, beginning right after graduating from Wellesley College. After a successful year selling a new line of strapless bras for Playtex, Wells transitioned to Marion Laboratories where she spent nearly 20 years growing with the company, including roles as a sales representative, area manager, training manager, district manager, sales director, director of professional education, director of national accounts and product manager.

Bitten by the life sciences bug, Wells also worked with Watson Pharmaceuticals, Elan Pharmaceuticals and Taro Pharmaceuticals before tran-
Star Quality

It was during her time at Genentech that Wells first became involved with LTN (then SPBT), and also with HBA. Both groups gave her the chance to expand her personal network, mentor others and become more involved in the wider life sciences industry. In addition to serving two years as president of the LTN Board of Directors, Wells also served as an HBA chapter president twice and spent more than eight years on the HBA board.

The connection between those two groups and her life sciences work is obvious. Both LTN and HBA are dedicated to helping professionals reach their potential, and that has been a hallmark of Wells’ work throughout her career as well.

“As I look back on my career, I have primarily been in roles where I’ve had the chance to lead and develop large teams and teaching, training and coaching was an integral part of the expectations of the role,” Wells said.

“You have an opportunity to make a difference in other people’s lives, and through that you can drive the business forward,” she added. “You can do that through training, you can do that a lot of ways. Any time you’re a leader or manager you get the chance to do that.”

That connection between training and leadership certainly isn’t new and provides an opportunity to model effective leadership full-time.

“That’s one of the things I love about the job,” Wells said. “Your job is really to help others be successful so that they can address the complexities of the world that we do business in and appropriately make sure the products that we create are available...
for the patients and families who are waiting for those answers.

**Shooting Stars**

Obviously in these technology-fueled times, anyone who has spent more than two decades in life sciences sales and training has seen significant shifts in the delivery and management of learning. While some basics haven’t changed, Wells cited changes she has seen including the evolution of learning styles, external regulations, financial pressures, limited access to healthcare providers, and increased competition.

But the more things change, the more some things stay the same.

“I think what has not changed is that people are people. The more that we can understand people’s goals and aspirations and appropriately align our products to help them meet those goals, and do it through a relationship of trust, respect and service, I think that goal remains the same,” Wells said. “That’s what makes the personal relationship, human being to human being, so important and so valuable. Because those opportunities are more limited based on the world that we now work within, we have to be even better with those skills so that people get their answers and the service that they need in a more effective way than we used to in the past.”

Training, she said, meets her where she lives: helping people and seeing them reach their potential, even if it’s a potential they might not have seen.

“I love the industry that we’re in, because we are extending and ultimately saving lives and as part of the extension of life, we’re also able to provide people relief from the pain they may be suffering,” she said. “We work in an industry that helps people at their lowest times feel better, as well as their families. In training we help people be the best that they can be so that they can deliver that message for those patients and families that are waiting. It just doesn’t get any better than that.”

**Evening Star**

Looking back, Wells is quick to tie her story back to the theme of volunteerism she spoke on while receiving the STAR award. Her work with HBA, like her work with LTen, is her way of giving back to an industry that has provided so much help to her. And, she urges others to do the same.

“I appreciate the recognition so that I could also hopefully influence people to think about how they interact with other people and bring a bit more kindness into their daily life,” she said.

“You have the opportunity to do that all the time.”

Obviously, Wells thinks the act of giving back is critical.

“I do think it’s great to be involved in organizations like LTen, because of the opportunity to bring your expertise to a larger forum outside your organization,” Wells said. “Also, what you get in return. You’re exposed to other ways of thinking and other ideas from outside your organization that you can bring back to your business. Everybody wins through that experience.”

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