

DEVIANT THINKING PODCAST

Episode 21 -
Interview with
Tricia Carey -
A Global Perspective



Transcript

See show notes at: www.deviantthinking.com/podcast/021

Jennifer Thompson 00:00

Welcome back to The Deviant Thinking podcast. I'm your host Jennifer Thompson and today and always will explore career advice that breaks the rules. On today's show I have Tricia Carey she's with Lenzing Fibers Group she is global ambassador, I guess for the fiber brand and works on new business development worldwide. And I'm gonna let Trish you introduce yourself and you can kind of tell people what you do.

Tricia Carey 00:29

Great. Thank you so much, Jennifer for inviting me today. We've known each other for many years. So it's nice to also have a chat here on your podcast. I am a regular listener. As you mentioned, I do have a role as an ambassador. I like that and I handle Global Business Development for apparel at Lenzing Fibers. We manufacturer Tencel, Lyocell and Modal by doing this we transform trees into fiber and you probably have seen it in some of your favorite retailers. brands, including Patagonia, Levi's, Nike, Gap, Banana Republic, Athleta, Mara Hoffman, those are some of the brands who use our fibers. So my role I based based in New York and I worked with throughout the supply chain in order to connect the partners in order to bring our fiber to retail for commercialization.

Jennifer Thompson 01:26

Fabulous, and part of why you're on today is yes, we've had that that long term relationship and I've always seen you as a fabulous role model for other women within the industry and and beyond. And also, you know, with that, a few weeks ago, I had a

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podcast that was about being so good, they have to hire you. And Trish, you are one of those people you have always gone above and beyond in any of the roles that you've had. And you are one of those people that anyone would like to have on their team, let's maybe start with a little bit of that you've been at Lenzing. Right? You said 21 years now. Um, how do you how do you stay fresh and engaged and excited about the work that you do?

Tricia Carey 02:12

Yes, I know, when I think about it 21 years, I, you know, I don't know where time flies, and I am having fun. So that's the good part. When I first started with Lenzing, the fiber was still very new in the market. And there were a lot of challenges that we had to overcome. And I feel that in the fashion industry, you know, the great thing is that every season we have the opportunity for change, and that's what's really kept it so fresh for me is that we have, you know, new customers, we've been able to grow in supply chain partners. We have new innovations that come in, we have sustainability that has just become embedded in everything that we do and for many of our customers. So this change that has always happened. has been, you know, part of the reason why I've been able to stay and keep it fresh. But also, I mean, it's not just what's happened in the market, but also within the organization. There's some great people. Because, you know, that's a big part of it. And I feel that more, especially in the past 5 to 10 years, it's been about the purpose of the job, and the purpose of, you know, having lower impacts on the environment. And now I think we're going to see even more changes that are happening within the industry. But the company overall has been very supportive of me and my career and my balance between family and work. I have two kids and and you know, during the earlier days when they were little, I was able to modify my work schedule, in order to manage both being a mom and working so keeping it fresh for for two decades is something that can be a challenge. But also it's the support of the company and being able to continually challenge myself to. And that comes also through new projects through learning opportunities. I just finished a certificate at MIT on strategy and innovation. And, you know, I really welcome the fact that I have these opportunities that I can better myself and also my work.

Jennifer Thompson 04:28

I love that. I love that one of the things I've been telling folks lately is, yeah, especially with all this time, you know, we are recording this during that that COVID situation and probably no place else in the world is more dire than the New York area and the restrictions and stuff that that you all have. But it's also opened up a great opportunity for people, they have more time in their lives and you know, doing things like certificates at MIT or any of the other great institutions. It's a really good time to do that. So I love hearing your furthering your learning.

Tricia Carey 05:03

Yeah, it's plenty because I started it last year, and I had planned to finish this spring. And then when we had to move everything online, I was really happy that MIT continued it through, they did actually did Zoom calls to finish it. And I thought, well, this is, you know, a way to commemorate the time at home and, and this adjustment. So it's really happy that I was able to complete it, and it was a great time to kind of step back and as we are transitioning, you know, sometimes I find we've been doing things a certain way but then I go back and look at the theory in order to you know, progress even better in the future. So this kind of back and forth between application in real business and then having this theory and you know, the professor's there are incredible. I it's almost like a show when they're presenting and their lectures are really very dynamic, so it was a great opportunity.

Jennifer Thompson 06:02

Fabulous. So, I love saying that they they jumped online and started doing the programs and stuff that way. I'm curious. One of the things, again that I'm getting asked a lot is about networking. Now that we're all home and Trisha, you are a fabulous networker. You have people within your network worldwide. I know whenever I need to know someone, you know, you are on the top of my list of people to call because I know you will know someone about that organization. How is your networking adjusting now that you're stuck at home? Because you did a lot of face to face networking?

Tricia Carey 06:42

Yes, yeah, big changes. When I had to cancel my last trip, it was a little bit like, you know, do I really have to do this? Because I do enjoy traveling. I enjoy connecting with people. And I feel very fortunate that I'm in the opportunity to have these global reach relationship and I think I've seen such a change. You know, we are all interconnected. And as we saw this crisis start in China, and it was understanding what was happening there. And then it kept getting closer and closer. And actually, it was in Europe in the beginning of February when it was starting to hit Italy and talking to the people there and how they were managing it. So I see a lot of change in in how we communicate with each other through, whether it's all the Zoom calls or WhatsApp chats. I'm just so amazed and touched by how many people have reached out as the news had more reports around the pandemic in New York City and the numbers of people that were being impacted here. I had so many people reach out what can I do? Can I help you can I send you masks I had some of our suppliers from China even sending me masks and really providing a lot of support. And I think, you know, through the network and the way that we process things is, is by talking and building on that and understanding what the challenges were in China in Hong Kong, knowing now in India, a lot of our customers in India and Pakistan are also being impacted, and how we can really help each other. So there's this greater empathy that's happening around the world. And I think, you know, through my network, it's been

great to be able to understand how other people are handling it.

Jennifer Thompson 08:33

I love that empathy piece. I feel like when we talk about networking, everyone thinks of networking often as a sleazy word, almost, like use car salesmen, right that when we were cultivating our network, it's for that self gain. And I think good networking is anything but that and again, I think you're someone who's always exemplified that, but I think as you said that with the empathy now that really comes forward, so you If people can't get out and physically meet with people, it doesn't mean that you have to socially distance yourself. I actually hate that they were using that word. And I love that you're saying people were reaching out personally, just checking in with you, that builds a lot of capital going forward, doesn't it that that you can trust these people to help when circumstances are not good. But then it's also you know, if they need something in the future, it makes you want to reach back out.

Tricia Carey 09:29

Definitely, you know, it goes both ways. And, you know, it was also when they were facing their challenges in China and reaching out to them and understanding. And I think it's, you know, how people act during these times does show a lot. And we see this with larger companies, how they're handling this pandemic with their workers. How are they treating for safety and health? You know, are they demanding that they come or putting unrealistic expectations on them. And so, you know, I think times of crisis that you really get to understand and see how a person is, or how a company is,

Jennifer Thompson 10:08

Yes, the reactions between different companies has been quite varied. I do want to get to that. But I do want to step back a little bit on the networking thing and maybe ask some really practical things. How have you been communicating with others in this crisis? Like, really? The brass tacks, is it you know, are you only on email? Are you hitting the text button? You know, what, what's your preferred mode of operation?

Tricia Carey 10:34

Well, I really see it as a back to basics and it's kind of like when I started 20 years ago, picking up the phone, talking to people is always the best way to really understand. I also have been doing some Instagram live chats with some of our partners. Again, they've reached out How are things happening and as they see, you know, done this with some of our customers in Pakistan, reaching out to our customers in Italy and having Instagram live chats with them. So that's been a fun way. And, you know, I think it's, again, it's how we can process things. I do a lot on LinkedIn, I really like that networking platform as a way of, again, sharing the information. You know, you could spend all day long reading articles about the pandemic, and all of the speculation that we have around post pandemic life. So we've been doing some webinars to to connect with people on a broader scale. And most of it has been around sustainability topics, because they do think

that that's, that's one thing that people are reflecting on more now is is you know, how is their perspective on sustainability? Not only from a business side, but from a personal sense. So we've been using webinars, Instagram, regular email, do a lot on WhatsApp, but really I have to say that best is picking up the phone and talking to people

Jennifer Thompson 12:01

Sounds great, and I love that you're choosing a whole group of different options. I know, many of the colleagues that I work with have had to learn to use Zoom lately, right? We're all talking about Zoom, then something I've used for years. So that's been great, but I love the Instagram story, you know, live stories idea. I didn't know about that one. So I'm like, that's interesting. You know, WhatsApp, right? You deal worldwide. So you do have to be flexible. Because each kind of area and region people do things a little bit differently. I know I've been invited even to some some apps called like house party and stuff where you can get together and play games with folks and have more of a social side of things. So it's really interesting. We're all having to learn in this new mode, but I'm finding to some degree, you know, it's it's kind of fun learning this, this new this new life and it's gonna be interesting to see if we keep some of these adoptions that we've we've made into our lives going forward.

Tricia Carey 13:00

Yeah, we'll be interesting to see how we change in that level of communication. I mean, even now I have a daily call with the team in New York. We previously didn't have that type of communication, we kind of just dove into our day. And so I think, you know, as we come out of this, it was nice to see there was an announcement yesterday about the steps of how we would come out and and the prioritization of different businesses, but I think it will be interesting also how we get back into daily lives and change because it's not going to go back to normal. There will be adaptations out of this. And then how do we bring some of these new found ways of communicating in I had never done an Instagram Live Chat before. Actually, they're, they're quite fun. And I found the few of the people that we've been chatting with on the other side really enjoy it too. We also did a series called taking the temperature it's headspace of knowing What's your headspace during this time? Because we feel that it's, we're living this history. And when we look back on this and one year, two year, five years, you know, how will we then remember exactly how we were feeling at the time. And that's been a really fun project to do a miss we're having on our blog, it's carved in blue. It's our denim blog. It's also on Instagram, Facebook, LinkedIn. And these were, again, global snapshots of how people are feeling at this time relating it not only on a personal level, but also what they're seeing in business.

Jennifer Thompson 14:36

Great. I will be sure to link to that in the show notes. So if anybody wants to check that out and see some of those posts personally, they can, can do so. Which that's a great segue then into the business side. So what are you seeing worldwide? Business wise, you work with a wide breadth of organizations, everything from the biggest retailers

in the world. to individual brands to really, I know you've worked with some places, I'd almost call mom and pop shops. So you know, that real gamut of companies who's who's handling this, you know, who's handling this well and not not by name of company, but what are the types of things that they're doing that are going to set them up for success in the future?

Tricia Carey 15:20

Yes, I see a lot of, you know, activities that companies are doing right now. And I think the ones that are doing it well are first looking at their workers, the safety and health of their workers. You know, there have been a lot of furloughs. A lot of layoffs already. And I see this, you know, definitely the challenge that we'll have coming out of the pandemic. So I find the companies that are open in their communication. I think those that have regular meetings with their teams and even upper management and for Lenzing, we've been having townhall meetings that really helped that people feel more comfortable. We all feel very vulnerable. Now, are, you know our security our safety our health, those are all things that now become very important in our daily lives. I also see that companies that are looking at long term rather than just short term, so how they treat their business partners is very important how they communicate with them. I found that even in my own work, I've had to renegotiate some contracts and you know, instead of saying, Hey, we're cutting everything, it's you know, we're in a, we're in this situation right now. We're no longer having trade shows, we're no longer doing all these other marketing activities. How can we look at you know, adjusting our plans. So those who are able to pivot and still maintain strong business relationships? In many cases, you know, these are partners that you want to have after the pandemic. So you have to be fair in how you're treating everyone. Now, I think some of the companies that we've seen that have made some mistakes, especially in the fashion industry, there was a lot Press articles about companies that were canceling all their orders in Bangladesh happens to be one region that was called out. And these are large global companies. And, and what happened was all the Bangladesh supply chain got together and said, Hey, you know, we're not going to stand for all of these orders being canceled, this is going to devastate our country. Our workers, you know, are paid hourly. And we understand that there needs to be changes, but if we've made the garments and produce this, you have to pay for it. And I think that's where it comes down to you have to be fair, and if the work has been done, you have to you have that liability, and you have to pay for it. So in my conversations with many of the retailers and brands saying this, what they're facing is, all of a sudden they have to switch in their supply chain and they have to manage their inventories differently. And with the store closures with the retail Store closures, and there's no certainty of when they're going to open. It's making it very, very challenging, but you can't harm the people, the workers that help you get the materials and the products in the stores on a regular basis and shut them down.

Jennifer Thompson 18:16

Again worldwide empathy, right? It also shows how connected we are as a world a

decision made in New York has ripple effects around the world, it's going to affect you know, a family in Bangladesh and if they're going to have food on their table, this pandemics really bring that to light of how interconnected we are as a world

Tricia Carey 18:36

totally as we close the retail stores in the US then you saw the orders in you know, in the east, so in Bangladesh, Pakistan, India, those declined then it went down to fabric mills and it goes through the rest of the supply chain. And that's why until the stores reopen, and in the United States, the only stores that you know that also sell clothes that are opener, Costco Walmart Target, everything else is shut down. For right now. And even a lot of online shopping has been a lot of the retailers have stopped you know Patagonia. Felt the health and safety of their workers is more important. And they're not even having their online distribution centers operating, you know, yes, this ripple effect that goes through. And you know, as we rebuild, it's not going to be like a light switch and everything automatically comes back on. And that goes for, you know, the textile and apparel supply chain to that it will have to work in stages to rebuild.

Jennifer Thompson 19:38

Yeah, I think we're all going to have to remember as well, who handled this really well. And I think, you know, that conscious capitalism that we we've talked about, within the circles you and I like to hang out and we're getting to see, you know, really clearly who who are good stewards of the world and who are doing things in a really conscious way. And, you know, I know for myself, you know, I've been working hard to reward those companies, you know, few of them are getting back online, depending on where they are in the country and, and starting to ship orders. And those are the ones that I'm picking. So it's going to be interesting to see if they built up that good. That goodwill with folks and if they'll be rewarded for it as well.

Tricia Carey 20:23

Yeah, I mean, we've seen after the store closures and many other retailers and brands moved into how can they help. And you saw this genuine kindness in how we could support frontline workers. And you saw brands, whether I mean, the one of the first ones to call me was Gap. They have announced, you know, they've been supporting local hospitals. I know Nike, there's Reformation has been supporting in LA and they've been partnering. So these new partnerships that have come out, you also saw All Birds donating shoes to frontline workers. I thought that was fabulous. They moved right in on that. Hanes and Fruit of the Loom have also been working on programs. And, and I started to see these connections happening a lot of industry organizations that were helping to like NCTO, which is the National Council Textile Organizations becoming these platforms and networks in order to bring people together in order to support the common good of having these materials face mass protective wear. And so this, this whole, you know, support that came out of the industry because of their stores were an

open vendor, they have the expertise and they have the IP in how to develop products and how to work with the supply chains. They wanted to help as much as they could.

Jennifer Thompson 21:49

So Trish, I'm gonna pivot us a little bit and maybe talk you as a manager, you've you've got a pretty good sized team right now. What are you doing to keep them motivated? It's it's a hard time for all of us.

Tricia Carey 22:01

It is a hard time. Again, we talk regularly, we have a morning kickoff meeting, we usually connect then during the day too. I think humor has a lot to do with it. I mean, you have to kind of make light of things. And also understand that now your roles between worker, mother, wife, girlfriend, boyfriend, whatever, they're they're all meshed together. And you don't have as much of that separation between Okay, here's work life and here's home life and that our responsibilities, you know, I've shifted in our daily priorities have changed, and if it's just making sure that you're healthy, and that your family's fed, and you know, to keep also the, you know, in contact with friends and relatives, and that becomes an important thing. So, I feel that, you know, again, we talked about it in order to process all of that happening. Now, but realizing that okay, you know, maybe we have to shift even in what we needed to get done at work, because we know we also have to handle some of these other personal things first, too. So it's all about that the balance. And again, kind of having this this empathy carrying through, even in the workplace. on a global level, it's been interesting, because there's, you know, in other countries, different regulations have come in. I do work a lot with our team in Austria. And for them, one of my colleagues didn't even have, you know, like their internet, they're sharing it within the family. And now kids are at home, doing their schoolwork. So it's, it's very interesting how everyone has to cope with this.

Jennifer Thompson 23:47

So it sounds like it's a manager again, that that same word here of empathy, knowing that everyone's situation is a little bit different seeing and understanding that and maybe giving some space for it. I'm still assuming some accountability, you know, a work still has to be done maybe differently than in the past, but it has to happen but but a gentleness and making sure that work gets done.

Tricia Carey 24:11

Yes. And we've also had to integrate, you know, new systems into how we work. Like you said, you know, different priorities, we have new projects come up, staying very close to our customers and understanding what their needs are. And, you know, overall, I think it's also very important from the company's perspective that the safety and health because we also manufacture products, not only the safety that you have when you're in a plant, but also safety that we have was even in our office situation. So as this was starting, we saw and built out different scenarios of how we would handle the crisis. You know,

whether it was an alternating work schedule, which many companies in New York City started with, but we went to Work From Home on March 13.

Tricia Carey 25:02

So you've been home abouts now a little over a month?

Tricia Carey 25:13

Yes, we're just finishing our fifth week. And New York City announced yesterday that they would continue through May 15. So we will see, at least that's the next threshold. So we have another month. But I think what we've been able to do as a team is, you know, kind of also brainstorm on projects that we had on the back burner that we could move forward. A lot of educational projects, too. So we had one of our technical directors, give an educational seminar each week, just internally, there are a lot of questions. So it allows us to do this education also on our sustainability team. So we've we've been using this time, as a way to also provide that education to think and grow in other ways.

Jennifer Thompson 25:59

Well, that leads me to Like who? And again, not by people, but what does it look like when people are handling this? Well,

Tricia Carey 26:06

I think when people are handling it well, they address some of their own fears and concerns around the pandemic, and then come up with ways to cope. And even if that means, you know, exercise, and we've talked about this in our group chats that we have with the team, it's you know, hey, that's great. Look, I went out for a walk today. And it's a great picture. It's those simple things that now matter. And I have to say, even for myself, it's been interesting to watch spring blossom before my eyes, whereas Normally, you know, you see a glimpse and oh, yeah, now that the leaves are coming out, but watching each day, I've been going for daily walks, and, you know, seeing the daffodils starting to bloom here and, and the whole transformation, but it's how can you keep yourself mentally sharp and how can you kind of turn this into a time to step back and reflect and then be able to come out of this regrouping a little bit from what you've learned during this sort of a retreat time. Because first and foremost if if you're healthy and your family's healthy, then you know you you count your blessings there and you you can move on at least for the day and and try to make the most of it.

Jennifer Thompson 27:28

I like that I it is the simple things right now that really are getting us all all through the day. So I love your daily walks and and then invigoration, and you know, seeing the seasons happen because yes, I can imagine you were jet setting around the world you probably saw spring in 27 different iterations but never watching it from start to finish. So that's a beautiful moment and to capture for for sure. And I think to like hearing you say that. This period kind of a rest mentally and physically I think people are going to

come out. I know myself, I can't wait to kind of step back into a mainstream of doing things like I do feel recharged and ready to go. So is there any planning that you're doing on, you know, when things get a little bit normal, what you're hoping to step back into doing?

Tricia Carey 28:19

Well, when we when we can finally step back, and I think seeing some of the guidelines that were issued, from the White House help to kind of understand that perspective. I for us, what we will do going forward is really keep a sharp, very sharp attention to what's happening at the consumer level, what's the sentiment of the consumer, and then also understanding more of how the retailers and brands are responding to that. In the meantime, we always emphasize our sustainability. And I would like to see that there's even more attention to the social side of sustainability not just the environmental impacts. And by that, I mean, you know that there'll be more concerned about where garments are being made and who made the garments, because I think one thing that came out of all of this was when we didn't have certain materials, because they were being imported, and how we needed to look at ways that we could manufacture certain products here in the United States. And so this emphasis of regional sourcing, that might change. So where do we need to shift and make sure that we can provide our customers with the optimal supply chains for how they're changing their business? I do think when we come out of this is how will we also adapt in connecting with customers? If trade shows change? You know, and places where we've been meeting, typically, how does that move, perhaps, and stay in a digital world, there's a lot still to monitor and assess but staying close to our customers is definitely key.

Jennifer Thompson 30:00

So Trish, we've had a great discussion this morning. If you could give people one piece of advice at this point, to help them be fabulous in their career to stand out even during a crisis, what would that that piece of advice be?

Tricia Carey 30:17

Um, I kind of always go by the motto is that perfection is the enemy of good. And I think, you know, you can't beat yourself up over Oh, what I didn't do during the crisis, or I didn't have time for this or that. And just, you know, take it one day at a time to get through everything, you know, to realize that this time of reflection can really bring so much good out of it, and how we need to take many of those elements and especially the empathy and carry that forward even after this time.

Jennifer Thompson 30:52

Fabulous. Well Trish, thank you for joining me today on the Deviant Thinking podcast. It was a pleasure as always was to chat with you. And we'll be sure to link to some of the stuff that you talked about carved in blue into the show notes so that people can learn a little bit more about those stories that you're collecting and especially the stories that



you do on sustainability and different retailers and brands around the world.

Tricia Carey 31:20

Thank you so much. I really appreciate the time to chat. It's always great to connect with you and really appreciate all the work that you're doing to bring the the zest into life on a daily basis.

Jennifer Thompson 31:33

Well, that wraps up another deviant thinking podcast. Special thanks to Tricia Carey of Lenzing our special guest. Also a reminder that for the month of April, our LinkedIn program to help you stand out and be remarkably different, is on sale instead of the regular \$49 is on sale for \$9.99. So definitely be sure to check that out as well. have extra time to work on that. Getting your LinkedIn profile up to date is a great option.

If you've enjoyed the show, I would appreciate it so much if you would head on over to iTunes and leave us a review those reviews really do mean the world to us. Until next time, definitely be safe and be deviant