

Chain Drug Review

Reporter for the Chain Drug Store Industry

July 24, 2006

by David Pinto

When someone is truly worthy of admiration

This is a love letter to Barb Hartman.

To the uninitiated, for the past several years Barb Hartman was responsible for Procter & Gamble's drug store business. Until late last year, that is, when she was given a new assignment at P&G, in part in response to the company's recently completed acquisition of Gillette.

Hartman did a real good job overseeing the drug channel for Procter. If you doubt that, ask any of the merchants responsible for health and beauty care sales at any one of America's big drug chains--or even the smaller ones, chains that Procter had all but forgotten about until Hartman came along. Indeed, it is difficult to remember a period in the sometimes rocky relationship between Procter & Gamble and chain drug retailing when both parties were more enamored of each other--and of the relative ease of doing business with each other--than during the Hartman years.

Most Recent Pharma Articles

- [Talecris May Not Be the First Biotech out the IPO Window](#)
- [Merck Accidentally Leaves Boss's Notes in Patent Filing: "This is Likely a..."](#)
- [Cephalon Q2: Not Taking Nuvigil to Stay Awake Yet? You Will Be, Company Believes](#)
- [Allergan Gets on the GSK Merry-Go-Round for a Second Time](#)
- [Big Pharma Bringing Out the Spies](#)
- [More »](#)

So appreciative was the chain drug industry of Hartman's contributions that

she was recently presented with the Robert Begley award for industry service by the National Association of Chain Drug Stores, becoming the first woman in the industry's history to be so recognized.

But what makes Hartman's performance remarkable enough to occasion this love letter is that it was produced by a Procter & Gamble salesperson. It is always difficult for a salesperson to stand out at a large company. It's especially difficult when the large company is also good. And Procter & Gamble is arguably the most proficient--and certainly the most successful--packaged goods company operating in America today.

In achieving and maintaining this lofty status, Procter has had lots going for it: a vision and strategy that insists on superior brands; products consumers value, purchase and use; marketing, promotional and advertising programs designed to maximize the products' appeal; the retail industry's most efficient and effective logistical support systems; arguably the industry's strongest leadership team and brightest marketing and support people; and salespeople who have been trained to ask for the order, insist on the terms--and discourage any demands not in Procter's interests or way of doing business.

As a package, it is difficult to resist. When it has sometimes in the past been resisted by chain drug retailers, that resistance has usually been based on the fact that it has not always been easy or fulfilling to do business with Procter & Gamble. Whatever the reason--arrogance, inflexibility, stubbornness, unreasonableness, a failure sometimes to grasp the retailer's role or point of view--it sometimes made

P&G, though easy to respect, difficult to love.

Barb Hartman changed all that. She came to her job prepared to concede the fact that the retailer often had a point, though she was not always willing to embrace it. Though she made it a priority to surround herself with the most capable sales and support people she could find at Procter, she invariably made herself available to her retail customers, even if that entailed a grueling travel schedule and long periods away from her husband and children.

More significant, she treated every retailer the way she wanted to be treated--and they responded in=20kind. In short, Hartman humanized Procter & Gamble for a group of retailers that had come to believe the company had no humanity. She went further, opening Procter's doors to the chain drug community (going so far as to organize an NACDS board meeting at Procter's Cincinnati headquarters), involving the industry in the company's business, encouraging individual retailers to see how the company worked--and what it could do for them if given the chance. As a result, at her departure from the chain drug community, Hartman had achieved a status reserved for the very few--and the very special.

But life and business go on. New faces replace the old and new relationships are formed in this relationship-intensive business. But seven months after her departure from the chain drug industry, and two months after receiving the Begley award, Barb Hartman remains a subject of fond memory when chain drug merchants gather. And indeed, she still receives the occasional love letter.