

# The *Value* Equation

Deirdre  
Connelly



**I**t's not often that a sales representative rises to the ranks of president of a pharmaceutical company, let alone one of the giants in the industry. That Deirdre P. Connelly did so is testament to her hard work and commitment to the company — Eli Lilly and Co. — and her easy one-on-one rapport with others.

This accomplishment also is a reflection of the company she works for and its willingness to offer opportunities to dedicated and determined employees.

"It's unusual that a sales rep becomes president of a company," Ms. Connelly says. "It's a nice message for the many sales professionals who want and are willing to take on more responsibility."

While Ms. Connelly, president of Lilly USA, says it did not occur to her early in her career that she would become president, she never questioned that this position would be beyond her scope.

"I'd like to be able to say I was one of those

kids who knew that they wanted to be president of a company one day, but I was not," she says, "I knew that if I did good work at Lilly that work would be recognized and I would be supported."

That support, she says, was forthcoming from her early days as a sales rep.

"I was fortunate to have a series of bosses who were willing to teach me and who enabled me to gain the experiences and develop the skills I have today," she says.

## The Lilly Objective

Starting out as a sales representative for Lilly in Puerto Rico, Deirdre P. Connelly has risen through the ranks through hard work, determination, and an innate ability to work with others. *Today, as president of Lilly USA, she is striving to ensure that the company remains a leader and a partner for its customers.*

In 2006, Ms. Connelly was recognized by *Fortune* magazine as one of the 50 most powerful women in business. *Fortune* also included Ms. Connelly on its prestigious “Young and Powerful” list.

Though she regards the label of powerful as somewhat dramatic, Ms. Connelly acknowledges that such recognition, when taken side by side with her professional achievements, serves to demonstrate that women are capable of accomplishing as much as men within the pharmaceutical industry and, indeed, within any industry.

“Women can have a presence in the business world, and they can have influence,” she says. “I understand that with the recognition that I’ve received comes great responsibility, because it’s important for women, and men, to understand that for those who are committed and passionate and who are willing to do the hard work there are companies, such as Lilly, that will offer opportunities.”

### LIFE LESSONS

One of nine children with a Puerto Rican mother and an Irish-American father, Ms. Connelly — who uses her full family name at home, Deirdre Connelly Montesinos — and her brothers and sisters were raised and went to grammar and high school in San Juan. She and her siblings, with the exception of one brother who completed his pre-med training in Puerto Rico, attended college in the United States.

Ms. Connelly is part of a tight-knit family and learned valuable lessons from her parents, both of whom have since passed away. She speaks with great fondness of the way her moth-

While much of what the pharmaceutical industry does today springs from innovative science and continuously emerging discoveries, there is also a proud history that dates back centuries in some cases.

Among those select companies is Eli Lilly and Co., which was founded in 1876 by Colonel Eli Lilly in Indianapolis. Col. Lilly was a Civil War veteran and pharmaceutical chemist who was troubled by the poor medicines available in his day.

Col. Lilly committed himself to founding a company that would manufacture pharmaceutical products of the highest quality; to develop medicines that met the needs and had the respect of physicians; and that would commit itself to following the best science of the day.

Over the years, Col. Lilly and his successors laid the foundation for a company that focuses on ensuring the quality of existing products and later discovering and developing new and better pharmaceuticals. From those humble beginnings, today Lilly employs almost 41,000 people worldwide and sells its products in 143 countries.

Lilly commits itself to long-established core values, which are respect for people, integrity in the way it conducts its business, and pursuit of excellence with regard to pharmaceutical innovation.

“Those three core values have held true throughout my career, not only in what is expected of me, but also in how I’ve been treated,” says Deirdre P. Connelly, president of Lilly USA.

Ms. Connelly says her goal as president and that of the company is to ensure that Lilly distinguishes itself among its competitors as the company that best serves its customers, with that service being based on their needs.

“We’ve implemented a metric process that allows us to gauge how we are doing against that objective,” she says. “I think we are one of the few companies that has such a process.”

To that end, Lilly has reorganized its salesforce, retrained its personnel, and put in place a new profile as part of its recruitment drive, with the objective being to ensure everything it does is customer focused.

“By customers we mean providers, that is the healthcare professionals, including doctors, nurses, and others; it also encompasses patients, the folks we serve through these providers, as well as payers,” she says. “It’s important that we offer good information and data to payers so they can make decisions about our products. We give good, accurate information to providers so they can make the right choices for their patients, and we provide information to patients through education so they can help determine the best course of action to take care of their diseases.”

Over the years, there has been a growing emphasis on the patient and ensuring the patient is informed and able to make decisions about their health.

“Patients are our inspiration,” Ms. Connelly says. “We take the opportunity to listen carefully to them, and we make sure all of the employees who work here understand what the outcome of their hard work is.”

The company has a clear objective of providing education to patients so they can help their healthcare providers in managing their diseases.

“With the information that is available to patients today through the Internet and other sources, patients are very well informed, and they should be because prevention is the No. 1 answer to disease,” Ms. Connelly says

Above all, Ms. Connelly says it is vital to ensure the company is focused on innovation and producing the best quality medicines.

“We have to fight and help others fight diseases, and we have to invest our dollars in educating patients because if we educate patients and we prevent diseases healthcare costs are lowered,” she says.

er and father met at a hospital chapel in New York, where both spent time with sick loved ones.

"My father saw my mother a few times in the hospital chapel, and he thought she was a beautiful woman," she says. "He asked her out for a date for a hot chocolate. And they had nine kids."

With an interest in accounting and eager to attend a small school away from big cities, Ms. Connelly studied at Lycoming College in Williamsport, Pa. Although she loved numbers, she soon learned that a career in accounting was not for her, and she switched to a degree in economics and marketing.

Straight out of college, Ms. Connelly spent a year helping her father in his business before beginning her own job search and career.

This was not an easy time to be entering the job market since the economy was in the midst of the recession during Ronald Reagan's first term as president.

"I was very fortunate to land a position in sales with Eli Lilly in San Juan, and this is how I started my career," she says. "I've been with Lilly for 23 years now."

The pharmaceutical industry, and Lilly, has

had a long and strong presence in Puerto Rico. Ms. Connelly said she recognized that the pharmaceutical company would be a good place to work, in part because of the valuable work it did and because there were opportunities for a thriving career on the island.

Also influencing her decision to work for Lilly was the respect her father had for the company.

"My father talked about Lilly's foundation, which was world renowned," she says. "Also, he was a devout man and, at the time, the Lilly foundation was investing and supporting religious research. He thought this was appropriate and that Lilly was a good company."

Ms. Connelly spent the early years of her career as a sales representative and then as marketing associate in Puerto Rico. Both experiences she found to be rewarding and informative.

Later in her career, when she returned to Puerto Rico as national sales manager, then as sales and marketing director, and eventually general manager for Lilly in Puerto Rico, the network she had built over the years helped the affiliate to become a thriving business.

"Not only did I know the market and the

culture, but the folks I led were my teammates from 10 years ago," she says. "While it could have been difficult to come from a salesperson role to lead the same people I had worked with, it wasn't. I was fortunate to have a group of individuals who worked with me shoulder to shoulder and who respected me and my position."

With such a strong team, Ms. Connelly and her colleagues were able to build the Puerto Rico group into the company's No. 1 affiliate for a few years.

## VALUE PROPOSITION

It's clear that the values Ms. Connelly learned as a child growing up in Puerto Rico remain integral to the way she lives her life and the way she interacts with others in the workplace.

Though her father had harbored dreams of being a writer, having nine children meant doing the right thing for his family and ensuring he could provide for them.

"Both of my parents' outlook on life was

## Making Her Mark

**AS PRESIDENT OF LILLY USA, DEIRDRE P. CONNELLY HAS MADE A HUGE IMPRESSION ON HER COLLEAGUES AND OTHERS WITHIN THE INDUSTRY.**

**I**t's not only in business that Ms. Connelly seeks to demonstrate what's possible and to contribute. In an effort to enhance the lives of those with a mental disability, Ms. Connelly serves as a board member of Noble of Indiana.

The organization helps children with developmental delays and adults with developmental disabilities in central Indiana through person-centered services, innovative therapies, employment services, and life-skills training.

"These folks don't have the abilities that many people enjoy and they deserve an opportunity to learn and excel as much as their abilities allow them to," Ms. Connelly says.

One of Ms. Connelly's greatest concerns

is to make sure that people have every opportunity to achieve success.

"Everyone who has the desire and will to succeed should be able to do so, and I worry about the distance between those folks who have the means and those who do not," she says. "It's important that we close that gap either by doing something ourselves or by supporting leaders who will help us get there."

The company leader also has an appreciation for the finer aspects of life. As someone who, along with her eight brothers and sisters, was raised with an appreciation for music, Ms. Connelly is a board member of the Indianapolis opera.

"I have a sister who has a beautiful voice and a brother who sang professionally," Ms. Connelly says. "My father used to encourage us to listen



to the symphonies or operas each Saturday morning. As little children we liked it; as teenagers, 8 a.m. on a Saturday morning wasn't the best way to start the day, but a love for music stuck with us. Today, most of us still listen to and or are associated with music."

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about compassion for others and doing what was right," she says. "My parents built an insurance company, and their focus on the customer and taking responsibility and being accountable were lessons that filtered into our home. All of this has had a big influence in how I approach what I do for a living and how I behave."

This value-centric philosophy is one of the reasons Ms. Connelly has stayed with Lilly for more than two decades.

"During my initial interview with Lilly, there was an extensive conversation about the company's values," she says. "This discussion remains very much with me, and it's this core value set that has kept me at the company. During the past 23 years, in 16 or 17 different jobs, and three or four locations, I've never had to compromise my values nor was I asked to do something that went against what I believed to be right."

In leading a large organization, Ms. Connelly seeks to demonstrate that it is possible to accomplish great things while adhering to a set of guiding principles.

As a healthcare company, Lilly is committed to the present and future well-being of people and the environment. This commitment is to be pursued with a goal of continu-

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ous improvement and guided by several principles.

It's a commitment to these guidelines, Ms. Connelly maintains, that is the reason for the company's 130 years of business success and will be the impetus that carries Lilly forward for another 130 years.

"We make decisions and we approach business with our corporate values as a guiding light," she says. "This sounds very poetic, but it's true and it's very practical."

Ms. Connelly advocates Lilly's credo in all of the company's dealings.

"We have to be continuously alert to ensure that all of our processes and our approaches to business are without reproach and are of the highest standard, and this takes work," she says. "We need to invest in both people and opportunities to continue to experience the growth the industry has enjoyed for many years." (For more on Lilly's approach to business, see page 67.)

## RISING TO THE CHALLENGE

Over the years, Lilly and its competitors have enjoyed growth while contributing immensely to research and to helping people have a better quality of life, Ms. Connelly notes.

But like all pharma companies, Lilly must address the challenges that the current business and political climate present — the legislative, social, and pricing pressures that proliferate.

Rather than viewing this as a burden for the sector, however, Ms. Connelly believes it is a chance for the company, and the industry at large, to become stronger and better.

"Criticism presents a great opportunity for introspection," she says. "Whether the criticism is valid doesn't matter; it's an opportunity to slow down and assess processes and effi-

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ciencies. This scrutiny has, I believe, made this industry even stronger. We will continue to provide customer value but in a more effective and efficient manner.”

Those challenges will likely continue as government leaders work through the issues they have with healthcare, and it’s critical that companies partner with those leaders.

One area where the industry has come under

some pressure in recent years is with regard to product advertising.

Ms. Connelly maintains that companies need to ensure that there is a careful balance between helping patients understand disease and offering them insights into products that may work for them so they are able to have informed discussions with physicians.

To that end, Ms. Connelly is highly sup-

portive of guidelines on direct-to-consumer advertising by the Pharmaceutical Research and Manufacturers of America.

“When talking about a disease and medicine, it’s important to be very careful and to have a balanced message that provides education as well as information about therapeutic alternatives,” she says.

How the company delivers those messages needs to be driven by its values, she maintains.

“Messages have to be developed with respect for the listener; they have to be developed with integrity; and they have to be of the highest quality,” she says. “It’s important that we have the ability to reach our customers, but it’s also important that we do reach them in the right way.”

As president of Lilly USA, Ms. Connelly draws on the lessons she has learned in her many positions along the way to ensure the company maintains its path of success and excellence. As an example, she cites her experience in leading a product team as being invaluable to her understanding of what is required in terms of resources to develop the clinical and marketing strategy for a product.

“My experience as head of human resources enabled me to understand the processes that ensure we have the very best talent in place and that we retain that talent and compensate our people appropriately,” she says. “The most important skill set any leader or executive must master is the area of people management. I use the lessons learned throughout my career, as well as those as head of human resources, as I lead today.”

While she has accomplished much in her career, it’s the achievements of those she has led and worked with, and the role she has played in contributing to their careers, that makes her most proud.

“Several former colleagues who I worked with in San Juan are leading businesses for Lilly or other companies today, and I am very proud of them,” Ms. Connelly says.

Her enthusiasm for the business and her colleagues in every department is demonstrable. But the biggest thrill lies in the research and efforts to find answers to disease.

“The fact that we continuously invest in cutting-edge science to find new answers, not me-too products, that can answer questions in cancer, osteoporosis, diabetes, and mental health where there is still desperate need for new medicines makes me very excited,” Ms. Connelly says. ♦

## Ladder to the Top

### DEIRDRE CONNELLY — RESUME

**JUNE 2005 – PRESENT.** President, Lilly USA, Eli Lilly and Co., Indianapolis

**OCTOBER 2004 – JUNE 2005.** Senior VP, Human Resources, Lilly, Indianapolis

**MAY 2004 — OCTOBER 2004.** VP, Human Resources, Pharmaceutical Operations, Lilly, Indianapolis

**SEPTEMBER 2003 – MAY 2004.** Executive Director, Human Resources, U.S. Affiliate, Lilly, Indianapolis

**JULY 2001 – SEPTEMBER 2003.** Leader, Women’s Health Business Unit, U.S. Affiliate, Lilly, Indianapolis

**OCTOBER 1999 – JULY 2001.** Product Team Leader, Evista Product Team, Lilly, Indianapolis

**AUGUST 1998 – OCTOBER 1999.** Executive Director of Global Marketing, Evista, Lilly, Indianapolis

**APRIL 1997 – AUGUST 1998.** Area Director Sales and Marketing, U.S. Affiliate, Lilly, Indianapolis

**APRIL 1995 – APRIL 1997.** General Manager, Lilly Puerto Rico, Hato Rey Export, Puerto Rico

**1993 – 1995.** Director of Sales and Marketing, Caribbean Basin Region, including Central America, Puerto Rico, and Caribbean Island countries, Lilly, Hato Rey Export, Puerto Rico

**1992 – 1993.** Marketing and Sales Director for Puerto Rico, Lilly, Hato Rey Export, Puerto Rico

**1991 – 1992.** National Sales Manager, Puerto Rico Affiliate, Lilly, Hato Rey Export, Puerto Rico

**1990 – 1991.** Diabetes Product Manager, Lilly, Hato Rey Export, Puerto Rico

**1989 – 1990.** International Management Development Program at Lilly Corporate Center, Indianapolis, later becoming Sales Supervisor, Philadelphia

**1985 – 1989.** Marketing Associate, Lilly, Hato Rey Export, Puerto Rico

**1984 – 1985.** Sales Representative, Lilly, Hato Rey Export, Puerto Rico

#### EDUCATION

**2000.** Graduate, Harvard University’s Advanced Management Program

**1983.** B.A., Economics and Marketing, Lycoming College, Williamsport, Pa.

#### HONORS

**2006.** One of the 50 most powerful women in business, *Fortune* magazine and its “Young and Powerful” list

**2007.** Received key to the city of San Juan, Puerto Rico.

#### BOARDS

**2005 – PRESENT.** Board of Directors, Noble of Indiana, Indianapolis

**2006 – PRESENT.** Board of Directors, Indianapolis Opera, Indianapolis

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