

WOMEN IN AESTHETICS | JULY/AUGUST 2024

Women In Aesthetics: Crystal Muilenburg

The Groundbreaking Original Series from Industry Vet Wendy Lewis Wendy Lewis

Get to know Crystal Muilenburg, Chief Commercial Officer of Acorn Biolabs



Acorn Biolabs is a personalized regenerative medicine company that offers the world's first non-invasive, follicle-based, stem cell cryopreservation service, and is developing treatments made from a patient's own cells.

HOW AND WHEN DID YOU GET STARTED IN THE AESTHETICS FIELD?

I was the girl who was stirring up lotions and potions in the bathroom with my mom's perfume and creams for as long as I can remember. My interest in skin and beauty, coupled with my fascination with science, made a career in aesthetics a no brainer.

I started at Allergan, Inc., now an AbbVie company, in 2006, right after the company purchased Inamed Corp, the makers of breast implants and dermal fillers. I'll never forget my first day on the job taking a private jet to Santa Barbara with my new boss and a group of Allergan executives. I was 26 years old and thought, "Whose life am I living?"

My job in the PR department was to support the reintroduction of silicone breast implants in the US market after a 25-year moratorium. That role had it all – controversy, headline news, two fierce competitors vying for customer loyalty, plus an element of patient advocacy through the breast reconstruction business. I loved the challenge, and after that, I was hooked on the aesthetics category.

WHO ARE SOME OF YOUR MENTORS WHO HAVE INFLUENCED YOU IN YOUR CAREER AND HOW?

I come from a blue-collar family that ran their own businesses. They showed me how important your word is, the value of a happy customer, and that work ethic wins every time. My dad was always the first person in the office – probably because he didn't want to miss any of the action when the day started. I'm a lot like that too. I've been blessed with a strong support system in aesthetics. I'm still very close with many customers and colleagues I first met at Allergan. Caroline Van Hove, who is now the CEO of Revelle Aesthetics, first hired me at Allergan and promoted me into several roles at the company. We worked together for more than a decade, and we also did our first start up together. I learned a ton of leadership lessons working for Caro, for example, to be fair and consistent, be prepared and thorough, know your facts, ask questions even if they are not popular, and don't commit to something unless you understand the implications fully, and are prepared to live with the outcome.

SHARE YOUR PERSPECTIVES ON WHAT SUCCESSFUL PRACTICES NEED TO DO NOW TO **THRIVE IN THIS COMPLETIVE MARKET?**

To me, it's all about the people. Your team is a direct representation of you and your brand. Hire people you trust will go above and beyond to overdeliver the experience you want for your patients each and every time. That is the strongest predictor of retention and word of mouth referrals. The rest can be learned. Selfishly, I also have to say, stay close to the key players in regenerative aesthetics. Be part of the studies, do your homework and work with companies that are investing in and building a foundation for the future. Your patients want to know that you are exploring the next frontier in aesthetics across all dimensions, and that they'll have access to these new developments through your practice. This will also help to position you at the cutting edge of the aesthetic industry and the 'go to' doctor when media need a source to interview.

WHAT SAGE ADVICE CAN YOU OFFER WOMEN WHO ARE RISING STARS IN AESTHETICS? There were very few female executives in aesthetics when I started. Those trailblazers carried a

lot of weight on their shoulders to break in and gain respect. We all saw how hard that work was. My view at the time was that I need to be just like them to rise to those ranks.

No one told me this, so I say it as much as I can. Your style of leadership is as effective as another person's style as long as it's authentic to you. It may be different, and you may show up differently than your peers, but it's ok. Be you, and be true to yourself, and you'll find your people and make magic happen.

and don't just accept what you say as truth. They are the ones who will challenge you to be better, learn and grow.

I also believe that it is critical to surround yourself with people who are truly different than you

WHAT IS YOUR POINT OF VIEW ON WHERE MEDICAL AESTHETICS IS GOING IN THE SHORT/LONG TERM, ADD A TIP OR TWO FOR HOW TO GET READY FOR THE FUTURE? There are two macrotrends that I am watching very closely now. The first is personalization and

customization. There is a surge of companies launching in healthcare that leverage insights from your saliva, blood and personal health information to deliver custom solutions. I see this as making its way into aesthetics very soon. The other trend I am following is harnessing the power of your own body to heal, regenerate and live a longer, healthier life. This is what drew me to join fast-growing categories of medicine, which is very exciting.

Acorn Biolabs. We are setting a foundation for regenerative medicine within aesthetics, and other Lastly, women at the helm of companies in aesthetics is on the rise and the momentum is getting bigger and stronger. There is now an incredible group of female leaders who are ready and able to

make an impact in the field. I am proud to know them, to support them, and to hopefully bring them



in to join our mission. We are just getting started!

Wendy Lewis Founder & President of Wendy Lewis & Co Ltd, a strategic marketing communications group in New

York specializing in the aesthetics category for over two decades. Her textbook, Aesthetic Clinic

Marketing in the Digital Age From Meta to AI, is in its second addition (Taylor Francis).