



Lynn Vos: HBA 2005 “Woman of the Year”

*“ I am honored, thrilled and humbled [by the WOTY Award]. Recognition by your peers is the highest satisfaction.”
- Lynn O'Connor Vos*



Susan W. Youdovin
B&Y Communications

Lynn O'Connor Vos considers herself a very lucky person. The combination of medicine and marketing is her passion and her profession. Vos, the 2005 HBA “Woman of the Year,” (WOTY) is President and Chief Executive Officer of Grey Healthcare Group Inc. (GHG), a global communications enterprise with over \$1 billion in billings, and 42 offices in 21 countries. She manages all GHG’s fully integrated worldwide subsidiaries, including GHG Advertising, BrandEdge, Avenue Grey, Nova Grey, Phase Five Communications, International Meetings and Science, Summit Grey and Hurd Studios, enabling Grey to deliver a full continuum of advertising and medical education services to companies worldwide.

As far back as she can remember, Vos was drawn to medicine and to work. Becoming a nurse seemed like the quickest avenue to combine both passions. While she enjoyed patient care, she knew it wasn’t what she wanted long-term and responded to a Johnson & Johnson ad for a clinical trial data monitor, “with lots of travel.” The job marked her debut in pharma and the beginning of a highly successful, fascinating and rewarding career. Vos joined pharma at an exciting time. She came in on the ground floor of a new era of clinical marketing through her work with her next employer, Novo Nordisk. “We launched a unique insulin model born out of clinical research,” she said. “This was a first for me, giving me an opportunity to work with top thought leaders and help to evaluate novel approaches to diabetes treatment.” It also hooked her on this way of communicating. “I saw that a few smart people can make a difference by engaging thought leaders in the process of improving the lives of their patients through education and research.” Vos’s next job was with Pfizer during the exciting 80’s, where she had an opportunity to work creatively with major brands affecting millions of people.

Marketing Visionary

Imagine a time when cholesterol was an obscure word in a medical dictionary. That was the world Vos entered when she met **Alan Gross** in 1986, who invited her to join GTFH (GrossTownsendFrankHoffman), an agency legendary for its energy and creativity. It was an invitation Lynn was happy to accept.

***“The world is an interesting place - be engaged!”
- Lynn O’Connor Vos***

This move put Vos on the ground floor of a revolution in cardiovascular care. “Our goal was to develop an innovative approach to market conditioning,” she recalled. To prepare for the introduction of Mevacor, the first “statin,” physicians and patients needed to understand cholesterol and its role in heart disease. Vos led the team that identified thought leaders, developed the “Cholesterol Connection” to educate physicians, created the “Know Your Number” campaign for consumers and helped spark the creation of the National Cholesterol Education Program (NCEP) of the National Institutes of Health (NIH). Portable screenings began, and with them a new approach to patient education and the treatment of heart disease.

Always the visionary, Vos seized the initiative and founded Phase Five Communications, a pioneering medical education group, in 1987. This move “took guts,” according to **Ilyssa Levins**, Executive VP, GCI Group, and Managing Partner for BrandEdge. “Lynn left a comfortable position with the base advertising agency, catapulting herself into an entirely new and groundbreaking venture. Few ad agencies had in-house medical education companies, so it was her personal vision that sparked and skyrocketed the company’s growth.”

Steven Felsher, Vice Chairman, CFO, Grey Global Group, called Lynn “one of the first to understand the leading role medical education was to play in the promotional marketing mix.” Lynn’s leadership at Phase Five Communications “led to a fundamental industry-wide change in the way healthcare agencies serve their clients,” he said.

GTFH was acquired by Grey Advertising in 1986, opening a new chapter for Vos, but one that was not without challenges. Founders **Alan** and **Jane Gross** retired, and her beloved mentor, **Ronnie Hoffman**, died in 1991. With the strong support of Grey’s management team, Vos became CEO of Grey Healthcare Group (GHG). In her current position, she places a priority on mentoring, carrying on that early legacy that was so meaningful to her.

Another ingredient in Vos’s success is her ability to see challenges as opportunities and business as a competitive sport. As the industry began to look at global branding as more than “US+,” for example, Vos saw yet another ground floor opportunity. She created a unique P&L structure linking the entire worldwide Grey Healthcare network. “That seamlessness convinced clients that the agency’s incentive structure truly placed all the energies of a far-flung enterprise behind the needs of each brand, a model now copied by many,” noted **Donna S. Wolff**, PhD, Executive VP, The Summit Grey Division.

Vos and GHG have been widely recognized, winning nominations in 2005 as Agency of the Year, Most Admired Agency, and Best Global Network by Med Ad News.

Mission for the HBA

A longtime HBA member and activist, Vos is currently on the Board of Directors and a past member of the Advisory Board. “Over the last few years, the HBA has really stepped out and become a major force in pharma. More women are engaging in the HBA because they feel the power of the network and a comfort in sharing war stories, best practices and trials and tribulations,” she noted, adding that she sees a special role for the HBA in the current negative climate for pharma. “Who better than women to tell our story, regain the public’s trust and turn this industry around?” she said. “Women have a special understanding of the importance of communications, philanthropy, teamwork and leadership in running a business.” Vos looks forward to the next HBA Leadership Conference as an opportunity to mobilize the organization in this effort.

Vos and GHG have also been instrumental in branding the HBA as “required experience for healthy careers.” The mission of the HBA, said Vos, is to “tell women worldwide that they need to be part of this exciting organization and this fantastic industry.”

HBA President **Barbara Pritchard**, President, The Pritchard Group and Intermedica, Inc., lauded Vos for her entrepreneurial success. “Lynn represents one of the strongest role models for our industry. She demonstrates the ideal of advancing women in their careers by appointing them to key leadership positions in her organization and mentoring women at various levels throughout the industry.”

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- Barbara Pritchard

Giving Back

Vos’s energy and creativity extend well beyond GHG to her many pro bono achievements. She holds board positions with several charitable organizations, including the Multiple Myeloma Research Foundation (MMRF), where she works closely with HBA 1998 WOTY winner and MMRF Founder and President, **Kathy Giusti**; The Jed Foundation, devoted to the prevention of suicide among college students; and the YWCA of the City of New York. As Giusti noted, “What truly separates Lynn from other nominees is her incredible generosity and selflessness, devoting hours of her own time to worthy causes.” “I love pro bono work,” Vos said. “It opens my eyes to new ideas, new people and what they can accomplish.” Giving back is also an important aspect of GHG. “Lynn is the first CEO I have worked with who makes pro bono work a fundamental part of her business,” said **Phil Satow**, President, The Jed Foundation.

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- Kathy Giusti

Think Three-Dimensionally

Vos also values work/life balance. “There are three parts of life,” she said. “Work is one aspect, family is the second and the third part is ‘You.’ And you can’t be good at the first two unless the third part is enriched—by pro bono work, sports, hobbies, friendships.... The world is very interesting, and we owe it to ourselves to be three-dimensional.” Vos considers herself very fortunate in all three dimensions. She credits her mother, whom she lost to ovarian cancer, with her positive attitude. “She was a high-energy woman who never saw barriers—everything was possible.” Vos is also blessed with three children: Kate, 16; 12-year-old twins Connor and Julia; and a supportive husband, George. As a working mom, Vos makes it a point to be at her children’s special events. She also wants to convey an important message: “Work isn’t drudgery. It’s exciting!” What better role model could they have than this lively, engaging Woman of the Year?

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