



## Season 2, Episode 7 – Consumer / Healthcare Packaging Industry

**Christine Jones Harris, Co-Owner/Principal, Jones Healthcare Group/Jones Packaging**  
**Stacie Berdan, International Careers Expert (Podcast Host)**

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### **Stacie Berdan:**

Welcome to the Global Careers Podcast sponsored by GW-CIBER! THE source for inspiring stories from seasoned professionals who have embraced a global role and reaped the benefits. We offer practical advice and insider tips across a broad swath of industries and fields around the world. Whether or not you've considered moving abroad or taking on an international role, globalization will impact your career. So join us for a lively discussion as we explore what an international career really means. My name is Stacie Nevadomski Berdan and I'll be your host! In Season 2 we find ourselves in a fast-changing world still affected by the pandemic where we must adapt to succeed. Come with us as we share with you how to craft your place in the new global work space. Today, I have the pleasure of interviewing Christine Jones Harris – Co-owner and Principal, Corporate Development, at Jones Healthcare Group/Jones Packaging, headquartered in Canada. In 1996, she and her husband Ron bought the business from the balance of the family and took it into the fourth generation of active leadership. Chris currently leads innovation development, commercialization, external partner relationships, digital commerce, marketing and communications, and organizational talent strategy for this company with 450 employees across facilities in Canada, the UK, and Spain. Chris is an entrepreneur with a global perspective and just recently celebrated the 100<sup>th</sup> birthday of the Jones enterprise. Welcome Chris, it is such a pleasure to have you with us!

### **Christine Jones Harris:**

Thank you!

### **Stacie Berdan:**

One of the objectives of this podcast is to provide a sense of the careers that are out there – more than the titles and job descriptions. You are a business person with a passion for building... Tell us about your role with Jones Healthcare.

### **Christine Jones Harris:**

Thanks Stacie. It might be helpful if I give a little background on Jones Healthcare Group first. We are an integrated packaging component and packaging services provider to the global health, wellness, and nutrition markets, with operations in Canada, UK, and Spain. Operationally, we are structured in three separate business units – all really taking part in a different healthcare packaging value chain. Our first business unit is involved in the design, print, and manufacturing of secondary packaging components (that being cartons and labels) for both branded prescription and over-the-counter drugs. Our second business unit is involved in the primary packaging of Rx and OTC drugs into blisters, pouches, and bottles in an FDA approved multiple cleaned room facility. Our third business unit is in the product development, sales, and distribution of dispensing packaging, which for example is labels, vials, bottles, multi-medication blister packs – really anything from a packaging perspective that a pharmacist needs to fill a prescription.

### **Stacie Berdan:**

Wow. How did you get involved in pharmaceutical packaging?

### **Christine Jones Harris:**

The roots of the company are actually in pharmaceutical packaging, and so, when my grandfather started the business in 1882 selling to apothecaries at the turn of the century. So the company really has always been in the



healthcare marketplace broadly speaking, and we've never really looked away from that. Now we have some significant nutrition clients, as well as food clients, but primarily we are, all three of our business units are still very much linked into what was started over 130 years ago.

**Stacie Berdan:**

How cool is that, that's terrific. So, clearly, the pharmaceutical, wellness business evolving, growing – I suspect that the same might be said for the packaging as well – what are the greatest opportunities and challenges that you see today and the ones you see coming down the pike?

**Christine Jones Harris:**

Well, there's no shortage of those. So, we are in the healthcare packaging space, but broadly speaking it's the consumer packaging supply chain industry that we play in, with a strong focus on the health and wellness sector. So, being both in packaging and being in health – they are very good places to play from an ongoing market pull perspective. But they are also industries that are rapidly changing. And while I know everyone is tired of speaking specifically to the pandemic, there really is no decoupling of that global experience of COVID to many of the opportunities and challenges in our industry, and frankly for any industry. The pandemic has created an incredibly complex set of supply chain issues that, again, we're not going to see the end of for a number of years. The global movement of people and goods was frozen for such a period of time, and many subset industries had to make operating decisions, cost structures had to be changed to survive, and that meant taking many assets and services out of the market. You know, all I have to do is look at the impact on the airline industry for that. And, for example we import some of our dispensing products from China for sale in North America and the cost of a sea container went from \$3,000 to \$25,000 in under 12 months. And in some cases the container cost more than the product that was in it. So, when I say we're all tired of hearing about COVID, the ripple effects of the back end of COVID are just outstanding for every business.

**Stacie Berdan:**

What do you think that means for some of the students – juniors and seniors in college – what does that mean for them?

**Christine Jones Harris:**

Well, I think it means that they have to take a really hard look where they are focusing, their first or next career path, and just be reflective of the fact that the world is fundamentally changed. And this public health crisis that we faced this year is not going to be our last one – with the movement of people around the world it's going to be an ongoing thing. But that's not a bad thing – it just means you have to sort of widen your horizon and the landscape of the issues that you look at when you are inside a business, whatever part of that business it may be. There's always going to be something out there, you just need to understand what the drivers are and then where are the pain points of the businesses and where can you insert yourself.

**Stacie Berdan:**

Yeah, that's really interesting because you've just described how things have changed over the last eighteen months, not only for your organization. But what are the skills that are critical, you think, for hiring, maybe some of the soft skills, as well as those technical skills you mentioned?

**Christine Jones Harris:**

Well, on the soft side, we really want to see people who can swing with change. You know, people who are comfortable working in muddy, undefined roles. We've actually made four hires in the last year where we actually went to the people that we were looking at – and we looked at a broad range of people. We knew fundamentally the skillsets... So, we don't know enough about this area to clearly define a job description, so if you are comfortable with that, you can come in and help us build knowing that we have a gap in a certain area, and the ones I'm think about right now are data mining and data analytics and data aggregation. But, that's not the business we are in; we



make things, we put ink on paper, we fold paper board to make cartons and labels, we put drugs in packages. We aren't data engineers. So, we are really looking to hire people who are very willing to be comfortable in undefined spaces with a core set though of skills around a particular area. The other thing that we are really looking to hire for is curiosity. Because of the fact that the world is changing so quickly and we are really in a very old (you know, some would call it smokestack) industry, it's really important that we have people on our team who can help us impact our innovation and strategy pathways and where we need to go, and really have a much broader lens on what's going on in the marketplace and at the consumer level that we can be building some new product platforms around.

**Stacie Berdan:**

Yeah, that's interesting. You mentioned curiosity... I was actually going to say sounds like curiosity and creativity and adaptability, which is terrific. That's really neat. Some of the workplace trends that have emerged recently – things like automation – you mentioned, rapid advances and change in tech – you've mentioned, remote work and hybrid schedules... What do you see that's important, you know, that listeners need to better understand in today's workspace?

**Christine Jones Harris:**

In terms of the remote work and hybrid schedules piece in particular?

**Stacie Berdan:**

Sure.

**Christine Jones Harris:**

OK. That's one that's really near and dear to our hearts right now, and I think to most people as we start coming out of the extreme lockdown and start moving back into some element of whatever normal was and will be going forward. So, you know, COVID did teach us that in our business we could tread water for our business with remote work. But there's no way we could move our business forward that way in a long term in sustainable manner. It's a tough one, because we are frankly grappling in terms of the hybrid side. We have brought our office colleagues around the world back into the office, we have respected that the labor force has gone through a fundamental change and expectations are different now. So, some flexibility is required more that it was in the past. We've gone to a minimum of three days in our office, because we need to have these impromptu team engagements, we need brainstorming sessions, we really need meaningful face-to-face dialogues to happen. And all of this builds a culture, working in synch together to move the business forward, you just don't get when you have to book and plan a Zoom to even say hello. So, I really do have concern when I think about students listening, or any young people coming into the workforce. My premise is, as a leader, you really need to be visible, you want to be on the radar screen, in the business that you are in, very much in touch with the senior leadership and what they are doing. You want to be seen grabbing the reigns, stepping into assignments that often simply pop up in an office or business environment that do not necessarily happen just because you've scheduled a Zoom. They happen because something has just happened on the marketplace, there's been a supply-chain shortage that we talked out that's come through and we're all quickly gathering in a room and coming up with some strategies... You want to be in there to be able to help the business in real time. And I think too... we talk about the mental health impacts of the full tilt of working offsite. We are still very social beings and we benefit from personal interactions. So, the mental health impacts of the isolation of the remote work is a real thing. And I worry for young people for whom that has been the only experience at this point – either finishing school or getting into their first jobs. It's really, really difficult to put a specific number against the impact of learning and mentoring simply by being in a physical setting with other people. So, gaining knowledge of the style of a senior leader, sitting at a drafting table with a CAD engineer and just watching how they do the business, even though you've been schooled in it. Years of experience can bring a different nuance and it's really hard to do that when you're offline. And finally, I would say to this next generation of students coming into the workforce, and I've said that to our folks here as well – if you feel that your work can be so easily done remotely then you have just broadened our entire labor approval for your role, and that means



outside of the regional areas that we work in, we could look at areas with potentially lower cost, we could look at areas where it gives us a 24h productivity piece because of time zones. So, be really, really careful, would advise students not to devalue your role and what you can intrinsically bring to your own development and the business by being remote. And, I would argue, by being too hybrid.

**Stacie Berdan:**

Yeah, that's wonderful, terrific, terrific perspective Chris, thank you for that. I loved all the points that you shared and that last one in particular – from globalization perspective... That's happening in some industries – they are actually saying 'yeah, let's throw open the doors open around the world and let's see where we can hire some people. That's one of the things that I think people looking for a job early on in their career need to think about from a global perspective and the competition that's out there. And, you know, we've all been impacted by global events as you said in the beginning... But a lot of students and young people they don't really think that they want an international career... But today's workplace is going to continue to evolve based on globalization, so it's critical to understand it how it affects our jobs, our employers, our industry, the supply chain... What specific advice or tips do you have for students when it comes to globalization if they are not quite certain that they want to be involved in a global organization or don't think they need it?

**Christine Jones Harris:**

Well, you know, Stacie, I would really say to them that all businesses are global – no matter what the size – there would be some element of your business or your value chain that is from outside your region, outside your country and/or is controlled or able to be directly impacted by something outside your country. So, I would counsel everybody to be aware of this and just keep this always in front of mind that no matter where you end up working – you know, you don't have to be sitting in Singapore to be in a globally impacted business. You can be sitting in New Jersey and that might be a one-site spot but your input factors could be coming from around the world, your markets could end up being around the world. So, I think sometimes students, and I know this with my kids, we thought global business that meant you jet setting around the world... No, it just means you're working in a global marketplace and that can be anywhere. So, having said that, I would say that always being a student of world news and events, geopolitical factors can make or derail a business very, very quickly and so I would guide students on the soft side to always stay abreast of what's going on in the world. Make it a point to know what the big, particularly political, events are, that are going on around the world. I guess I should say public health events. That global health crisis won't be our last as I said and this phenomenon of near-shoring in conjunction with global – what does that mean? I would really take a look at how students are looking at... if they're going to get on the market side of the business what does that mean... the customer channels, the customer strategies that you should be digging into advising your employers on. Be aware and learn. Globally, governments are investing in near shoring and private equity is investing in near shoring. When you see that happening you know it's not going away. So, just really, even if you are inside a global multi-site group, be aware of that phenomenon, and what that risk could be to your global strategy as an organization.

**Stacie Berdan:**

Hm, great advice, wonderful. Do you want to add something else? Yeah?

**Christine Jones Harris:**

Yeah, as I think about that and I think about what has been very important for us and really has been a tough skill to get inside our four walls, and I've struggled with it as a leader – the developing of the capacity to search and identify and manage partnerships, because increasingly this is going to be key for all businesses. Finding different capabilities, extending your value but not bringing it in house. There's just so many complexities right now to running businesses that have international footprints or international chain somewhere in their business and their market strategy – you just can't do it all. And so you need to find the right partnerships you need to be able to align with another organization – that's a real critical success factor, and a really tough one to nail. So, I would say that's



something you probably don't get schooled a lot in academically but identifying and managing partnerships for companies in the global marketplace – that would be a really great skill for the kids to keep an eye on.

**Stacie Berdan:**

Yeah, that entails a lot of cross-cultural relationship building, aligning, emotional intelligence, yeah... This is terrific advice that you've been giving our listeners, and things that you've experienced... And they also have experienced so much change, right, we've all experienced so much change in the last years... What's a tactic that you've used, Chris, in dealing with change, anytime throughout your career, and how has it helped?

**Christine Jones Harris:**

Well, you know, I'm probably getting a lot better with it as I get older. I probably embraced it without thinking a whole lot about it more quickly as I was younger, but now I make it work for me. So, obviously it's inevitable, change is inevitable, and some of my personal best growth opportunities, and professionally, have come from changes that have been either thrust upon me or that I chose to seek out. Like buying this business, for example, was a huge change, huge risk, and really stretched and really brought some serious headwinds to us, but something that really allowed me to grow beyond whatever I could have done had I stayed in the mining industry where I was. I think that you never know where change is going to come from... The COVID at the extreme was a huge change that was thrust upon us organizationally and challenged us to be very agile and very focused on important things and that is always a really helpful thing. When you're thrown into a changed environment it causes you to get a laser focus on what's really important, and that's a good thing to be thrown into every once in a while, because we all get caught up in the things that just aren't that game changing but can really suck up a lot of your time and energy as a leader. And change won't always bring a positive new light for you. I usually, in terms of coping with it, I would give myself a short period of time to absorb it, to say "well, that was lousy" or whatever it may be, have a negative reaction. I try to make it as short as possible but depending on the issue it can frankly take me a little bit longer... But fundamentally, I am an action oriented person, I like to move forward, so I have learned not to fuss with the elements of the change that I can't do anything about and I just get putting all my energy into embracing what I can do. I've also learned to embrace imbalance in my life, and change brings huge imbalance, and I think we hear a lot in the world about how important work-life balance is. I would say to kids coming out of school: embrace imbalance because that is life, that is work, and it's all one thing. You can't do it forever, you can't be off kilter forever but you do have to be OK that your life is going to be put out of balance with change. And I guess, the final thing I would say there is that early advice in my career was that I would need to learn to stand in the wind. And when I reflect back on what that means now – really, learning to move, to be resilient, to turn where you have to turn, to switch gears, and realign and reposition and pivot, so learning to stand in the wind is really fundamentally to me is learning to healthily embrace change.

**Stacie Berdan:**

That's wonderful. Wow, I love that – embrace imbalance. Because absolutely we have to. So thanks for that point. This has been wonderful, insightful, there's so much that we've covered. I think our listeners must be so pleased with hearing about all these various things. But right before we wrap up, is there anything else you want to add?

**Christine Jones Harris:**

I guess the last thing I would say – whatever the students decide to do, whatever direction they decide to go in – just own it. Step up anywhere you can for accountability opportunities. It's risky. You won't always get it right, absolutely you won't get it right. But it will be a huge piece in developing your confidence, your profile in your organization and your business savviness, and therefore, fundamentally, your organizational worth would be that much higher. So, I guess my final comment is just put yourself out there and own whatever you decide to do.



**Stacie Berdan:**

That's wonderful, thank you, Chris. This has been super insightful and really so inspiring to hear your story, your advice what it's like running a business at this time, and to talk with you. I really, really appreciate it you taking the time to spend with us today. Thanks.

**Christine Jones Harris:**

Oh, my pleasure, Stacie, thank you.

[Music]

**Stacie Berdan:**

You have been listening to the GW-CIBER Global Careers podcast. Join us again next time, and in the meantime – go global!