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ATG Interviews Nancy Percival

Sales Director at Prenax, Inc.

by **Tom Gilson** (Associate Editor, *Against the Grain*) <gilson@cofc.edu>

and **Katina Strauch** (Editor, *Against the Grain*) <kstrauch@comcast.net>

ATG: *Nancy we know that you have extensive experience in sales, marketing, and business development. Can you tell us a bit about your background?*

NP: Most of my career was spent working and expanding my business knowledge and skills within the publishing industry. Having started in entry-level positions and growing into leadership roles, I have had the opportunity to experience all facets of sales, marketing and business development. I have defined strategy and contributed greatly in each role and have managed the highly successful teams that have executed the strategy. With this experience, I feel confident that I am well-suited to manage the teams that continue to serve the needs of our clients while delivering great results to **Prenax**.

ATG: *Tell us about Prenax. What is your core business? Where is the company located? How long has Prenax been in business? How big is your staff?*

NP: **Prenax** is a global leader and an information management partner for librarians in academe, hospitals, government agencies and procurement professionals in corporations. Over the years, **Prenax** has built a reputation for providing excellent customer service, helping to streamline the ordering and renewal process while reducing overall spend. **Prenax** is a trusted partner for both clients and vendors alike.

Our U.S. headquarters is located in Concord, New Hampshire with remote offices throughout the U.S. Our customer service and all other administrative departments reside in our Concord office.

Prenax is celebrating its 25th anniversary this year.

ATG: *Prenax has changed hands several times, yes? Can you tell us about that? Who is the current owner? Until recently Prenax owned The Reference Shelf. However, you have abandoned that line of business. Why?*

NP: No, **Prenax** has not changed hands several times. **Prenax, Inc.**, a global leader headquartered in Sweden and our CEO based in Paris, provides information management services to libraries and corporate procurement professionals. In 2007, **Prenax** purchased **Basch Subscriptions**. Although **Basch** was a strong brand name with our clients and within the industry as a whole, we officially changed our name to **Prenax** in 2015.

Prenax made the decision to pause operations of **The Reference Shelf**. With our company focus on the library and corporate sectors, this gives us the opportunity to consider the future direction of **The Reference Shelf**.

ATG: *How do you overcome the challenges of coordinating a business headquartered in Sweden, with a CEO based in Paris, and a substantial presence in Concord, New Hampshire?*

NP: The president of **Prenax – U.S.** runs operations and reports to our CEO in France. We don't experience challenges coordinating business with our European headquarters as they support our efforts and provide us with the resources we need to be successful.

ATG: *On its website, Prenax claims to provide information resource solutions & services to librarians and corporate procurement professionals. Can you elaborate? What specific services do you offer? Who/What is your main market? Where do libraries fit into the mix?*

NP: Library and government agency clients are the foundation of our company and our client base remains fully entrenched within both of these market sectors. As we expand our business, we have discovered that the corporate market sector is in need of redefining and streamlining their entire process of information management while reducing costs and increasing their spend visibility.

ATG: *When talking to corporate clients, what recommendations are you making to help them redefine and streamline their information management process? How are you helping them reduce costs and increase their spend visibility?*

NP: Many corporate clients do not have full visibility into their orders or know what their spend is. **Prenax Online**, our online platform, streamlines the process and provides the full visibility to their orders, so they are aware of where and who is spending. Clients can identify lapses and unread content, whereby enabling them to make sound

decisions on whether or not the content is warranted.

ATG: *Speaking of markets, since joining Prenax in 2016 what changes have you implemented to enhance the company's sales and marketing efforts? Can you point to specific evidence of success?*

NP: Since the name change to **Prenax, Inc.** we've focused in on creating new marketing materials that show the depth and strength of our services. In addition, we have more than doubled our sales staff with highly experienced business development managers that are located across the country.

ATG: *Are these moves starting to pay dividends? Have you noticed an uptick in the market's response? If so, in what ways?*

NP: Yes, high dividends because of the way we work and treat our clients. Along with our experienced team members, we are consistently providing solutions to our client's business problem.

ATG: *We also notice that Prenax, Inc. operates globally. How have you developed an effective international marketing strategy? What does such a strategy look like? Where is the demand strongest for your services? America? Europe? Asia/Pacific?*

NP: Since **Prenax, Inc.** is a global company, all of our offices collaborate on a collegial basis by developing and sharing similar branding messages, sharing market data and systems. This enables us to be aware of global opportunities that are beneficial to the entire company.

ATG: *Is it safe to say that the U.S. is your strongest market? Can you tell us more about which other countries are essential markets for Prenax? Where are future global opportunities most promising for Prenax?*

NP: Yes, the U.S. is the strongest market by sheer size and volume of business. All of our overseas offices are firmly established in both the corporate and library markets and equally deliver high revenue streams.

We partner with many global third-party vendors that offer services to our clients.

ATG: *As journals and other periodicals have become more and more digitized, how has the role of a subscription manager changed? What impact has the transition from print to digital had on your bottom line?*

NP: With the increase in online and database spending, the role of a subscription agency becomes even more important. Working with multiple publishers and different systems will continue to be a challenge. For example, when online access lapses, **Prenax** has a team of E-Resource members that work closely with

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our clients and publishers to ensure continuity in client access. Service for online issues require immediate action and that's what **Prenax** offers client's now and will continue to.

ATG: *Some wonder about the viability of a subscription service in an increasingly digital world. Is that concern justified? Is the subscription part of your business experiencing satisfactory growth?*

NP: Our business is growing continuously as the industry transitions to digital.

ATG: *How do you see Prenax business model evolving to adapt to an ever-changing information industry? What market opportunities do you see in Prenax's future, both near and long term?*

NP: We stay close to all of our clients and continuously learn about the industry changes and challenges they face. **Prenax** either creates solutions or partners with companies that offer the services they need in this ever-changing information industry. We continue to see great opportunities serving libraries as well as on the corporate side.

ATG: *Nancy, we know that you stay incredibly busy with all that's on your plate. But everyone needs some down time. What do you do to relax? Are there fun activities that help you recharge and get ready for the next professional challenge?*

NP: I relax in several ways. I belong to our local gym and try to work out 2-3 times per week. On weekends in the summer, we head to Cape Cod and spend our days in and on the water in kayaks and on sailboats. I also read a fair amount and enjoy spending time seeing the latest movies.

ATG: *We really appreciate you taking time out of your schedule to talk with us. We enjoyed it and learned a lot.*

NP: Thank you for the opportunity to work with you on this interview! 🐾

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time when more money was flowing into libraries (although, as she points out, purchasing power wasn't dramatically increasing), but her concern was the challenge of enticing bright young minds to enter librarianship. She thought it was the best time since the late nineteenth century to be a librarian and she wanted to make sure that story got told. "We live today in an exciting world. We are fortunate to be working at a time when the milieu in which we operate is undergoing many changes—sometimes bewildering changes. These in turn force us to look around with a fresh viewpoint, and this necessity makes our jobs even more challenging and, therefore, more interesting..." She would've loved seeing what we're faced with now.

To "look around with a fresh viewpoint." It's the people that'll make the difference. When we focus on the organizations and lose sight of the people, we lose track of the ideas and the energy that are necessary to create the changes society needs in our scholarly communication systems. When we disregard the people because of where they work, we fall into the trap of thinking only we, and the people who think like us, are on the right side of history, only we know the path forward. But developing the systems that will best serve society requires the expertise and energy and insights of all of us. We certainly won't all agree. That's okay. I've learned that I don't always hold the truth in my hip pocket. The organizations we work in don't hold the keys. It's the people that count. 🐾

Endnotes

1. **Brodman, Estelle.** "Money Talks, but People Count." *Bulletin of the Medical Library Association*. 1965 Oct; 53(4): 567-572. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC198334/pdf/mlab00181-0073.pdf>