

BORN TO SHOP

by Gregory Smith



Some people like to claim that they are born to shop, but Nicki Albrecht really means it. Albrecht is the Senior Vice President, Sales & Marketing at VIDPro Inc., which is devoted entirely to creating the ultimate shopping experience. A shopping maven in her own right, Albrecht sat down with us for an interview about her life, work, and decision to become Marketing at Retail Certified (MaRC) through POPAI.

What is your background?

I graduated with a visual arts degree in photography and spent many years as a sales representative and sales manager selling professional photo finishing in both commercial and portrait photography markets. My father, prior to retiring, was a retail architect specializing in store planning. It was not unusual, as a little girl, to accompany Dad on a Saturday to a job site or go out on a field trip visiting retail locations. I think being involved in a visual merchandising career is in my blood. But most of all, I love to shop!

How did you get started in this business?

When I first started with VIDPro over 13 years ago, all the information based displays were created photographically. In the upcoming years, it was a great transition from photo to digital print. If you can imagine some of the first projects I worked on, used the now completely obsolete Kodalith® line film process to create information cards with text. The opportunity of incorporating photography and display with my visual arts interest and background drew me to the idea of developing a different type of product information system and product line.

What is a good early story about your business?

When I first arrived at VIDPro, the company was heading in a completely different direction. The product line had been solely based on the video movie and video game industry. As I worked my way from Manager in 1999 to President in 2008, we re-engineered our product line to supply and protect information in retail, industrial and business environments. Being part of the growth of an entirely new product to a completely new market was both incredibly exciting and scary. However, partnering with Walmart to launch the program in Canada, expanding it to Germany, and still being in over 17 categories is unbelievably satisfying and rewarding.

What is your favorite part of the business?

Helping people shop! I get great satisfaction in empowering the shopper with information to assist in making an excellent purchase decision. I find satisfaction in creating a positive shopping experience and increasing the consumer spend for my clients. I enjoy the variety of challenges my clients bring to the table. Each clients product, shelf space, timeline and sales goal is different and I enjoy combining those elements into a successful solution.

Who is your typical customer?

Our complete system works best in a retail environment, however, anywhere where information is needed, requires protection and the versatility of being easily replaceable. Our clients are retailers, vendors, and manufacturers.

What made you decide to pursue the MaRC accreditation?

College is a good start to a career, but maintaining professional accreditation doesn't end there. I am also a Certified Sales Professional and I think it is important to continue to seek out programs and courses that add to my ability to bring value to my customers and my company. I was closely watching how the Point of Purchase industry was becoming a market and industry completely separate from the standard advertising market. The influence of the shopper was being addressed differently and required a very different skill set. I felt that POPAI was creating an organization addressing point of purchase advertising proactively. I wanted to take the opportunity to learn all the different facets involved in the ever changing point of purchase industry and elevate my skill set to a more specialized direction and be able to enhance my expertise and provide relevant solutions to my clients. The MaRC accreditation I feel, is a reward among your peers in the industry, acknowledging your commitment to the industry and willingness to offer the most current marketing at retail expertise. Working in a small Canadian company I embraced the opportunity to interact with colleagues, staff and instructors with a great range of talent, experience and professionalism from across North America. Working toward the MaRC goal allows one to see each industry professional differently with exposure to their unique contribution to the P.O.P. industry.

How have the courses helped you in your everyday job?

The courses have assisted in being able to offer structure and systemic approaches to my clients. My clients now benefit from my enhanced understanding of both industry standards and shopper behavior and expectations after attending the various MaRC courses.

Is there a customer experience you are most proud of?

I am most proud of the trust my customers place in me, having a client, offer me a challenge, unexpectedly, in passing because they know it will be taken care of, without question is very rewarding.

What is an interesting story about a customer interaction you had?

At a industry event, I was introduced to someone new to me. To my delight they knew VIDPro from almost 20 years ago, as a client, and they had wonderful things to say about the product and the company experience. It made me feel proud to be part of the VIDPro team.

What are some of your greatest challenges in your business?

The retail marketplace is overcrowded with messaging, the VIDPro system puts the product benefits right in front of the consumer at the point of purchase. My biggest challenge is having our system understood and acknowledged as an integral component for increasing sales and enhancing the shopper experience.

What do you see as the greatest challenge to the POP business in the next few years?

I think it will be a challenge to maintain the point of purchase market as a specialized focus, in light of the pressures from traditional advertising media departments. There is so much P.O.P. "action" currently that I truly hope that the direction isn't lost and that consistent clear, measurable industry goals can be maintained.