



## **BRAND SECRETS AND STRATEGIES PODCAST #43**

Hello and thank you for joining us today. This is the Brand Secrets and Strategies Podcast #43

Welcome to the Brand Secrets and Strategies podcast where the focus is on empowering brands and raising the bar.

I'm your host Dan Lohman. This weekly show is dedicated to getting your brand on the shelf and keeping it there.

Get ready to learn actionable insights and strategic solutions to grow your brand and save you valuable time and money.

**LETS ROLL UP OUR SLEEVES AND GET STARTED!**

Dan: Welcome. If you've been listening to this podcast, you hear me talk repeatedly about how the retailer/brand relationship should be symbiotic, how it should be a collaborative partnership. In fact, in my free course, Turnkey Sales Story Strategies, I actually challenge a myth that retailers need brands more than brands need retailers. The point being is that you're equally important, and that you need to rely upon each other. Today's story is about a progressive innovative retailer who knows what this means, and



what it should look like. Today's story is about a retailer that celebrates the brands that they sell, that realizes that those brands are helping to drive traffic in their stores, that realizes that the community, that relationship that they have with those brands gives them their core strength, and their competitive advantage.

Today's story is about Lucky's Market, an innovative retailer that's learned how to embrace the brands that are on their shelves. What do I mean by this? Unfortunately, a lot of large retailers look at small brands as an ATM machine. Brands act as the glue that binds your customers together, that brings your customers into the store, and that keep your customers from shopping the competition. Today's story is about Lucky's Market, and how they leverage that relationship with their brands to drive sales across every category. Today's story also includes the commitment that Lucky's has made to the brands on their shelves to help them succeed, realizing that if those brands succeed, they succeed.

I met today's guest at an Expo West panel event where retailers were telling the audience what they want and what they need from the brands that are on their shelves, what they needed was for brands to step up. They need brands to provide insights, actionable insights, not canned top line reports, but actual insights. Who shops their product, why they shop their product, when they shop their product, what do they buy, et cetera. Savvy retailers want and need brands to step up and help them be successful in their market. In return, savvy retailers will bend



over backwards to help those brands stand out on a crowded shelf and help them grow.

I'm frequently asked what makes natural natural? Well, this is a big part of it. A community of brands and retailers working harmoniously together, working in union to put the customer first. After all, that's what we're all here for.

I'd like to introduce you to Ben Friedland, the VP of Marketing at Lucky's Market. Hi, Ben. Thank you for joining me today. Before we get started, can you tell us a little bit about yourself and how you ended up going from where you were, a ski bum as you shared with me, into working for Lucky's?

Ben: Yeah. You bet. I do sort of refer to myself as an accidental grocer. Growing up, all I ever wanted to go was work in the ski industry. I did that for many years. All of a sudden one day decided I didn't, and looked for another business opportunity that I could be passionate about. I have a pretty intense passion for food, and, ultimately, was able to parlay that into a job spending a little over six years with Whole Foods Market working in their marketing department. Then, ultimately, jumping to Lucky's Market about four years ago when we had five stores, and jumping on here, and helping this business grow. It's been a really fun ride.

Dan: One of the reasons we're connected is I had the privilege of showing up and listening to a talk that you gave at Expo West. You were talking about what you were hoping brands would bring to you, how you were wanting brands to support Lucky's in



helping you guide them at shelf. Interestingly enough, I had just launched a free course that captures this a couple days earlier, but let's talk about what you were talking about, why you saw it was important, and what do you want from brands.

Ben: It's really a shared fate mentality, I think. For young and upcoming brands sometimes, people feel like the hard work is done once the product gets on the shelf. That's not to diminish the incredibly hard work that's happened to get to that point, but unfortunately I think that's where a lot of the work is just beginning. We really look at our relationships as shared fate relationships, right? So great, let's go ahead and get you in the store, and certainly look at promotional opportunities and things like that. The way that grocery stores have done since the beginning of time is still a part of the model, but I think moving forward, shifting that paradigm a little bit and co-storytelling and really having brands that are really effective at telling their story and driving demand for their product and therefore driving people into our stores to find them is a really great opportunity for brands to help create incremental value. We love to partner with folks in doing that. We're really eager storytellers ourselves. So being able to leverage some of that information and content to also be able to communicate to our customers is something we're eager and excited to do.

Dan: That's exactly what I was hoping you would say, because, I mean, that's what you were talking about at Expo West. The reason it's so important, and I agree with you completely, and to



your point, a lot of brands when they show up, they think, okay, I'm finished. I finally got on a retailer's shelf. The selling never stops but it especially extends to well beyond when the consumer takes it home and shares it with their friends and family. That ties back into what you were saying in terms of the storytelling. Who is that consumer? How do they share it? How do they use it? What do you do to help nurture brands within that storytelling, to help support that?

Ben: Yeah. Even before I answer that question, just to go back to your point, which I agree, if you just think about the fact that you have a chance certainly through your packaging to tell that story right when a customer picks it up on the shelf. They also have the opportunity to view that story when they take it out of their bag and put it on their shelf or put it in their refrigerator. They then have another chance to view that story when they take it out and prepare it and use it sometimes multiple times. So really thinking about how you deliver your story on the package, I think is really critical, because there's multiple times in multiple spaces where customers will be more apt to be able to consume your message. It's really difficult to do on the shelf when you've got maybe a couple of kids hanging off your arm. You're making that decision then, but there's some strong storytelling, to your point, that can happen long after the product gets home.

Plus, one of the other things that we discussed at that session was this idea that storytelling, the research has happened long before customers ever get to the shelf. So it's an old concept at



this point, but it still rings incredibly true. Google coined the phrase, zero moment of truth. It's this idea that your storytelling begins long before the customers ever come into the store. So what we're here to do is work with this idea that your content is your currency. Right? You have the ability to tell the story and create demand long before those folks ever come into the shelf and then ultimately see your product. So considering that as part of the storytelling life cycle, if you will, from start to finish I think is really important.

Dan: Absolutely love that.

Ben: Yeah. To get back to your question though, what are some of the things that we do? Obviously, we're eager to capture content, to partner with people. We've partnered with a variety of different people to leverage their story, be it in in store signage, really working to celebrate their stories in some of our social media channels, our email channels. As a retailer, we've got really robust channels that have a lot of people that we're reaching out to. So when we've got interest from folks, and a lot of times, it starts right at a demo, right on the floor. We have a conversation, we learn a story, and we say, "Hey. How can we celebrate you? How can we create incremental demand? You've got such a cool, great, refined story that we really want to be able to get out there." We've developed many partnerships that way. Hopefully, we've been able to create a win, win scenario where we're increasing demand for that product, and our customers are



winning as well, because they're getting introduced to a very cool story and a new, hopefully, potentially favorite product.

Dan: Love all the different ways you frame this. This is so important. Thank you for sharing that. Okay. Spoiler alert for anyone listening, just because your mom loves it, doesn't mean everyone else will. You've got to be able to communicate this across every platform, every channel. The fact that you guys go out of your way to embrace the brand, to celebrate the brand is amazing. This is why I wanted to talk to you specifically. Most retailers talk at us. Most brands talk at us. They don't have a conversation with us. You don't really get to know the brand or the retailer beyond the four corners of the package, or beyond their sign in the front door. So the fact that you guys are going so far beyond that, in my opinion, is what differentiates you from other retailers in this space. What have you seen? How do your consumers appreciate it, your shoppers? And then, what are you hearing as feedback from the brands that you work with?

Ben: Yeah. I think in order to answer that question, you have to take a look back just a little bit about our roots and where we came from. We were founded by a young couple, Bo and Trish Sharon, who were in their early 20s. They bought this grocery store, and really had no idea what to do with it. They just knew that they had a passion for food, a passion for helping to improve their community, and felt like opening a local market could really help accomplish that. They've done wonderful work in that vein, but you go back to those early days, and they saw entrepreneurs



coming into their store asking to put their products on their shelves. Well, as luck would have it, Bo and Trish were entrepreneurs as well at that time. So really the spirit of the company is founded in that. I mean, a lot of products were just placed on a shelf based on a handshake, because it was this mutually beneficial relationship. Well, we can help you grow your business. You help us grow ours. We all have a specific mission in mind. Let's help each other accomplish that.

So we're a very proud to say that a lot of well known brands had a lot of their starts early on on our shelves. That was due to that handshake agreement and that commonality, that brotherhood that Bo and Trish felt in really connecting with some of these folks. So we've heard some really great feedback. We've been very, very proud to hear different brands tell people that they wouldn't be where they are if it weren't for Lucky's. Certainly, that had nothing to do with me and everything to do with Bo and Trish and the work they were doing with those brands in the early days. So we're very proud that we've been able to have a small part in that. We're very excited to see that they've grown past our stores and into many stores around the country, because we were able to help them plant that seed and spread the good that they are ultimately trying to spread. So that's been a really wonderful thing.

Then from a customer's perspective, it's been really nice. Customers are able to come in and find new and exciting and interesting products. Again, if we have supplier partners that are



eager to help tell their story, that's what our customer base really wants, right? They're interested in more transparency. They're more concerned about what they're doing, what kinds of foods they're putting in their body. Ultimately, they want to support people that are living the American dream. So there's a lot of really great stuff, a lot of wins, certainly for us, because it helps us grow our business, but as importantly for those supplier partners and our customers as well.

Dan: You know, I think a lot of people realize, and I'm going to date myself a little bit, when I started in this industry, that's what it was. Every retailer, even a King Soopers, they weren't a big conglomerate type chain. I'm not picking on them, but 160 stores, that's a lot of stores. The point is that when I started in this business, they were all pretty much independent. We didn't have the connectivity that a lot of retailers had. So you would actually go in the store and deal with the store personnel, the store manager, the grocery manager, et cetera, and that's who you sold your product to. That's who you'd develop a relationship with. Point was that it's very similar to what you're describing today. I don't think people realize that grocery in its roots, that's the way things were done.

We've gotten away from that. I think it's a disservice of the shopper to now be such a big business that all you want is slotting and fees to go on the shelf. You got to pay to play. It becomes so dollar driven, that it really doesn't have the friendly atmosphere like you're talking about in terms of helping brands



get on retailer's shelves. Again, at the end of the day, if a retailer doesn't sell anything, there's no purpose for being. I always say that retailers can't possibly be an expert in every category. Retailers generically don't sell anything. They sell real estate space in the form of the products that they sell. I know you have a deli, and you have some other different departments, I'm not getting into that, but for a retailer to not be able to maximize every selling opportunity by leveraging the content and the relationship that you've built with your community, that's a huge mistake. So kudos to you guys.

Ben: Thank you for that. I think one of our greatest concerns, and I think it's right, I mean, you have a lot of smaller grocery retail brands that are sprouting up that are doing an exceptional job of this. I think one of the challenges that we're certainly going to have and one of the things that we have to really remain committed to and focused on is still being able to allow that sort of thing to happen as we grow big. It's a lot easier to do that when you have one store or three stores, but if you wind up having 100, 200, 300 stores, the trick is from a buying perspective and how you're slotting and what you're planning to put on shelf, how do you get bigger while remaining small? Having that small mindset and focusing in on allowing a store manager from a store in Florida to be able to swing by a local farmer's market, fall in love with a product, and give that person the opportunity to get into the store. Efficiencies are a wonderful thing, but they have the potential of getting in the way in moments like this.



So being able to stay small, being able to give our stores the autonomy and the ability to bring in products that they love locally, those are going to be things that are certainly challenges for us. To the point that you're making, that's ultimately how we think we can combat this idea that you lose the personality, you lose the localization, you lose the ability to bring in some of the smaller producers, because you've centralized everything, and these efficiencies really kill the spirit of what makes grocery retail so special sometimes.

Dan: I couldn't agree with you more. I mean, I think, for some retailers, it's more about the bottom line. You know, the bean counters? How many dollars can I put in this column versus that column, without really thinking about what drives those sales? Going back to what you said, so Bo and Trish who did an excellent job at providing and sharing their entrepreneurial flare, their spirit to help encourage brands. So the fact that you guys hold onto that is so critically important, because it's all about us working together as a community.

Okay. Side note, you're in Boulder. I love Colorado. I'm a native. The fact that it's such a unique community up there, so much more tied together than I think a lot of other communities. Your community is so integrated in terms of all the different activities outside, inside. I mean, the hiking, you've got such beautiful weather, et cetera, but you've also got the heart of nature right there. So you're seeing things possibly long before anyone else. More importantly, you've got a lot of really great innovation that

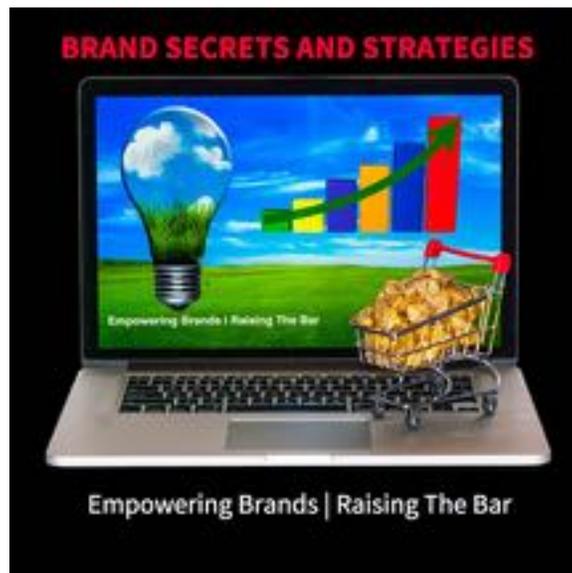


comes out of that area. The fact that you're able to capitalize on it. I love the fact that you gave the example of where someone in Florida could see something at a farmer's market, fall in love with it, and get it on your shelf. Can you tell us a little bit more about how that works?

Ben: Yeah. So we empower our store directors and those teams to be able to go out and find local products and work to bring them in. What we are really focused on doing, especially as we get a little bit bigger, is ensuring that we're not burying these potential suppliers with paperwork. A lot of times, that's what can happen. It's a great product you're selling at the farmer's market, come on. Whoa. You're hit with all kinds of things that require fees and time and energy. It can just be daunting and overwhelming.

So we're focused on keeping it really, really simple, and being able to have a very quick turnaround. So those folks make that introduction. They kick it up to somebody in our office. There are some minimum requirements that folks need to have, like insurance and some of those sorts of things, because we want to make sure that everybody's protected. Other than that, we're looking at a very, very quick process. It continues to be something at the root of who we are and what we do, because if we're making it difficult for people to get into our stores, then we're not doing our job.

Dan: Well, I think that ties back to what we were saying. Getting bigger while remaining small. The point being is that if you're quick and nimble, that gives you so much more flexibility in terms



of taking advantage of that. That is your competitive edge. Wanted to get to this a little bit later, but let's talk about it now. I remember going into the original store, and it was nice. It was a really nice homey comfortable store. The store that I met you in, your newer store on Broadway, is phenomenal. It's retail done right in my opinion. The way that you've merchandised it, the way you've laid it out, the way you've set it up. It's very friendly and inviting. I don't feel like I'm walking into, I don't remember the old toy store, but remember they used to pile the merchandise to the ceiling? Pile it high. Sell it cheap.

Ben: Yeah.

Dan: Yeah. You're definitely not that. Everyone is so friendly when you walk in. They say hi to you. It's such a different atmosphere. How did you come upon that formula? Then how do you communicate that to the brands and the retailers, or do they just automatically pick up on it?

Ben: Well, I think the mission of the company is to provide greater access for more people to healthful foods. That really is the mission, this idea of good food for all and democratizing good healthy food and making sure that everybody can afford it and can have access to it. So if you start at the mission of the company and you think about this idea, it's about creating accessibility. So accessibility, how does that translate to the physical space? How does that translate to your store? When you walk into our stores, that's really ultimately what we're trying to do.



A lot of times, unfortunately, people that are making a transition from a conventional retailer to a natural foods retailer, they're walking into a scenario that they're completely just mystified by, right?

Dan: Right.

Ben: They're completely confused, because all of a sudden you walk in, you see 40,000 products. You don't recognize a single one. You see a lot of people that you're not used to seeing in your grocery space, and it can be intimidating. So our goal is to reduce that intimidation, to make the space feel more accessible. So that's why you're never going to see marble countertops in our stores or really fancy fixtures or things like that, because that just lends itself to the idea that there's a greater expense. Somebody's going to have to pay for that marble countertop. You know?

Dan: Right.

Ben: So we're really trying to focus on this level of accessibility. We're trying to create the spirit of the stores is really rooted in the past. We sort of look at it through this retro modern lens where we'd like for a young person to be able to walk into our stores and say, "Hey, this place feels great. It's got a great vibe. It's a bit fashion forward. There's some very cool things going on here." But at the same time, I'd love for somebody in their 80s to walk into our store, and say, "This reminds me of a store that I used to shop 40 years ago." So there's an old time market feel to it. It's a little bit retro. It's a little bit modern. At the same point, the critical lens



that we look through is this level of accessibility. That's why it's not that fancy. It's very stripped down. The fixtures, oftentimes, people could walk into our store, and say, "It looks like I could build something like that."

So it's imperfect. To us, being imperfect is perfect, because we just want to make sure that everybody feels warm, everybody feels welcome. We can just strip that piece of it away, and then we can get to educating. Then we can get to the opportunity for people to really reduce any fears, and really just get to enjoying the space and all of that.

Dan: That's great. I love the way you frame that, too. I've got to say, it was perhaps the cleanest store I've been in in years. The merchandising, I love the fact that everything was so neatly placed on the shelf. When you're in this business, as a brand, you have a lot of retailers have what they call a set store. A set store is where they develop their schematics. That store has to look right all the time. It's where the corporate brass comes through. So they're always merchandising it, cleaning up, and sprucing it up. Your store looked far better than that.

The point I was getting at is that the merchandising, everything looked picture perfect. You've done a phenomenal job of communicating and training and working with your staff so that your store provides a uniform appearance not just in one department, but across the entire store. As such, it is inviting. I think it goes back to the entrepreneurial spirit where you value



and realize that the shopper is the key to your success. So how do you tie all that together?

Ben: Yeah. Well, first I can take little to no credit for the exceptional merchandising that happens, right? Those are the folks in our merchandising team and our operators in the store. I mean, our most important position in our company is our store director position. Those are the generals in the field that are really bringing this thing home for us. So I think, giving credit where credit is due, that's those teams that are really making that happen.

That being said, it's a trial and error process. I mean, we're still a very young company. I agree. I think the store looked great when we were walking the store, but sometimes they're not our best days. Right? It's this continual battle. We have this joke that when you open a store, it's this giant race to the starting line. You have to take a moment to really look around and appreciate how great the store looks, because it's never going to look that good again. Every day from here on out, your goal is to try to make this store look as good as it did on opening day.

So we work really hard to empower the stores and those store directors to run a great store. Our goal at our home office is to provide support. It's not to direct people. It's to say, "What do you need? What is the best way that you feel you can take care of your customers? How can we support you in that endeavor?" Because some guy sitting in an office in Boulder, Colorado with his feet kicked up on a desk is not going to know the best way to



take care of a customer in Gainesville, Florida or in Bloomington, Indiana or in Columbus, Ohio. So we really rely on our stores to be able to guide us and to feed us the information so we can best support them. So I think that's critical to what we're trying to do.

Again, we're still a young company, and so I often say it's like we're building the boat and rowing it at the same time, but we're getting better. The stores are looking better, and our customers are responding. We're really proud of the product that our stores are putting out there. Fortunately, the customers are telling us so, telling us that they appreciate it as well through their return visits and the feedback that they provide us.

Dan: Well, that's what it's all about. I mean, if you can't get a customer to come back in time after time after time, let me back up a little bit. There's a lot of pride there. You were talking about the connectivity. You were talking about the entrepreneurship, that flavor, or I should say that spirit that resonates in your business. If you can keep the people that work with you happy and keep them engaged and keep them involved, they're going to deliver at a much higher level. Point being is that resonates in how the store looks. So getting to what you just said, consumers want to feel comfortable. They've got a myriad of choices. If I don't find what I like at your store, I have a choice I can go anywhere else or I can go online.

I guess, what I'm really getting at here, Ben, is that most retailers, unfortunately, spend all of their time to reacquire that customer. Whereas if you can do these simple things right the



first time, create an inviting environment, well stocked, well merchandised, friendly store that invites people, then you're not reacquiring that customer. Then you develop that relationship with them. That's true loyalty.

So let me frame it this way. I've got a loyalty card for almost every retailer in my neighborhood. I've got a loyalty card for airlines that I fly on. But I'm not necessarily loyal to them. Consumers use loyalty cards as a coupon, not a gimmick, but as sort of a coupon. My point is that true loyalty comes from giving the shopper a reason to come back again and again. I think you guys have really done this really effectively. Can you talk a little more about that? Then what I want to do is transition into going back to the storytelling and how you bring all those pieces together.

Ben: Yeah. I think true loyalty lies in relationships. It lies in trust. It lies in the ability to connect with people when you go in and know that you have an existing relationship and it's one that you really, really appreciate. So while I agree there are rewards programs and loyalty programs that add a value and a benefit to customers, what's more important I think to a customer is walking up to our butcher case, and saying, "Thank you for asking me to help, and I'm going to wait for that person who I always meet with. They know exactly how thick I like my steaks cut. They gave me a great idea for a marinade last week. I can't wait to tell them all about it, and get a new idea from them." I think that's where true loyalty lies.



The only way that you're ever going to be able to get that is to be able to create an experience that team members appreciate and they really enjoy and they're passionate about working there. So that's everyone from the store director through everybody in the store. So creating an environment where people feel like they matter, where people understand what definition of success means for them in their role, making them feel like they're connected to something larger than themselves are all part of our ethos and who we are and what we try to do. Then ultimately, saying, "Great. This is your store. Run it like you own it." Giving them that power, I think really impassions them to create those connections and ultimately develop that loyalty. Without that, to your point, people are going to be able to go get it down the street, or a team member's going to leave the first time somebody offers them a nickel more down the street. So really it's about creating that experience for the team members, which is as equally important as it is for the customers.

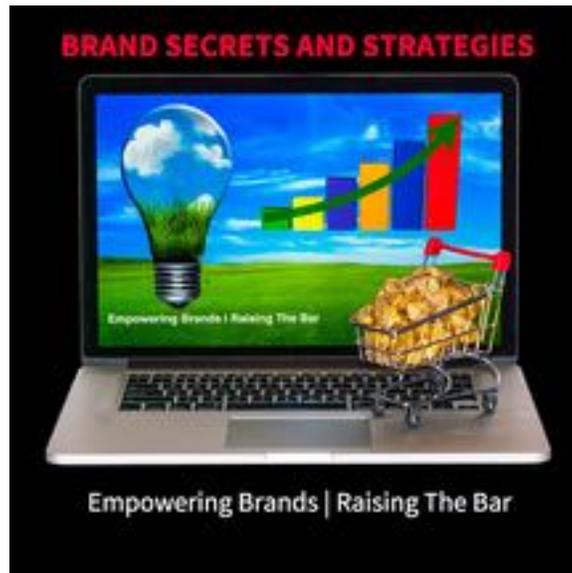
Dan: I remember years ago when I was a grocery manager,. They put in a time clock, and I thought how horrible that was, because all of a sudden, instead of being a valued employee that would work 90 hours a day if I needed to, or I used to go in at 6:00 in the morning as a grocery manager, and I'd get off really, really late at night. I loved it. I was there because I wanted to be there, because I wanted to deliver such high value to the shoppers. When they put in a time clock, I thought, "Oh, wow. I'm just another number." I'm not saying that time clocks are bad. You need them to some degree. But to have a atmosphere where, as



you said, the employees feel valued and empowered, that is so radically different than what a lot of the big retailers are doing. So I applaud you guys for doing that, because that's a difficult balance to try to manage.

By the way, I was talking to Phil Lempert in episode 32, the Supermarket Guru, and he said the experience, he called it theater, which I love the way that forms a picture in your mind. So talk more about the theater that you offer, the experience that you offer that keeps consumers coming back. What do you offer besides the butcher that offers recommendations?

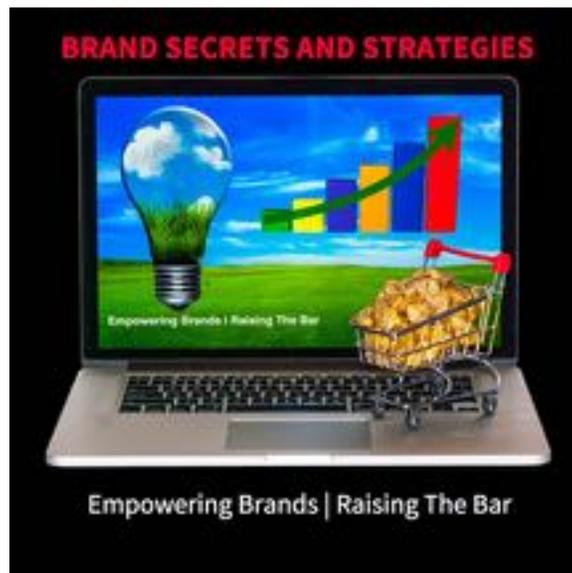
Ben: Yeah. So I do agree. Being able to create a level of theater in store, it gets people more closely connected to their food. Again, that's this core need that more and more customers are having. It's what we want to be able to provide for them. So be it using the butcher example where we're smoking our own bacon in house, or taking a look at our store design, and when you go over to our culinary department, we've got a wide open kitchen. So customers are coming up and selecting the foods that we're preparing in house and can see that happening, and see our chefs in preparation right behind there. Doing simple but yet really fun things like pop-up events where we're grilling or we're making guacamole on the floor or doing simple yet really great things that get people more connected in understanding where their food comes from, it's important, I think an important part of being a retailer these days.



Certainly, it really connects to who we are at our core. Bo and Trish, prior to opening that first store, they met in culinary school. They're professional chefs. So what will always be the case in our stores is the belief that fresh prepared foods right there on site are something that's really critical to the Lucky's Market experience. So you're always going to have this theater happening in our stores, because so much of our food is not just made in some windowless commissary somewhere and then shipped to our stores. It actually was ingredients that came into the store just earlier that day. So theater is really a critical thing.

When you're trying to create a community space, when you're creating a space that people want to go to to select their food, those are the kinds of things that as more customers turn to online grocery shopping, those are the kinds of things that might drive people to consider, "Well, maybe I want to go see this. Maybe I want to go experience this. I'll go ahead, and I'll drive to the store as opposed to just quickly getting something online."

Dan: Absolutely. Well, a lot of people, they love taking classes. They like getting immersed in their hobbies. Where I'm going with this is that consumers today do a lot of shopping beyond the four corners of the package. You referenced that earlier. So to have not just a recipe on a website, but to be able to show the shopper how to build the item, the recipe from scratch in your store, and then talk about it, and then sample it, for me, I'm one of those shoppers that loves to be able to see how something's built, and then be able to taste it. Then have that as a reference point to



know that I did it right hopefully the next time. So I love the way that you're tying this together. So do you involve the brands? Do you bring that into that equation?

Ben: Yes, we do. Be it wine and cheese tastings that we do in some of our stores. We bring those folks in to really help sample and educate, certainly our beer, wine, and spirits department. We do those sorts of things. Vendor demos are something that are really critical to our stores, being able to create space and opportunity for our suppliers to be able to come in, and sample their products and tell customers about them and put a face with the products and all of those things. That creates a level of theater as well as breaks down a barrier that allows people to know who is producing their food, where it's coming from, and being able to hear it from them. So there's a variety of different ways that we try to provide a level of education and wow our customers with cool experiences.

Again, at the same time, it creates one of these win, win scenarios where the supplier wins as well, because they get to watch that product of theirs go in the customers mouth, have a dialogue around it, see what their reaction is, perhaps make modifications, or feel really confident about where their product is and where it's going. So making sure that our suppliers are an active part of this process is something that's really critical for us.

Dan: And the fact that you provide that is so important. I talk a lot of times about how the difference between a big brand and a small brand in some regards is that the big brands hire focus groups.



Focus groups are people that are paid to sit in a room, try a product, kick the tires, and then sample it and say, "This is what we think about it. Plus or minus, et cetera." That's not real. That's not really understanding how the consumer thinks about the product, what they like about it. So to have the owner or a product ambassador, brand ambassador in your store being able to do that live A, B split testing or whatever you want to call it, but actually getting valuable insights for the brand to take back and continue to shape and mold and craft their story around that, that's worth I don't think you can really put a value on it. That is so valuable, because now you have the shoppers story that you can use and leverage to communicate or better communicate to more shoppers on a broader basis. How do you then take that or what do you do with that story, and then how do you convert that into some of your other social media platforms that you mentioned earlier?

Ben: Yeah. Again, I think it starts with the supplier, right? They gain the knowledge. They help us communicate their story. So it could be a variety of different ways that we could ultimately do that, but if it's compelling, if it's interesting, that's the stuff that we want to share. We want to create channels where people can celebrate food, learn how to eat a little bit healthier, laugh while pushing a grocery cart. Those are all things that really drive what we do day in and day out. So if they can capture it, we're open to the conversation about helping to share that. So without using a specific example, I would just say that's generally our idea. That's our MO.



Dan: It's so valuable. It's so very important. I get to the point where I just don't like shopping anymore, because it is such a chore to go into a store and have to do the scavenger hunt thing and be able to find things. Yet when I go into a store like yours, I like being there. I like looking at different things. I don't feel like I'm time crunched. I feel a lot more relaxed. Again, I love what you guys are doing. I really would encourage anyone to stop by a Lucky's store, because it's amazing. This isn't necessarily supposed to be a commercial for Lucky's even though I really applaud what you guys are doing, but my point is you guys are doing grocery right. This is the way retailers need to be thinking about the way they connect with their community, I believe that small retailers, independent retailers are such a critical part of the ecosystem.

I talk to a lot of retailers, and they're worried about the competition from the big guys, from the guys down the street, as they should be concerned about it, but if you can stay true to your mission and stay focused on what you know you do better than the big guys, and as you've pointed out so brilliantly so many times, stay focused on those things that your shoppers want, that's going to give you a point of differentiation. You will always have a home within that community. Can you talk a little bit about what's next for Lucky's, and where do you see the company going? What are your goals? What are your aspirations as a brand, Lucky's being the brand? Then, where do you want to go? How do you connect with shoppers on a broader basis?



Ben: Yeah. Well, I mean, we're entering into a pretty significant period of growth. We just recently announced the signing and the pending openings of 20 stores. So we currently have 28 stores.

Dan: Congratulations.

Ben: So we are going to grow significantly over the course of the next 18 months. Then from there on out, we anticipate more of that growth if we continue to provide our customers what they want, and they encourage us to open more stores. So a lot of growth coming. With that comes a level of diligence in really making sure that the brand...it's very easy to stamp out physical spaces throughout the country, it's very difficult to take the heartbeat of the company and infuse it into these different locations. So for us, in that growth, it's about coming into new markets, but even more importantly, it's about fostering growth within our team member base and really nurturing and growing future leaders in the company that can then go into these spaces and really help carry the brand identity and the mission forward with Lucky's. So we've got a lot on our plate with that.

Fortunately, we are one of those companies that still has a founder that is involved. We're not one of those companies that has a Board of Directors, that doesn't have somebody who is so intimately involved. As they often say, this is Bo and Trish's baby. They've got two kids that are about seven years in age apart, because they often joke that their baby is Lucky's, which they started in between. They're so incredibly passionate about this

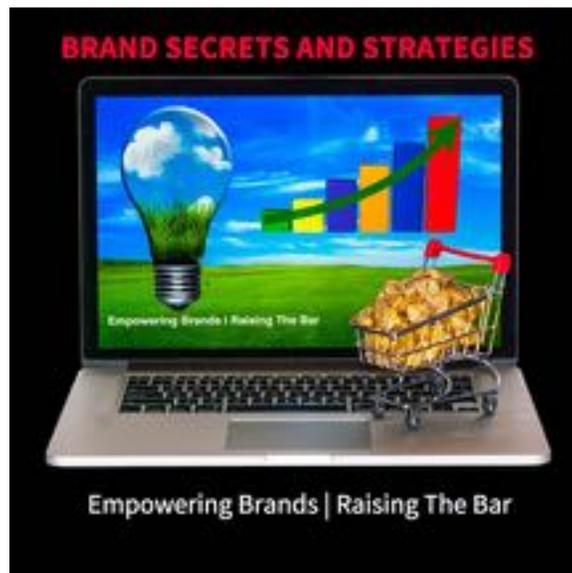


business, about the mission, and therefore, they're involved every single day in being that moral compass, right?

Dan: Sure.

Ben: Being that guide and making sure that why this company was started will continue to manifest itself in the stores that we continue to open. So certainly, moving into new markets, being able to make positive impact in those communities that we serve is really on our radar in what's next for us. A lot of that growth is actually happening in Florida. We've had some great responses in Florida. Those communities are really embracing us, so we'll certainly be opening in other areas than Florida, but that's a really important area of focus for us. That's the goal. Make positive impact in the communities that you serve, and that means supporting a myriad of nonprofit organizations in those communities, creating jobs, and just making a positive impact on the world. That's ultimately at the end of the day what we're trying to accomplish.

Dan: You have a community room where you bring the community into your store, and you were sharing an actual Boulder event, which I thought was fantastic. So the fact that you go one step further and invite the community in for educational purposes, bringing brands into the store, again, I love what you guys are doing. It's amazing. In fact, my only wish is that you guys had one close to me, because I would go there all the time. So put that on your list Bo and Trish, if you're listening. Anyhow. I love what you guys are doing. I love the message. I love the atmosphere. It's really



great. Is there anything else that you can think about or that you would want to share with a brand that wants to find a way to get into retail, find a way to help support what you're doing? Again, I love the idea that you realize that this is a collaborative relationship. What would you recommend to a young brand, and, again, anything else that we haven't covered?

Ben:

Yeah. I would say if you have a product and you have a passion, connect with others in the community, be it with us at Lucky's, or with other brands. One of the things that I really appreciate about the natural food's community is the shared fate concept. People are so open and giving and so welcoming of providing guidance and feedback and recommendations and things like that. So don't feel like you have to go it alone. There's a lot of mistakes that a lot of us have made that we'd love to be able to help you avoid. So I really encourage people if they have a product and they're interested to really get involved in just meeting people and really shopping their ideas around.

Then if you are able to get to a point where you're on a shelf, think about your content being currency and don't think of demos as being your only option. Demos are critical, as we talked about, and they're very, very important, but one of the dangers is, and you see it all the time, you're trying to grow a business. You have your CEO and your CFO are oftentimes the same person doing demos all the time. Well, there's an opportunity cost associated with that. So be strategic with ways that you use demos, because they are critically important, but make sure that you have



resources in place to know when, be judicious, understand when and how you should use those demos, and think about other ways that you can build your brand. Think about other ways that you can develop content, use it as currency so it can really help you grow your business. I think that's something I'd like to impart on folks.

Dan: Thank you for that. Going back to what you said, the shared fate concept, that's why this show exists. It's all about you. It's for you, meaning whoever's listening, the brands, and the retailers. By the way, a lot of times I will say brand when I'm talking about a retailer, because a retailer is a brand themselves. Point being is that having a conversation and learning about what's going on in the world and beyond your markets, that's what this podcast is about. That's why I'm so thrilled to be able to interview you and other thought leaders to be able to share these experiences and share these insights with brands, so hopefully that they can gain more traction and they can do a better job at helping you succeed with their brand. Thank you again for your time. I really appreciate it. I look forward to the next time you and I can connect.

Ben: Wonderful. It's a pleasure. Thank you for inviting me.

Dan: Thanks, Ben. I really want to thank Ben for coming on today, and for sharing his valuable insights and his time with us. I'm thrilled to have a retailer on the podcast to share with the brands, with you the listeners what retailers are looking for. This is so critically important. If you can get this right, you will succeed just about



anywhere. After I hung up, Ben asked me to put a link to their community page on this website and on the show notes. In addition to that, I'll also put a link to Lucky's Market so you can learn more about him there. You can download the show notes at [brandsecretsandstrategies.com/session43](http://brandsecretsandstrategies.com/session43).

Today's freebie is my top 10 strategies to build sales and profits where I talk a lot about some of the strategies that we talked about earlier today with Ben. You can get it instantly by texting 10 strategies to "44222" or go to the show notes. You can also get access to my free Turnkey Sales Story Strategies course at [turnkeysalesstorystrategies.com/growsales](http://turnkeysalesstorystrategies.com/growsales). Find it on the show notes and on my website. Thank you again for listening. I look forward to seeing you in the next show.

Lucky's Market <https://www.luckysmarket.com>

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Thanks again for joining us today. Make sure to stop over at [brandsecretsandstrategies.com](http://brandsecretsandstrategies.com) for the show notes along with more great brand building articles and resources. Check out my free course Turnkey Sales Story Strategies, your roadmap to success. You can find that on my



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Sign up today on my website so you don't miss out on actionable insights and strategic solutions to grow your brand and save you valuable time and money.

I appreciate all the positive feedback. Keep your suggestions coming.

Until next time, this is Dan Lohman with Brand Secrets and Strategies where the focus is on empowering brands and raising the bar.