



BRAND SECRETS AND STRATEGIES PODCAST #57

Hello and thank you for joining us today. This is the Brand Secrets and Strategies Podcast #57

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!

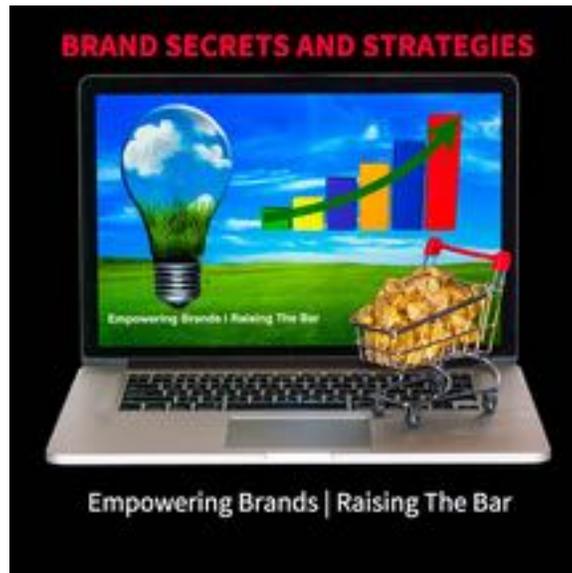
Dan: Welcome. Today I want to introduce you to someone I've known for quite a while. I bump into him at a lot of networking events, trade shows and even around town. I've always known Steve to be a great communicator. He knows everybody. Steve's the kind of guy that will go out of his way to make an introduction or to help support you with advice and by introducing you to the right people that can help solve your problem. This is at the core of what makes natural natural. One of the main reasons I wanted to



invite Steve on today is because a couple years ago I had the privilege of speaking alongside Steve at a SupplySide West event. The topic was on food labeling, specifically non-GMO. When Steve got up at the talk I had the rare privilege of getting to know him in an entirely different light. His passion, his ability to communicate about the importance of knowing what's in your food and why it mattered so much to him. The argument Steve made would have swayed any jury. His message was personal and from the heart. This is one of the main reasons I wanted to introduce Steve to you and to bring him on the podcast. Here's Steve.

Steve, hi, thank you for coming on today. Can you start by telling us a little bit about yourself and your journey of how you got to where you're at today?

Steve: Well, thank you, Dan. First, it's a real pleasure to be invited on to your show. Pleased to speak with you and address your audience. I've been involved in food and agriculture for 40 years now, really, since I got out of college and was a Peace Corps volunteer in agriculture in Central America where I started learning about food agriculture, the pesticide equation, the circle of poison, and it led me further and further into agriculture, getting a master's degree from Penn State in agriculture, learning more about insect control, serving as an agricultural extension agent in Philadelphia County of all places with Penn State University, learning more about urban food systems, farmers' markets, urban gardens,



horticulture, a lot of things you usually don't think about in agriculture because most people think about acres of crops.

So that led me to New Hope Natural Media which was actually based in New Hope, Pennsylvania right on the Delaware River near Washington's crossing at the time. I joined them as an editor in 1985, eventually moved with the company to Boulder, Colorado, served my tenure there, finished as editorial director of the trade magazine division and helped run the educational programming for the natural products expos for nearly nine years. Those shows today are the largest natural and organic product shows in the world.

Since then I've worked for a number of leading natural and organic brands in the last 10 years have been running a public relations and marketing firm that I founded called Compass Natural, and that's to help guide people navigate the natural and organic products market.

Dan: Appreciate your sharing that. One of the reasons I really wanted to have you on is because I had the privilege, I know we've known each other for quite a while, but I had the privilege of being on stage and speaking with you at SupplySide West a year or two ago. Your passion around non-GMO and organic, it was infectious. I'd like you to share a little bit about how you became such an advocate for natural organic.

Steve: Well, I appreciate that, Dan. Really, the issue for me about editing genes in our food is that this is something that I think merits



more study. It's really hard to tell if there are adverse health effects when research is being suppressed and also when there are no long-term studies on human health regarding GMOs that have ever been conducted. So given that there's a concern there, the other concern I have is actually the advent of GMO technology and food is also interdependent on the use of synthetic pesticides, the majority of which is very toxic. We're starting to see some of the research come out on glyphosate, known under the trade name Roundup, that is now the world's most widely used pesticide in history. At small levels it could be benign, again, I'm not a Luddite, I am pro technology when it serves us, but at the point of usage now it's so saturated in our environment that this glyphosate chemical is literally in the rain throughout the Midwest during the growing season when it's used so heavily on our bread basket crops.

Dan: Sad that so many people really don't understand this. Consumers are confused. One of the things that I ask my audience when I speak is which is better, non-GMO, organic, et cetera? Point being is that most people don't understand the difference. I start out by saying that again, while there's no scientific, hard scientific evidence to prove this, if you are what you eat, then what you eat matters, if a pesticide is designed to knock out the nervous system on a bug why would we begin to believe that anything that we ingest that has a pesticide on it would not adversely affect us? That's kind of scary. So to your point, I love the fact that I'm talking to a lot of people at Climate Collaborative and OC2 and Gary Hirshberg and a bunch of other people that are



really focused on these issues around organic and sustainability. Can you talk a little bit about what you've seen in terms of the trends from non-GMO to organic, and how would you define it and where do you see consumers gravitating to?

Steve: Can you ask me the question again, please?

Dan: Yeah. How would you recommend a brand, communicate the value that they have in their product from being organic, non-GMO, et cetera, natural, in a natural product and not only communicate that on the package but beyond the package and leveraging what you're doing through Compass Media, leveraging that in the way they tell their story?

Steve: Well, the certification and seal issue in trying to help educate consumers about the mission or quality or certification behind the product is a blessing because it can help convey a lot of information in icons quickly on the package, but it's also a challenge because it's like, how many certifications and seals do I as a manufacturer need and can I afford? The aspect of non-GMO certification is a way of conveying to the consumer that we are taking a more healthful approach to our products, or at least that's what the consumer perceives. However, the product is not necessarily organic. It may very well have been grown using toxic synthetic pesticides just because it's a non-GMO crop.

So to me ... Now I'm actually hearing of a glyphosate seal, like a non-glyphosate Seal, which to me is fine, but again, that could very well mean that other toxic pesticides are used.. I've been a



33-plus year advocate of the organic seal. However there's so much confusion around the organic seal right now that consumers actually sometimes think a natural label or a non-GMO label may be more of a quality product than the USDA certified organic seal, but in my mind there is only one system that audits food from seed to shelf and that is the certified organic system. And it is a system that requires that no toxic synthetic pesticides or fertilizers are used. Again, for me it all boils down to the application of these toxic chemicals on our foods the residues of which do not wash off or wash out.

Dan: Well, and I'm glad you said that. To re-emphasize again, the fact that these these products are tested and retested and retested and not just certified once is something that you can feel comfortable with, that you can have faith in, that you can trust. So when we're talking about total transparency we're going beyond the four corners of the package too like you said. I think a lot of companies buy into the next greatest CEO or the next greatest logo or disclaimer that they can put on the product when organic is really the way to go. There's so many other good reasons for organic like regenerative agriculture and how a lot of companies are focused on helping the ecosystem. Can you talk a little bit about some of the things that you've seen working through products as a New Hope staff member and then with what you're doing now, can you talk about some of the ways that brands should be leveraging the organic seal to better communicate with consumers?



Steve: Well, I believe that we need continued education for consumers to choose organic. As the market for organic is growing significantly and has been over the last 20-plus years since the National Organic Program in law has been established. So while I know there are questions among core organic advocates around the use of hydroponics and organic, around animal welfare standards that were recently denied by USDA to help strengthen organic standards, I realize that there are some controversies within the organic movement itself, but as a consumer, I still put a lot of faith in the certified USDA Organic seal. To me that means it's been produced without the use of toxic synthetic chemicals or fertilizers.

Now, for those that want to get into nuance and discuss whether it's been grown in soil or in some medium or hydroponically, oh, well, that debate is ongoing right now. Again, that to me is a good debate because we do want to help ensure, I think, the purity, cleanliness of our food for our families. But again, I believe in choosing the organic seal overall. I'm a big supporter of the Non-GMO Verified project and its work. It's done a lot to raise awareness about the issue of GMOs in food. I think fair trade seals, other seals are all very important, but ultimately to me when people think that organic is too expensive, I always say, "Well, if you think organic is expensive try health care."

Dan: True.

Steve: Because when there are a dozen pesticide residues in a conventional apple and that has been tested by USDA testing and



published, it's on the web, then these pesticides on a conventional apple don't wash off and over 40 years these are the things that give us cancer. So that's where I say and my own quote is, it's the organic apple a day that keeps the doctor away.

Dan: I like that. Well, one of the things I always say is that if you are what you eat then what you eat matters. What I'm getting at is that if you eat the products that properly fuel your body then you're going to be more sustained. So the analogy that I give a lot of times is that if you go buy a loaf of bread, the cheap generic stuff, you're hungry almost immediately. If you buy a loaf of bread that is the best mainstream bread out there then you might be sustained for a couple hours, three or four hours. But if you buy the organic equivalent because it better meets the needs of your body, you'll probably be sustained even longer. Point being is that if you spend an extra thirty cents at the shelf due at the time of purchase, that's usually cheaper in the long run. Then as Gary Hirshberg was talking about to your point, reducing the need for doctors, or the need for prescription medication, reducing the issues that products that aren't clean, that don't have the nutritional value create. So thank you for sharing it.

With Compass Marketing, can you talk a little bit about that? How do you help brands communicate the value of their product, and then how do you work with brands?

Steve: Well, at Compass Natural, I served for quite some time as the editor of the leading trade magazine in the natural products industry, a magazine called Natural Foods Merchandiser, part of



New Hope Networks suite of communications out to industry members in our industry. So I saw a lot of incoming news, press releases from brands, from organizations, nonprofits. Again, this is a very mission-based industry. So when you go to a Natural Products Expo, it's not just brands. It's all these organizations and NGOs and media and people that are involved and committed to the healthy lifestyle space, both professionally, commercially and oftentimes personally.

So coming from that angle and then having worked as the national marketing director for at the time, the leading organic food company in the country, a brand called Arrowhead Mills now owned by the Hain Celestial Group, I got to understand a lot about product and package development, package design, advertising, public relations, launching new products into the marketplace, trade show planning, and then again subsequently producing further conferences and events through publications that I've ran. One notably called the LOHAS, a journal which stands for lifestyles of health and sustainability. We combine all these to help emerging brands, established brands, international brands communicate to the industry, to the media that covers the healthy lifestyles business and to consumers, because it really is, these days even more so, an integrated approach in how you communicate with your markets. There are more than one market. There are your constituents, these are your stakeholders, not just your shareholders, but everyone that you serve from where you source to where you sell.



Dan: Appreciate your saying that. So let me back up a little bit. I've written a lot of articles for Natural Food Merchandiser when you're talking about LOHAS journal, what is that? Is that the publication that Ted Ning used to run?

Steve: It is. It's no longer being published but I believe it was published for about 15 years, and it was a business publication, the conscious consumer market, consider yourself as a conscious consumer who might opt for Xcel Energy's wind power program, you might drive a hybrid Prius or an electric car, you choose organic foods, you choose more green products, you're willing to maybe spend a little extra to shop with your values, you may decide to support certain brands and not support others with your dollars. But all these markets from green building to recycling to alternative energy to alternative transportation to natural and organic foods to alternative medicine to yoga practice is all part of this emerging more culturally and environmentally conscious consumer base of which there are significant numbers in the United States and around the world.

Dan: I have contributed to the digital version of that magazine but not to any print version of it. I miss it. I wish that Ted would revitalize it. I know that he's moved on to other things, but such an important contribution and the groups that he was able to bring together as a result. So let's talk a little bit about some of the conferences and some of the different groups that you've put together. I do get your daily summit weekly. Do I call it daily newsletter or a weekly newsletter? But I get that, and you have a



lot of interesting activities, and you champion a lot of different causes. Can you talk a little bit about that?

Steve: Well, I appreciate that you see our communications as newsletters. What we kind of believe in is leading with info marketing, informational marketing that helps educate. So what we actually send out is on behalf of the brands organizations and events that we represent. So we will actually communicate with our subscriber base, two or three times a week, sometimes more often in advance of major events and shows. We joke and say we do everything from PR to package design to public affairs. Part of why we were involved in these GMO labeling issues is Compass Natural was engaged by the prop 37 campaign in 2012 in California which really initiated the whole GMO labeling movement, and we lost by only three percentage points after being outspent six to one.

I was further engaged by the GMO labeling ballot initiative in Washington State in 2013 and then again in 2014 in Colorado. I also helped organic winemakers lobby for a improved organic wine label to be considered by the National Organic Standards Board. So we do public affairs work. We do package design and website development work and again, a lot of public relations work to try to drive media attention for our client base, and then with a subscriber base, and anybody can sign up for our newsletters and information at CompassNatural.com. We share a lot of information about the green business and lifestyle space.



By the way, I just want to share that my company's name was inspired because my father George was a boat captain in the North Atlantic and took out scuba divers on a charter boat every weekend for 40 years. I was a young lad and he taught me how to steer that boat, and he would point me at the compass and say, "I want you to steer this angle Northwest. I'll be back in 40 minutes." I would steer in the big waves, and he'd come back and say, "Okay, I'll take over." He would drop a buoy and check his sonar and radar and find shipwrecks that divers would dive on. I don't know how he got close with me steering at 12 years old, but I just always remember that. So my logo, my simple symbol of that mariner's compass is twofold. It honors my upbringing and that time with my father, learning on the ocean about a lot of things, and then guiding companies in the natural and organic space, which while it's growing and we want it to grow, we want to reach more consumers, we want more consumers to have affordable access to these products. It will change our environment, it will change their health, it'll change our communities for the better. It is still a unique industry, and we just help people through our knowledge, through our relationships, navigate those shortcuts that might take them longer to learn on their own.

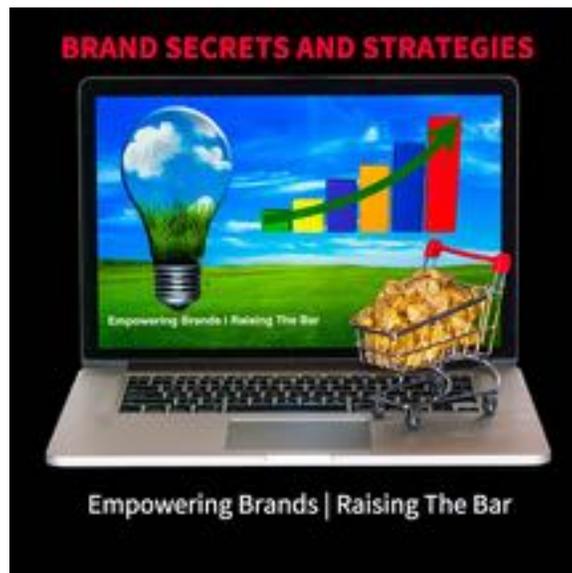
Dan: Great story. I remember going deep-sea fishing with my uncle and watching the sonar as we'd go over wrecks. It's pretty fascinating. You can see the ship and the outline of the ship on the sonar, so great story. I love the fact that you're paying homage to your father. I honestly thought, and I'm glad you



shared this, I honestly thought that the compass had something to do with being right, if you will, and natural and focused on staying true to your mission and natural. That's where I thought it came about, but if that works.

Steve: Well, there is that meaning of finding your true north. That's what we try to help companies with, really, because we feel that mission based companies ... actually having a mission for a PR firm, that gives us something to really work with because your mission is your story, your story is what helps people engage with you. We like to help people share that story. One client we just engaged with yesterday, I'm proud to say BIJA Chocolates, B-I-J-A, they were just featured on The Today Show. That's right, NBC's Today Show, national television, for their mission of empowering women's cacao cooperatives in Latin America and around the world. That's their specific mission. So mission can help drive attention and storytelling, and they wanted to tell the human story behind chocolate. So again, for us as a PR firm, that stuff we can really work with to drive media consumer and industry buyer attention to a product and a brand. These are the authentic brands that we want people to support.

Here at Compass Natural we're jacks of all trade. What do you need done? We have a network, we'll get it done. We have a virtual team, but also we are specialized and committed to natural organic sustainable socially responsible products and services. We work with nonprofits and a lot of events in helping them promote. One event in particular we're really proud of is the



NoCo Hemp Expo now going into its sixth year, we're really bringing about the industrial hemp market helping galvanize that, and we're talking about hemp for clothing, hemp for CBDs and dietary supplements. We're not talking about the marijuana market. We're talking about hemp foods, hemp for medicine, and that's very much an emerging market and what happens to be our state, Colorado, is becoming an epicenter of that. So that's exciting to be working in that new and emerging category which dovetails very nicely with the natural products industry where all times you can find hemp foods and hemp clothing and increasingly hemp supplements that contain full spectrum hemp extract, otherwise known as like cannabinoid compounds or CBD.

Dan: I appreciate you sharing that. The reason this show exists is to help brands learn how to tell that story, how to go beyond the four corners of your package. How to go beyond what's on the shelf. The whole idea is that the way consumers buy products today is very different. They don't just go and look at the package and see what's on it, they do the research online. So to have a resource like you're talking about is so critically important. More importantly, to go one step further, you were talking about building websites and being able to help brands communicate there as well. So again, brands need to do a far better job, and I think organic needs to do a far better job of communicating the value, what we're talking about today, the value of clean healthy products that are transparent, that you can trust.



The hemp industry, you were talking about that, I know that it is exploding. I've had some interaction with it. Yet I think there's a lot of miscommunication or a lot of misunderstanding around it in terms of the legal piece and what's legal what's not legal and why it's good. People have been using hemp rope for years. Maybe they didn't realize how big a piece of that and that part of that segment, that industry it was. Can you talk a little bit about how hemp is used and how it is redefining the way that people look at products? Because it is so sustainable. The stuff grows literally like a weed, no pun intended, and you can use it for so many different purposes.

Steve: Well, it's having a renaissance because it was prohibited along with the prohibition of marijuana, for I don't know, since the '30s. So how many years are we talking, 80 years? Somewhere around there. Some of the reasons why industrial hemp were banned are questionable. However, again, it kind of got thrown under the bus along with marijuana when marijuana was made illegal in the early 1930s. Before that there were no laws about marijuana at all. It was not illegal. There were just no laws. Then it was prohibited, and hemp was too. Hemp is the non-psychoactive cousin of marijuana. It's not rich in THC which is the psychoactive ingredient in pot, hemp is rich in what's called CBD or cannabidiol, or cannabinoid compounds. more than THC these actually have been used for thousands of years by humans, and now research is showing that they might be helpful in helping with neurological conditions, everything from autism and epilepsy to helping as an adaptogen. So it's increasingly finding a market



in the dietary supplement section, in natural food stores as the veil of prohibition ends.

Now actually it can come out and experience a renaissance of research, of varietal selection. I mean, there's been no research on crops, no research in science and health. Our Constitution was printed on hemp paper. Canvas, what they used to make sails for the big ships that sailed around the world is derived from the word cannabis. Hemp has been in our history for as long as we have been around. So to now have it legalized for all these industrial non-psychoactive uses from plastic to building materials to sustainable insulation and building your home to animal feed to hemp seed for high protein, high omega fatty acid rich foods to now CBD and cannabinoid dietary supplements, there have been recorded some 25,000 odd uses for hemp and I just encourage people to go google hemp history week, the hemp industries association, hemp uses. Well, I don't have to tell you where to go, just google that. You'll find all kinds of fun stuff. Then check out NoCo, N-O-C-O for Northern Colorado, NoCohempexpo.com.

Dan: Thank you for sharing that. I'll have to put links of that on the website and in the show notes. To your point, a lot of companies are coming out with this, and I'm learning a lot about it. It is something that has a mysterious cloud over it, no pun intended. The point being is that a lot of people don't understand it, people are afraid of it. But yet you see people that are gaining true benefit from it. I think some people ... Coming back to what you're talking about the labeling, some people are kind of over



promising, I worry about that piece of it. But I do hear stories about how it does help people with epilepsy and it does help people with pain management and inflammation, helps them sleep better and a lot of other really important things. So how does this group that you're working with communicate that beyond just doing research on the website?

Steve: Well, very carefully because, A, the regulatory waters are murky. However, as more and more states legalize recreational and medicinal cannabis and now that Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell and Rand Paul have introduced a bill legalizing industrial hemp, you're not going to put this genie back in the bottle. So the industrial hemp market is growing. Now, where you are as a company and how you want to present it, I would still say be very very careful. Then let me tell you, this is not new in the natural products industry or in the health food industry. You're always going to have high quality product makers, and you're going to have questionable quality product makers. You're going to have product makers that may end up making inappropriate claims, and you know what, there are laws out there to regulate that, and that should be enforced. I'm totally in support of that.

However, for the quality dietary supplement makers, I think there's a lot of demand. For the natural products industry as well, this is a welcomed category because the industry has always welcomed new exciting innovative products. It's what's in large part helped drive it. This is no different from innovation like



when echinacea hit. Now immune enhancing mushrooms are hot, right? It's an emerging hot category, and it has huge potential, that's what I think people are really looking at. Plus, it's got the sex appeal that it's coming out of prohibition along with marijuana. So it's kind of fun to talk about, but actually hemp is amazing and can really be helpful for us in so many ways.

Dan: I was going to liken it to bamboo. Bamboo being a sustainable product that is so abundant that can grow really quick and we could use that instead of tearing down trees that take dozens of years to grow. So thank you for sharing that.

Steve: Yeah, there's even a conspiracy theory that those who owned the tree forests for paper actually were lobbying to make hemp illegal so that they could control the paper market, they didn't want competition from hemp. Now I'm going to enforce that that's alleged, but again, those googlers that want to look back on history, all this was happening right around the same time as for example the Hearst Newspaper Empire was getting started, and for example he was buying up forests actually to provide paper for his newspapers. So just connect the dots yourselves.

Dan: Sadly, nowadays most of the publications are going by the wayside, which is I think tragic, but I've got to admit that I'd rather read it digitally and not have to worry about recycling a tree or a plant or something like that.

Steve: Well, I'm glad I lived in the day when the newspaper was delivered on paper because back in the old days when they'd



have to carve it in the stone and throw it, it would break. It's not the medium, it's the message.

Dan: True.

Steve: Remember. So we've been carving it on stones, we've been putting it on papyrus, we've been putting it in paper, now we're putting it on tablets and digital media, that's just human progress. But like I say I welcome the digital media too, it creates its own environmental issues, and it solves some, but this is now how we're reading stuff. The same thing I could say, recorded music from that thing that Edison had to the record to the cassette to the CD, now everything's like totally digital. So it's the message, it's not the medium. I think the medium, the way the medium is evolving technologically, it democratizes the sharing of information. Now, the downside of that is, again, caveat emptor, you have to discern your sources of information in this day of ... I do actually believe there's a lot of fake news out there. I don't believe that you call something fake news just because you don't like how they're covering you as a leader of the free world, for example. But I do believe that as information gets democratized, the reader does need to be discerning as to the source.

Dan: Well, and that's a good point. I'm glad you shared. I wrote an article that was in Whole Foods magazine where I talked about the 2016 election and natural, what do they have in common, the point being apathy. I'm glad to see that so many consumers are getting involved and becoming aware of things. So let me go back to that now, what is going on with the non-GMO movement in



terms of getting it on the ballot and making a stand on that? One of the questions that I wanted to add to that is I don't think a lot of people understand non-GMOs, there are no GMOs in Europe. How do we communicate that more effectively in this country?

Steve: I'm not going to say there are no GMOs in Europe. GMOs find their way into animal feed in Europe. They find their way in the products in Europe, but there are labeling laws in Europe. Products that contain GMO ingredients do need to disclose that on the label, and they do. In the US the same companies have fought it tooth and nail and have spent hundreds of millions of dollars to defeat ballot initiatives throughout the United States. They even were able to overturn an established law in Vermont by having USDA override it and now saying that they're going to come out with a national GMO labeling law. Well, that was a couple years ago. So now the USDA, and why your question is timely, is just this week the USDA finally unveiled what it calls its proposed national GMO labeling law. Where now most consumers understand the non-GMO label and they know what GMOs are or at least they know the phrase, they may not necessarily know all about it, it's confusing and it's complicated, but they may not understand about GMOs.

So now what the USDA has come out with is a very friendly little smiling sun that says, BE, B-E, and it's yellow and it's smiling. Now, B-E stands for a term nobody's really heard before that they want to use instead of GMO, and the term is bio-engineered. So what they want food companies to disclose is this little sunny B-E



symbol, just like the buzzing bees that are being threatened by the pesticides, so they've kind of co-opted this friendly sunny B-E to convey that this product has genetically modified organisms inside it, what they now want us to call bio-engineered ingredients. Because, actually, it's brilliant as far as a marketer goes, it's much more friendly. And no one knows what the heck it means.

Dan: I was going to say it sounds like it's going to be very confusing. I did get the note from Laura Batcha about this at the OTA. I think it's going to have a heck of a rollout. It's going to be a tough thing I think for people to really understand and adopt. So how would brands leverage that on their label and their packaging and their communication?

Steve: You got me. I mean, this is totally being forced down our throats, literally and figuratively. So the industrial chemical dependent food agribusiness, confined animals with no concern for welfare industry that runs our food business has been lobbying government and USDA to turn this around and make lemonade out of lemons. So okay, they were facing national GMO labeling. So they completely turned it into something that's actually ... I don't know how to describe it. So those that put this on the label, it's again, to me it's an opt-out. It's a way to say, well, we've got GMOs inside but it's up to you to understand what this B-E thing even means, B-E with a smiling sun. Bio-engineered. So that I think is something that is going to confuse consumers more, but this is the industrial food industry and USDA proposing this



twisted kind of national GMO labeling on to the American public. I am not in favor of it, so I don't know what to tell you. I think label needs to be clear. This is actually I think purposefully further obfuscating.

Dan: That works for me. I was going to say, it sounds like something you'd see on the periodic table of elements, remember back to your science days? Confusing as heck. It goes back to where we started this conversation, talking about organic and talking about helping consumers understand what's in the products and the food that they're eating and why it matters, and then talking about regenerative agriculture and all the things that go with it. One of the last times I talked to you, we were at a Naturally Boulder event where the Climate Collaborative was talking. Are you involved in that or have you done much with that group?

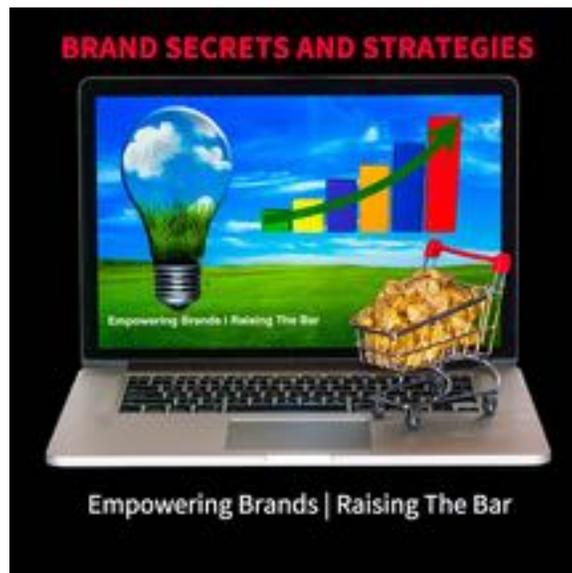
Steve: Compass Natural is a media partner with Climate Collaborative. We help them with their messaging, so we're a very proud partner of the Climate Collaborative. Also I worked for two years with Regeneration International, and you mentioned earlier, I served a stint as the director of the Organic Center. That's at organiccenter.org and there's some great research to help educate consumers about the benefits of organic food and agriculture at the Organic Center. It's now a part of the Organic Trade Association but still it's a great resource, the Organic Center.

Regeneration International and regenerative agriculture. So Regeneration International is basically found based on the original



writings of J.I. Rodale and the Rodale Institute very influential in the birth and growth of the organic food and agriculture movement. Really what Rodale was referring to was not just organic but regenerative that actually rebuilds and renews the land and the soil, helps build the soil, doesn't just let carbon and nutrients go out into our atmosphere which is what's happening. Agriculture is contributing a third to a half of all global greenhouse gases just from conventional agriculture. Organic and regenerative agriculture actually, its mission is to rebuild the soil, actually, to sequester carbon back in the soil, keeping it from releasing into the atmosphere. So today's system of industrial atmosphere not only is doing all these things regarding pesticide contamination and pollution of our waterways with chemicals used in food production, also the intensive confinement conditions of industrial raised animals for food.

You know what regenerative agriculture is about is actually again, it's a way of using agriculture to be a solution to feeding the world and climate change versus being a cause. Conventional agriculture is one of the prime culprits of global warming. People think of emissions and all that, and let me tell you there's a lot of emissions, and then carbon out when fields are bare, into the atmosphere. So carbon dioxide goes out and is heating our planet. So the solution is literally right under our feet, and it's rebuilding our soils to contain more carbon and more life. Organic agriculture does that beautifully. Conventional agriculture, regrettably, is kind of a primary emitter of global greenhouse gases through its use of petroleum products and also the way



that it toils the soil. This is a new movement as people recognize that the way that we're producing food is actually contributing to the warming of our planet, and we have to do something. So it's small but it's growing and you'll hear this regenerative term more, Dan, you're using it.

Dan: Yeah. Well, and I was actually sharing a lot of insights from people like Katherine DiMatteo and Ahmed Ramin who have recently been on my show.

Dan: Yeah, he's amazing, and Lara Dickinson, Gary Hirshberg, Neil Blomquist. So many great people that are really focused on this. This is our future. Where I wanted to go with this and this is why I wanted to talk to you is the strategies that brands can use to communicate this. Customers want to feel good about what they're buying. Customers can easily make a purchase, a simple thing to do, that can support some of these brands that are that are involved in this, whether it be Annies or Numi or Good Spread or any of these companies. So can we go back to Compass Marketing? How do you help companies and steer them toward that story that they need to share with their customers?

Steve: The companies that I like are companies that are involved in the community, and they share with you in a non-arrogant way that helps engage you to be more loyal to the brand and also what can I do, are those that are telling me what they're doing for the environment, for fair trade and for climate change. I think climate change is going to become increasingly important. There is a regenerative organic certification that's out there that companies



like Dr. Bronner's and Patagonia and Rodale Institute are behind. It's a seal kind of on top of the USDA Organic seal that says, "Hey, we're soil grown. We meet these regenerative standards." Again, I think, for those core consumers maybe like me, I am looking for that. What I actually think is an emerging label is the biodynamic label. To me biodynamic is kind of taking organic beyond into a regenerative approach. Biodynamic agriculture is a very cool system of sustainable regenerative agriculture. I'm seeing more biodynamic products on the shelf.

So I think that's a really good sign because it's taken years and years and years for consumers to start recognizing ... I know organic people don't like me to say this but it's kind of like organic plus. Regenerative is also organic plus plus. The main thing, I think, is choose organic, number one. There are better organic systems than others. For me what regenerative agriculture is about is what my friend Kyle Garner, the CEO of Organic India is doing, they work with a lot of Indian producers. So the Indian producers are small-scale, right, but he's supporting them, conversion to organic. What they're seeking is not scale where it has to be the biggest single farm ever. What they're looking for is replicability so that they can work with hundreds of small-scale producers and achieve the same goal. To me it's like Maple Hill Creamery. I don't work with them, but I really admire their company. It's this 100% grass-fed yogurt.

Dan: Great company!

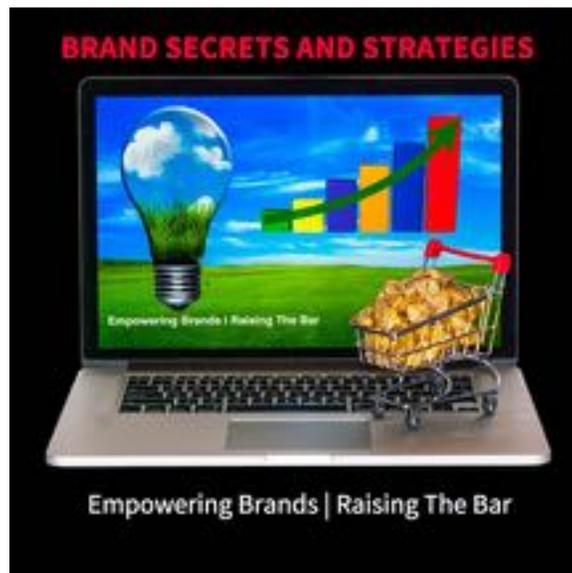


Steve: I love the product. What those guys have done is rather than have one dairy farm with 8,000 head of cows that now is kind of an environmental situation, they work with a hundred different growers that each have 80 to 100 cows, and it's kind of back to the old way where they're collecting all the milk, consolidating it, getting it out to distribution, and what they've got going is replicability, not scale to achieve that and to help support smaller scale family farmers and dairy farmers who are really suffering right now. As a matter of fact, the rate of suicide among farmers in the United States is the highest rate among all groups.

Dan: Ouch.

Steve: Yeah, I just heard that on NPR yesterday. So farmers are having a hard time out there. I would hope that we would make it easier for farmers. Again, I'm not really in favor of government subsidies where my tax dollars are supporting this industrial scale of chemical dependent, intensive animal confinement agriculture. I want my tax dollars to support organic regenerative agriculture that actually empowers people, communities and farmers, again. So there you go. Not that I'm soapboxing or anything.

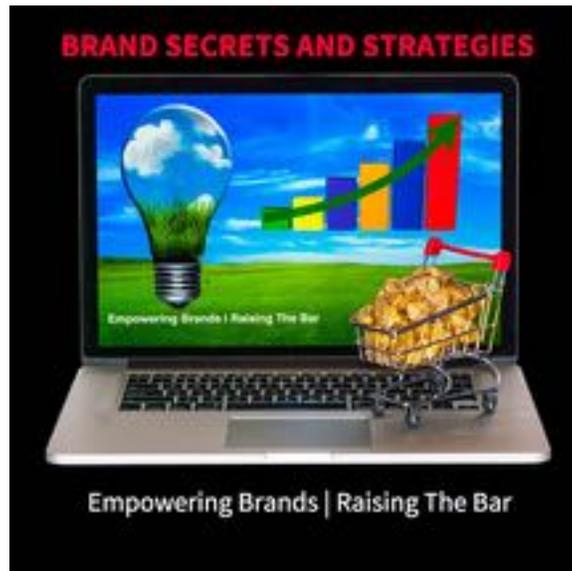
Dan: No, no, actually Kyle Garner is going to be on the podcast in a couple weeks, and I interviewed Tim Joseph a couple of months ago with Maple Hill Creamery and what a great story to share. He talks about how his animals are healthier, they live longer, they don't need the antibiotics, and he's basically disproven all the traditional claims that a lot of people make about why you need to do things conventionally which I absolutely love. Again, that's



why this show exists. To talk about and to celebrate people like that, people like you that are making a difference in the industry, people that are communicating a story that brands and consumers can get their arms around. Thank you for sharing that. How would you recommend a brand leverage their story to help communicate to the consumer what they offer, why their product's different, unique? Then more importantly, how does a brand help a retailer understand what's unique about that brand through their story?

Steve: Retail is shifting. So everybody's trying to figure that out. It used to be in the old days that you didn't want to sell on Amazon for fear of not doing well with Whole Foods. Today you might actually take the approach of really doing well on Amazon, and then they might approach you and say we want you in Whole Foods. So that's shifted 180 degrees. Yet I think there are still lots of opportunities for the independents and the chains. The supermarkets, the mainstream supermarkets today have the majority market share of natural and organic food sales which has shifted since my time in tracking the industry with New Hope and the Natural Foods Merchandiser when independent natural and organic food retailers still commanded the majority of sales of natural and organic products. Today that's not the case. The good news for the retailer is you can now find these products everywhere. So I think that's tremendous news.

Now, to make use of public relations because there's actually a lot of media out there now. While the traditional media may be



struggling to figure it out as well, there's a whole lot of bloggers and now this new term called influencers, which are basically spreading the word either through their blogs or social media or speaking or elsewhere. So they're media now. So YouTubers, bloggers, social media mavens are now part of the media mix. So I actually think public relations becomes more important than ever. Then it's not like you bounce your basketball once to get down the court and back, you have to keep bouncing the ball. You have to keep the conversation going in all these media outlets. I mean, now it's created a full-time position for a social media manager to be working Facebook and Instagram and Pinterest and all of it. You still have to reach out to traditional, in print, in person, online.

I think the brands need to continue to tell that authentic story. For me, your mission is your story, is your point of distinction, as well as your product has to be innovative and taste really good or really work and have some point of distinction. For me, organic is a really good point of distinction, non GMO is a point of distinction, gluten-free is a point of distinction, vegan is a point of distinction. So all these things, who are you, really target it, and then share your story, why you're committed, why this is personal, and you reach your influencers. You've got to balance all these balls in the air.

Then I think, working with retailers, it could be, if you're doing line drives and promotions in certain regions of the country. Maybe boost your social media advertising in those regions to



drive customers to the stores, and still work with retailers in traditional ways. Can I do demos in your stores? How can I help advertise in your flyers? I mean, it's not like all the old-school ways go away. There are some that are still creative, maybe even work even better because nobody's using them anymore on top of the new layers of how do I reach my constituents, my stakeholders, how do I help my partners sell this product.

Dan: Appreciate you saying that Steve. I love the basketball reference. It makes so much sense, and it draws such a nice picture in everyone's mind. What I do is I help brands with advanced strategies that help them get more runway, so they can do more with their dollar, so they can get more incremental space, so they can get on more retailer shelves and into the hands of more shoppers. Steve, I really appreciate you and thank you so much for carving out this time for us and sharing your insights and your thoughts and your passion for this industry. I appreciate that.

Steve: Well, Dan, thank you for inviting me again. Keep up your great work!

Dan: Thanks.

Steve: I hope your reach keeps building as well. Let me know and we'll help share this podcast with our constituents as well.

Dan: Thank you.

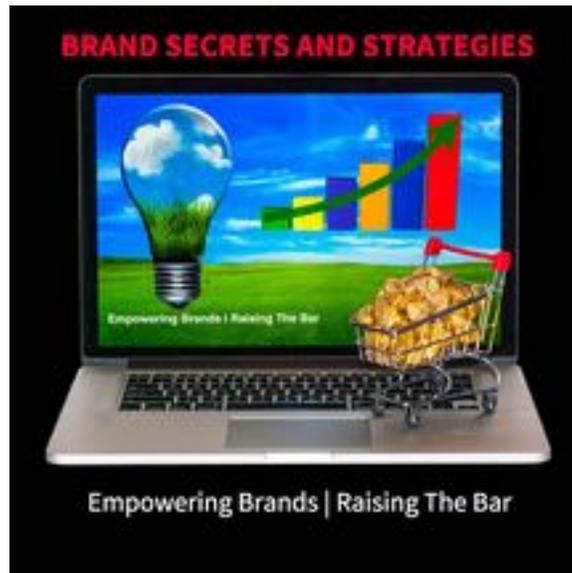
Steve: Of course.



Dan: Yeah, actually I've doubled over the last month. When I hung my shingle out several years as Category Management Solutions, people didn't know what I did or how I helped brands. When I rebranded as Brand Secrets and Strategies, that made a fundamental shift. This podcast is taking on a life of its own, and I've got people that are looking forward to coming on and sharing their stories. I mean, if you look at the list of guests I've had, Gary Hirshberg, John Foraker, Seth Goldman, Sheryl O'Loughlin, a lot of the big thought leaders in the industry and a lot of brands too. It's people like you that are helping this community because as I always say this is what makes natural natural - people like us within this community that are working together to help each other thrive and flourish because at the end of the day, that's what's helping brands succeed. So again, thank you for all you do in the industry, and thank you for your time, and thank you for your story.

Steve: Thank you very much, Dan, again.

Dan: I want to thank Steve for coming on the podcast today and for sharing his insights and his time. I'll put links to all the resources Steve mentioned as well as the link to Compass Marketing in the podcast web page and in the show notes. You can download them at [BrandSecretsandStrategies.com/session57](https://www.brandsecretsandstrategies.com/session57). Today's freebie is my effective merchandising strategies that grow sales and delight shoppers. This ties in nicely to what Steve was talking about. How do you communicate beyond the four quarters of the package? More importantly, where your product is on a retailer shelf is how



you communicate? What differentiates your products from the competition? You can get that on the show notes and on the podcast web page. As always, thank you for listening, and I look forward to seeing you in the next episode.

Compass Natural Marketing <http://www.compassnaturalmarketing.com>

Thanks again for joining us today. Make sure to stop over at 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 website or at TurnkeySalesStoryStrategies.com/growsales. Please subscribe to the podcast, leave a review, and recommend it to your friends and colleagues.

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.