



BRAND SECRETS AND STRATEGIES PODCAST #67

Hello and thank you for joining us today. This is the Brand Secrets and Strategies Podcast #67

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. Thank you for listening. I really appreciate you. This podcast is about you and it's for you. I'm working hard to provide actionable insights and strategic solutions to get your brand on more retailer shelves and in the hands of more shoppers with simple, easy to use and adopt strategies to give you an equal seat at the table with the big brands, in addition to interviews with leading industry thought leaders. If you like the podcast, please share with a friend, subscribe, and leave a review on iTunes.



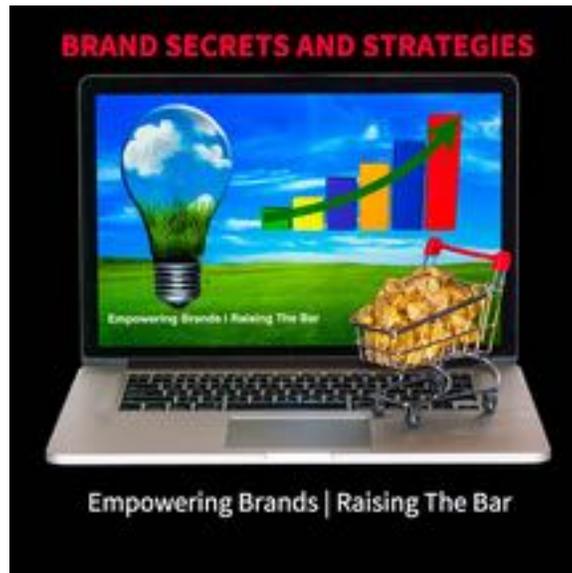
Today's podcast is about an innovative new platform to help emerging brands grow and succeed across all channels. Julie, thank you so much for joining me today. Could you start by telling us a little bit about yourself and your journey to FMI?

Julie: Sure, and Daniel, thanks for having me. I really appreciate this opportunity. I have always been passionate about the food industry. I started years ago on the agency side and my first client was McDonald's and what I really developed working on that piece of retail business was appreciating both the operational side of the house and how it impacted branding and marketing. That really opened my eyes to the world of retail.

Then really over the years, after working on several quick service restaurant and casual dining brands, I shifted into the grocery industry doing marketing and branding for a few big retailers such as Ahold and Whole Foods Market and Earth Fare, and just really passionate about both uncovering new products, and supporting retailers as they continue to differentiate.

I've been a passionate consumer for a long time and a passionate marketer, and I think all of those things brought me to where I am today.

Dan: Appreciate it. Could you tell us a little bit about FMI? Who is FMI? Why do they matter to the listeners on this podcast? How are you connected to the industry as a whole?



Julie: Sure. That's a great question. FMI is a trade association that has a rich history of advocating on behalf of the food retail industry. FMI member companies operate about 30,000 retail food stores and 12,000 pharmacies. We have a lot of great and varied member partners. One of the things FMI is really known for is that it champions and nurtures its members. These members might be food retailers, manufacturers, wholesalers, suppliers, distributors, and associate member companies who provide products and services to the food retail industry.

Dan: Perfect. I appreciate your sharing that. Let me add a little more context, because it's relevant to this audience. FMI was instrumental in helping craft what is now category management. In other words, they helped give birth to this new discipline, this new strategic discipline. Category management is the lifeblood of a lot of the big brands out there, and what I mean by that is when we used to go to market years ago it was all about getting volume. It was about penny profits, it was about trying to drive as much volume to shelf, to retail as possible without thinking about what did it cost.

Ironically, this is similar to the way things are done in natural today. Then a little retailer popped up called Walmart, and it forced brands and retailers to rethink things and to be more strategic. Like them or not, Walmart is phenomenal at putting a product on the shelf cheaper, more effectively, more efficiently, than any other brand out there.



It was a wake up call to the industry, and as a result The Partnering Group and FMI got together with a couple leading manufacturers, Unilever and Procter & Gamble. I worked for Unilever at the time, and we became instrumental in forming this new discipline called category management, which was designed initially to remove the waste out of the supply chain to grow profitable sales by category, and to focus instead more on penny profit per margin and stuff like that, on contribution back to the brand and back to the retailer. My appreciation for FMI comes from the fact that, like you said, solving complex problems. They were instrumental in doing that.

Do you have any stories or any anecdotes around that, and has that helped form what you're now calling Emerge?

Julie: Well I think just given the history of FMI over the years through many conversations with retailer and member partners, and especially over the past recent years, the conversation's really been around how can we collaboratively work together to support emerging brands and how can we partner with retailers to develop best practices and strategies for working with those emerging brands so they can develop healthy trading partner relationships. As they grow their distribution, they're also preparing themselves to be successful with the relationship piece of the business. That was really part of the impetus for the program.

Dan: Appreciate that, thanks. Of course, as we all know, this podcast is about you, for you, meaning everyone listening, this podcast is



built around those core principles. It's about helping brands get their products on more retail shelves and in the hands of more shoppers. It's about teaching those best practices.

I was really impressed when you called me and reached out to me and shared with me a little bit about what you're doing. Can you talk a little bit about Emerge, because I think there's so much need for this in the industry.

Julie: In the same way that FMI has been nurturing and supporting its members, we made a decision earlier this year to also enrich emerging brands. This was a natural progression for FMI to develop a new program called FMI Emerge. That's really why I'm here today, is to share a little bit about both FMI and this new platform called FMI Emerge.

Dan: Sounds exciting. Can you tell us a little bit about FMI Emerge? What is it? How does it integrate? Who's your target audience? Then how can your target audience take maximum advantage of this program?

Julie: Because FMI is known for solving complex industry issues, we really embraced an opportunity to create FMI Emerge. Its purpose is to support the grocery retail industry by nurturing emerging brands and helping them and retailers develop healthier trading partner relationships.

Having said that, FMI Emerge is a subscription-based online community that helps small food and beverage brands to grow



sustainably in expanding their distribution, operations, financing, and sales. The cost of the subscription is \$999 for a one-year subscription, and \$1495 for a two-year subscription.

One of the main goals of the program is really to bring emerging brands and the grocery retail industry together. As you know, one of the big trends that we've seen is consumers are really demanding high quality product, ingredient integrity. They're demanding differentiation at shelf. We really want to partner with these emerging brands and with retailers to help meet consumer demand, and we want to help these emerging brands reach that next level of distribution faster, saving them time and money, and more easily than they would on their own.

We just launched our new online subscription community about eight weeks ago, and in order to see what it has to offer you can visit [MoreShelfSpace.org](https://www.moreshefespace.org). That's the domain name for the community. We're providing all sorts of assets to help nurture these brands including education, a mentor community, an investor community, and enabling supportive outreach. We've got all sorts of resources on [MoreShelfSpace.org](https://www.moreshefespace.org) for these emerging brands.

Given FMI's history within the space for solving complex issues, FMI has access to resources, to educational content, to member insights and data. FMI has really strong relationships within the industry, to really aggregating all of those things into one online community portal makes for a one-stop area for brands to get all the material they need to elevate their business.



Dan: Julie, can you tell me more about what you get through the subscription? What does it mean to be involved in this community and what is a mentor and what other resources do you have specifically?

Julie: There's a couple of things. We've developed a grab-n-go, MBA style educational content across a number of different topics that we know emerging brands care about. Whether it's information on how to find the right retail buyer, how to find the right retail broker, when the right time is to finance and the type of financing a brand might need, how to best partner with a distributor, or even how best to prepare a presentation for a retail buyer or for a meeting with a broker. We have all sorts of really specific tips and lessons that we have heard from emerging brands that are really important to them as they scale. The educational piece is one of the components.

The other area where we can provide tailored support to brands is through our mentor community. We have spoken with dozens of mentors across the industry who come from consultative backgrounds, who come from successful brands, who come from the eCommerce space, who specialize in sales management or distribution, and we have created a comprehensive mentor network of people who are ready and passionate and wanting to help emerging brands succeed. Access to this mentor network is an immediate benefit of subscribing to FMI Emerge. An emerging brand can contact as many mentors as they would like, and set up free consultations with each of the mentors and ask them



really specific, laser-focused questions based on their business needs. That is just a really, really important benefit that we have created as part of the platform.

The other things that are in development are an educational content calendar, so each month we'll have webinars and podcasts and conference calls for emerging brands to dial into on certain topics and learn more, and each of them will have actionable next steps for brands to take in whatever areas that they feel like they need support in.

Then lastly, we are in the process of pulling together an investor community. When a brand is ready to be discovered by an investor, they can quote unquote raise their hand within the community and be seen by investors. We see this as a real opportunity to support emerging brands as they grow. We're definitely tailoring these offerings for brands who have some sort of initial success with their business, and they have some processes in place that are working for them and now they're really looking to up level their business across some different key areas that they've identified as opportunities.

Dan: Perfect. Let me reiterate that. Anyone thinking about building a brand, it's important that you learn how to do this stuff right from day one, before you even launch. As you know, I work with a lot of brands of all different stages of development, and these are things that people continually ask me is, "How do I get resources like this? How do I get access to these kind of communities?" Thanks for setting this up.



Can you tell me Julie, who is your ideal FMI Emerge subscriber? What do they look like?

Julie: Sure. Our ideal subscribers are small food and beverage brands who have already launched a product or a product line and have some sort of retail distribution. For example, they might be selling via eCommerce and they want to grow their eCommerce business. They may already be selling at an independent grocer or a regional retailer, and really looking at taking their distribution to the next level, whether that means increasing the number of independent grocers, adding in some regional retailers, or even starting to look nationally. These brands are really in need of a commerce boost, and the reason for this is they want to either grow revenue, increase their sales velocity, and secure more shelf space.

One of the things I did want to mention is that we're not necessarily looking for pre-revenue or startup companies. The emerging brands whom FMI feels it can best support are those doing anywhere north of about half a million dollars in annual sales and they're really looking at building their business and reaching that next level of distribution.

Dan: Fantastic. Well it sounds like an amazing program. Is there anything else that we've missed? Anything else that you want to share about the program?

Julie: One of the opportunities that I'm really excited about, because FMI is meant to be a nurturing environment with both regional,



nationwide retailers, the industry's leading expert mentors, education, outreach, et cetera, it was really important for us to have some different ways for industry experts to engage.

There's two main ways that someone can engage with the platform. One is as a strategic partner. As an industry expert, retailer, or manufacturer, if you'd like to provide guidance on the overall program content and help us to solve mutually business challenges that emerging brands and retailers are facing, we'd love to talk to you about joining one of our strategic partner groups.

The other way to engage is as a mentor. We offer a mentor/mentee relationship, and this allows industry experts to partner directly with emerging brands. Speak with them one-on-one and support them with whatever the specific resources are that they need. This mentor opportunity also allows a potential mentor and emerging brand to enter into a business partnership if they so desire. It's a really nice way for brands to connect with experts directly, and then get that one-on-one support that they need.

Daniel, you have graciously become a mentor within the community. We're so excited to have you on board.

Dan: Thank you Julie. Again, I'm honored to be a part of this program that you've put together. What else have we missed? What other points should we be covering here?



Julie: All of these opportunities can be found on our website at MoreShelfSpace.org. If you have any questions, certainly brands, mentors, anyone within the industry can reach out to me directly, and I've love to talk more about the program.

Dan: Appreciate you saying that. Is there anything else that we've missed today?

Julie: You know, I was just reflecting on, I was at Fancy Foods this past weekend and had the opportunity to speak with so many small food and beverage manufacturers. What was interesting for me is that every one of them really shared and expressed with me the same sorts of challenges that they were having. As I mentioned before, challenges around finding the right co-packer. How best to prepare for a successful retail buyer presentation. How to select a distributor. When the right time to finance was. In having all of these conversations, it really validated the challenges that these brands are facing, and these are exactly the types of challenges that we want to help emerging brands solve for through the FMI Emerge program.

I feel confident that through our educational content, through the mentor and investor communities, that we can help brands scale faster and really save them frustration, time and money. I'm excited to partner with these brands and help them get to that next level of distribution faster than they could on their own.

Dan: One of the things I love about this program Julie is that you're taking the expertise from FMI, from FMI's long, rich history in this



industry, and then you're applying that to young brands. More importantly, and this is the part I love the best, is that you're also learning how to give these brands what they want, working on their level, which is so unique because a lot of the big brands, a lot of the incubators out there, tend to try to commoditize. You and I have talked about that. They try to get the small brands to be a representation of themselves or try to get small brands to do things the way big brands do. Life's changing. The world's changing. The way consumers buy products is changing. The fact that you guys are getting down on their level and working with them where they are, I think that's amazing.

Well I appreciate your sharing that. I'll be sure to put a link to the website in the show notes and on this podcast webpage, and I really appreciate your time. Thanks for making time for us today, and thanks for sharing information with us about this exciting new platform that you guys have developed.

Julie: Thanks Daniel. I appreciate it, and thanks for having me. It was lovely to be here.

Dan: Thanks always for listening. As I keep saying, this show is about you and it's for you. I want to thank Julie for her time, and for sharing with us her insights about this innovative new platform to help young emerging brands. I also want to thank her personally for inviting me to be a mentor and including me on the Champion Council. You can get a link to FMI Emerge on this podcast webpage and in the show notes. You can download the show notes at [BrandSecretsandStrategies/session67](https://www.brandsecretsandstrategies.com/session67).



Don't forget to check out some of my many resources, my free course, and other episodes of this podcast where you're going to learn more brand building strategies from myself as well as a lot of the leading industry thought leaders.

If you like the podcast, please subscribe. Share it with a friend, and leave a review on iTunes. I look forward to seeing you in the next show.

FMI Emerge (Food Marketing Institute) <https://www.moreshelfspace.org>

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.

BRAND SECRETS AND STRATEGIES



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