



## **BRAND SECRETS AND STRATEGIES PODCAST #98**

Hello and thank you for joining us today. This is the Brand Secrets and Strategies Podcast #98

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's story is about an industry thought leader that went way above and beyond to do more and to be more, and in the process, managed to build two iconic brands. On this podcast, we spend a lot of time celebrating those thought leaders that are able to do more to build a brand around a mission, that educates and inspires consumers to change the way that they do business, to change the way that they buy products, to change the way that they make decision.



One of the leading trends across all consumer package goods is mission. Customers want to feel good about the products that they buy. They want and go out of their way to find products that align with what's important to them, to find products that let them feel good about the decisions and the choices that they're making. Not everyone can stop what they're doing and work in a soup line or help out in a third world country.

Mission based companies are unique in that they give consumers an opportunity to make a difference just by simply purchasing the products that they know and like and trust. One of the things that makes natural natural are brands that are willing and eager to give back to make a difference, to develop a mission or build a mission around their brand. It's rare however, when we find a thought leader that's willing to go beyond that and give their all, everything, even putting themselves on the line, including their personal freedom. Today's guest was instrumental in championing important causes, including the health and welfare of our planet. Champion the causes that impact all of us, from climate change to animal rights, to human rights and so on.

Today's guests put his personal freedom on the line for all of us, and I want to thank Jeffrey for doing that. Today's guest is Jeffrey Hollender, of Sustain Natural and Seventh Generation. Here's Jeffrey. Jeffrey, Thank you for coming on today. Could you start by telling us a little bit about yourself and how you got so interested and so involved in causes that are bigger than you. That's one thing that's really impressed me about you that I want



to talk about, but how did you go from being an activist for better and then develop a couple of really impressive big brands, Seventh Generation being one of them?

Jeffrey: Yeah. I think the big influence for me was growing up in the 60s and experiencing the impact of the Vietnam War and the huge wave of reaction to people who were just absolutely passionate about taking some action and doing whatever they could to end the war and growing up with that type of experience made me feel really for the rest of my life, that I had a responsibility to take action that doing good for the world, doing what I can to improve the lives of others and to protect the planet, was sort of baked into my DNA. As I grew older, that became a more and more important part of my life, both in the businesses that I started as well as the activities that I have pursued outside of business.

Dan: Interesting. One of the things I talk about while on the podcast is how mission based brands are very attractive, especially to younger consumers. What was it like in terms of balancing the mission based and having a brand that you're trying to drive profits with? Profits that are at least enough to survive and grow.

Jeffrey: Yeah, I think the biggest challenge or at least one of the biggest challenges you face is to continue to focus on the short term. Building a terrific brand takes time. The relationships that you're striving to develop and achieve with your consumers, don't happen overnight. There's pressure in the financial market because we've been a public company as well as a private



company at Seventh Generation. I have started and run five different businesses since I dropped out of college when I was 19.

That financial pressure and that short term orientation is really a challenge. Secondly, there are compromises you have to make. You are really heading in a dangerous direction. If what you say is all you care about is improving the profitability of your company over the short term. Sure we have to make money and sure we have to generate great financial results over the long term but that's not always the right lens to use when you think about the decisions you have to make and sometimes the compromises you have to make.

Dan: Well said. In fact, that's one of the things that we're talking a little bit. You called when I was actually getting off a plane. Again, thank you for your patience sir. But one of the things that I focus on this podcast about is that paying more attention to your actual consumers, is the focus; and in a minute you asked me about a book and I want to talk about that. How would you suggest brands focus or stay laser focused on their core mission, on their core customer and be able to tune out some of the noise from Wall Street and from investors?

Jeffrey: Yeah. First of all, when it comes to mission or values or purpose driven brands, they really have to understand the meaning and implications of that in a holistic way, and how to build those values into your corporate culture, so they affect not just who you might give money to but affect the way you treat your employees, affect the way your sales team behaves, affect the



way your accounting team behaves. You have to build those values into the business everywhere, all the time. People have to understand how they as individuals, can support that vision and how they can behave in a way that's aligned with that vision. You have to be willing to let people move on if that's not really what they want to do, and sometimes it's not for everybody. That's really a critical part in.

I think in some ways, the most enjoyable part of the 20 years I spent leading Seventh Generation was that process of creating a culture that really supported our values and creating a culture that continued to express those values in unique and innovative ways. I'll tell you just a brief story about that. In the early days of Seventh Generation, we were starting our business, mostly focused on the natural product industry and had been fortunate to have a tremendous amount of support from the industry. But at one point we wanted to see if we could expand into some traditional grocery stores.

The first grocery store we ever got into was a chain in Southern California called Albertsons. Unfortunately, really within weeks after getting onto the shelf of the Albertsons stores, there was a labor strike and there was a conflict between the management and the staff over healthcare benefits, and the management was trying to reduce their expenses and remove some of the benefits that had been in place. Interestingly enough, our team and our culture said, "Gee, should we do business with a company who's trying to deprive their employees of healthcare benefits when we



as a company believe so strongly that the company should provide free healthcare for everyone?"

There was a raging debate inside the company because some people said we should take our products off the shelf, which might seem like an extreme thing to do but they were very passionate about making sure that we were doing business with values aligned partners and other people said, "No, that's a crazy idea, because we would deprive the consumers of access to our products and really penalize them because the retailer might not be behaving in a way that we approve of." The first thing I love is the fact that we had the discussion and we had the debate and people were passionate about their positions.

The debate went on for several weeks and I was really torn between the two potential pass and one of staff member, who's a lot brighter than I am said, "I have an alternative solution, which is why don't we take all of the profits that we would make from selling to Albertsons and contribute them to the workers strike fund, so that we can help perpetuate the strike and make it more likely that the labor at Albertsons would win out and resist the reduction of their healthcare benefits, and that way we would honor our values and also be able to serve our customers."

The fact that we had those kind of conversations and that we were constantly examining in all parts of our business, how to express our values, was I think what would made in part, Seventh Generation such a unique and wonderful company. It certainly made it a place that was really exciting and stimulating



for our team. Stories like that really helped our consumers understand that we really were a very different kind of company, and we took our values seriously and that we behaved according to what we believed.

Dan: Love that. That's so important. Again, that's why we're having this conversation, is to help brands understand why this matters and give brands the ... if you excuse the expression, the courage to be able to hold true to their values. As a side note, at that time, I actually worked for Unilever, so I was on the other side of the fence. What's interesting about it is I really learned the category well. I know the players exceedingly well too, but one of my passions has always been natural, organic, healthier, better for you products. That was something that was really missing in our portfolio at that time. Certainly at that time.

One of the things that I remember when you guys came onto the shelf and I was a category captain, different categories, et cetera, is I always made a point in making sure you guys had your first space on the shelf. Because I think that the public needed that. I think we needed the alternative products that were contrary to the traditional big business viewpoint. Just as a side note, I've always been a huge fan of Seventh Gen and what you guys are doing. When you're doing this, how did that work out with Albertsons?

Jeffrey: Unfortunately, labor lost, as it sometimes does and that was disappointing but at the same time, we felt that we had done what we could do and we had behaved in a way that was aligned



with our values. You win some and you lose some, and we were disappointed but we continue on and continue to look for other opportunities to behave in a way that's aligned with your beliefs.

Dan: Absolutely. Just go one step further. You lost that battle, but you're winning the war long term and what I mean by that, Jeffrey is that, we vote with our dollars, and people are aligning themselves with the products that meet and exceed their specific viewpoints, their goals, their values. Now we're seeing this resurgence of ... actually not resurgence, but really this movement toward people that are buying healthier products, that are focused on products that are mission based.

Where I'm going with this is that these are the products that are driving sustainable sales across every category. Instead of being a little brand on the shelf that no one's really paying attention to, now people are standing ... the big brands are standing up and taking notice. You've got to feel good about the fact that you impacted the way that big brands like Unilever and P&G and some of your other big competitors, are thinking about the category. Can you talk about that a little bit?

Jeffrey: Sure. I think the natural organic space and I'd been in it for at least 30 years or more, has come a tremendously long way and I think that in part, that's been a response to the challenges that we see in our environment and the growing impacts of climate change. The environment has been a big driver I think of necessity. We can't afford to not think about the environment in



the way we behave as consumers, because the ramifications are quite horrible.

The same is true when it comes to our health. We're beginning to understand that it's not a doctor or a nurse that's responsible for our health. It's ourselves and our own behavior. As we understand that we need to become the stewards of our health as well as the stewards for the environment, the natural inorganic world is one of the most important places that we can express those concerns and we can take positive actions to mitigate the negative effects and ensure that we're optimizing our own health.

I think for decades, we've been focused on in some ways, preventing damage. Preventing and protecting ourselves, and from my perspective, where we need to go in the future is we need to think not just about how we can sustain what we have, but how we can as individuals and very importantly, businesses, can have a regenerative effect. We can actually help repair and improve health and the environment, because we don't want to leave things in the state that they're in today.

Dan: Absolutely not. In fact, I always say that I think the number one problem facing us as a society, as a planet is the lack of personal responsibility. What I mean by that is it's not about me wanting this instant gratification. It's about thinking through what is the effect of creating so much plastic that now we've got this huge island floating in the Pacific that's just trash, or what is the effect of all the other problems, the smog et cetera.



I agree with you completely. Again, I'm just thrilled that you're here. One of the things that, by the way, I was actually going to be talking to Cohen with Sustainable Brands hopefully next week. Can you talk a little bit about your work with them because I noticed you've actually got a bio on their website.

Jeffrey: Yeah. I have spoken at several of their conferences. When it comes to responsible, sustainable brands they have played a really important role in creating a space for the natural brands to sort of show off what they're doing and really to play a really important educational role for more traditional brands to learn about the space. The last time I spoke there, I spoke there with my daughter [Mikah 00:16:35] because we had started a new business about five years ago called Sustain Natural, and we had a terrific opportunity to really introduce the brand to over a thousand people who were at their conference. That is tremendous in terms of building brand awareness, in terms of being able to tell our story as well as connecting with potential partners and purchasers.

Dan: Great. Before we go to Sustain Natural, I want to talk a little bit more about Seventh Gen. Can you talk about some of the products that you've got, some of the products that you created. What was your mission? What problem were you trying to solve?

Jeffrey: Seventh Generation, which was started in 1988 as a mail order business, initially focused on energy and water conservation. We have to remember that in the late '80s, environmental product were a totally new area. The term green products didn't even



exist. We were very, very early on in the adoption of this new trend. After focusing on energy and water conservation, we expanded the brand to focus on recycled unbleached paper products. Paper products that were 100% post consumer content and not bleached with chlorine, as well as dish cleaning and laundry products.

That served as the foundation for the company for most of its history, but over time, we expanded into two other areas. We expanded into the household cleaning category with all purpose cleaner and glass cleaner, and we made some big departures into new categories like diapers, which was a huge growth generator for our business, feminine care or organic cotton feminine care.

More recently, the company has gotten into personal care products as well as something that was probably one of the most difficult technological challenges for the company to solve, which was basically to develop a natural nontoxic disinfectant. When you use traditional disinfectants, you basically have to wipe them away after you use them because the residue is quite dangerous. In many cases, you have to use these disinfectants in a well ventilated area so you don't breathe the fumes, you might have to use gloves.

This is a disinfectant that so safe, you can spray it on children's toys and hand the toy to the child and let them play with it right afterwards. The company has really continued to innovate, continued to expand its product offerings. That expansion of the



product portfolio has been a huge driver of the company's growth.

Dan: How did you communicate the value of the product to the retailer when you didn't have the financial resources? You weren't big enough like some of the bigger brands and you didn't have the ability to get behind the product like some of the big brands, so what I mean by that Jeffrey, is that the big brands have what seems like an unlimited war chest in terms of their ability to promote. What story did you tell the retailers? How did you work with them to help them understand why your products mattered and why they deserve to be on the shelf?

Jeffrey: Sure. For the first 20 years of Seventh Generation, we basically did no advertising. We've relied almost exclusively on public relations and publicity. Why were we able to do that? We were able to do that because we weren't telling stories just about toilet paper, we were telling stories about what we had done at Albertsons, telling stories about why we initially decided not to do business with Walmart. One of the reasons we were able to get such great publicity coverage, and this is billions of media impressions, is really because we told great, exciting, compelling and meaningful stories that the media wanted to cover, and that built brand awareness. In many ways, more effectively than advertising does because that editorial coverage is often more highly valued by the consumer.

We also did really unusual things from a promotional perspective. You walk into stores and you see all kinds of promotions and most



of them are focused on saving you money or sending you places that you might not want to go to, and one of the best promotions that we ever developed was in partnership with Greenpeace. What you would win is a week-long training program in Washington with Greenpeace to learn how to become an environmental activist. That was a really unusual promotion, but we selected someone from each store to become a winner, and we were again, keeping our values aligned with the way we behave because one of the things that was foundational to Seventh Generation and still is, is education. We figured out a way to combine sales promotion with education and the natural product industry was just in love with this concept.

Another promotion we did and this was probably not something that Unilever or Procter and Gamble loved, but we set up a promotion where you could bring in coupons for Tide, Bouncy and other traditional products, and use them for Seventh Generation products. We captured all the money that P&G and Unilever and SC Johnson was spending and awarding the benefit of the use of those coupons for people who were purchasing the Seventh Generation brand. It requires a lot of innovation and creativity to give compelling reasons to the retailer, why to get placed on the shelf, but that's only the beginning of the processes.

Once you're on the shelf, you have to demonstrate that you're generating profitability per square foot and contribution dollars to the retailer, and at the end of the day, you have to really rely on fact based selling that you deserve those spots on the shelf



because you're generating profitable revenue that's appropriate to the shelf space you have for the retail.

Dan: I appreciate your saying that and actually, I remember those two promotions very clearly and I remember talking to some of my bosses and they were saying, "What the heck is this? This is the weirdest thing I've ever seen." The Greenpeace one especially, but yet it had a profound impact and so again, looking at Seventh Gen from the other side of the equation as a competitor, I was thrilled with what you guys were doing. And like I said, I did everything in my power whenever I had a chance to protect your space and to give you guys a bigger voice as much as I could. What I meant by that, I certainly made sure that you guys had the facings to survive and were in a decent position where people could find your products. One of the things I loved about what you were doing is that you are an alternative.

Back then we had Unilever, P&G, you guys, a couple of other brands and then Private Label, and I really wanted to see you guys survive because Private Label was pulling dollars out of the category, we were kind of to what you were saying, just playing with ... trying to trade coupons or price for sales, which that's not necessarily sustainable and yet you guys were the ones that were really driving the sales, the profits in the category or more importantly, you guys were the ones that were driving the contribution.

So you absolutely deserved to be in there from a contribution standpoint but clearly from a velocity standpoint, you did and I



guess what I'm getting at there is that the value of a natural organic brand to provide contribution to a retailer is great, but when retailers and other brands pay attention to your velocity as the only measure they're paying attention to, then that limits your ability to grow in the category, and then that limits your ability to get in front of more customers. Was that something that you shared with the retailers?

Jeffrey: Sure. I mean, we were very, very focused on fact based selling so we were doing analysis on things like basket size and we were able to show the retailer that consumers that were buying Seventh Generation often had a 50 to 100% larger basket size than consumers that were buying traditional household and personal care products. That's an important driver. Frequency of store visits, the people that were buying Seventh Generation, we're in the store more frequently.

The people that were buying Seventh Generation, we're buying much less on promotion than traditional household products. Household products can be on promotion in some cases almost up to 50% of the time, we were promoting half the time that makes us a more profitable product for the retailer to have on the shelf.

It's great to do all these wonderful things that you feel good about and I would never not do any of them, but at the same time, you have to rely on facts that help the retailer understand why it's a good decision for them to continue to support you.



Dan: That's really the basis of what I do in my day job and that's one of the main skills I'm trying to teach brands, is how do you tell a compelling selling story that is backed up with facts? Thank you for sharing that. The next thing I wanted to share is that I then went to work for Kimberly Clark, so I was very familiar with the products that you have. Yeah, I knew the diaper category well and again, I made sure you guys had your space.

You deserved to be there, and more importantly, fact based selling. One of the things that was kind of interesting about the different relationship between your customer and our customer et cetera, is that at this point, mass merchandisers like Walmart, were becoming all the rage.

While we were trying to help keep that customer in the store, the reality is that customers were changing their buying preferences to buy more of our products from the mass merchandiser, pulling dollars out of the traditional retailers, but yet you were helping the traditional retailer keep that customer within their four walls. Can you talk a little bit about that, Jeffrey?

Jeffrey: Yeah. I mean, we did something that many people thought was crazy. When we first had the opportunity to sell to Walmart, we decided not to do that. We had ... like we did with Albert sons, a big debate within the company about Walmart's social and environmental practices. It's important to say that Walmart was a very different company 15 years ago than it is today and they have made dramatic improvements from a social and environmental perspective, but they were not a leader 15 years



ago; and we decided that their values were too misaligned with ours to do business with them. But we didn't stop there. We didn't just say no.

I wrote a letter to the then CEO of Walmart, Lee Scott, and I said, and this is the sort of audacious, crazy thing for a little Vermont company to say, and I never expected he would respond to my letter but I said, "Dear Mr. Scott, we've decided not to do business with you with this time, for these reasons," which I laid out and I said, "But I'd love to come down and visit with you and see whether there's some way Seventh Generation could help you make progress on the social and environmental challenges you're facing." Amazingly enough, Lee Scott wrote back to me and said, "I'd welcome you to come down to Bentonville," and I arrived the first time there, met with his whole management team and was shocked at their openness to having this dialogue.

That really led to quarterly trips down to Bentonville to discuss sustainability with them. 10 years later, Walmart had made tremendous changes and we decided that it was time to start doing business with them, but again, decisions like that are things that we are really proud of as a brand and again, it's another way in which we express and take our values seriously. That means that we're willing to compromise taking on revenue and growing the business to protect and live out our values and that's really putting your money where your mouth is and I think that that's a hard thing to do. Most people have a really hard time



saying no to new opportunities, even if they're not aligned with the company's purpose.

Dan: Love that; in fact, very inspiring so thank you for sharing that. Back to what you're talking about earlier, you lost that battle with Albertsons, but you're winning the war. I love that theme, that whole idea because you're actually making real change and I think you need to be celebrated for that. What's really exciting about that is that you're able to help change the industry from within and that's kind of the underlying theme of where I wanted to go with this. The point being is that small disruptive brands that stay aligned to their voice aligned to their mission have the greatest opportunity to make tremendous impact across all categories, and so thank you for doing that.

When you decided to go into Walmart and start doing business with them, was it something that you started doing slowly or is it something that you start ... you just jumped right in with both feet? The reason I ask this question is there's the mindset that when a small brand sells out to a big brand or a small brand goes in ... does business with a big retailer, then that's a really bad thing. But my opinion, kind of what we've been talking about, if you can make change from within, then that's a great opportunity for us to really change the way big brands and retailers think. Kind of goes back to what you're saying of sustainable brands.

Jeffrey, when you started working with Walmart, was it ... at that point did you kind of dip one toe in or did you just jump all in?



Jeffrey: The decision to do business with Walmart happened right after I stepped down as CEO, but my memory is that like we would typically do with a Target or any large new retailer like Costco, is we would test first before we jumped in with both feet, because the last thing you want to do is expand too quickly. We wanted to make sure that we had the right product selection at the right price for the Walmart shopper. From my perspective, testing is always the right way to do that, and it doesn't just protect you but it protects the retailer as well. We would typically try to figure out which of the stores that the retailer has indexed the highest for natural and organic products and test the pro ... the Seventh Generation products in those stores.

If you can't succeed in those stores that index the highest for other sales of natural and organic products, you're just not going to make it at the chain and in a broader set of distribution. I'm an advocate of cautious expansion and I think it's often dangerous to get so excited about getting into thousands of stores that you put the success of the program at risk by expanding too quickly.

Dan: Well said and I appreciate your saying that. This is what I talk about a lot. Again, I don't mean to keep harping back on that, but my point is this, there aren't the opportunities, the programs, the learning ... the ability for small brands to learn this, which is really sad in this industry, and the fact that you're doing this again, this is exactly what I teach. This is exactly what all my contents is based on, is that, when you go into retail, you've got a plan. You've got to have a plan.



I know of way too many brands that get way over their skis and then have out of stocks and they can't support the retailer and then all of a sudden they're discontinued and I always say, you never get a second chance to disappoint a customer, especially a retailer. If you get in front of a retail like Walmart, that's a gift in the sense that you now have a much bigger audience to be able to sell to, and so by not being able to identify where the best stores to sell to, can you support that volume, et cetera, that is something that I think a lot of brands really need to be paying attention to, because that is again, one of the areas I think a lot of the brands that I talked to, really struggle with, they don't understand why this matters so much.

Going back to the fact based selling, if brands are paying attention to this, if brands are really working hard with the retailers to understand the retailers business and it helped the retailer avoid out of stocks, et cetera, then that's the opportunity to help support the brand. Actually, kind of as a side note, I read an article yesterday that was talking about how brands need about out of stocks and it completely missed the point about how, from a category management standpoint, brands need to take responsibility for this.

Brands need to understand what kind of volume goes through a retailer store and help the retailer ensure that they've got the right amount of inventory to support whatever sales they are; whether it's promoted or not promoted. Again, thank you for sharing that. Do you have any other stories or insights that you



want to share around Seventh Generation before we move to Sustain Natural?

Jeffrey: Well, there's lots and lots of things that we could talk about. Let's talk about Sustain Natural. Sustain Natural is a women's sexual wellness company that I started with my wife and my daughter in 2013. The idea for Sustain Natural really came out of insight that I had about Seventh Generation and many products that are positioned as green and sustainable. That is ... one of the challenges we face is we need to be developing and selling what I call good net positive products, not just products that are less bad. Seventh Generation might have the absolute and I think does have the absolute best paper towels, but paper towels, no matter how good they are, are going to have an adverse impact on the environment. There's packaging waste, there's products that are disposed and go into the landfill, they get used quickly, they consume energy and water during the manufacturing process.

From an environmental perspective, even the best paper towels or the best diapers are not a net positive for the environment, they're a net negative. Again, that doesn't take anything away from how wonderful the Seventh Generation products are, even though I left the company as the CEO, I am a board member of Seventh Generation and very proud to be so. But the challenge that I took on after I left Seventh Generation was, what does a good product look like? What is a product where the positives of that product outweigh the negatives?



We started the business with the development of the first fair trade of vegan nontoxic condoms, and you could say, "Oh my God, how did you end up selling condoms?" But condoms are really interesting products because not only do they help prevent the spread of disease, STDs, AIDS, not only do they help prevent unplanned pregnancies, but by helping ... and we targeted young women with the sale of condoms, and we targeted them because we wanted to empower women to be responsible and to take charge of their sexual health and really not to rely exclusively on men to play that role. But by helping women have more planned pregnancies and that usually means less pregnancies.

We have a very positive effect on climate change because we're helping to control the growth of the population, which is the second biggest driver of climate change. In addition to that because these were fair trade products, we were doing some good work to build the incomes of the rubber tappers in India where the latex is high ... is harvested and one of the interesting things about condoms that people don't know, is that condoms are made from the sap of the rubber tree, just like maple syrup. They are a completely renewable, sustainable product and ingredient and the trees remain in the plantation, taking CO2 out of the air, while they produce latex for about 35 years of their life, so we have a sustainable product.

We also learned that during the manufacturing process of most condoms, unintentionally, a carcinogenic chemical is released as a chemical reaction during the process in which you turn rubber



latex from a liquid into a solid, and that's called Nitrosamine. Most condoms have very small minute quantities of nitrosamine, which is a carcinogen in them, and we were able to redesign the manufacturing process to eliminate any detectable nitrosamine. We did pretty much everything we could. We also took the casein, which is a dairy product, out of the condoms, so they could certified as vegan products.

Lastly, one of the things that we've learned is that the biggest impact that consumer products have is usually during consumer use. If you think about laundry detergent, or you think about shampoo, it's not the ingredients, it's not the packaging, it's not the transportation. When you use shampoo, it's heating up the water in the shower, that accounts for 89 ... 80 to 90% of the environmental impact of the products, and of course most people, but certainly not all people are using condoms with the lights out, so they're not consuming energy while they're using condoms. I could go on and on and on, but I was so excited and enamored with the product from a sustainability, and a social perspective that that's what we decided to launch to Sustain Natural with as our first product.

Dan: Interesting. In fact, I think I've mentioned to you that I had a lot of great conversations with Joe Brown who works with you on this topic even before you launched, and he was asking me what I think about it, what I think of the opportunities were and where should you be placed and where should you gain distribution, et cetera. First, I learned a lot. I did not know and I think as most



people, we don't know what we don't know, and it's great that you were able to develop a story around what you're doing to help people understand it. Kind of going back to the disinfectant example that you gave us. A lot of people think that that evaporates off the counter. I thought that that's what happened until I really started to understand, and again, I'm selling this stuff, the point is that you guys are really changing the way that consumers think about the product and then trying to educate the retailers and so on, so forth.

Another thing that's really exciting about what you did with that company is the fact that your daughter and your wife are involved, but now you have other product lines within that category. Again, I don't understand those categories really well, being one's competitor. There's so much opportunity to do better, and this kind of ties back to what were ... the underlying theme of this is, being more than just yourself, being more than just a consumer, but being more, contributing more, being ... trying to develop products that really make a difference in our society. The other products that you created under Sustain Natural, can you talk a little bit about those and why those matter?

Jeffrey: Sure, sure. We also developed an organic lubricant to go along with the condoms. Lubricants are typically petroleum based. Our lubricant is made primarily with organic aloe, so it's a certified organic lubricant and there's all kinds of things that are really important when you make a lubricant, to make sure that it's compatible with the chemistry in a woman's body, because if not,



lubricants can exaggerate things like bacterial vaginosis, which is a problem that many women have.

So it's really, really important to formulate the lubricant with the right PH and to make sure the osmolarity of the lubricant is compatible with a woman's body. We went beyond lubricants, we developed wipes which are made from recycled post-consumer cotton and we also expanded into organic cotton tampons and pads. Our organic cotton tampons, which have an applicator is made from a bio plastic material which is made 90% from sugar canes.

To a certain extent, as we did with Seventh Generation, at Sustain Natural, we've expanded the product portfolio and really helped create a place where women can go to buy products for all their sexual wellness needs.

Dan: Thank you for sharing that. Again, being one of your competitors, understanding this space really well, Kimberly Clark actually invented feminine care in terms of this stuff ,and the fact that you guys came in and redefined the category, cleaned it up and made it healthier and again, I did not realize when ... here I am working for the company, I didn't realize the impact of how these products dramatically impact the user of these products. Thank you, Jeffrey for sharing all that. Is there anything else that you wanted to share about sustainable brands?

Jeffrey: Sure, I mean, one of the things that is really important and that I'm very passionate about is that we don't just act to make our



own company and our own products better, but we participate in the broader landscape of helping to address issues systemically like climate change and social inequity. About 10 years ago, I started an organization called the American Sustainable Business Council, and the American Sustainable Business Council focuses on public policy and works to do things like increase the minimum wage for all employees to \$15 an hour, works to ensure net neutrality, works to prevent large companies from hiding their profits outside the United States and avoiding paying taxes, to put a price on carbon, to do many of the things that we as natural and organic product companies believe in.

Many companies behave in a way that has a positive effect on these issues but we need to change the rules. It's not enough to be an exception to the rules, we need to change the rules because if we're going to fight things like climate change, we really need to not just reduce our own CO2 imprint, but we need to put a price on carbon so that everybody reduces their CO2 emissions. I'm really proud to have started ASBC, the American Sustainable Business Council, and to serve as its board chair.

Thinking about the American Sustainable Business Council, I just finished reading probably the most important book I've read in the last decade. It's called 'Winners Take All'. It's really about the need for us as individuals and us as businesses, to go beyond our personal actions to change the political legal tax and regulatory landscape.



One of the terrible challenges we face in the United States, is increasing social inequality. We have a situation today where three individuals have wealth that equals 50% of the entire country and 10% of the country has wealth that is equal to the entire remaining 90%. That type of social inequality is not good from a social perspective, but it's also bad for business. We need to make sure that we have a healthy, robust middle class and that is eroding.

There's more and more people in poverty today than ever before. America has become one of the most unequal countries in the world. This book, *Winners Take All*, really talks about this problem and this challenge in an amazing, articulate, thoughtful way. It's written by a terrific guy who is a New York Times journalist, and is with me actually, an adjunct professor at New York University.

Dan: Well, and it sounds like a fascinating book and I can't agree with you more. We need to do more. Again, we need to vote with our dollars. If we want the country that we want, if we want the environment, the products that we would want on retailer shelves, this is an opportunity for consumers to rise up and vote with their dollars and let retailers, let brands, let politicians, let everyone know that this is what we expect. This is what we need because one of the things I love about what makes natural natural, is the fact that most of the companies in this space are focused beyond just the packaging on their product, they're thinking about the missions or thinking about something bigger



than themselves, so thank you for sharing that. Is there anything else that you'd like to share?

Jeffrey: Again, I would only reinforce the importance of doing the things that we need to do. I mean, we need ... it's really important that we limit the amount of meat we consume unless it's grass fed meat, that we drive hybrid cars, that we put solar or wind to power our houses. We need to do all of those individual things. We need to support great companies that have terrific values. The natural product industry is filled with so many wonderful companies that are doing wonderful things. We need to vote with our pocketbook. Equally, importantly, we need to go out and vote. We have a very, very important election coming up shortly and it's absolutely critical that we participate in that election. We exercise participation in our democracy and we make our voice heard in the political process.

Dan: Absolutely, I cannot agree with you more and that gets back to what I was saying, personal responsibility. People need to understand the cause and the effect of making a decision and more importantly, the cause of not making a decision, and why this matters because it's small disruptive brands like the brands you've created that are changing the way consumers think about products that are changing the way that we go to market and more importantly, and I love this the most, the fact that you are just these small brands, especially what you were doing, the example at Walmart is really inspiring, where you're changing the



way the big brands and the big retailers think about the way they do business. So thank you for sharing that.

Typically, I always ask if there's a bottleneck or something that I could help solve. Is there something that you could think of that I could help do with this podcast to help educate or help inform and get people inspired and get more people behind these ... Some of these important measures?

Jeffrey: Yeah, I think it would be great to do a whole podcast with the American Sustainable Business Council. To hear about the work they're doing, how you can participate and join with them, the issues that they're focused on, where they've had success, where they're making progress. I think your listeners would find that fascinating.

Dan: I would welcome that. I'd love to. In fact, actually that's one of the reasons why I'm looking forward to talking to Cohen. My mission is to make her healthy way of life more assessable by getting these natural organic products in more retail shelves in the hands of more shoppers. That is really the focus of what I'm trying to do. It's trying to help these brands get a bigger foothold because if these brands like Seventh Generation and Sustain Natural can do more and can grow and become more of the bigger brand, if you will, in the retailer shelf, then that's one way that we're really going to affect change because again, voting with our dollars so yes, I'd love to.



If you could please set that up for me or help me connect with the right people, I would welcome the opportunity to have that conversation and welcome the opportunity to help support some of the other initiatives that you've got going on. Again as, we all work together, we rise together and as I always say empowering brands, raising the bar and being able to bring people, thought leaders like you into this conversation, is what's making the difference, what's going to make the biggest difference long term so thank you for sharing that. Jeffrey I really appreciate your time. Thank you for making time for us, thank you for your insights, your stories, your anecdotes, and again, thank you so much for all you do for us as a community and us as a planet.

Jeffrey: My pleasure. It's a privilege and an honor and I am blessed to be able to do the good work that I do and it's a pleasure to have the opportunity to positively impact so many other lives and to help the health of our planet.

Dan: Well said. Thank you sir. I look forward to our next conversation.

Jeffrey: Absolutely, so do I. Thank you, look forward to chatting with you soon.

Dan: I want to thank Jeffrey for coming on the podcast today for sharing his insights and wisdom and more importantly, all the good work that he does on behalf of all of us. There are a few of us that are actually willing to put everything on the line for the betterment of other people. Please join me in thanking Jeffrey for doing exactly that and so much more. I'll be certain to put a link



to Sustain Natural and Seventh Generation and the show notes, and on this podcast webpage.

This episode's free downloadable guide is my Top 10 strategies to meet your business goals. This is a list of the top 10 strategies that I found to be most effective in helping all the brands that I work with. You can get into the podcast show notes, or you can download it instantly by texting 10strategies to 44222. As always, thank you for listening and I look forward to seeing you in the next show.

### [Top 10 Strategies To Meet Your Business Goals](#)

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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.