



BRAND SECRETS AND STRATEGIES PODCAST #109

Hello and thank you for joining us today. This is the Brand Secrets and Strategies Podcast #109

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. Do you ever wish you had a shortcut or a crystal ball or just a way to look into the future to understand how to get onto a retailer's shelf? Do you wish you knew all the strategies that the experts knew? Do you wish you had the opportunity to learn from others' mistakes? Well, now you do. In this episode, this is what we're going to be talking about. That's what this podcast is all about. That's what all my content is about, and the courses that I



created. They're designed to teach you how to get your products onto more retailers' shelves and into the hands of more shoppers.

One of the best ways to do that is to take a look at what other brands are doing, even the big brands. Now, I know a lot of small brands say, "No, we want nothing to do with the big brands. We want to be unique and different." The reality is that there are things that they can learn, things that you can learn from the big brands. You can learn how to do things better and still keep natural, natural. Let me put this another way. There are similarities between natural and mainstream. We all sell our products at a retail store. We share some of the same customers, and a lot of the technology, like the shelving we put our products on, are very similar.

In fact, when I started in this industry, things in mainstream were exactly the same as they were in the natural. For example, we called on every single store. We had to merchandise all the products within each store ourselves. Pricing and promotions were all handled on a store-by-store basis. Our products were delivered to the store by distributors. In other words, you really couldn't tell the difference. What happened was, a retailer named Walmart was born, and they forced us to be more strategic. Love 'em or hate 'em, they forced us to be more strategic. They forced us to pay more attention about what it costs to put a product on a shelf.

Walmart's claim to fame is that they can put a product on their shelf at a dramatically lower cost because of their efficiencies.



Because of that, we needed to learn how to better manage our inventories, how to better manage our promotions. That was why category management was born. I talk about this a lot on the podcast, in my courses, and my content. This podcast episode further validates those strategies; the same strategies that you can use to get your product onto more retailers' shelves and into the hands of more shoppers. At the end of the day, that's what we're here for. You've put all your effort into building a product that's creative and innovative. Shouldn't your business strategy be as innovative and creative as your product is?

To be the first to hear these new strategies on each new podcast, make sure you subscribe, share it with your friend, and leave a review. And don't forget to check out the free downloadable guide at the end of every episode to help you grow sustainable sales and compete more effectively. Here's today's guests, Brad and Rudi, of Red's All Natural.

Rudi and Brad, I really want to thank you for coming on today. Could you start by telling us a little bit about yourself? Rudi, do you want to go first?

Rudi: Sure. So, I started in the candy business in 1985 out of college, specialty candy business. That was before Whole Foods, and kind of grew up learning the specialty food business, and then I moved to a company called Terra Chips. We built that Terra Chips up and sold it to the Hain Celestial Group, was also rolled up with Garden of Eatin' at the time. Terra Chips and Garden of Eatin' was the snack division of Hain. That was actually the Hain Food Group at



the time, and then they later merged with Celestial Seasonings or took over Celestial Seasonings and became the Hain Celestial Group, and I ran their snack division.

Then one of the two co-creators of Terra Chips started a french fry company called Alexia Foods, and we built that from 0 to about 40 million dollars and sold it to ConAgra. Then I went to work for some friends at Snyder's Pretzels, because that was local to me, and I wanted to get off the road for a little bit. So, I helped them with their natural organic business. Actually, launched gluten-free pretzels for them, and helped them get into Whole Foods nationally with organic pretzels. Then I got a call from Alex and The Shansby Group, TSG, put the band back together again for a third run. The Alexia run was basically the Terra team from days gone by, and now this was going to be our third run. That third project was called Julian's Recipe, and Alex is still working on Julian's Recipe today.

But I got a call about three years into that, and we were sharing our time with Raybern's Foods, and Alex was CEO of both companies, and I was VP of Sales East and Rebecca was VP of Sales West, so we shared our time on all that, and he decided to focus his efforts on Julian's Recipe and then just sort of created a point in time where I wasn't sure whether this was gonna work and whether it made sense to stay. I got a call from a friend of mine at Snyder's who was put in charge of running Snack Factory as general manager, which is Pretzel Crisps, and they wanted to



keep it standalone. They did not want to fold it into the DSD organization because it sold direct into the deli.

So, I joined up with them and was VP of Sales for the Snack Factory division. That was a great three or four year run, and then Snyder's-Lance acquired Diamond Foods, and then Campbell's acquired Snyder's-Lance, and somewhere in that shuffle I decided it was time to move on. I met Mike Adair from Red's and hit it off and hit it off with Brad, who's also on the call, and then an operations guy, and it all felt right. They had a great selling story already, a nice footprint, and a lot of young energy and enthusiasm, and that's kind of what gets us here.

Dan: Appreciate that. Thanks. Brad, do you want to chime in?

Brad: Sure thing. So, I actually started in working packaged goods, so I spent my first 10 years with Procter and Gamble, so, doing some of those traditional big brand roles, working on Crest and Downy and Cascade and Dawn and all those household staples you're familiar with. Focused mostly on trade plans, consumer marketing plans, and product and packaging innovation, but then also got to do some work in terms of new brand development. So, was part of the team that launched Swiffer and Swiffer Wet Jet, as well as some of the other items like Dryel. So, I got a lot of interesting learning on how you launch a brand from scratch in a big company versus kind of just maintaining, growing brands that have been around for decades.



So, I did that for a while, and then wanted to make a switch, and was kind of interested in the natural pet food industry, and so made the switch, managed a brand called Nutro. It had just been acquired by Mars Pet Care, and Nutro was the number one natural pet food brand in the US, about 350 million in net sales, and came in and focused on building out a team and building out an innovation pipeline. I just strengthened the capabilities overall and spent about seven years doing that. During that time, we acquired P&G Pet Care, ironically enough, and their pet care brands and helped figure out what to do with some of the smaller 10 to 20 million dollar brands that were in that portfolio in that natural category.

So, really enjoyed the natural space, really enjoyed the speed of innovation, the kind of hyper-competitive environment, and so many similarities actually between the trends in, you know, human natural organic food and natural organic pet food, as well. So, similarly to Rudi, paths crossed with Mike, our founder. We met for a few times for coffee, and I just fell in love with him and his vision of the company and momentum that was behind the business, and so, joined here two years ago. Been working with Rudi on go-to-market selling, on our trade plans, as well as a lot of packaging and innovation work as well as we continue to expand distribution both in retail and in different product categories.

Dan: Appreciate you sharing that. Thank you. The reason I wanted to have both of you on, and thank you for making time for me



today, is that I am focused on teaching natural, small, innovative, disruptive brands the benefit of taking advantage of some of the strategies, tips, and tricks that you learn in mainstream CPG, and how they can leverage those and yet keep natural, natural. What I'm getting at by that is I'm classically trained in mainstream CPG, as well. In fact, actually, our paths didn't actually cross, but I've certainly interacted with both of the brands that you work with, although specifically we sold Terra Chips and Garden of Life back when I worked as DSD driver for Red's, but that was before you, Rudi, and Snyder's too, Snyder's Pretzels, but also bumping into P&G a lot. I love the ability to compete at that high of a level. I learned a lot. It was a great experience.

So, what I wanted to do is really focus in on what did you learn in mainstream CPG, and then how does that translate into natural? And then more importantly, what's unique about natural, and how do you help the natural organic companies not be ... I'm trying to think of the word ... how do you have the natural companies not to be gulped up by the big companies, and then be assimilated into them so that they lose their look and their feel and their mission? Because that's the thing most people are afraid of. We all know of natural companies that were acquired by a big brand and all of a sudden that brand lost its heart and its soul and its flavor and everything else.

So, can you start by talking a little bit about what's unique about mainstream CPG, and what did you learn in it that you were able to transfer or bring into the natural world?



Rudi: I'm gonna let Brad go because honestly he has more of the mainstream background. I dabbled in mainstream. I mean, if you want to call Hain Celestial mainstream, if you want to call Snyder's-Lance mainstream, but I think they're really both small businesses, more entrepreneurial type ventures. So, I've been more associated with the small and sort of the natural business myself.

Dan: Okay, thanks.

Brad: Yeah, so ...

Rudi: The only thing I would impart would be that I was exposed to a high level of fact-based selling in both Hain and in Snyder's-Lance, and I would certainly preach the fact-based selling angle.

Brad: Yeah, and I'll share with you a couple of my thoughts. I would say the principles of how to build a brand and how to grow sales don't differ. It's really what does being a smaller company allow you to do to have some kind of a competitive advantage versus the scale that these big companies have. So, meaning the principles of ensuring you have a product proposition that's distinctive versus other options in the market, that offers real value, meaningful benefit to the category that doesn't exist. So, does your product have a functional reason to exist? Is it priced appropriately to be competitive, in line with category norms as well as accessible to the shopper? Are you investing appropriately in trade? Do you have a clear brand story?



You know, all of those things ... I could go on and on, but all of those things are true whether you're talking about a billion dollar brand, or a million dollar brand. What's obviously different in the smaller environment is the ability to move with extraordinary speed, and the ability to be more intimately connected to the retailer and use that relationship as an advantage to tailor your plans, and your product to what they are seeing as needed in the market. I'll expand on both, but in terms of the speed, I can't emphasize enough how slow big companies are. Think of them as almost an aircraft carrier. It's a complex operation. There's a lot of people involved. There's a lot of systems that need to be running in sync to make sure that aircraft carrier and all its personnel understand the mission and what they need to accomplish and what they need to do day-to-day and if there's a change in the mission, that has to be communicated to a lot of people. The appropriate systems have to be adjusted.

In the context of say, launching a new product, that can take many weeks, and many months just to get alignment internally to what you want to do in market, let alone what it takes to actually execute it, whereas when we're so small, where we're having direct conversations with the retailer and hearing firsthand what they see as gaps in offerings, gaps in price points, packaging opportunities, the ability to hear that feedback firsthand and then literally that day, later in the day, get the group together, talk about it, decide what can we do right now, what could we do with some help of a new supplier, and in a matter of a couple days, start to mock up what the solution is. That just doesn't happen in



the big companies. So, speed and agility and the ability to react quickly to retailer feedback has to be exploited when you're operating at this size.

Dan: I agree with you completely, and that's one of the things that I really want to focus in on is the advantage that small brands have, but yet being able to use the capabilities, the wisdom, the ideas, the mindset, the knowledge that the big brands possess. So Rudi, with that same question in mind, what are your thoughts around speed and agility, and why is that important, and how do you guys leverage that at shelf?

Rudi: Well, yeah. I like and agree with everything Brad said. I would even kind of extend that to just speed of decision making and saying, "Yes." The big companies are all married to budgets, and they're married to 90 day numbers, quarterly Wall Street numbers. There's a lot of layers of decision-making and there's a lot of different functional areas that you have to navigate at a bigger company. That's gonna frustrate the Whole Foods of the world. That's why it gets sometimes difficult when brands get folded in too quickly in big companies that in many cases, I've actually had Whole Food buyer ask me, "Who do I even speak to at this company to get an answer?"

So, one thing a small company can do, they don't have the layers of bureaucracy to get an answer, and I would encourage small brands, especially ones that aren't well-established yet, figure out how to say yes to virtually everything the customer asks you to do, no matter how crazy that trade spend sounds. Obviously,



you've got to have some understanding of slotting and return on investment and things like that, but if they're asking for a demo, whatever it is they're asking for, instead of saying no, try and tell them what it would take to make that work, because the bigger companies are looking for how to say no. They have more to lose quite often. When they're sort of the king of the hill they're just trying to protect their steady stream rather than invest and grow and figure out how to say yes. They're trying to figure out how to say no.

Dan: That's an interesting perspective. Do you mean that when you're talking about in mainstream or in natural or in both?

Rudi: I mean in both. I mean in general, to the customer in general when you're a small brand. I'm looking for ways to get the yes. I'm looking for ways to make whatever their request was work. I think it's important to have a price size architecture that makes sense. It's important to have fair and equitable spending going on, but generally speaking, try not to say no.

Dan: You were gonna say something, Brad?

Brad: Yeah. I was just gonna kind of share the big company perspective. I think that's a spot on point. The reason there's rigidity is within a large company, the expectation is to have three to five year master plans in terms of product innovation, pricing action, and then aligned global teams, regional teams, and customer teams against that. So, there's really an expectation of a vision for where to take the category because these brands are



generally such a big part of the category, the retailer expects to drive category growth, and so, there's this mid to long-term view that shapes a lot of the work.

Once all that alignment happens, it points that aircraft carrier in a direction. To Rudi's point, when the retailer does provide feedback that is either contradictory or doesn't fall quite in line with those plans, it is more about figuring out, "Well, does this fit with what we had assumed, and what we want to do and plan to do, or is this something very different?" If it doesn't fit really cleanly, it generally doesn't get the attention. So, that's more of the why I think that happens, but certainly something again to Rudi's point, don't be so fixated on the strategy that you may have thought was the plan. Allow enough flexibility in your strategy, because really, this isn't about strategy. In many cases this is about execution and who can execute what fastest.

That's probably the biggest change for me is when I was in that environment, the emphasis was very much on figuring out the right strategy through the right analysis and all that stuff, and then it was like then execute, whereas in this environment it's much more about have a direction, but then really spend 99 and a half percent of your time focused on execution, and adjust execution as needed as information changes.

Dan: I agree with you, once you get to a certain point. So, let's parse this out. At what stage of development within a brand would you recommend that a brand focus on what you're talking about, the



development and then the execution, and then saying yes to everything that's possible?

Brad: Well, I'll give you my two cents and then let Rudi chime in. I think it's always a balance. It's never just one or just the other. I mean, I think a team, a brand always, whether it's one person or 10 people or 100 people on your team, you always have to have some sense of a plan of what are you trying to aim for, whether it's a revenue goal, it's a channel you're expanding into, a new product you're looking to launch, and have kind of those lighthouses in your mind of what you're trying to accomplish and then you'll always have the right direction on your compass.

And then as you get that information, that day-to-day information that comes in, that retailer feedback, that competitive move that you didn't anticipate, quickly carve a little bit of space for conversation to decide, "What do we want to do in light of this? We assumed this and now things have changed. Should we go after this?" And just be open. Be open to that level of adjustment kind of as you go. That would be my take.

Dan: I agree completely with that, being open, but I want dig more into this. Rudi, your thoughts?

Rudi: Yeah. I mean, I would say that it's important to do it from infancy in the incubation stage until you're number one at something. I think you have to start out in your space and making it your immediate goal to be number one or number two within that space. Make that space narrow enough that you can actually be



number one or number two at it. So, either infancy to number one status or even beyond that. If you are, let's say, venture capital stage, and you're looking to exit, I would say all the way to your exit, you're gonna be yessing everybody.

Now, obviously it depends to some extent on the leverage of your brand. So, Terra Chips had a lot of leverage. You want another Terra Chip? Go find one. You want another Pretzel Crisp? Go find one. You want another burrito? Yeah, they're waiting in line, right? So, not every brand is equal. Depends on kind of the barriers to entry and the strength and replaceability of the brand. So, there really is no one answer. Everyone kind of has to feel it out for themselves, but whatever your category or whatever your space, your primary goal should be to be number one or number two at it, because a retailer in today's world really doesn't need a number three, four, and five brand. These days you're seeing number two get questioned, right?

So, for example, in our space, in the natural burrito segment, Amy's is number one. But if we redefine the space to be burritos with meat protein we become number one. If we redefine the space to be certified organic, we become number one because Amy's is made with organic. If we defined it as breakfast burrito, we become number one in the natural channel. So, adjust your space, adjust your metrics, measurements. Could also be and should also be in the incubation stage the fastest growing XYZ, right? And then I would repeat that message what I'm number one at just about everywhere I go, index and sale sheets and ads



and trade show booths, and just like I said, figure out a way to say yes.

Now, one way to say yes would be to say, "Well, yeah, maybe we can give you the slotting, the demo, the ad, and the BOGO, but I only have 15% to spend. I don't really care how we spend it. You help me work within that 15% budget, and we'll do whatever it is you want to do," rather than just say, "No, we don't ever demo."

Dan: Well, and I'm glad you said that ...

Rudi: How many cases do you need to demo?

Dan: Well, I agree with you. I'm so glad you said that, and that's exactly what I was really hoping to get to. So one, depending on the leverage of your brand and then two, negotiating. Here's why I wanted to go back and really dig into this. Some brands will accept distribution in retail outlets that they're not prepared to support. That's a mistake. Some brands will try to gain distribution in areas where their clientele doesn't live, their ideal clientele. So, there needs to be some strategy around that, but once you define that and once you understand how you can leverage your brand with that consumer in that particular retailer, I agree with you 100%.

But the thing that really resonates, and I'm so glad you said this, Rudi, is that you need to negotiate. There's not an unlimited amount of money. One of the things that I find that a lot of the smaller brands are struggling with is do they put money here, do



they put money there? The answer to that question is, if you develop a relationship with your retailer, like you were saying, Brad, then that gives you the opportunity to have an honest conversation with them and say, "Look, I really want to do this, but I'm a little bit limited. Can you help me?" Then what's really cool is that if you can leverage the value that you bring to the retailer over and above the package that you put on their shelf, then that gives the retailer another reason for them to work with you.

That's really what I'm trying to get at, is that there's a way to develop a strategy that has a component of really being smart and intuitive and understanding your consumer, and this is exactly why I built my free Turnkey Sale Story Strategies course, to teach brands how to build this healthy foundation that you can then leverage at retail. So, when you're talking about working with a retailer ... And I agree with the analogy that you used, Brad. We used to use the oil tanker analogy. You can't turn on an oil tanker in the ocean very quickly. It takes a lot of time. That was with Unilever. The difference being that, and you're absolutely right, a small brand could be quick and agile.

So, what examples would you have or ideas would you have about how a brand should leverage that unique capability to be able to address the needs of a retailer right away, and then how would you leverage that ability to respond to a retailer's needs quickly as you're working with a retail partner?



Brad: Yeah, so I think this is played out ... I'll speak to product and packaging and Rudi can expand upon that, other views, but for example, being known for something. So, obviously Red's and Mike's focus has always been on burritos first and building a share in the burrito segment. As he had success with that over the years, it was very much a focus on what we call snack burritos or non-breakfast burritos. Through conversations with a couple of the retailers that he had personal relationships with the longest, in the natural channel, there was a strong encouragement of, "Well, why not breakfast? There's a huge amount of activity going on here and here's what's happening in conventional, and we think there's opportunity to do a great natural version, a Red's version of that."

In my old world, we would've said, "Oh, interesting. Good thought. Let's go off and do some consumer research on that. Let's buy some market data and assess the opportunity. Let's debate it internally and kind of come up with a strategy," whereas in the case of Red's, we took that feedback, and we pulled out what was publicly available IRA data in frozen and refrigerated buyer and quickly cross-checked market size and said, "I think it's a great idea. Let's do it. One way we can do it fast is we can borrow a flavor profile that we think has relevance there and tweak it a bit."

That led to one of our first organic breakfast burrito options, an egg and cheddar, that we came back with very quickly and ultimately launched, I think, in nine or 10 weeks. I mean, it was a



very short amount of time. It just wouldn't be anything we would consider doing in kind of my old world in terms of operating that fast. But when you can decide, to Rudi's point, when you can decide quickly, "Yes, we want to do this," when we can share the concept, in this case the flavor profile, that it was an organic option that the retailer said, "Yes, I'm in support of that," then we immediately could shift execution and say, "Okay, the next two days we're gonna develop and optimize the recipe and then we're gonna submit it for organic certification approval," and on and on from there in terms of sourcing ingredients, whatever it is.

But it became all about the execution then at that point, and then of course, looking at execution as fast as possible. And so getting it then successfully on shelves, whether it was for reset or for a cut-in that they allowed us to do, ultimately paid dividends. Almost all of our new items that we've launched over the last 18 months have been very similar to that approach, with the exception of a couple. So, it's working well. It keeps everyone on their toes, and probably the biggest thing is even in a small team, you might be working with six or eight people that touch a new product launch. That's a lot different than one or two.

And so, even as we have grown as a team over the last 18 months, where it was originally just Mike and a co-packer, and now it's me and Rudi and Mike and an R&D person and our own plant. Now that's a much bigger team, and so, even just having a team of that size, you still have to carve out moments to bring everybody up to speed on, "Here's the new information we have.



Here's what's changed, where are we on the project list," yada, yada.

Dan: No, that's a great story. I appreciate your sharing that. That's exactly what I was getting at, is the fact-based selling. I remember way back Unilever, Kimberly-Clark, et cetera, where we would spend months, decades, years it seemed like, eons, trying to develop a product before it went to market, all the focus groups and all the studying and everything else. But what I really want to highlight here, emphasize here, is that you took the advice from the retailer, and then you were able to run it through some quick analysis. Like you said, being able to get a quick study that you were able to understand what's going on in the category, what the opportunities are, and then you're able to develop something, and then also be able to leverage what you know is already out there.

What's unique about natural, I believe, is the ability to understand the attributes that are driving sales within each product segment, each brand, et cetera. So, being able to layer that into it gives you that unique flavor and then at the same time, allows you to execute at a much faster pace. So, thank you for sharing that. Rudi, your thoughts?

Rudi: Yeah. I mean, I think what we're trying to say here is to be customer-centric, right?

Dan: Yes.



Rudi: I mean, to get close to the customer, to understand the customer, the customer to know that you understand them. I recently went into a natural retail chain, C, we'll call it. I went in, and I said, "Look, I'm the number one selling brand of burritos in natural chain A. I'm the number one brand of burritos in natural chain B. That's why I'm the number one brand of burritos in the natural channel. Why am I not the number one brand of burritos in your natural food chain C? What do I gotta do to get there?" Just basically, that was my pitch.

Dan: Right.

Rudi: And then, he sat back and said, "Well, your competitor, A, they are what they are. Competitor B has been acquired by another large company, and we're not all that excited about doing business with them. I'll tell you what. If you give me a BOGO for the month of October, we'll put all your items in, and you'll be number one next year."

So, I just looked back at him, and I said, "Done." That was good. So, in the space of 10 minutes, in the space of 10 minutes by being customer-centric, and just asking him what it would take to become number one, your point about the big companies sucking up to little companies and then kind of forgetting about them in that one bag approach, because they have more brands to sell than I have items, was a huge weakness for them. It may take them a long time to even understand what happened.



Dan: Yeah, I agree. It probably will. A lot of the big brands ... My belief is that every brand needs to firmly keep their hand on the wheel of the rudder, to use the ship analogy, even when a big brand acquires them, but more importantly, as you're using a broker, distributor, and all the different agencies that help you. The point being is that you need to understand at least from broad strokes how things work, the fact-based selling and everything else. If you have that ability to do that, then that empowers you to make better decisions.

Again, going back to the negotiation ... What you did, instead of what I hear a lot of brands say is, "Well, they put me on the bottom shelf. They put me in the back room. They put me in the wrong category," is that you're actually working with the retailer to help them identify the solution, help them fix the gaps that they have. So, let's dig into that a little bit. One of the things that I really want to focus on is go back to the strategies that you learned in mainstream CPG. I know we're kind of glossing over that, so let's kind of color in the lines a little bit.

Brad and Rudi, both of you have a wealth of experience about how to deliver a product to retail, about how to start that negotiation, how to have that relationship that goes beyond negotiation and more importantly, about understanding the retailer's business. Instead of looking at the retailer as someone who can help you achieve your objective, you're developing a partnership or relationship with that retailer that gives you the opportunity to have these conversations. So, how do you leverage



that? How did you guys both create that unique opportunity where you can work with a retailer one-on-one to help them solve their problems, to help them grow, to help them gain foot traffic, and more importantly, to help them satisfy more of their customers, your customers?

Brad: Yes. I'll share a couple thoughts. So, I think in terms of a principle that I learned, kind of I guess, from big CPG days is the expectation when you're a big brand that has a 30, 40, 50 share of a big important category, the expectation becomes that you have to bring category growth solutions. They're happy that you've been successful making yourself the number one share.

I remember when Swiffer became the number one share quick clean, it was on of my first meetings with a new Walmart buyer, and they said to me, "Congratulations on kind of your share of leadership and effectively now you're the category, so, what are you going to do to grow my category?" It's a great challenge to look at it, because then you're essentially having to think through, "What am I gonna do that can either grow dollars in terms of top line sales or what I can do to grow profit dollars for the category? So, how can I grow the pie, how can I make the pie more profitable?"

I think that lens can benefit any brand. And so, you're always gonna be better suited when you're thinking about presenting your brand, or your product as where's the sales gap the category's missing, where's it gonna allow a consumer to trade up to a higher transaction or trade up to an incremental



transaction, that they're not currently capitalizing on today with their shopper base. That's certainly where you're gonna be able to fulfill a need. Big brands are gonna bring big marketing budgets. They're gonna drive traffic to store through advertising and through big brand tent pole events. Small brands can't do that. So, small brands really have to fill niche needs in terms of product functionality, new product benefits, new price points. And so, I think that's the place at least that we've very much focused on, is products and key price points and key ingredients that are missing and things like that.

So, for us, in the burrito category, as Rudi said, we look at it through multiple lenses. We look at meat versus non-meat, breakfast versus non-breakfast, dairy-free, gluten-free, non-GMO. There's functional benefit lenses, there's ingredient lenses, and you have to kind of look at what's in the category, look at the trends that are happening across categories in the natural and organic space, and kind of figure out like, what is gonna create an unlock? Plant-based protein has created a new unlock in burritos, a place we don't play in. And so, there was an opportunity that a couple new brands have brought to the retailer that's contributing incremental transactions. So, thinking about that, I think that puts you with the retailer's view of what can you do to help them grow their business.

Dan: Agreed. Rudi, your thoughts?

Rudi: Yeah. I mean, it was a great answer there, Brad. I'm just thinking in terms of the natural specialty categories, and the retailer's



basic problem is that there really isn't growth, and so, how are they gonna grow? They're really going to trade consumers up, right, from let's say Hot Pockets to natural burritos, or 47 cent Tina burrito in the Mexican food door to a two or three burrito in the natural space.

So really, what we have to offer, it's almost like the retailer already gets it upon arrival and that there really doesn't need to be very much selling on our part as to what the benefit or advantage to adding the natural categories are or would be. In a no growth environment, it's just obvious to the retailer that if they can create, let's say a natural handheld door and get mommy to buy Johnny an organic or better for you burrito at two dollars versus a Hot Pocket for a fraction of that, that they're gonna grow their sales.

Many cases, it's just very hard for the big CPG to retool a Hot Pocket and put lipstick on the pig and call it organic. Those brands aren't typically able to reverse engineer themselves. I think Frito's done a pretty good job in snacks actually, but they're certainly a unique brand. Generally, by and large, that's why the big CPGs have to acquire small brands because they have a hard time inventing it and they have a hard time reverse engineering it.

Dan: I'd go so far as to say that they don't understand what makes natural, natural. They commoditize the natural brands and the natural products and the natural consumer. That's their Achilles's heel. That is the opportunity for the small brands.



I want to go back to something you were saying, Brad. I just wanted to touch base or kind of clarify something. Actually, both of you, do you believe that the category leadership still retains or should still go to the larger CBG company? Or do you believe that the smaller natural brands have a role in terms of being a category leader? Not a category captain, a category leader.

Brad: I'm gonna give the answer of I think it's always a combination of the two, and I think the savvy retailers understand that each party brings different strengths to the table. We're obviously ... What we and other small natural organic companies can bring to the table is usually having a far more intimate understanding and sensibility of where trends are going. What is really, call it bleeding edge versus leading edge versus beginning to gain critical mass across all these trends. Whereas, the bigger companies, they are bringing sophisticated analysis and teams of people crunching data to help the retailer figure out how much space to earmark the category, and the optimum SKU mix and things like that. So, the more analytical view of the category and how to make the most of the category ... I don't think a retailer would ever go ... be very smart to go all one way and ignore the other. It's always about a blend.

But that sensibility, that on the ground in-touchness with what's going on, and the ability to tease out what's just a fad, because there's just so many ingredient trends that emerge each year, like, what's a fad that's really not going to be broadly relevant, even among really innovative natural shoppers? What's



something that is really gaining traction, and people are talking about, and more and more people continue to try, and the buzz isn't wearing off, and it's just continuing to snowball, and more and more manufacturers are getting behind it, launching SKUs? I think that's a real place where we can add value, and we add value by leading with innovation, and using the innovation as the discussion point for where to take this innovation in the category. That would be my take.

Dan: Rudi, your thoughts?

Rudi: Yeah. I agree with that. I agree with what you said, that the big CPGs don't understand natural. But, I mean, I think, you know, just because someone, you know, may have developed some sort of a bar to solve their own sort of nutritional need problem, and they're passionate about it and they know a lot about the ingredients in the bar, doesn't necessarily make them the most qualified to come help me, you know, sift through data and merchandise. I agree. You have to have a little bit of a blend of both, in order to deeply understand, you know, the category, the product, the ingredients, and so forth. Then also, you know, enough sophistication to sift through the data.

It certainly seems like, you know, the large retailers are dominating more and more. The power is getting concentrated. The buyers there have less and less time. They review the categories less and less often. That's a bit of a problem vis-à-vis Amazon and the world of Amazon, where, you know, everything is happening quickly. I would say that the retailers are going to



have to do a better job of figuring out how to make quick changes and analyze things.

Brad: The other thing I do, and it's a little bit of an insight into the people component, is one of the reasons the bigger companies rely on so much data isn't just because they have the funds to buy it and the intellectual horsepower to really, you know, get the value from all that data. Those companies, we would generally rotate people across brands and categories very frequently.

So, imagine changing brands every 18 months. It's exactly what I did the first 18 years. When you're only on a brand or category for 18 months, you have to rely on data, because you have no category experience. You have no gut instinct. You're purely relying on what you hear from consumer research and what you're seeing in market data to make decisions, if you are not connected to the retailer. Generally, those big companies have sales people that are connected to the retailer, not people at headquarters. Add to that if they're not communicating, that information flow isn't going backwards.

So, where the insight is for small companies is we can't under-appreciate how much value we can bring from just being an expert in the space, having so much knowledge of the trends, of what's going on with the consumers, what's going on with the items, the technical understanding of these different ingredients and what they do for the category. Speaking from real passion, having real knowledge, that is, I think, extraordinarily valuable and sometimes it's under-appreciated. I also think, too, when I



first came in to this organization, which is, you know, a small organization, I started with data. You know?

That's where I led when I started to put my first few retailer decks together, was just all this data and crunching all this data. You know, I think what I've seen over time and working with Rudi and being with Red's is you've got to have it, but they already have the data. They already know the story, for the most part. We want to call out the obvious stuff, make sure we're getting credit where credit is due for us. But it's about also showing the expertise in the other areas and adding value in those other ways.

Dan: And that's exactly the niche that I play in, and this is exactly why I have the podcast and everything, and why I put out all the content that I put out. So, thank you for sharing that. I agree 100%. Small natural brands are valuable, and they're under-appreciated. Retailers don't want to see a report that tells them what they already know. Savvy retailers already know how well their category is going, even before the big companies show up.

What I believe is that the small brands need to have the expertise to at least be able to provide the insight. So, let me frame it this way. A category leader is, in my mind, any brand willing and able to step up and help guide the retailer to grow profitable sales in the category. That means understanding the trends and everything else. True category management, as I've coined the term, as I would define it against traditional category management, is looking at every single thing that impacts the



consumer decision, from the consumer's perspective at shelf, and educating the retailer as to why that makes sense.

So, kind of going back to a lot of things that you said, that's the unique opportunity for a natural brand to step up and really help guide the retailer without having to spend billions of dollars, it seems like, in data and et cetera. But more importantly, I've got some strategies that I've been leveraging with small ... actually, with every retailer ... to be able to help them understand the category, about what's truly going on in the category. So, what is your contribution? Are you driving contribution dollars in the category versus sales, et cetera? One of the challenges that I run into with a lot of brands is their traditional way of looking at the category pays more attention to the volumetrics, dollars, and units.

The reality is that there's no way that you're going to compete against the Hot Pockets in terms of dollars sold, but if you isolate or drill down into organic versus non-organic, and then you pay attention to your contribution, you're responsible for all the growth in the category. And so, what I wanted to get at is by teaching brands these strategies, these fundamental strategies that don't require billions of dollars and millions of people, man hours, et cetera to put together, this is what gives you a competitive advantage. Then go one step further, and to take what both of you have said, and thank you for doing that, and then adding in those components of understanding the category, understanding the flavors, understanding the consumer.



Again, really being able to identify and isolate what makes that brand unique. Again, that's why I built that course. But ultimately, this is the opportunity for a small brand to step up and take a leadership role in the category. So, let me go a little bit further. Large brands, as I mentioned, tend to commoditize the shopper, the category, the retailer, everything else. So, they have a cookie cutter approach in terms of, "This is the way we do it, because this is the way we've always done it." I built my career on pushing big companies like that around, by understanding, more importantly, how the consumer shops the category when the consumer makes a decision. Why do they make the choices that they make? Why do they choose one brand over another brand?

As a result, I've had the privilege of pushing some of the most iconic brands around throughout my entire career. These are the strategies that I espouse and teach and profess throughout my courses, the podcast, and the content. Any more thoughts that you want to share on that? What would you suggest, or what would you recommend that a brand do to really take a leadership role in the category, and really help the retailer partner carve out that unique niche, and maybe capture more, increase foot traffic, and help that retailer compete more effectively in their market?

Brad: I think the starting point has got to be about knowing, having insights into the consumer and shopper that they don't have or that competition doesn't have.

Dan: Agreed.



Brad: And the definition of an insight is a not yet obvious discovery. Right? So, it's always something where once you've articulated it everybody nods and goes, "Yeah, yeah. That makes sense." But until you articulated it, nobody was talking about it. And so, first off, have that standard, that you don't really have an insight unless once it's articulated, once you share it, it's a not yet obvious discovery. Once you've found an insight, and I'll use pet food as an example ... In pet food, a big insight that's driven over a billion dollars of growth over the last decade in natural pet food, is that ... And you've seen many brands probably do this in advertising. The dogs descended from wolves and wolves naturally prefer meat, and as they consume a meat diet you don't see them eating plants and grains. Thereby, grain-free dog food is something that is more natural to serve your dog.

So, that's not a new fact, but the articulation of the insight of that it's a descendant of a wolf and that wolves naturally hunted and ate animals, which are composed of meat and fat, so, basically protein and fat sources and not a lot of grains and carbohydrates. Therefore, a dog should eat a higher protein diet that's grain-free. That is a real insight that then could be turned into a product idea that was totally different than anything that existed on the market before that. Before that, you know, average protein levels were 17 to 21% for dog food. These high protein diets are 30 to 35 to 40% protein, and a 50% premium over natural dog food, which was already 150% premium over conventional or 200% premium.



And so, understanding the insight, being able to translate that into a product design that actually solves for the insight is key. The latter part is really important. It's not just about having insight, it's about translating its execution. At Nutro we stumbled when we tried to do this the first time. You know, we thought it was just about not having grains. We missed the real meat part of the story. We missed the high protein part of the story, because we were looking at the market data. The market data was coding the segment as grain-free.

So, silly enough, taking it that literally, we designed a grain-free proposition, and we saw some brands were launching what we should have been launching. We said, "You know what? That's not really necessary. It's really about this." We were just talking to ourselves at the end of the day. Then eventually we got something else that was designed right and brought it out. It's getting back to that not yet obvious discovery, that insight, and then making sure that the product truly delivers, you know, on that.

Dan: I want to go back to what you just said, "just talking to ourselves." That's what I'm getting at in terms of the way big brands look at things. They have a focus group. They do panels. They do research. It's sort of a bubble, an echo chamber. Whereas, if a small brand can go talk to the consumers who are actually buying their products and understand, "Why did you buy this? How do you use it? When you take it home, how do you share?" You know, all those questions.



What's great about this is to be able to leverage digital and social media to answer some of these questions. I did a very informal survey for a brand I worked with several years ago, where we did an informal Facebook study. It was not scientific by any stretch, but we got a lot of the great testimonials and insights out of it that you guys have shared with me in some of the stuff that you've provided to me. I was able to bake that into their presentations, but more importantly, because of the unique ways the consumer's communicated, "Here's how we use that product," that helped that brand gain incremental distribution, and essentially got that product in every single one of the retail stores all the way across the country, which led to more growth and earn and earn and earn.

So, that's ... Thank you for saying that. So, talking to ourselves versus actually talking to the people that buy our customers. And again, I think that's what makes natural, natural, what makes us unique, is that smaller brands, going back to what you guys said, are able to innovate based around what their consumers want, what they need, rather as opposed to thinking of a creative way to carve out a new space. Great example with the pet food, because you're so busy with your head down, paying attention to the research that you're not paying attention to the origin of dogs. So, anyhow, thank you for sharing that.

I really appreciate you guys coming on and sharing all your great insights. Can you talk a little bit about Red's? And then after we do that, I'm going to give you the opportunity to ask me a



question about a specific bottleneck you'd like me to help you solve. So, can you talk a little bit about Red's? Rudi, do you want to go first?

Rudi: Sure. So, I'll give you the quick Mike story, Mike Adair, out of college. Out of college, became a mutual fund salesman. He was absolutely great at it. He's great at almost everything he does. He was so good that they, at age 26, shipped him to the Pacific Northwest, he's from Connecticut, to open up that division. While he was there he adopted a dog from a shelter named Red. Eventually went in and quit his job because, as he says, selling mutual funds is soulless work. He absolutely hated it. Gave it all up. Went back east, went to a business entrepreneurship program at Dartmouth. Those programs typically have a Capstone project where you're launching a company.

So, he decided to ... it kind of started as a joke ... launch his ... He loved his wife's burrito. He loved his dog Red. So, why not launch a burrito company and name it after my dog Red? Then he fell in love with that idea and launched the company. Flash forward four years he failed with a big Chipotle sized burrito that was really high in price, fat, calories, and sodium, and then hit the re-set button, retooled it, downsized it to 300 calorie range, and kind of found a lot of success. Now last year he brought me on and at the same time opened up a new factory to self-manufacture. Product was being co-packed. So, that's come with some challenges.



Pretty much every brand that I've worked on that was what I call a rocket brand, whether it's Terra Chips or Alexia, had growing pains throughout its course. Just since last May when we opened, we've put on a second line to catch up. Now just recently we put on a second shift to catch up. So, explosive growth. It's not without its challenges. It's negative unemployment where we are in South Dakota. But he wanted to be able to make the best burrito possible, and in order to do that we had to self-manufacture, make the tortillas fresh in the plant, turn them into burritos, and hand roll them right away, and then flash freeze them.

That's kind of the Red's story that gets you to where we are.

Dan: Rudi, you told me you guys had some new items coming out in January. Can you talk a little bit about that, because that's about the time that this podcast is going to be released?

Rudi: Yeah.

Dan: And I'd love to celebrate them and highlight them.

Rudi: We're really excited about being the first in the single serve meal space with rice cauliflower entrees. We introduced a chicken and rice cauliflower bowl earlier in the year, and we got such an overwhelming response from consumers that were asking us for other flavors, and a retailer was actually telling us that they thought we could pivot out of Mexican and be more than Mexican. So, we thought that would be the ideal platform to test that out.



So, Brad did some research. We've got three new flavors coming out: chicken teriyaki, tikka masala, right? Then a vegetarian one, a chickpea paella. So, we'll have a full shelf of rice cauliflower entrees, and we were just at NFRA, and one retailer when I walked in at the end of the second day, retailer said, "This is brilliant." He said, "This is the best innovation I've seen in two days of companies coming in here with innovation." He was meeting with all the big CPGs of the world. So, kudos to Brad and his R and D efforts and team on an exciting platform we've got coming out.

Dan: I've got to tell you, the new packaging, very impressive. You guys have really upped your game. I agree that this is definitely an opportunity for you to not be a one horse wonder. Not that you guys were before, but an opportunity for you guys to expand and grow. Again, this is true innovation. This is providing customers with something they want to buy, and I think you guys have absolutely hit the nail on the head. Great. I appreciate that.

Of course, I'll include a link to Red's on the podcast web page and in the show notes. So, thank you for sharing that. By the way, I've been looking at your website. Your website is great. I love the redesign. So much better than it certainly was before. But one of the things I really like about it is consumers are buying things different today. They're shopping different. They go to the store, they pick up their smart phone, and then they start looking at the product, going beyond the four corners of the package.



One of the things that they're going to do is they'll go to your website, and really begin to understand the company, the flavor, the mission, a little bit about the brand. So, I think you guys did a great job retooling that. Brad, any thoughts that you want to add?

Brad: No, I think the ... Well, I think the one step of the journey we're in right now is how do we start to better tell the story of who we are? Really, the website is our first big step towards how we talk about Red's moving forward, or at least to the consumer, and tell the story of Mike and how people understand how and where we source ingredients, and give a level of transparency to where we source ingredients from, let people into our production facility via videos and pictures so that they can see, you know, exactly what's going on.

So, to me, when we did that, the main principal as we figure out how to communicate better with consumers is just to be transparent. You know, and be a bit vulnerable in terms of sharing your people, sharing more behind the scenes. Again, that is something that big brands absolutely will not, cannot do for a variety of reasons. And so, it's very much limited to the functionality of the product. There's really a people story behind, you know, Red's, behind all small natural and organic start-ups. That humanity is a real differentiator. To your point, it connects with people and helps them not just find a product that they might love, but find a mission they might love at the same time.



Dan: Well done. Well said. That's exactly why, you know, that's what makes natural, natural. Thank you so much for going in through that and sharing that story, because that resonates. I agree with you that being able to reach a customer where they're at, being able to tell the right kind of story, that's the opportunity for you to stand out on a crowded shelf, for you to be differentiated against your competitors, especially the big guys.

Is there a specific bottleneck that I could help you with? I mentioned when I talked to Rudi that this is something I've been adding to the end of every show. So, is there something that you guys have that maybe I could help, a bottleneck or a problem that I could help you solve?

Brad: I'll share one, and then I'm sure Rudi's got one. For us, in this story, we talked a lot about product innovation and packaging, and we're kind of well on our way on those fronts, but in terms of telling our story in the right way and the right vehicles and tactics, and driving incremental household trial, really looking to figure out what are the right tactics to pursue next. Because most of the big brand toolbox of tools don't really apply for how we would tell our story. And so, obviously social media and things like that are places to play, but it's really more of case studies of brands that have, you know, activated those vehicles in a meaningful way, not just in a way that looks cool when you go to their Instagram or Facebook page or whatever, but truly are building a brand, reaching new households, driving trial among



new households. That's really a tension point we'd love some help with.

Dan: Rudi, do you have something that you'd like to add before I answer Brad's question?

Rudi: Okay. So, this was a question around what could you help with, or ...

Dan: Right.

Rudi: I do have one tip or trick that I would throw in before I pivot to that, would be, you know, regardless of how much data you can buy or what data you buy, I would encourage everybody to tackle both IRI and Nielsen, well, and SPINS, and make sure that your items are all coded properly and that they're footing to the right category, because while you may not even buy your data, your competitors are out there presenting your data, unbeknownst to you. I present my competitors' data, just because that's the way it works.

So, when you don't have your items coded right, your brand is not necessarily getting all the credit it deserves. And so, even if you bought a lot of Nielsen data, it might not be presented right at IRI. So, one tip or trick I would suggest is to make sure that your items are coded right with all the different organizations.

Dan: Well said.



Rudi: We've had issues with that on our own, and even let's say a retailer like Target is going to have a specific way to look at a category with IRI. So, even within the individual retailers you need to be sure that they're looking at it right, and that you're falling into the proper categories. So, be aware and understand all of that, and how the retailer's looking at the data, regardless of what you're buying or presenting.

Dan: Well said. Let me address that and then I want to get back to what Brad said, and then your tip too. Thank you for sharing that.

I agree with you 100%. I have yet to see a taxonomy or product hierarchy from any of the database providers that accurately represents, or identifies the product or looks at the category rather, from the standpoint of the consumer. I've got some strategies around that. I'm building many courses around it. This is something that's near and dear to my heart, and this is something that I help small brands with. I've got a really creative solution to help brands gain a significant competitive advantage with this strategy.

In fact, in full disclosure, I was recently invited to be on the board of advisors for a company to solve this exact problem. But the point is that yes, you need to make sure that the data's clean. Garbage in, garbage out. It is, in my opinion, the brand's responsibility. Back when I was a category captain for Unilever and Kimberly-Clarke, working with the largest retailers in the country, I would actually go in and talk to the data provider and say, "This needs to be coded this way, et cetera." You know they



don't have that line of sight. They don't have that luxury to be able to do that with every single brand.

So, again, I've got strategies around that. But to your point, that is something that every brand needs to do to be able to make sure that when you're presenting the data, it's as clean and as accurate as possible, so that you're giving better insights. This is the opportunity for small natural brands, something that big brands overlook. So, thank you for sharing that. Rudi, did you have a question about a bottleneck I could help solve, and then I'll add yours to Brad's.

Rudi: Yeah. I mean, you know, it seems like no matter how long we do this we're always presented with new challenges that are not always so clear and evident. So, we have an item, a breakfast burrito called egg and cheddar. That item's currently 78% organic because we couldn't find someone to scramble the eggs that was certified organic. Well, now we have. So, we want to upgrade the item from 78% organic to USDA certified organic.

Well, along the way we also decided that we have a ranchero sauce in there, and that may be calling it egg and cheddar is not exactly the right positioning, and that maybe the flavor profile description ought to change to something like ... What are we saying, Brad? Egg and ranchero sauce or something like that?

Brad: Yes.



Rudi: So, what are we allowed to do? What are best practices for evolving this item with or without a UPC code change to 100% certified organic? Category manager asked me, "When we upgrade to organic am I going to do a new UPC code?" I said, "Well, I don't think so. I don't know exactly what the rules are, but I'll get back to you."

So, what are best practices? Can we change this egg and cheddar item from 78 to 100% organic without a UPC change, and in the process can we change the profile designation as well? Is that a separate UPC change to address? There's an awful lot going on there, but it's very expensive and disruptive to your business to change UPC codes and your retailer, on the one hand. On the other hand, there are rules and obligations and issues around making changes.

Dan: Well, I can't speak to the legality, and I can't speak to the rules in terms of at what point what percentage, whatever, do you have to change. I mean, I know people that can do that, and I can connect you with certain people certainly, but I don't know what the rules are in terms of if you change this, and you have to have a new UPC or whatever. But I can speak to the beginning of your question, which ties into what I was going to say for Brad, and that is understanding what the consumers want

So, let me address it from that point of view, and again, I can connect you with people that can answer the question from a legal standpoint. What are the requirements, how does that work? Let's back up a little bit. Organic's organic. Okay? From the



point of a consumer. I don't know of any consumer that walks up to a shelf and says, "Well, that's 50% to 60% organic or 70 to 90%." It's organic or it's not, right? It's whole grain or it's not. When I say it that way, looking at things from the point of view of the consumer, that's the way, I think, that everything needs to be addressed.

And so, the ability to say that it is USDA organic certified, I think, is tremendous. That clears up a lot of that, makes it a lot easier. But let's go one step further. Your website looks great. I think that one of the things that you guys should do is own your customer. What I mean by that is develop a digital strategy to have your customer, build a community around your customer, but have your customer reside on your website. What I mean by that is that if I go in ... And, by the way, I love your product. But if I go into my local retailer and I buy a burrito, you guys have no line of sight to me or the fact that I bought the product or that I like it or don't like it or whatever. You don't know why I chose this product over your competition and vice versa.

But if you can develop a community, a loyal, evangelistic community, around your customer, by developing an email list through your website, and be able to survey them and be able to communicate them, and be able to bring them in to your community, and then you can do things like test your products. What's new? What's different? You can, as you were asking, Brad, you know, you can get to understand what's unique about the consumer? You can say, "Okay, we're coming out with a new



product, and I want to see what everyone thinks about it. So, before we give it to retail, if you want one, I'll send you one. I need your input, your feedback."

And so, that's how you can do some real life testing through your website, through your community. That will help answer and address a lot of those other questions. And then the insights that you'll get from that are priceless. So, you know, back in our old CPG days, you know, we learned to look at the consumer as head of household, female, 2.3 kids, all that other stuff. This allows you to go much further beyond that. This strategy would allow you to understand, "Are they a vegan? Are they ... Do they do Cross Fit? Do they do hiking? Do they have what kind of family? What are their needs? When do they consume their product?"

One of the things that you might find is that the consumers in your community, in your loyal community, might consume the product different than you're thinking about. You know, Brad, your example where not putting the meat in the dog food, maybe you might learn something there that you wouldn't learn someplace else, that, by the way, in a focus group people are probably going to tell you what they think you want to hear, not necessarily talking to the people that are actual live customers for you.

So, you know, if you go back into the store, in the aisle, and you were able to talk to everyone or at least most everyone, that bought your product, "Why did you buy it? Why did you make that decision?" Then your competitors' product, "Why did you buy



it? Why did you choose that product over this product?" Then you were able to follow them through the register and understand what's in their market basket. That's the best information you can get. That's one of the things that can, again, differentiate you between other companies, and being able to provide that level of insight.

So, you can do that, a lot of that, through social media, through digital. But again, you've got to be able to own that customer on your website, and be able to build that nurturing community. I'm looking at your Twitter page, and you don't have very many followers, and you're not following that many people. You talk about what's going on with your product, but it would be great to see more interaction with consumers saying, "This is how I used it. This is the need that you solved. This is why I love your product over something else." Does that help?

Rudi: Yes. Yes. It does. No. I appreciate it. Good suggestions.

Dan: Yeah. It's again, it's what makes natural, natural. It's going way, way, way beyond. It's what the big brands do. The big brands, again, they're going to show up at the focus panel and say, "Well, here's what 92% of the people liked this product because of this, and you need to buy it because of that." But now you're getting an opportunity to take real life comments from live consumers, and then leverage that at retail.

Again, the free Turnkey Sale Story Strategies course, that's what this is about. Becoming an expert in your brand and who your



consumer is, how it's shopped, how it's merchandised, everything about it. Then becoming an expert in your competition, all of your competitors. Not just the natural brands, everybody, including Hot Pockets, including all the mainstream brands. And then becoming an expert in your retailer. This is where you guys really excel. And then being able to leverage all of that, sprinkle in some fact-based sales, and then when you sit down with the retailer, now you've got a compelling story. Now you've got a story that really resonates with them, and that's far more important than showing up with a bunch of charts and graphs and stuff like that, and saying, "Look, I was able to print this off my own printer. Aren't you impressed?"

No. They're not going to be impressed with that. They're going to be impressed with the fact that you can tell a story with the data, a story that goes beyond the tables and charts. Your thoughts?

Rudi: That makes a lot of sense.

Brad: Yeah. I mean, it's another way of just being close to the consumer and getting insight that you can use to optimize your products and how you go to market. It's a great suggestion.

Dan: Exactly. Yeah. That's the beauty of it. That's what big brands can't do, like you said. Can you imagine surveying every sailor on an aircraft carrier to say, "Why do you eat this whatever?" At this point, you know, even if it's unscientifically, even if it's unscientific at first, you'll be able to divulge insights. And then what's cool about it, then when you guys decide that you want to



come up with a unique ranch sauce to put on this particular product, then you've actually got something behind it instead of it being a guess.

In other words, back to your story where you said a retailer wanted you to come up with a breakfast burrito, and you guys went in, you did some quick research. What about this? What if you had a loyal community? And you could say, "Hey, guys. We're thinking about doing this. What do you think about it? What do you think it should be called? What flavors would you like to see involved and baked or included in this product?" Then you've got something that they're actually going to want to buy. So, anyhow.

Well, thank you so much for sharing that. Anything else you want to share? Any other tips, tricks, ideas, strategies?

Brad: No. I think this has been great discussion.

Dan: Well, I appreciate your coming on. Thank you so much for everything you've shared.

Rudi: Thank you so much. Appreciate the time.

Brad: Thanks for having us.

Dan: I want to thank Brad and Rudi for coming on today, and for sharing their insights, for helping us understand how mainstream strategies can help grow natural businesses. I talk to and work with a lot of natural brands who want nothing to do with



mainstream strategies. The reality is if you had an opportunity to learn from someone else's mistakes, wouldn't you listen?

While it's true that the products are natural or unique and different, there are some similarities. For example, you're putting your products onto retailers' shelves, right? So are mainstream brands. So, why not leverage the strategies that work best for mainstream companies, but yet with a natural twist? That's what my focus is. That's what the focus of my content is, this podcast, and everything else I do, including my courses.

This week's free downloadable guide is the Essential New Item Checklist, the recipe for success. The growth engine for every new brand is innovation. Being able to introduce new products to new consumers requires getting them on store shelves. This is what this checklist is about. This is the heart of everything I do. My mission is to make our healthy way of life more accessible by getting your products onto more retailers' shelves and into the hands of more shoppers.

In this podcast episode, we talked a lot about new items, gaining distribution, and making sure that customers can easily find your products. You can get this downloadable guide in the show notes and on the podcast webpage by going to [brandsecretsandstrategies.com/session109](https://www.brandsecretsandstrategies.com/session109). Thank you for listening. I look forward to seeing you in the next episode.



Reds All Natural <https://www.redsallnatural.com>

This episode's FREE downloadable guide

New product innovation is the lifeblood of every brand. New products fuel sustainable growth, attracts new shoppers, and increases brand awareness. Know the critical steps to get your product on more retailer's shelves and into the hands of more shoppers.

CLICK HERE TO DOWNLOAD YOUR FREE STRATEGIC GUIDE: [The Essential New Item Checklist - The Recipe For Success](#)

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.