



BRAND SECRETS AND STRATEGIES PODCAST #126

Hello and thank you for joining us today. This is the Brand Secrets and Strategies Podcast #126

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. Small brands tend to overlook the importance of goal setting. They're the primary component of a solid business plan. They need to contain clear, specific, and timely objectives that can be measured. Your goal should be incorporated into your business strategy. This is something that all brands struggle with, especially small brands. Doing this right could be the difference between how long you're going to be around; a week, a month, a



year, a decade, or even longer. Doing this right can add rocket fuel to your growth.

Think about it. What do you want to be? What do you want your brand to be? Do you want to disrupt the category? Do you want to become a category leader? Do you want to be the brand that retailers call and say, "How soon can we get your product on the shelves?" Or do you just want to survive? No matter how you answer that question, there are a lot of things to consider. There are a lot of different things that you need to be able to put in place to reach any one of those goals.

For example, if you want to grow your brand, you need the right team. If you want to grow your brand, you need to make sure you've got the right retail strategy. And more importantly, how do you make sure that your selling story is clear and compelling and told with the same passion and enthusiasm as it's told by the founder? In addition to that, how do you ensure that your selling story is the same across every part of your sales funnel?

This is exactly why I launched the Free Turnkey Sales Story Strategies course. It's critical that your selling story resonates across every part of your sales funnel and that it aligns with your core customer, your target customer. So now that you have an objective, what are the fundamental things that you need to have in place to achieve that objective? What are your goals? And when you break them down, what are the things you need to do first, second, and so on? Those need to be included and baked into your business strategy. The more effective your business



strategy, the more effective you're going to be able to drive your business forward. Your business strategy, when done right, can also act as guardrails to keep you from going off track, to keep you focused on what's really important.

That's what the focus of this podcast is about. And at the end of this episode, Dustin shares with me his two most pressing bottlenecks. They're probably the same bottlenecks that you're wrestling with. You're going to want to listen to the end for actionable advice that you can use to drive your business.

Now, before I begin, I want to give a quick shout-out to a listener. Scott Jensen, the CEO of Rhythm Superfoods and Stubb's, said, "Listening to a half dozen of your podcasts with the breadth of them, as many as they are, you can listen to half of them and get an MBA in entrepreneurship." Thanks, Scott. I really appreciate that.

Scott and I had a great conversation on podcast episode 78 about how he uses the strategies that the big brands use to help him drive sales and compete more effectively and naturally. These are the same strategies that helped him stand out on a crowded shelf and help him become a category leader. I also want to remind you that at the end of each episode is a free downloadable guide. I always try to include one easy-to-download, quick-to-digest strategy that you can instantly adopt and make your own, one that you can use to grow sustainable sales and compete more effectively. Remember, the goal here is to get your product on more retailer shelves and into the hands of more shoppers.



If you like the podcast, share with a friend, subscribe, and leave a review. Now, here's Dustin.

Dan: Dustin, thank you for coming on today. Can you please start by telling us about yourself, and your journey to Ka-Pop!.

Dustin: Well, I started my career in investment banking actually in New York. I was with Goldman Sachs and so I got a really strong financial background. One thing that's super interesting I think that's helped differentiate me versus others in the marketplace is I take a very financially minded approach to marketing, to CPG, to branding. That really has helped me grow in my career.

But after that with a few other stops I went to Kellogg Business School in Chicago where I had the opportunity to grow substantially with incredible people, learned an incredible amount of information.

From there I went to General Mills, my first stint in CPG. I had two experiences there that really have set the foundation for the rest of my career. The first is I actually started on a joint venture. So I wasn't in their mainline office, I was off in another building. We did 8th Continent. 8th Continent was a soymilk competitor to Silk.

At the time I think it had the 10% market share to Silk's 80% market share. But we were number two in the market to give you an idea of the marketplace at that time for soymilk.



But we were innovating clinically, we were entrepreneurial, it wasn't the big CPG engine. And that's what I got experienced in, that kind of entrepreneurial thinking early.

They sold off that business while I was there. I went from the smallest division to the biggest division with cereal. It's a big G, it's called the General Mills with all the cereals and I was on the adult cereal brands and I had the unique opportunity to work on Chex.

Now at the time, Chex's 80% of their volume was in the Chex holiday mix season. People loved making Chex mix. The problem was they self-cannibalized because they launched a prepackaged Chex Mix in the snacks division. And on top of that, they really wanted to get people to eat Chex as cereal again. So the challenge to me was how do you de-seasonalize Chex and get people to eat Chex as cereal.

Back in 2007, so keep in mind the time, we came up with this cookie idea called Gluten-Free. Back then people didn't really know what that meant but we launched a Gluten-Free Chex. We were the first to launching national gluten-free CPG project including, the Gluten-Free Chex.

The reason it was impactful, not only because we came up with this great idea that differentiated ourselves and significantly changed the landscape, but it really impacted consumer's lives.



So a story that I love telling, it's my favorite story is a consumer wrote us a letter. Back then we got real letters, this wasn't like now with all emails. It was a real letter and it said the following. "We bought a box of rice Chex for our daughter who has Celiacs and that night we heard her crying in her bedroom. We walked upstairs and we found her under her sheets in a tent crying eating a bowl of Chex cereal and she was crying because it was the first time she could have real people food." Not the crazy stuff they had to go find at random stores. This wasn't now where it's easier to be vegan or easier to have a gluten-free lifestyle.

So I really focused my career on doing that. I had a couple other stints. I worked at WhiteWave on Horizon Organic and had a great experience there. I went to work for some private equities. Went to AVID Nutrition and helped grow their divisions with ZonePerfect and EAS.

But ultimately decided to launch Ka-Pop! because my belief in what healthy eating should be, and I never wanted to compromise. So everything about me and about this brand is about authenticity, simplicity and joy. I wanted to bring that back to the snack category.

I wanted to bring that back to nutrition, to natural foods, get away from this serious no, no, nos and it doesn't have to be a trade off. Nutrition and health and joy don't need to be a trade off. Eating healthy doesn't need to be a trade off from having fun. Food is fun and that's what we create. Our branding is fun. Our food is fun and the nutrition is real.



Dan: I appreciate you sharing that, and I couldn't agree with you more. So to kind of back up a little bit, I couldn't agree with you more that food should be fun. We spend more time thinking about what apps to watch or whatever than we do thinking about the food we need.

In the salty snack category, it is so crowded and there's so much noise and people don't understand what's real food, and we'll get into that in a minute.

But to go back a little bit, gluten-free Chex, I remember when they ... Actually back up even further, dating myself because I'm older than you, 8th Continent. I remember them well. Actually I was doing projects for WhiteWave at the time.

Dustin: Yeah.

Dan: That kind of helped them compete more effectively against you guys. So even when I was working for Spends I was actually kind of farmed out to them, so I was working with them.

So point being is I understand the landscape very well, and I've done a lot of work in that category with other brands. What an interesting category. So much opportunity there.

Again, a lot of noise. So you got to Chex and you're dealing with cereal, had some opportunities to do a lot of work with Kelloggs as far as other brands as well, natural brands. Interesting category that has really shot itself in the foot because consumers



got smart and they realized that they only needed to wait till the product went on sale and then buy it.

Dustin: Yeah.

Dan: So pulled all the margins out of the category. So I'm sure you're a part of that, so we might get into that a little bit. But any other than other brands, et cetera. All brands I'm familiar with, you've got a great background.

What I think is really interesting is Kellogg School of Business MBA, that is really prestigious for anyone who doesn't understand what that means.

Dustin: Thank you.

Dan: Yeah, that's a big, big, big deal. In fact, you get an MBA from them and you're guaranteed a nice paycheck some place, which is great. So kudos to you and your Wall Street background.

Dustin: Thank you.

Dan: So you've taken that, and you've leveraged that to develop your own brand. So, why in the heck did you decide to become an entrepreneur? What were you thinking? No, I'm serious. What would cause you to go down this path because hey, this is not easy.

Dustin: It's a great question, and I get asked that fairly frequently. Having been in this now, this journey, and we'll get into this more



I'm sure, but this has been the hardest journey of my entire life on a personal and professional front.

So, I'm so happy I did it. But I definitely walked into it a little bit more blind than my experience would relate. But here's what I would say is I have a very unique gift that I am so fortunate where I'm able to take strategy and apply it. I think there's a lot of good people at strategy who are good at strategy. I think there's a lot of good people at execution.

I think I'm able to build strategies and then execute them quickly. Additionally, I had that great financial background. I've been so fortunate to be trained at some of the best campuses in the world not only Kellogg School of Business but Goldman Sachs and General Mills and WhiteWave and all these incredible organizations that I've worked for. I've really taken all the good and learned some of the bad.

But to get to your ultimate question, I like having the flexibility to grow and move fast. One of the downsides we all know with big CPG is they move slowly, very boxed thinking. There's very strategic ways that they have to grow, they have to launch brands that are going to get X% ACV or one X profitability. These type of things don't hamstring small businesses.

So, I got very good at going into people's brands whether big companies for a few years before I launched Ka-Pop!. I was working for private equities as interim CEO or CMO of different companies and I got very good into going to your brands or



someone else's company and saying, "Here is how you fix it. Here is how we grow it and let's do that."

People would always say, "Why don't you go do your own thing?" I would always say, "I'm very good at helping you, I don't have any good ideas. I'm not the idea guy for a company. I can help you fix your company."

I was also very pessimistic, although I like to call it realistic, about ideas. So when I would hear about an idea I'd usually find the 10 reasons why it's bad. You brought this up, every category now, there's not a single category in the store that is not fragmented or volatile or competitive. So there was that factor.

But to answer your story, one day I had a very serious injury where I tore my pec, AC joint and bicep all at once. I'm a very health eater. I work out seven days a week. But I wasn't going to be able to work out for six plus months and I let my nutrition slip a little bit, which meant for me eating more popcorn, healthier, better for you chips that aren't really that good for you.

I realized the nutrition was lacking. There is no, it's all fillers, there's no good vitamins. So I went into my pantry and I had ancient grains. I'll go into ancient grains more. But these are incredible nutritious grains that have never been modified. They're so nutrient dense. I said I wonder if you could pop this.

Similar to every other entrepreneur out there, it was I thought there could be a better way and I popped it on my stove and I



got these burned bag, burned little nuggets of popped sorghum and popped amaranth and popped quinoa.

It looked terrible but it tasted delicious. It was filled with nutrients. It was like having your cake and eating it too. Then my kids loved it. My neighbor's kids loved it. People at Expo West loved it, and I knew I was on to something and I decided to pursue this full time.

The journey, that was in October of 2015, we launched in April of 2017. We just celebrated our one year anniversary of launch. So it's been a journey for sure. It's been an incredible journey.

Dan: Well congratulations. A year, that's really cool. To back up a little bit, yeah it's a very different thing to run your own brand than to try to start someone else's brand. The big thing is that one, working for a big company you don't have psychology. The sort of insurance when ... I'm just kidding, I mean because it is a lot of brain damage at times as you know. A lot of stress and et cetera.

But the other thing is you get to go home at night and turn out the lights and relax and stuff. Whereas, if it's your own brand, you own it. So it is kind of 24/7. So I want to get into that a little bit more.

When you decided to transition from helping other brands and to working on your own brand by itself, what was the impetus behind that? What caused you to say, "Hmm, my kids like it. Let's see if I can make this work."



Dustin: You know one of the frustrations that everyone has, I think, that work for somebody else at any stage in your life is you always have the what if I could do it this way. Or what if I could tweak it in this fashion.

One of my frustrations with the natural food industry as a whole is there's a lot of me-too products out there. I think there's a lot of banality in the branding and the execution. It's not to say there's not a lot of great brands out there, there are.

But I think overall we have the 87th Kombucha or the 97th nut butter, right? I really wanted to do something unique and I was actually interim CEO of a company at the time, and I had the opportunity to do that full-time. They were ready to actually relocate their company to Boulder for me where I lived. I was commuting to their company every week in California.

I realized as I came up with this idea that number one, I needed to get proof of concept. I don't mean in launching it and testing it, I meant really making sure that I'm not the only one who thought this was a good idea.

People get hang up by these large research and how much it's going to cost. I got mom groups in my neighborhood, bought them wine and said, "Come on over, let's try this project and let me know what you think." And did research that way.

I took it to Expo West because I was in the industry, and this is an advantage I do have. I met with the buyer of WholeFoods as a



friend and said, "Hey, I got this burnt ziploc bag of crap here. What do you think?" And explained the thought process behind it.

I met with some private equity friends. So I was able and fortunate to get everything from this sophisticated, professional opinions all the way down to the consumers, kids, adults, families, to help me understand do I have a concept that could work, do I have a platform that's expandable, then can I make this into a real business.

The funny thing is though, I had mentioned, this was a popped sorghum product. It was a pop sorghum product from October 2015 to January of 2018. Keep in mind I launched in April of 2018. My product is hopefully people are starting to know they popped chip.

Dan: Yeah.

Dustin: I have to pivot pretty last minute and we can go into that. Sometimes the product you're working towards or the idea that you have to not only know when to run through the wall, take the feedback, ignore some, go with others. But when it's time to pivot and really take your business to the next level.

I can guarantee you all the success that we've had would not have been possible had we not made that pivot.

Dan: Got you. I appreciate you sharing that. In fact, I do want to get into that more. That's interesting. One of the things I didn't frame



is that I've had the benefit of that mainstream CPG experience. You were talking about all the me-too brands.

One of the challenge that I faced, Dustin, is that a lot of the brands that go into our category of management is they don't have that experience. What I find is that we were trained in a certain way where we learned how to do things a very specific way. They worked on the foundation and they helped us build that foundation so that we understand how products are grown or how to gain distribution or how to compete more effectively at retail.

So leveraging that gave you, I think, a lot of great insights. So as you're using that or leveraging that experience and building it into this, again, deciding to do it on your own, what did you find that was lacking or did you find anything that was lacking in terms of the experiences that you had previously to help you get to this point and then of course I want to get into the pivot.

Dustin: Yeah. As I mentioned at the beginning, this has been the hardest, most humbling job I've ever had and that's with someone coming in with 15 years of experience, right?

Dan: Right.

Dustin: Having been a CEO. I've been a CMO. I've been a CCO. I've been a brand manager and a salesman. I've done all the roles and I've learned more in the past two years than those 15 years combined.



And I'll get into what those things were like. I think there's a couple of factors. One of the big CPG, and to pivot a bit or digress a bit, it's actually interesting because a lot of big CPG people want to go work for startups or want to go to a small company.

They see the sex appeal and they see how fun it can be but it has a very high failure rate of big CPG people going straight to small companies because it is a huge learning curve.

The best way I can relate that is I was running companies that were two million dollars in sales. The gap between a two million dollar company and one that's zero dollars is infinitely wide.

Dan: Sure.

Dustin: So one that's making a hundred million dollars to zero, don't get me started. So, one of the things that big CPG, I'll give it ... I'll first talk about the pros. One thing that really helps you is understand what the different pieces to the business are, how to think about a PNL, how important trade is, how to work with the sales organization, how to effectively build a product, how to think about branding, all the kind of standard principles that are critical for building a company.

What it doesn't train you for though is to rely completely on yourself and in a world where this industry unfortunately is not set up very well to support small businesses, which is incredibly ironic because how much this industry has grown recently is all driven by small natural food companies.



The entirety of the growth in the food industry, if not 90% of it, has been driven by small natural food companies. Yet the industry while there's plenty of agencies and people out there to support these companies, the overall infrastructure is not built to help support small companies.

Dan: True.

Dustin: That's why you lose so much money and that's why unfortunately you almost have to sell to a strategic in the long run to be successful because the infrastructure is not there.

That's been the biggest learning that I've struggled with in this company is constantly fighting what I call mediocrity. It's constantly fighting gaps in the marketplace. It's constantly fighting for my fair share of attention. That's with everything going great for a company.

So, there's days where I'm literally brought to tears on how hard we're fighting and clawing our way from LTL shipments that can't get dropped off and you're trying to get an Oreo launched or people treating you 10th in line because you're small and insignificant, right?

It's hard and it's humbling and it's scary. But that's why I think as much as product taste, quality is important, perseverance, dedication and passion is more important, being convicted. That's why you can't be mediocre. That's why you can't be okay with that. You have to fight and fight and fight to be successful.



Dan: I appreciate you sharing all that. I want to go one step further. The other thing about big CPG is they're very siloed. And they move people around and the goal within a big CPG company as far as the incentive structure is that you get in a position, you're there for about 18 months. You need to gain X amount of profit, then you move to another position, et cetera. You don't have that continuity.

To your point, it's not your problem once you're almost ready to move into a different position maybe the same company et cetera. Also you're right, they don't ... A CPG turns out people fast, which is good and bad. But coming into small business, you're absolutely right.

One of the frustrations that I have, the sole reason that I hang my shingles and started down this path, is to fill that gap. So I feel your pain and I listen to other brands share the exact same thing with me.

They're taught that if they take a can top on reporting and do a retailer, that's enough. I would probably say that that's a waste of paper and ink. If you don't know what it means or how to understand it and you certainly don't want to be telling your competitor, "Look, I'm just like everyone else on the shelf." Or like you said, the me-too brands.

So, I really appreciate you sharing that. This is exactly why I wanted to have you on the podcast. This podcast is different because instead of talking about wow I've got a great product



and my mom likes it, et cetera, let's talk about the fact that this industry does, like you said and I appreciate you saying this and I agree 100%, does a lousy job of helping and supporting the brands that are out there.

I think it's a huge mistake to teach brands that your checkbook is far more valuable to you as far as a resource than anything else in your toolbox. You've got that big CPG experience and experience from other companies. So you have a leg up in the sense that you understand or know things that they don't know.

So let's talk about a little bit of that. When you're talking about gaps, how we're fighting mediocrity, the gaps et cetera, I love the way you put that, I couldn't agree with you more. Can you give me some illustrations or stories around that and how you were able to cross over that threshold or how you were able to defeat that?

Dustin: Yeah. So for those listening, I have a big grin on my face because I'm trying to think about how to do this as a small company without giving too specific of examples for those out there to make it even harder on us.

Dan: Right.

Dustin: But I will give you some illustrations. Before I do that though, one thing I want to say is regardless of the mediocrity or regardless of the challenges out there, it is incumbent on each one of us



whether you're a big CPG, as a small company to always put your best foot forward and drive hard.

Dan: That's true.

Dustin: Then it's obvious, and people get that I know, but there's a difference between saying I gave up my best or doing everything you can to drive through that wall. So examples I'll give really around I think there's big distributors in our world, right, and they to be fair to them, they have hundreds, thousands of brands they're working on. They have hundreds of new brands that come in the door probably every day that are like us that want to drive it.

And I don't think they have the man or woman power to support all the initiatives that we want to do because hey, guess what the most important brand in the world is to me right now? It's Ka-Pop!, and it's the only thing I think about.

You said earlier about the 24/7, one of the side effects of this job is an incredible amount of insomnia. So, I think about it all the time and so trying to get UNFI or KeHe's attention and making sure that they are giving you the support you need and they've created great programs like Next, for instance, with UNFI and we've been able and fortunate to go to some of the D.C.S and present our brands and get in front of them and do a show to explain to them why we're important. But you have to fight for that.



They're not going to just say, "Hey, we've got your back." You have to fight for their attention. You have to build those relationships. Every chance I have to create a relationship with somebody at a distributor, at a retailer, my team will tell you, we do everything in our power whether ... We all have a lot of fun stuff with t-shirts and swag and we try and participate in their programs. We do everything in our power to make their lives easier.

So, they're just not set up. Retailers are not set up to handle 50,000 independent brands. They have 50,000 products in the grocery store, right, a big grocery store. They don't have the luxury and manpower to manage all these different natural food companies. So you really just have to fight and claw away from that gap in the marketplace.

Some of the other areas I will talk about like demo agencies as a whole, I think get a bad rep because there's this fluidity to the marketplace, some of the trading and merchandising agencies and there's great ones out there and Amazon agencies and eCommerce agencies, there is agencies out there that check the box and do what they say they're going to do, but they don't care as much about the brand as you do.

So I constantly I'm fighting to find agencies and partners, and I've done a phenomenal job of finding those agencies through lots of trial and error who care about my brand, who work with us, who have built this company.



Those people are the ones that help you grow but it's going to take a lot of trial and error. We've gone through three Amazon agencies. Now we have an amazing one that we work with. But it took a lot of pain to get there. I answered that question by the way, without trying to give too many specifics.

Dan: No, no, I appreciate it. I think that that's great. That's perfect. You brought up a couple of key points so let's talk about this a little bit more. When I worked for Kimberly-Clark we had a direct model. We had sales reps. We had people that were all in the same page, same incentive structure et cetera, and then one day they decided to cater more toward Wall Street as opposed to main street and over three quarters of us were gone in a heartbeat.

That was not only extremely disheartening, but the fact that the brand ... It ripped the soul out of the brand and they're not number one in every category anymore like they were back then. The point is the business model and the way that big brands cater more toward the bottom line, towards Wall Street et cetera.

When you're working for yourself, like you said, it's got to be your brand. I would argue that one of the biggest challenges that all small brands are dealing with, like you said, is you don't know what you don't know.

Dustin: Yeah.



Dan: So finding the good resource is one. Then two, like you said, there's a lot of people that phone it in. There are a lot of companies that don't have that relationship, and I would go one step further instead of the distributor I would focus on the retailer, the end retailer.

So, I would recommend, I know I told you that I'd give you an opportunity to ask me a couple of questions at the end as far as bottlenecks you're trying to solve, I would change the conversation from being a push strategy, which is what every brain uses today, to what I would call post strategy.

A post strategy, Dustin, is when you become an invaluable resource to that retailer. There's a lot to it, we'll get into that more in a minute. But when you can become an invaluable resource to the retailer, then they will tell the distributor, "Look, you will get these guys in your warehouse. You will make them available for me, et cetera."

So, it's a much different model. Again, things being broken in the industry, when I started in this industry we had distributors for all the big brands, everyone did. Those distributors are gone, and the reason they're gone is because they didn't provide any value long term.

I have some concerns about what distributors and brokers, et cetera, do and don't do. Long story short, this is your economy, and I believe that you really need to remain the captain of your ship.



So what I try to teach or what I'm ... What this podcast is about is helping you keep your hand firmly on the wheel, to teach you the strategies, et cetera, to help you level the playing field with the big companies and more importantly, develop that relationship with the retailer.

So the retailer says I want Ka-Pop! versus anyone else on the shelf. At that point, that changes the conversation. At that point, then you can negotiate slotting and all that other stuff. So, what are your thoughts about that? Does that seem radically weird to you or?

Dustin: No, I 100% agree down to the micro level. One thing I talk to small brands about, one of the luxuries when you are very small, I'm talking your first few months, and you're in 10 stores or 15 stores, is you should have a one-on-one direct relationship with every manager in that store.

I'm not talking just about the store manager, I'm talking about the ... I make snacks. We knew the dairy manager, we knew the beverage manager, we knew the cashiers. We would buy them all chips. We would do everything we could to develop those relationships because those people will become advocates.

Now, as you get bigger, maybe it goes from all the cashiers to just the store manager. But fine, build that store manager relationship. As you get bigger from there and we're kind of still in that precipice area, building the relationship with the buyers is absolutely critical.



So one thing I do want to hit on that you said, one thing I say when I go to every meeting, and this doesn't matter if I'm actually going to a two store chain or a hundred store chain is I say we're small, and we act entrepreneurial but we will operate with all the big company strategy thinking and execution that you're used to. It's one thing I end every meeting with.

Because I think they value entrepreneurial thinking, they love the brains, they know that we're the ones driving the industry. But they don't have the time or the ability to manage all the inadequacies of most small companies. That usually comes to inability to fulfill orders, making promises you don't keep. So there's a lot of onus on us as an industry as well as the vendors.

But I say that on every meeting, and what I mean by that is this, we will stay true to every commitment we make and we will do everything in our power to make this as easy as possible on you. When we do mess up, because guess what, we will mess up, I will be up 24/7 fixing the error for you and making it up tenfold for you.

Dan: Yeah.

Dustin: That's hard because unfortunately there is a lot outside our control. So I mentioned some of these things like transportation as an LTL versus full truckloads. That's something I never really dealt with in my career. In fact, I never dealt with that in my career before.



Learning how difficult LTL shipments are. One little wing and piece of the business that no one thinks about. But the complexity of LTL shipments, the costs, the timelines, we had to work to find good brokers that we work with on the transportation side.

But long story short, I 100% agree with you and I think building those relationships as big as you get ... One other point I'll make Dan too, on the consumer level, I've personally done with Harley, who's part of my team, hundreds, hundreds and hundreds of demos. I cannot stress enough how important doing your own demos are especially early, but I still do them, and I will always do them for the rest of my life with this brand for a few reasons.

One, I know every possible comment a consumer will say about my company. I've heard them all now and I know which ones are consistent, I know which ones are the one offs, I know which age demographic buys which product, I know which psychographic buys which product. I know every step along that journey.

The second thing is I know where to take this company. I know where to think about going forward. I know where to think about how we grow. So that's incredible. I told all my big CPG friends that I wish I had done this earlier in my career. It's the advice I now give to big CPG guys is go demo. There's no better learning doing that. By the way, what's the side benefit? You meet the cashiers, you meet the store managers, you meet all the people involved.



It's a phenomenal thing. The final thing I'll say about it for us thankfully we have a great product. So, four of the five people who tried by it and on those days when I need an emotional boost, talking to consumers, their excitement about our product is emotionally uplifting, it's fantastic.

Dan: Can't beat that. Real feedback. So podcast 68 that was all about that. If you had a chance to listen or if you haven't listened to it, the whole idea was that as a small DSD driver working for a regional chip company, I was able to leverage those relationships so that when a big retailer launched their first super store in the market, I managed to get a 4200 chip display in their lobby.

So 5900 bags of chip that week and my number one competitor, the biggest name in the salty snacks category got zero displays anywhere in the store.

The point was, like we're saying, if you can deliver that exceptional value, if you can stand behind your product. Bottom line is your name is on that product, you literally.

Dustin: Literally.

Dan: Anything, if you've gotten out of stock that's your fault. It's not the broker's fault, it's not anyone else's fault, it's your fault from the perspective of the consumer, that's tough love.

But the reality is if you take that much responsibility for your brand, at the end of the day that's what's going to move the needle. And that's when you start becoming what I would call a



category leader. I would define any, a category leader, as any brand willing and able to step up and help the retailer grow sustainable sales and increase shopper traffic by leveraging the strength of your brand. Big difference from category captain where we're used to in the big CPG. That's out of the realm of any small brand, too expensive et cetera.

But if you can provide those valuable resources and insights that your competition doesn't provide and because you don't phone it in and because you make sure you take your planogram and you go the extra distance, that sets you apart and one more thing, brilliant, talking to the consumers.

So many brands think that once the product gets packed up and gets loaded into the truck at the back of the warehouse, they're done. They can go home. They can be at miller time, whatever. But the point is, that's when the selling starts.

What you're finding, and this is key and I really want to highlight this, is that the insights that you gain about the consumer that uses your product, how they evangelize it et cetera after they take it home, that's far more valuable than any sort of study or consumer study or whatever because that gives you an understanding of your customer and it lets you talk to them in their language. When you can have that one-on-one intimate relationship with your customer that differentiates you in the category.



By the way, I hope you're leveraging that at retail. I hope you're able to go to the retailers in your presentation and say, here's what consumers say testimonial is more important and here are the anecdotes. Here are the stories that they share. For example, the girl underneath the tent blanket, that's a great story.

Dustin: Yeah.

Dan: Now granted that was mainstream CPG. I'm just kidding. No, but having those stories or a wealth of those stories, again that's so critically important. Here's another thought, if I go into the store and I buy your product, you know nothing about me. You don't know what age group or how I use the product or whether I like it or dislike it.

But if you're making a concentrated effort to get to know me and to find out how I use the product, et cetera, again it helps you innovate, it helps you pivot, it helps you do all the things you need to do.

So, more importantly than any, there's the finance and all this, and that's also critically important, this creates the road map, the blueprint, et cetera, so that when you go to a new retailer now you have a really great story.

And that's why I launched my Turnkey Sales Story Strategies course. But the reason, the impetus behind that podcast 68, but the point being is to teach brands what you're sharing with us today. So thank you.



It's who is your customer. A lot of people think they know it even the big brands. The reason I was so effective at kicking our big competitors' butt, big brands like P&G et cetera at freedom is because I knew my customer far better than they did at that specific retailer and I was able to help that retailer understand not only who my customer was, how they shop, when they shop. When they bought Huggies et cetera, what else did they buy with it?

Again, if you can leverage that, that helps you stand out on the shelf. So, kudos to you.

Dustin: Yeah.

Dan: I think that's great that you do. Anything else you want to add?

Dustin: I would just say that one of the things people say about demos in particular is it's not cost effective or the return on investment isn't there. I'm a big numbers guy, I'm a big ROI guy. Absolutely, if you look at demos it's on an individual demo basis, it's not.

But I would say people will also ask me is that a good use of your time as a CPO or someone trying to grow this business, I literally cannot think of a better use of my time being with consumers. And I gave all the reasons why, so I'm not going to rehash those.

But a few others that I would talk about, some are minor, some are bigger, consumers when they get a chance to interact literally with the people on the team part of the company, they're so used to just demo people handling themselves, they're going to be



like, "No, this is my company." Their eyes light up and they get much more passionate about what I'm doing. Those people become evangelists.

We all know word of mouth is the best marketing strategy out there, right? Driving ...

Dan: Yeah.

Dustin: I have people who are so passionate about our brand already. My favorite story about our brand is we have someone who got a tattoo of our brand already. So I can say us and Harley Davidson, and I always say to Harley Davidson, "I guarantee you didn't get someone getting a tattoo within the first month of their existence."

So, a, we're ... And it wasn't a complete stranger, a complete stranger. A true story. But demos really allow you to build that relationship. But now learning about the consumer, I know so much about our consumer and it helps me dictate how to grow our business, new flavors, what size packaging we need to do. We know what type of modifications we need to make.

By the way, I've created those relationships with the store personnel like we mentioned. So when we walk back in, one of my favorite guys around here, this guy Cisco a store manager at Lucky's he'll tell us what's going on with the brand. We're seeing these people buy and we're seeing this happen. We're seeing hey what if you do this? Can we get a spin rack here.



You know I haven't done the 5200 bags yet so I'm going to work with you later to get that figured out. But the reality is we have at with Mark and other people small stores local to Boulder we've set up these huge displays because of the relationships that I've created that Harley and my team have created, that evangelists for our brand have created on our behalf. So it's fantastic.

Dan: It is great. On that note, podcast episode 123 just had that. We talked about the importance of in-store demoing. So to again to reemphasize this, at what point ever do you have the undivided attention of a future customer in front of you where you have the ability to either lose them forever or convert them into a lifelong, like you said, a brand evangelist. That is the best marketing you can have.

I have this belief, and you're going to laugh, just keep ... you might, I don't know. I believe that a CEO should not be a perpetual fundraiser.

Dustin: Yeah.

Dan: That I think that is one of the biggest failures of this industry. When you look at all the different programs out there, it's your brand, you need to go raise money. But then you need to go raise the money. And oh, and then you need to go raise money.

If you can do what you're doing and if you can have a great story to be able to tell the retailers, then not only can you get raise



better money, you can get better terms, et cetera, et cetera. So I made some benefits there.

But going back to what we're talking about, as far as the use of your time, at the end of the day if no one buys your stuff you don't have a brand.

Dustin: Yeah.

Dan: We go back to where we started earlier, we're putting, as you said, crap in a bag, here you go try this. I tell young brands just because your mother likes it doesn't mean that everyone else will. I know that's tough love and that's really hard to hear, but the reality is that you've got to understand what your consumer wants, why they want it, and et cetera.

By the way, this is so much more valuable than social media or throwing stuff out there. One of the things, I think you probably agree with me on, is that one thing that makes natural natural is while the big brands are talking at us, look at us, we're number one, we're great, aren't we big, aren't we wonderful, to look we've got a relationship with our customer, we understand what they want.

So we're innovating at a rate or a scale or however you want to put it. So we're giving consumers what they want. Now the salty snack category. One of the things that I love about that category is that you can wake up every morning and decide how much



money you want to make because it's basically all an impulse purchase.

Dustin: Yeah.

Dan: So tell me a little bit about that.

Dustin: So the salty snack category is incredibly fragmented. It's one of the lower barriers to entry categories, which is difficult for new brands like mine coming into the business. And I'll jump into how we all set that as well.

But like I said, every time you hear a story, you'll hear the next phrase say it's a really complicated category. Every category, there is not a single category in the store that isn't competitive or fragmented or volatile, not anymore. Maybe there is, I can't think of it. Maybe produce, I don't know.

But there is the growth and packaged foods and trends to this market is phenomenal. Look at Expo West alone, 85,000 people attended this year. It may have been more but I think it was 85,000 people. Over 4,000 booths, right? It's insane how much this industry has grown.

When I first went in 2008 or whatever year I went, it was the convention center, it was manageable, it was only the natural foods industry. Now you have private equities, you have the big CPGs are there. They even have booths now, the big CPGs, right?



So it's a very different world that we live in with natural foods. So to answer your question, I think it comes down to how you differentiate yourself. I also have the pleasure of teaching marketing at University of Colorado. I teach what we do on a daily basis.

I'm a very, very big believer in a few key things. Number one, and any student in my class will tell you this because I bring it up at every single class, who's the most important? What's the most important thing in marketing, in business? The correct answer is the target. The target is the most important thing. A lot of times that's forgotten. So you bring up like oh my mom likes it. Well that's great, is your mom the target? Who's the target and everything must be to them.

Then I say what's the most important framework in marketing? I personally believe, and we'll go down on sort of this, the four Ps, product, place, promotion and pricing are the most important attributes to run a business. Everything you do falls into that.

It doesn't mean they're easy but everything I do on a daily basis is focused on the four Ps. What do I need to focus on, how do I build that, how do I leverage it to be more successful? Each one of those I teach a whole semester basically on the four Ps.

So, you must differentiate, you must do it in relation to your target and you must create some type of barrier to entry. Well in our world there's no patents for the most of our food companies. There's trade secrets, they like to call them.



But really it's about branding execution. How do you build a relationship with consumers that differentiates against the next me-too follower? I'm the only one who's doing what I'm doing but I'm not naïve to think that someone else is going to come and try to do this especially as we continue to grow. I need to create that relationship with the consumer that they will choose Ka-Pop! 10 times out of ten not competitor B or competitor C or D or E or F. That's what I really focus on is building that relationship we talked about through demos, through social media. But I constantly I'm communicating with our consumers to build that relationship.

Dan: Good for you. So, one of the things that you didn't say that I think a lot of people don't understand about this industry is that because we're a natural our ingredients are pretty much, the recipe is pretty much on the bag of the bag.

Dustin: Yeah.

Dan: Whereas in the big CPG companies some secret sauce, formula or whatever and who knows what it is and you probably don't want to know what it is. So, that makes it even more challenging.

I want to add another couple of weeks to your semester. Don't forget when you're talking about the four Ps, the fifth P, the most important P, people. Nothing happens without the people because going back to what you said earlier, if your mom is the target, how much can she buy in a given year? Think about her garage is only so big no matter how much she loves you.



Dustin: Yeah.

Dan: So you've got to have the people and each one of those aspects is so critically important. One of my things that I did that I had so much success with was dealing with each one of those five Ps is with a category of management, developing a trade marketing strategy that was accurate. That's a whole another conversation.

Trade marketing is a challenge in it of itself. But I was able to when I was working for Kimberly-Clark get down to the contribution of a brand back for a given promotion, et cetera, which that's a big deal if you understand what this is or the pricing. And again, the advance category of management.

So, I appreciate you bringing this up. I told you that you could share with me a bottleneck, you said you've got a couple of them.

Dustin: Yeah.

Dan: So before we go there, what else do you want to say? Then also I want to make sure that you tell us about where to learn more about you, where to learn more about Ka-Pop!. What is Ka-Pop!? What are ancient grains et cetera. A lot to unpack.

Dustin: All right. I'll give you the sale spiel real quickly. For anyone who's interested in our brand www.kapopsnacks.com. So Kapopsnacks.com. For anyone listening I'll throw this out there if you use the code which is my fun title for myself, the top kapop. T-O-P-K-A-P-O-P get 15% off our website.



But one thing ancient grains are grains that have never been hybridized, modified or selectively bred for thousands of years. So they retain their inherent nutrition. They're incredible regenerative for our soils, for our earth. They use less water. They're good for our earth, they're good for our body. My favorite way of explaining it is I have a graph that shows ancient corn which is tiny to what we've done with modern corn, even non-GMO corn. It's big, it's been bred to be higher sugar. We like sweet.

I also talk about carrots in the US. We typically know them as orange carrots. Well around the world they're purple or green. So people love the sweeter varieties so we try, and bring back the authenticity, simplicity and joy back to snacking with Ka-Pop! Snacks.

The only other thing I just want to touch back on one thing, we've jumped into demoing a bit. So I'm going to give, if I can, two minute of demoing or less.

Dan: Sure.

Dustin: We go to demos and we sell. This past weekend we did some demos, we sold 122 bags in one, 90 bags in another. When we launched central market in three days, and this was just Harley and I going to 10 central market stores in three days sold 2,000 bags.

Dan: Good.



Dustin: Every launch is like that because one of the things that you need to do in demoing is get everyone to come try your brand. We make sure that anyone, we got the 16 foot rule, but anyone within 16 feet of our table is going to hear about our brand. We may not get them all to try it, but we definitely have a very high success rate.

The second thing I'd recommend is people when they're shopping nowadays they're busy, they're in their own world so we try, and disrupt their mindset by being really cheesy and goofy and fun because again ... and we're fun brands, so we try and do that. But we have fun with it to disrupt that kind of mindset.

The final thing I'll say in demoing that we do differently than what we see around is we make the sale. Too often you do this nice pitch, you tell that it's vegan and gluten free and non-dairy and blah, blah, blah and you're like so thanks for trying.

We will always then say, "So how many bags can we send you home with this weekend?"

Dan: I love that.

Dustin: Or "Would you like to take this home for the weekend and share with your family." We always make the opportunity and that's why we have the numbers we do. That's why four other five people will try and buy because not only is it a great product but we ask for the sales. Don't be afraid to ask for the sale.

Dan: Absolutely.



Dustin: As long as you're polite, positive, we've never had anyone not once be upset with us for asking for the sale.

Dan: You need to listen to episode 123. This is exactly what we talked about and then go one step further. So, even if you the CEO can't be there, what do you need to know to have an effective demo? To your point, I used to run the demo of people when I was the grocery manager at Price Club which is now Costco. Yeah you just can't stand there and hand it out or put a stacker on the table and expect people to fall in love with it.

Dustin: Yeah.

Dan: But the sales increases that you can get 400%, 1000%, unbelievable numbers. You cannot show me a lift that you can create using any other traditional promotional methods that comes anywhere near that. Not even putting a NASCAR out or any of the free big giveaways et cetera. BOGO's don't even do that. In fact, actually Bargas cost a lot of money.

But a whole another conversation. But absolutely. So thank you for sharing that. Anything else you got?

Dustin: Yeah. By the way what's also great about the data is it doesn't show up as like a TPR or features in the data. So you're getting that lift without hitting your merge lift. So when you're using that data to sell at the retailers, you're able to show these amazing lists especially as a small brand and it doesn't look like it's all being driven by merge.



Dan: Right.

Dustin: It is merging but it's not typical merge.

Dan: I'd love to keep because I've got another huge meeting. There's something else that I'd love to bring in there. So you pay attention to Bay sales. Bay sales are your sales in the absence of any promotion.

The bottom line is if you can deliver value, contribution, et cetera, to the brand et cetera, you got a course about that, that's a whole another conversation. At the end of the day, that's what's going to keep you going. Some brands succeed because they raise a lot of money, they promote the heck out of the brand, they become a one hit wonder and they're gone. Kind of where we started this conversation.

Too many brands don't have the resources or the tools or the ability to really know what they don't know so that they can drive their sales or drive ... build their brand et cetera around them. So thank you so much for sharing that. Okay, I'm ready.

Dustin: Okay, bottlenecks. I thought a lot about this since you told me that I could ask you about bottlenecks. There was one that we come back to and I've struggled with the right way to ask this so I'll just ask it. Our biggest challenge is time. Our biggest resource constraint is time.

Dan: Right.



Dustin: What I found is someone who is very proactive, as a growing business we've become reactive. So my question to you is how do you think about in a world where there's two people running a company and every day you're struggling to keep your head above water just to maintain a daily business, what do you think are the most important things to prioritize and focus on for the future growth of the company while on a daily basis you're trying to maintain business operations?

Dan: That's actually a really good question and it's a tough question and it's a question that I face too, how do you prioritize your time? So, on one hand there are things that you need to do. They don't pay the bills. On the other hand, there are customers that you need to take care of.

So, the honest answer is automation. Now, you can't automate everything et cetera. But if you can develop good systems, good practices, et cetera and put those in place, and then I would hire someone as a temp to take some of those things off your plate.

So let me as an example. If you're using data while you get the can top on report from whomever and what does it mean, how to use it et cetera, you can hire someone to do that. Now, that's not going to help you compete effectively. So what's a better way to use that data, get someone that understands it, that can manipulate the data, that could pull out the insights, that are going to differentiate you from other brands?



Take the time to learn it, take the time to understand that, the consumer piece. You're already doing that. So take those insights and find a way to bake them into your presentation. Those are the things that you need to be hands-on on.

But once you get to a point where you've got systems in place, then you start developing, recreating the same report. Once a quarter, I would consider, I would almost insist, if it was my brand I would insist that you have someone do a really deep dive into the category to understand what's going on in the trends beyond what you're seeing on a weekly basis, monthly basis, et cetera.

So, I think just the honest answer is you need to think about what are the things that don't require you to take a lot of time. What are the things that you're not good at that you struggle with that you would rather not be doing. And if you can find those out because those are the things that like it or not, you're going to find excuses, reasons, et cetera, to make those projects last a lot longer than they should.

Dustin: Yeah.

Dan: So get those off your plate. Then again, it's all about surrounding a good team. So you're a natural. You've got a lot of great resources. Again, this podcast, all this stuff we've been talking about and what not, those all help answer some of those questions. Use what Anthony Robbins calls net time. You're driving into some place et cetera, listen to a podcast, fill your mind full of good information.



Miller Ben, a great speaker several years ago had, you probably don't know who he is, had this great analogy that the pain has really stuck with me. So you think about your mind, it's a tank. And unless you're constantly pouring water, quality stuff into it, it eventually drains out and it's got ... I'm sorry. Tank with a slow lake.

So continually filling your mind with quality information, resources, insights, et cetera, attend the trade shows, attend the networking events, and then you said you're very physically active, make sure you make time for yourself.

But as far as the business is concerned you need to figure out what are the things that are must do versus things that you should do. You need to get your infrastructure in place, leverage other people to help you do that and since you now have evangelistic consumers, start asking them what they would recommend or what they suggest when you're thinking about new product innovation, new packaging, stuff like that. That will take some of it off your plate. So, I hope that helps.

Dustin: Yeah.

Dan: Kind of top level but at the same if you get into the weeds, I mean me, there are days where I get lost on a project and I'll look up and I'll go, "Oh crap, it's nine o'clock at night and what did I accomplish today?" So I guess ... Okay, so that's the other key point. Instead of thinking about what did you do today, think about what did you accomplish today. So know the difference is



instead of checking something off of my to-do list, you want to make sure that you crossed off something, an accomplishment to help move you closer to your goals.

Then of course, none of this is possible unless you plan effectively. I was having a great conversation with someone about a business plan. This should be right up your alley. So any brand, I don't care who you are and what you're doing, you need to have a business plan.

Your business plan shouldn't include how do I raise capital to keep going next week and then raise more capital. It should be what I want to be in a year, two years, three years, et cetera. Do I want to exit, do I want this to become a legacy brand.

So as you go backwards, now you could start putting overlaying your promotional strategies and stuff like that. This can change, it can be flexible. But the reality is when I started in this industry, we planned for promotions a week, a month or two in advance.

Now I would recommend that any brand out there try to plan for a couple of years in advance, that's a big ask. But if you can understand what are your needs in terms of forecasting, planning, et cetera, then that will give you a road map.

So, one of the things I've got ... I should actually include this in the course. It's in some of the mini courses. I'm sorry, include this in the podcast, is a score card. A score card is a really cool tool that you can use to manage any project.



So for example, I want to make sure I've got a promotion coming up at a store. How much product do I need to have in that store over and above what I normally sell to support it? When does the product need to show up? When is the ... All of those things that need to happen.

So then you can take that score card and hand it to someone else and let them execute it. Does that help?

Dustin: Yeah, it's fantastic. I love the what did I accomplish today versus what did I do today because I think we and myself definitely get lost in checking off the to-do list, focusing on the items I need to get done versus where are we moving this brand forward.

That's the thing that I tell people with all the years of experience I have it doesn't matter when you're in the weeds on the day-to-day basis trying to just do your business. So I'm the same as everybody else. I've got the luxury and pleasure of being part of the Kraft Heinz Incubator Springboard Program. I'm with four other amazing start-up brands, and we're all at different stages of brands. It's so fascinating to be a part of this and watching how everyone handles these different movements and leveraging each other's strength to move the ship forward.

So I love that thinking. I write it on a wall here and make it our mantra. Although they'd stare at me like what did we do?

Dan: Yeah.



Dustin: But how are we moving the ship forward. I love that, so thank you.

Dan: Well you're welcome, and I'm glad that it helped. A lot of people spend most of their time managing their to-do list. Another thing is the really successful CEOs, the really successful leaders, let's say leaders are the leaders that know when to say no.

That's a tough one because I'm a people pleaser and I'm one of those people that I got to get involved and I had this obnoxious belief years ago as a store manager et cetera, I used to be, like I said, grocery manager at Price Club.

I would get there every morning at six o'clock in the morning and I would leave there at 9:00 or 10:00 at night. But it was okay because I only worked six days a week. But I had this idea that if I wasn't there, the place would fall apart. That's ridiculous and your health suffers, et cetera, you've got to be able to say no. You've got to be able ...

Then the next thing that makes me part of that is you need to train people to fill your shoes. I believe that your role as a leader is to champion your subordinates and get your subordinates to be able to do your job effectively, to kind of work you out of a job.

I believe the role of a subordinate is to make you look like a superstar. If you have that sort of a philosophy culture within your business, then they will eventually want to take that off your



shoulders. So anyhow, thank you. You said you had another bottleneck for me. Go ahead, yeah.

Dustin: I want to add one thing to that on the know. One of the things that I used to preach when I would go into companies and help founders and help executives or do it myself, it was a lot easier when I was going to somebody else's business.

Dan: Yeah.

Dustin: But I'd always coach this, you need to say no as an entrepreneur to good ideas. You need to know when to say no to money making ideas. That's the hardest thing when you're an entrepreneur, and you're struggling and you see opportunity for ACD or distribution, you see opportunity for a paid check to come. Not paid check but a check to the business to come in, like oh I got to do that. This shiny object syndrome is rampant in entrepreneurship and that's one of the hardest things.

I used to have a really easy time helping others. It's phenomenally more difficult when you're sitting in the seat. God bless, it's so much harder. But I want to add that to the say no thanks.

Dan: Well thank you. On that note, I'm sorry, I've run into a lot of brands that do that. They get a call from a retailer, clear across the country, "I want your product on my shelf." Bad idea. You can't support it, you don't have the infrastructure, et cetera. So absolutely. Yeah, thank you for sharing that.



Dustin: So the last bottleneck I'll throw at you. It's not so much a bottleneck but it maybe advice or opinion is so we've got great growth and I always talk about companies different life cycles as a small business. I think one of the first in my opinion is a two million dollar mark. That's a first kind of big chunk.

So we have I'll call it proof of concept. We're in a good chunk of stores. We're seeing good moment or velocity. What do you think is the most important thing? So we talked about prioritizing just now. But I want you to help me, I want you to pick one thing if you can that you think is the most important thing to do to make you go from here to that two million dollar mark.

Dan: People, number five on the marketing list. Let me explain. If you can build an evangelistic community around your brand, remember I buy your stuff, you don't know who I am, okay? It doesn't help you grow.

If you can build an evangelistic community around your brand, better yet, if you can build that community outside of a traditional retail store through an email list et cetera, develop a relationship, one of the biggest waste of money in trade marketing is to have a promotion, to reward somebody who is a loyal customer to buy your product. It sounds counterintuitive.

It's more effective for you to invite me into this community and have me become a big part of this community and then reward me through the community through a special, look, I'll send you



something new, I'll try something new or whatever rather than have a discount ad shelf. Okay?

So if you can build, again, a relationship, build a community around your brand, a thriving community and we're going to use the poll strategy. If you can leverage that poll strategy to help your customers drive sales and distribution at other retailers.

So for example, you're in Denver. Let's say that you wanted to get into New Mexico, pick your city, it doesn't matter. If you developed a community in that area through your social media, through all the things that you're doing, your Amazon et cetera, then those customers should ... I would think they're probably happy to go into a retailer in their market and say how come I can't buy this product here?

So two things. As a customer ... Excuse me. Retailers generically don't sell anything. What they sell is the real estate that your product takes up on their shelf.

Dustin: Yeah.

Dan: They want more traffic in their store. If I can leverage their relationship, your relationship as a brand, if me as a retailer can leverage your relationship as a brand to drive more traffic into my store so they buy more stuff a share of what. I try to get them to buy as much of the stuff on their list every month instead of inviting them to go to their competition.



So this is all about one, people. Two, how do we get the other community. Three, the story, Turnkey Sales Source Strategies course. And it's all about building that into your story. So as you're moving forward, kind of back to your other question, you make sure that everyone is in lock step with what you're doing. So let me ... You've heard the example, I use this all the time. I tell you a story and then you share it with someone else and they share it with someone else and so on.

By the time the story comes back around at me, it's unrecognizable. That is the number one reason I think most brands struggle. Again, this is about podcast 68. If I can have everyone under my umbrella, everyone in my team be in lock step with the same passion and enthusiasm as you have and be able to share that story effectively with retailers through my community to build relationships with my community or their markets, that's a home run.

By the way, that's a whole lot cheaper than anything else. And if you can do this effectively then you can go to retail and say, "No I don't think I'm paying slotting. You've got a line outside wanting my product and I don't need to ... I'm doing great where I ..." We get into that bit over facetious.

Dustin: Yeah, yeah.

Dan: But the point is if you've got people knocking their door down, kicking their door, however you want to word it, begging for your product because you have such a loyal following because people



love your product, nor like, love, all that stuff. That's the answer to that question. Does that help?

Dustin: It does. It's actually it's exactly what Vega did for those emails. The Vega brand that WhiteWave and Dan and their Danone's. I heard that story a lot. It reminds me of them. They had these super passionate people that didn't work for the brand but took up this cause and would go into stores and demo the product for free. Literally super passionate evangelists and I can't think of a better way to drive that success.

So you've got me my mind turning right now in a thousand. Now you just added to my to-dos. But no.

Dan: No.

Dustin: I know. Actually it's I 100% agree and it's absolutely our focus point going forward. People for me goes beyond my consumer. It's people on my team.

Dan: Yes.

Dustin: So, I could not be where I'm at right now without the people in my corner. I have, I've mentioned Harley Bradley who's on my team.

Dan: I met her, yeah.

Dustin: Who is a rockstar and absolutely I would not be as successful. This company would not be successful. I personally would not be



successful without her. The advisors I have on this company. The investors who have supported me and then just the people.

I mentioned this actually, we're interviewing right now for our third role. Now I was telling the story today to one of our candidates around we hear this a lot. It's a great thing but people say, "You really have something here. This is really going to go places." The power of those words to an entrepreneur are so valuable because it's so hard.

Dan: It's validation.

Dustin: It's validation and it's uplifting, it's emotional. So for all the people listening, I think having those people around you that validate you, support you, are in your corner whether they're on your team, they're anecdotal are just absolutely critical to our success.

Dan: Absolutely.

Dustin: So I just thought I would put that out as well.

Dan: No thank you. Again, that goes back to making sure your story is consistent, making sure that everyone is in lock step, making sure that everyone is aligned.

I remember when I was working for a big CPG company years ago we used to joke about the only way to move up in the company was for a guy to knock off the guy above you. That's



not the atmosphere. That's some way the big CPG companies are where it's so impersonal.

What I love about natural, what makes natural natural is the community. So you've got people that are genuine, authentic, that want to work with you, want to support you, want to see you thrive. Even people, for example me that don't even work for you, don't have a stake in the company et cetera, that's why you're here. But yet we're trying to raise the bar in the industry. We're trying to help others through our story. So thank you again for coming on. Thank you again for your story.

Dustin: Thank you.

Dan: I'll make sure to put a link to Ka-Pop! In the show notes and on the podcast web page. Again, can't thank you enough. I appreciate it.

Dustin: Thank you so much for the opportunity. It's been a pleasure and if there's anything Ka-Pop! Can do for anyone out there or me personally, we're an email way. So never hesitate to reach out.

Dan: Love that. If you send me, whatever email address you want me to use I'll put that in the show notes as well.

Dustin: Yeah, fantastic. Thank you so much.

Dan: Thank you.



I want to thank Dustin for coming on and for preparing such great questions. We had a great conversation, one that I know is going to help a lot of brands out. Thanks, Dustin. You can get a link to K-Pop on this podcast website or in the show notes. This week's free downloadable guide is my retail scorecard. Scorecards are powerful, goal-setting tools. You've probably heard that what gets measured, gets done. Scorecards map out objectives in small, bite-sized, manageable chunks that keep you on track and focus. They're what you need to succeed. You can download this on the podcast webpage or on the show notes, and you can get there by going to brandsecretsandstrategies.com/session126. Thank you for listening, and I look forward to seeing you in the next episode.

KaPop <https://kapopsnacks.com>

This episode's FREE downloadable guide

Each of us needs to perform basic retail math calculations but it's not always possible to remember every formula, especially if you don't use them on a regular basis. Here's a quick cheat sheet with some of the most important formulas you need to know.

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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



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

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

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