



BRAND SECRETS AND STRATEGIES PODCAST #136

Hello and thank you for joining us today. This is the Brand Secrets and Strategies Podcast #136

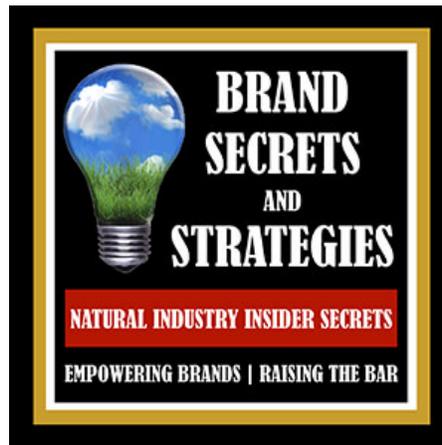
Welcome to the Brand Secrets and Strategies podcast where the focus is on empowering brands and raising the bar.

I'm your host Dan Lohman. This weekly show is dedicated to getting your brand on the shelf and keeping it there.

Get ready to learn actionable insights and strategic solutions to grow your brand and save you valuable time and money.

LETS ROLL UP OUR SLEEVES AND GET STARTED!

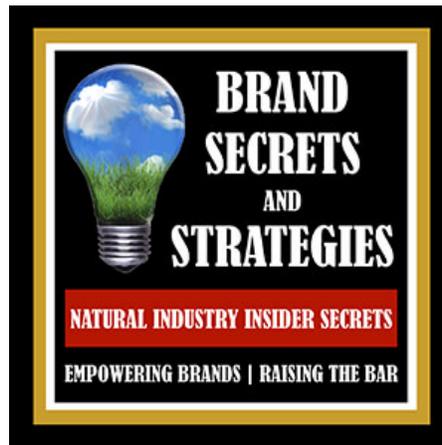
Dan: Welcome. Today's story impacts every brand that has or wants to have a brand on a retailer's shelf. Let's face it, retail is pay to play. It's expensive. It's even more expensive if you don't have a clear understanding of what the retailers expect from your brand. Mistakes can cost you dearly, so you need to avoid them at all costs, pun intended. This is a huge reason why 80% of natural brands fail within the first year. I'm committed to changing that. It all begins with having a clear path forward that helps you navigate around the bottlenecks that derail most brands. It begins with a solid go-to-market strategy.



There are ways to explode sales and save you valuable time and money, but first, you need to know what retailers expect from you in addition to how to work with and manage brokers, agencies, and distributors. This means that you need to have a clear understanding of how the retailer game is played before you adopt any of the creative brand-building strategies we discuss on other podcast episodes.

For today's episode, I brought in an expert and industry icon to help make sense of this, Bob Burke. Bob Burke's superpower is helping brands understand what retailers expect and teaching you how to play the retail game. Before you play any game, you need to know the rules. The better you know the rules, the more effective your strategies will impact your sales. The better you understand the game, the easier it will be to level the playing field between your brand and any competitive brand in any channel.

Before I go any further, I want to leave a quick shout out to a listener who left an amazing review. Jody N. says, "Dan Lohman is one of my trusted advisors. Working with Dan helped our company make decisions about marketing, new product development, new packaging, financing, and taking our company to the next level of growth. Specifically, Dan knows everything about products on the shelf. What sells, financial projections, spreadsheets, packaging, and design mistakes not to make. Fantastic at data collection and spreadsheets. Dan developed an inexpensive cost of goods spreadsheet that will have lasting value for us as we know at any given time what the true costs of our goods sold is. As a mentor, Dan is highly effective in sharing his expertise in many areas. We've been benefited greatly from

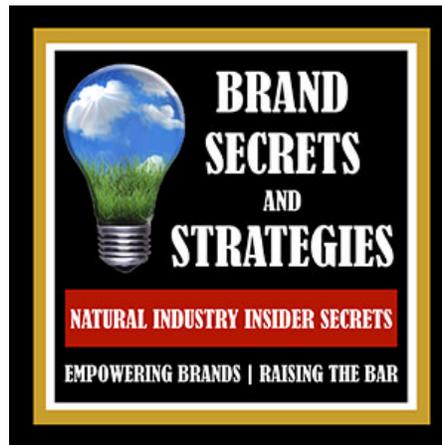


working with Dan and would highly recommend him as an effective advisor, coach, and analyst and strategic planner."

Thank you, Jody. It was a pleasure working with you. Exactly why I do this. My mission is to help brands like yours get your product on more store shelves and into the hands of more shoppers, including online shoppers. This podcast is for you and it's about you. If you want me to share your comments, please a review on iTunes, send me an email, or comment on any of my social posts. If you like the podcast, please share it with a friend, subscribe and leave a review. I also want to remind you that there's a free downloadable guide for you at the end of every episode. I also 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.

Remember, the goal here is to get your product on more store shelves and into the hands of more shoppers, and don't forget to check out my new Brand Secrets and Strategies YouTube channel where you're going to get a lot more brand building advice, including interviews, videos, and more. I might even include some of the talks that I've given at industry events. This podcast episode is an excerpt from a free mini-course I created in conjunction with Bob. The course contains additional insights, strategies, and resources that you can't bake into a podcast. You'll learn more about it and how to access it at the end of the podcast. Now, here's Bob Burke with Natural Products Consulting.

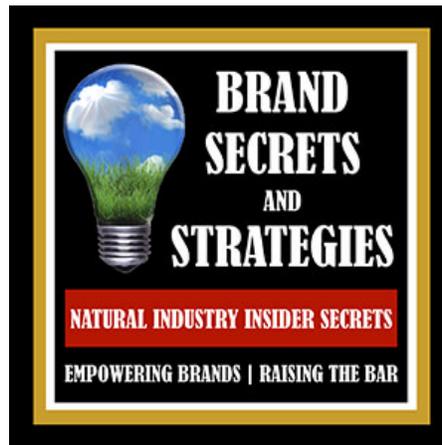
Bob, thank you so much for coming on today. Can you start by telling us a little bit about yourself and your journey to Natural Products Consulting?



Bob: Thanks, Dan. I'm happy to be here and the quick thumbnail is I've been consulting now for about 22 years, mostly around helping to bring natural organic and specialty products to market across all classes of trade. At this point, I've worked in many categories, probably two-thirds of what I do ends up being with food and beverage, the rest pretty much everything else, supplements, personal care, cleaning, pet, you name it. Along the way, I've done a how-to guide reference book called The Natural Products Field Manual. I also do seminars a few times a year. I do a two-day sales seminar and one day in raising capital. The next ones will be in Boston in December, and you can see all of this at naturalconsulting.com.

We're really around important things to think about as an early-stage company, so it certainly involves sales, but it's me sort of walking people through a little bit of feasibility, understanding the importance of velocity, understanding the importance of gross margin, putting a fundamental plan together, and then what comes out of that, what unfolds is the execution piece about brokers, contract sales, agreeing on objectives, how you get the right fit.

I've also served on a number of boards and advisory boards. I'm currently on the Board of Directors of companies like King Arthur Flour, Orgain, Saffron Road, FarmWise, Cali'flour, and Ecofish, and then I usually have the privilege of speaking, presenting or doing something at the major trade shows and conferences. Interesting for me, increasingly I'm doing more work with international companies coming into the U.S., and so a lot of that is around go-to-market and connecting them up with the right resources,

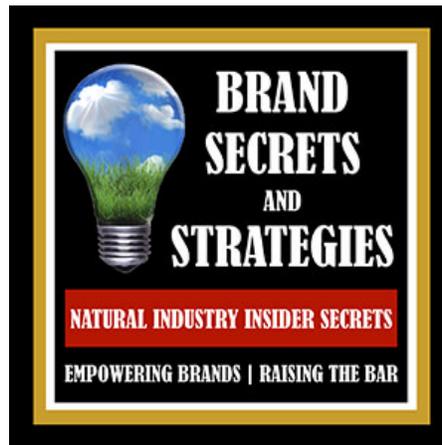


whether they be brand management companies, brokers, distributors, et cetera.

For me, I really enjoy what I do. It's sort of lifelong learning in terms of how the world is evolving and changing around us by the week, and so staying current with that is exciting and rewarding. Prior to consulting, I ran Marketing and Sales at Stonyfield Farm, the organic yogurt company.

Dan: I appreciate your sharing that, and thank you for coming on podcast episode 99. I actually listened to it yesterday to kind of reengage and kind of remember some of the things we talked about. go-to-market strategy is such a critically important thing for every small and emerging brand. When you talk about go-to-market strategies, what should early-stage companies be thinking about?

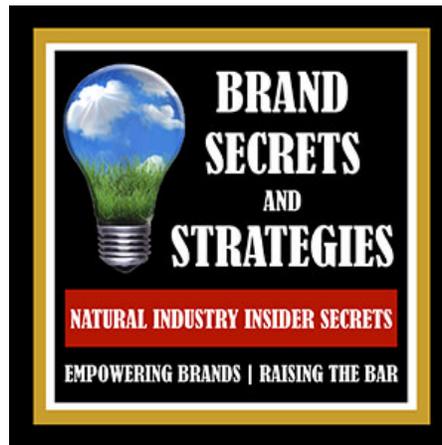
Bob: Well, probably the biggest thing is starting at maybe a 30,000-foot level and getting clarity on your objectives, understanding over what period of time, and then understanding what resources you have to put against them. A little bit of invoking Stephen Covey and beginning with the end in mind. If you think about if you're an early-stage company, what outcomes are you looking to shape? Are you looking to build it and sell it to Kraft, Unilever, Nestle, or are you building it for a succession? Are you looking to have a long-term business? Where are you on the spectrum where you're running a business to maximize growth versus running to maximize profitability? From that, a lot of things unfold in terms of what kind of capital you might need, how fast you need to grow, what's in your innovation pipeline, how you're going about investing in brand building and so on and so on.



Once you sort of get some clarity on that and you're thinking about a launch and thinking about go-to-market, the first thing to really be honest with yourself is, "Is what I'm planning to offer truly innovative? Have a reason to be in the market?" You, Dan, being an expert in category management, it's thinking about the basic category management argument in terms of every time you sit in front of a retailer, broker, distributor, investor, they're putting you through the filter of, "Is this really innovative and going to grow the category? Or am I just swapping sales from one pocket to another?"

Answering that question of, are you attracting a new user? Are you trading someone up to a higher price point? More penny profit? Higher rank, higher-margin, et cetera. Thinking about that. After that, it's going through a little bit of a feasibility step of, do you have rewarding and forgiving gross margins? In other words, when I talk about gross margin, I'm really talking about thinking about a P&L where in your gross to net sales you take out your returns, discounts, allowances, and trade spending, i.e., the money you spend with distributors and retailers to get you to net sales minus your cost of goods against your gross profit, and your gross profit divided into your net sales is what everybody refers to as gross margin.

If you're talking to an investor, a commercial bank, a strategic, that's how they define gross margin. In a beautiful world, your gross margin is somewhere in the high 30s, low 40s. Of course, the more the merrier. If you're in the mid-30s, low 30s because you're early and you don't have much scale but you have a pathway to get to 40, that's okay, but if you're in the teens or 20s, it's kind of a nonstarter and it's time to go back to the

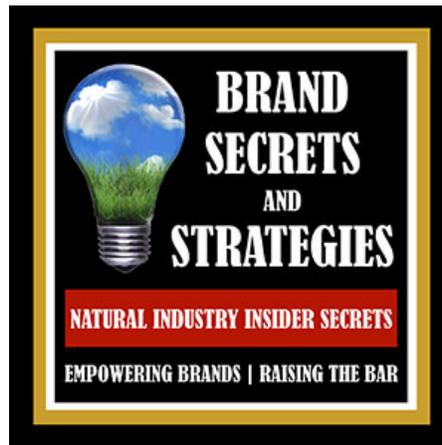


drawing board and rethink your offering, your case pack side, ingredients, formulation, et cetera, to see if there's a way to get to that sustainable gross margin level.

Without a good gross margin, you're either going to be funding losses through a continual capital raises, there would be solution for you, or you're not going to have enough money to invest in brand building, trade support, et cetera, other things that are going to be necessary to have a viable business. Gross margin is really important.

Dan: That makes so much sense, so thanks for breaking it down and sharing that. Let's back way up. When you're working with a brand, an emerging brand, and they're getting ready to pitch for the first time, and then before they do that before they present a product to retail, what are some of the things that you would help a brand with? For example, how do you map out their growth plan? How do you set them up to pitch properly and get the funding that they need?

Bob: Those are very good questions. Let's talk about mapping out a growth plan first. In almost every case, I recommend that people do a pilot and ideally it's in their backyard, meaning whatever market you happen to be in, if you can start to get your product into 10, 20, 30 stores and see evidence of it selling off the shelves. There are few things more important than the topic of velocity, your rate of sale off the shelves, and almost always expressed as units per SKU per store per week. Understanding what that benchmark is because you've done your homework and you've invested in some data from SPINS or other syndicated data, or you've talked to a friendly buyer who will give you an idea of what those referral rates are in the category so you've got

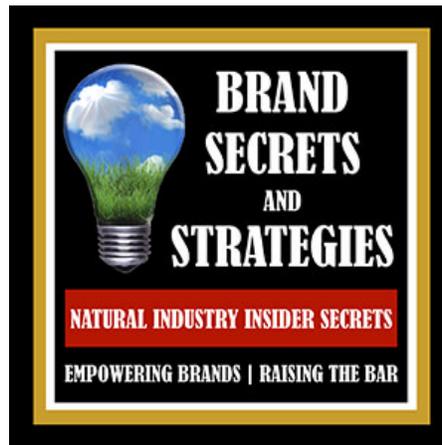


an understanding of what those expectations are in terms of how you're going to be evaluated because once you're on the shelf of a store, especially a chain, the clock is ticking where you need to be really proving yourself.

You doing a little bit of a pilot where you can have an opportunity to sort of validate all of the assumptions you had coming in about what's the right price point, the right size, if these are the right flavors, and see evidence of consumer acceptance. Velocity is the ultimate measure of product-market fit, so seeing it sell off the shelf. That's vital and I think once you see evidence of that, then you can start expanding into other stores and for most companies who are offering natural, organic, and specialty products, they usually start in those channels because they tend to be less expensive, more forgiving, good match with the consumer.

If you're going into natural food stores, if you're going into specialty stores, you can certainly start there and then as you see ongoing evidence of growth, hitting acceptable velocities, et cetera, then the normal thing is to start to migrate into more mainstream retailers. That can be supermarket chains like Kroger, Ahold, Safeway, Wegmans. It can be mass accounts like Target and Walmart, and of course, if you have a shelf-stable product, most people are starting online. Amazon is Amazon, they're the lion's share of E-commerce right now, but then there are other very good E-com platforms like Thrive Market and others, depending on your category.

Early pre-revenue companies almost always think about E-commerce, piloting in a region, growing in the natural and specialty channels, and then going into more mainstream channels, and then eventually maybe year two, year three, you

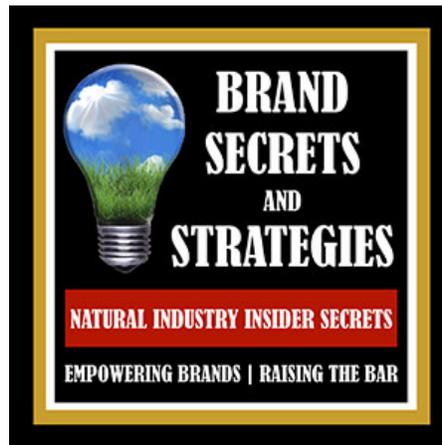


can start thinking about club and filling out distribution. Then, of course, depending on what your category is, there might be alternative channels available to you, food service, convenience store, chain drug, and for a lot of shelf-stable items, don't laugh but TJX has become a good customer. That's HomeGoods, TJ Maxx, and Marshall's, where for many years they were thought of as a liquidator. Now, they're doing quite a bit of business in natural and specialty shelf-stable items with very little stigma attached to being sold there.

Dan: Interesting. I didn't realize that. I had heard stories, but that makes a lot of sense. After all, those are the customers that they want. Bob, when a company is thinking about their go-to-market strategy, at what point do they want to get in front of an investor? How do they put together this plan to go down the path that you just suggested? There's a lot there I know, but what's the logical step...

Bob: Before I go into call it... When it comes to mapping out a plan, a lot of it is just spending a little bit of time with Excel, walking through some of the things I touched on. You can sort of do a back of the envelope P&L where you can say, "If I'm looking to retail at say 3.99", or we'll make it easier math, "We're going to retail at 4.99." If a retailer is working on 40%, then the store is paying \$3 for something they're selling for 5, because when we talk about retail and distributor margins, it's always a function of their selling price, not over their costs. Distributors broadly work on about 25% with lots of variations.

Famously, UNFI has a national contract with Whole Foods where they work on Cost Plus. With big chains they do a similar thing, but when it comes to them calculating their wholesale price in

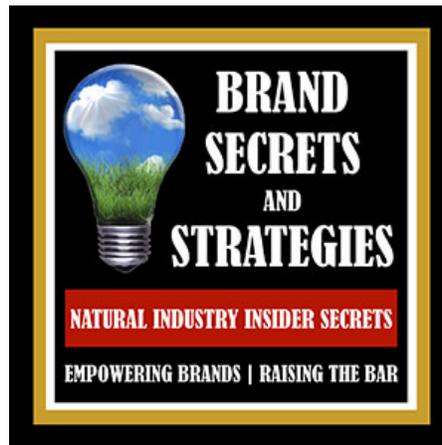


their catalog, historically it's been a 25% gross margin, meaning if you're selling it to UNFI or KeHE or any other distributor for a dollar, they would divide by .75 to get to a 1.33, which would be their published wholesale price. Mapping out some of this, where do I want to land on the shelf?

Working backwards to understand what your price to a distributor needs to be, and then doing your pro forma or projected P&L where you plug in something for returns, discounts, allowances, trade spending, seeing where your net sales come out, plugging in your cost of goods, seeing where your gross profit comes out, dividing your gross profit into your net sales to see where your gross margin comes out, and then running through the rest of the P&L. Something for warehousing and transportation, something for selling expenses, and then it's really making lists of things, right?

Dan: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Bob: To see either what you likely need to invest your first year to launch because you're going to be doing a lot of spending ahead of the sales. It could be putting brokers on retainer, it could be getting into trade shows, it could be doing trials with your co-packer, getting the package designed, and so on. Itemizing all of those things gives you a good idea of how much money you're going to need, whether it be from savings, friends, and family, or outside investors. Those are some of the very first things I would do, and in terms of mapping out a go-to-market plan, it's similarly starting to put down where you might do your pilot and then what regions and channels you're likely to go into.



Is it the Northeast U.S.? Is it the Rocky Mountain Region? Is it the Upper Midwest? Who are those target stores you're going to be going after? How are those stores serviced? By which distributors? How are you going to do that execution of getting in front of the buyers? Usually, it's with brokers and contract sales organizations. Mapping all that out, both in terms of an outline and then reflecting it in a spreadsheet or a sales model is the basic fundamentals of putting a simple plan together.

Dan: That's a lot of information to unpack. I'll certainly put a link to your website and to The Natural Products Field Manual. Thank you for going through that. If I'm a small natural brand and I created something in my kitchen or in my garage and it's the most amazing thing, even my Mom likes it, where do I go? Where do I start? What do I do first before I even start down that path? How do I start learning about this stuff?

Bob: A great resource... I know you've been to many fancy food shows. The Specialty Food Association is a non-profit trade organization that produces The Fancy Food Show. The Saturday before The Fancy Food Show, they have a very inexpensive program called The Basics, and it's everything from getting a license if you're making it in your kitchen so you go to a farmer's market, to go to a commercial kitchen to going, to a co-packer, to how one gets UPC codes. Going on the GS1 website and all of that. There are resources like that. I mentioned or you mentioned, thankfully, I have The Natural Products Field Manual, which is a very comprehensive resource guide, how-to guide, which includes content, databases of stores, coupons for services, and consulting time by me. Then, in a lot of major markets, there are communities.



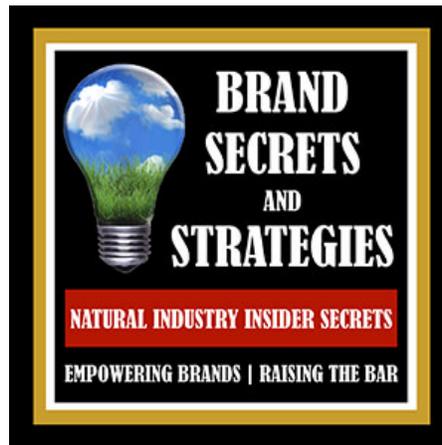
Where you are, Dan, in the Denver/Boulder area, there's Naturally Boulder, and as you may know this now, Naturally Bay Area, Naturally Chicago, soon to be Naturally Brooklyn, Naturally Austin. You plug into these communities and there's a lot of peer exchange. Sometimes they have educational programs and then, of course, some of the trade publications, whether it be Natural Food Merchandise or Whole Foods Magazine, BevNET, NOSH, they'll have good content and good educational programs as well.

Dan: Appreciate it.

Bob: I think all of the healthy people...

Dan: Well, I appreciate your going through that because that's so important because, "I've got a great idea, where do I go?" That's the first question everyone I speak to... that's the first question usually I hear from young brands. I'm starting to put together my plan. At what point do you recommend that you bring someone in to look over your shoulder and make sure that your plan makes sense? Where I'm going here is that when we've done some of the Pitch Slam things, et cetera, that we've done together, you've done a lot of them, at what point do you bring in a mentor to help you? How do you find that mentor beyond some of those groups?

Bob: Well, really as early as you can. In other words, you can certainly go through a little bit of the feasibility that we've been talking about so far. If you have an idea for a product if you go out and see what other similar products are selling for, and even if you're going to be premium priced to whatever is on the market already, you might have an idea of where you want this to price out on the shelf. Like, "Hey, I'm going to be doing this fantastic", I don't know, "Energy bar, granola, non-dairy frozen dessert, and I know

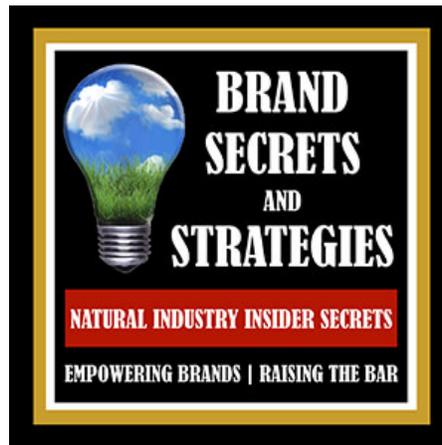


that the competitor products are at 4.99. I think I could be out there at 6 or 7.99."

You do a little bit of the back of the envelope that we've talked through and you say, "Well, based on what I learned, the retailer makes this 40% for a food item. The distributor makes 25. I need to have a 40 after all of these expenses. My costs to goods needs to come in around 1.50 or 2." Or something like that when you run the numbers, and then you might have an idea either because you're working with someone that does formulation. You might have some early preliminary discussions with co-manufacturers or co-packers, or even based on what you've learned yourself of what certain ingredients cost. Based on what those key ingredients are likely to be, you might be able to at least be able to at least go through that feasibility on your own, and then I would say it's worth trying to get some outside help.

There are companies out there who commercialize products, i.e., do formulation, find co-packers, help with operations. There are people like me who help with sort of go-to-market, growth strategy, how to put a sales plan together, how to put a marketing plan together. Who are the right resources to work with in terms of brokers, contract sales, brand management? I mean branding in terms of package design and marketing and all of that.

Even if you're totally sort of winging it on your own, what some people will do is take it as far as they can, and that means it making it in their kitchen, having some level of confidence they're not going to kill anybody or make anybody sick, either because they've been licensed or they've had a commercial kitchen sort of vet them on food safety and all of that. Then, they might go out



to farmers markets and that's often a farmers market, a Saturday market is where so many large companies we have started where you get that early sense of, "Wow, people are really excited about this. They love it. There's no hesitation at paying 6.99, 7.99. I see the same people coming back week after week. They really love it. They really want it. They want to get more of it. They've asked me to do new flavors or try this or try that." That's a place a lot of people start.

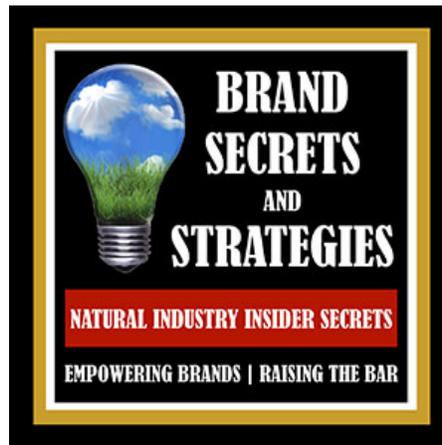
From there, it's maybe finding a commercial kitchen or a small copacker where somebody can make it more efficiently than you at a lower cost than you, and that's where you start to do your pilot and then go from there.

Dan: Got it.

Bob: That's like a fairly common sequence that people go through.

Dan: I love the idea that you're trying, like you said, in your backyard. Great advice. You're learning in your backyard, you're trying it with people to see what the capabilities, what the possibility is for putting this product together and getting it to market. What should suggestions do you have for a brand that's starting to work with a retailer? How does a retailer... excuse me, how does a brand prepare to work with a retailer? What advice would you give them?

Bob: That's a great question, and it's kind of where the rubber hits the road because this is where some of the things I touched on earlier, whether it's getting help from someone like you or me or talking to a friendly broker, but to understand how your product fits with the strategic objectives of the retailer. What are you

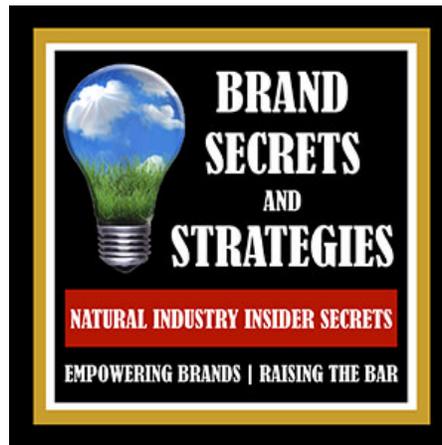


bringing to the party in terms of category growth? What are some of their objectives as a category manager or buyer? It's going to be things like sales growth, margin growth, basket size, penny profit, attracting new users, et cetera. How do you fit into that whole story? Getting some help, thinking about that is important, and again, it all feeds into doing your homework, not just going in and checking the stores, but if you can, try to get ahold of some data. If you can, look at industry trade publications and online where they might review categories and what's going on in a specific category in terms of growth, subcategories, areas of growth, consumer trends.

If you have a product that is keto-friendly, that's a good thing right now. If you have a product that has CBD, that could be a good thing right now depending on where you are and what the category is. If you're plant-based, that's on-trend if you're highly differentiated. Having a good sense of what's going on in macro trends and where you fit and then specifically where you fit in the retailer's category is very important, and then one of the things that a lot of people find helpful is engaging with a broker.

Brokers, for those who aren't familiar, might be akin to a manufacturer's rep in other industries. They work as a partner of yours. They work as an extension of your sales team. What they usually have to offer is access to the retailer. If you're cold calling a buyer, you might find it very challenging to get an appointment in, whereas a good broker might be in to see that buyer once a week, three times a month, et cetera.

They also can help advise you on specific go-to-market for their region, their geography, their channel, where they understand those buyers, what they're looking for. What are their pet



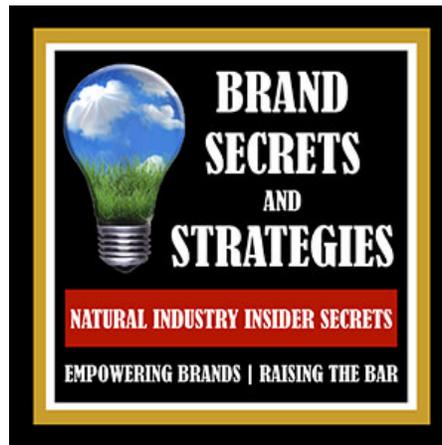
programs? What support are they looking for from the supplier, i.e., you, in terms of promotions, demos, other kinds of investments in their programs depending on what they offer? The broker should advise you on all of that before you even go in and have meeting, and then the broker can also give you some feedback on pricing, margin requirements for the retailer industry there and other things that you need to know that might be specific to that channel and to that region.

There are brokers organized by channel, i.e., natural and specialty in grocery, as well as club and chain drug. In some big retailers, they have their own ecosystem of brokers such as Target-specific brokers, Walmart-specific brokers, Costco-specific brokers, and so on. That's often... when you're ready to go into those kinds of retailers, engaging with a broker is a good step. I'm imagining you might ask me how one finds a good broker and

Dan: Or you.

Bob: Like anything, you could call me or call you, but it's also networking with your peers. If you do have any contact with retailers and distributors, you can certainly ask them who they think might be a good fit for you. It's not always true that big brokers will work with big brands and small brokers work with small brands, but someone who might have experience in your category, someone who the retailer or industry friend or distributor might think might be a good fit for a brand like yours and in a category like yours.

When you talk to brokers, many of them work on a commission based on net sales. 5% is usually the starting point. If you're a new brand with very little existing business, they'll often want a



retainer. A retainer is a minimum monthly guaranteed commission if you will, and they'll often structure the program as, "You pay us 5% or 500 a month, whichever is greater", depending on the region, depending on the channel, et cetera. National retainers could be anywhere from 12 to 15,000 a month, depending on total U.S., depending on the broker, depending on your category, et cetera.

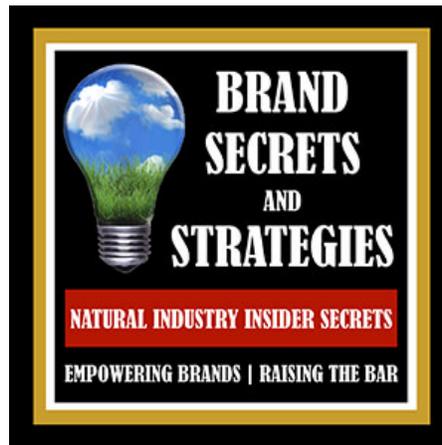
Dan: So-

Bob: Go ahead

Dan: Please. No, go ahead. Please.

Bob: The last thing I was going to say is the most important part of the discussion when you're talking to brokers, you'll go through all of the perfunctory things of who's on their team, what region they cover, what channels they cover, who they call on, what other brands they represent, just again, all common sense questions, but the most important part of the discussion is that you both agree on objectives together and you have an agreement of expectations. The biggest reason why I see these relationships not work out is when there is a mismatch of expectations. Rather than say to your broker, "I'd like you to grow sales, I'd like you to grow distribution", you might say, "I would like to get these four SKUs into these 60 stores over the next 90 days." The broker says back to you, "I can do that."

Or, the broker says back to you, "I can do that if you give me the right tools", which might include promotions, free fills, a budget for demos, and things like that that will enable them to get that done. Once you've agreed on those objectives, you then want to

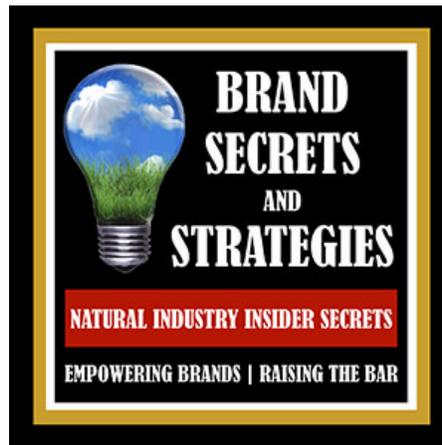


have some kind of ongoing review process. There might be a 90-day check-in, there might be a six-month check-in, there might be an annual review very similar to what you would do with your own employees or if a founder worked at a bigger company before starting the business, the kind of thing they would have experienced as an employee.

Dan: Thank you for sharing that, and actually, that was going to be my next question is, how do you hold them accountable? When you're talking about working with a broker, how do you manage all of that? You've shared a lot. Brokers that work in specific regions, brokers that have expertise across multiple channels. As a small brand, how do I manage that? How do I not get caught up in so many things going on that I can't keep track of them and I can't effectively keep the hand on the wheel of my own ship, the rudder of my own ship?

Bob: That's a really good question because as a founder, as you... if we go back to where we started, mapping out a very simple plan, being clear on what you're looking to accomplish, thinking about over what period of time, thinking about what resources are required, there's a couple of places that you can invest in additional help. One is if you're a founder who's doing everything, you really need to think about, what is the highest and best use of your time? What things might you be able to delegate? In some cases, you might say, "Look, as a founder, my best contribution to my business is being focused on innovation, being focused on brand building, being focused on sales or building out distribution. For those other things, I need to bring in some help."

It might be an all-purpose utility person who's a right-hand person who's doing light bookkeeping, customer service,

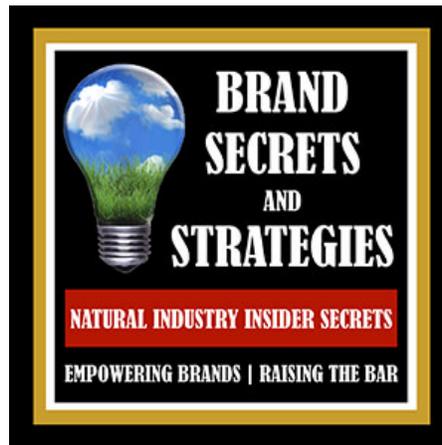


coordinating things with your comanufacturer or copacker, coordinating logistics with a public warehouse or 3PL. That's one place. The other is, there's another category of service provider between you and the broker, and that's called a brand management company. What they are is a contract sales organization. 20 years ago, they might have been called a master broker.

What it is is it allows you to sort of outsource your sales management to this team, and some are big teams of 20, 30 people. Some are smaller teams of 10 people, five people. Some are one-off individuals where they do all the things a VP of Sales would do if you had one, but they're doing it part-time for you and other companies, so you're getting it at a lower cost. You're sort of getting them part-time, but you're getting them where they add the most strategic value to your business. It's managing brokers, helping with headquarter calls, helping a little bit with the go-to-market plan, and again, being less expensive than you hiring a full-time VP of Sales too early. Eventually, you'll want to do that, but the risk of hiring the wrong person is very high.

Dan: Any other thoughts? Anything that we've missed?

Bob: I do, I do. The first thing I wanted to say is when you referred back to my background, in my book, in my introduction, I say, "This is a compendium of all of my bad judgment, expensive mistakes, and blown calls", and I'm not being falsely modest when I say that. People like you and me and other friends of ours kind of learn the hard way because we grew up with the industry and as with all the changes, it's an evolution and it's adapting as things change and evolve. That's one thing.



The other thing I would say for all your viewers and listeners is I can't think of a better time to be launching a product, both in terms of all the ways to reach consumers, whether it's E-commerce, whether it's direct-to-consumer meal kits, you name it, as well as access to capital. Between all of those accelerators, crowdfunding, angels, family offices, as well as many of the large CPGs have their own incubators, so everyone from General Mills, Campbell's, Kellogg's, Pepsi, Coke, I don't want to leave any out, Danone, many others have these incubators.

If you've got a great idea, if it's on-trend, if it's innovative, chances are not only will you have new and different ways to reach consumers, but you're going to have new and different ways to access capital. It's going to be a little easier and a little more available than even five or 10 years ago.

Dan: Thank you for sharing that, and I've had the privilege of working with some of the brands for a couple of those different incubators and I love the passion and enthusiasm. You're getting the big CPG experience. To your point, I've got scars on top of scars, and if you can learn from someone like us, that's going to save you a lot of headaches, a lot of sleepless nights, et cetera, so take advantage of it. Again, that's what I think is so great about natural, or as what I say, what makes natural natural, is that we're a community that is willing, able, eager to help you succeed. It's not about similar to back in the old days when I started in this in big CPG, where it was them versus us. Now. it's, "We're a community. How do we help each other grow?"

Thank you for sharing that. Any other thoughts? Also, how do we find out more about you and what you do, The Field Manual, et cetera?



Bob: I think that covers a lot of it in terms of I would say this was a good distillation. I think based on some of the questions that you shared with me about essential things to think about, and then as far as me, I mentioned earlier my website is naturalconsulting.com. You can see my background, my clients, my services. You can see about The Natural Products Field Manual, which is a whole package of content, databases, coupons for services, and I think you're in there, Dan-

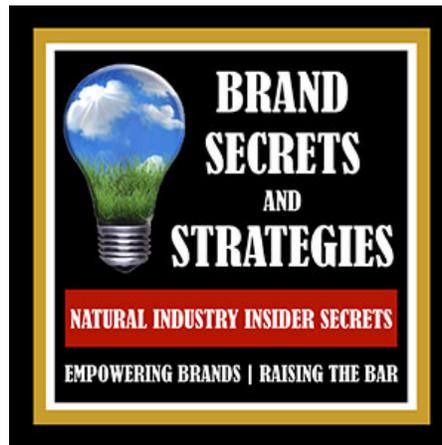
Dan: Yeah, I am.

Bob: For a coupon, as well as some consulting time from me, and then I do my two-day sales seminar and one day in raising capital, I do them every December in Boston, so it is December 10, 11, 12. December 10/11 is sales, 12th is financing. These are great networking events as well as great content. We've got upwards of a dozen expert speakers plus sponsors plus companies of all sizes and stages in the room. Then, the one day on raising capital, we typically have two institutional investors. We usually have an angel or a family office. We have a strategic, we have a debt expert, and then we have an entrepreneur who share their experience raising capital.

We've been alternating Chicago and San Francisco in the spring, so we haven't set dates yet, but we've also had calls to consider doing it in L.A. or Denver or somewhere else. That remains to be seen.

Dan: Yeah, and I

Bob: But thanks for asking.



Dan: No, I appreciate your sharing that. Thanks, and I had the privilege of going to one of your events in Chicago and I liked it. It was well worth it, so thank you. Again, another opportunity, another resource for brands to start figuring out, where do you go? Knowledge is power and the more you know the fewer headaches, heartaches, et cetera, and so the bottom line is we want to help these brands succeed.

Thank you so much for your time. I'm going to make sure to leave a link to your website, to The Field Products Manual in the podcast show notes and in the end of this video. Anyhow, thank you.

Bob: I want to add one last thing, and this is not the mutual admiration society, but for all your viewers, anyone who's doing anything in natural products should in addition to getting natural foods merchandise should also get Whole Foods Magazine, and I would strongly encourage them to read the articles that you've written-

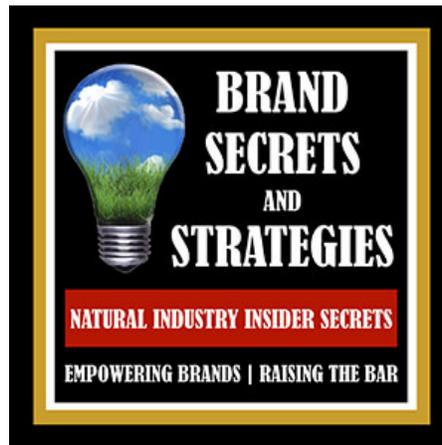
Dan: Oh, thank you.

Bob: On category management and how to fit in with those strategic objectives of the retailer.

Dan: I appreciate that. Thank you. I'm trying to provide value, trying to raise the bar in the industry. Thank you so much for your time. Anything else?

Bob: That's it.

Dan: Okay, thanks, Bob.



I want to thank Bob for coming on today and for sharing his wisdom and his insights. This information is so critically important for every brand, whether you're an existing brand or you're a startup brand. In podcast episode 99, we share a lot of additional insights. You're going to want to go back and check that out.

I'll be certain to put a link to Natural Products Consulting and The Natural Products Field Manual in the podcast show notes and on the podcast web page. This week's free download is The Essential New Item Checklist - The Recipe For Success. I thought that this would be perfect because we outlined a lot of the different things you need to know in this podcast. The Essential New Item Checklist - The Recipe For Success lays the foundation for everything that Bob and I talked about today. More importantly, it's the foundation that you need to have in place to build a healthy, thriving, successful brand. On top of that, I also share a lot of the strategies that you can use to explode sales. Things that you need to know about. For example, how to properly manage your broker, something we talked a little bit about earlier.

Anyhow, you're going to be able to download those on today's podcast show notes and on today's podcast web page. You can get there by going to brandsecretsandstrategies.com/session136. I appreciate you for listening and I look forward to seeing you in the next episode.

Natural Products Consulting <https://www.naturalconsulting.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.