



## **BRAND SECRETS AND STRATEGIES PODCAST #143**

Hello and thank you for joining us today. This is the Brand Secrets and Strategies Podcast #143

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!**

Welcome. In honor of Expo East this week I wanted to talk about trade shows on this show. It's a little bit of a different topic. But the point is this, trade shows are a big part of your trade marketing budget and just like everything else we talk about, you want to make every opportunity work to your advantage. Trade shows can be a huge win for your brand or they can be a tremendous wasted expense. Depends on how you attack it. Depends on how you approach it. And it depends on the strategies that you use to maximize each and every opportunity, each and every selling opportunity to get in front of other brands, retailers and consumers.



Early in my career, honestly I thought I went to every trade show in North America. While that is an exaggeration, it sure seemed like it. I was traveling all over the country going to trade shows, tabletop shows, et cetera. Back then, trade shows were designed for selling. It was an opportunity for you to sell in shippers and new products into retailers, an opportunity for getting your new products into a distributor.

I've talked a lot about this. The way things were in mainstream back then are very similar to the way things are in natural today. In other words, we called on each and every store. We had to sell into each and every store. We had to sell our products to the distributor. Everything was distributed or delivered to the store through a distributor. Very similar to the way things are today.

Then we needed to get smart, we needed to streamline things and we needed to weed out a lot of the costs. That's why a lot of brands, a lot of retailers were bought up and we went through this thing called centralized buying. That's a whole other conversation. Back to trade shows.

As I mentioned, I went to a lot of trade shows and a lot of the trade shows were all about how much can I give you or reward you for buying or taking my product off my hands. I literally would give someone a box of golf clubs or golf balls if they would buy a shipper or a certain number of shippers, et cetera. And the point was they were all about selling. They were about making that connection with the retailer, with the distributor, et cetera.

On this podcast episode, we're going to tackle the trade show question from two different views. One from the brand perspective; how you can maximize it as a brand. And then two, how you can maximize a trade show as a retailer. You're going to want to stay tuned to the entire episode so that you can think about the different ways that you can impact each group. If you're a brand, how can you help the retailer? If you're a retailer, how



can you help the brand? This is something you're going to want to listen to because again, this is all about getting your products on more store shelves and into the hands of more shoppers.

Before we go into further, I want to remind you that at the end of every episode there's a free downloadable guide for you. 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 sales and compete more effectively with. Remember, the goal here is to get your product on more store shelves and into the hands of more shoppers.

If you like the podcast, share with a friend, subscribe and leave a review. And don't forget, while I haven't talked a lot about my YouTube channel, I've got a lot of content I'm going to be putting on there pretty quick. A lot of brand-building content, including interviews with leading industry thought leaders like Bob Burke, Walter Robb, and many more. You're going to want to check it out.

Trade shows represent a huge financial commitment and time commitment on the part of the brand. This is why it's so critically important that you maximize each and every opportunity to leverage your brand, to get your brand on more store shelves in the hands of more shoppers, to encourage more people to look at your brand and use the opportunities from a trade show to get noticed.

As I mentioned, trade shows back then were all about selling your product. Specifically, how do you sell your product to a retailer, distributor and so on? Today, trade shows are mostly about networking or introducing a new product too attendees. In a trade show, in the newer version of the trade show, you have an opportunity to get your product in front of industry influencers as well as other brands, industry media, as well as other retailers.

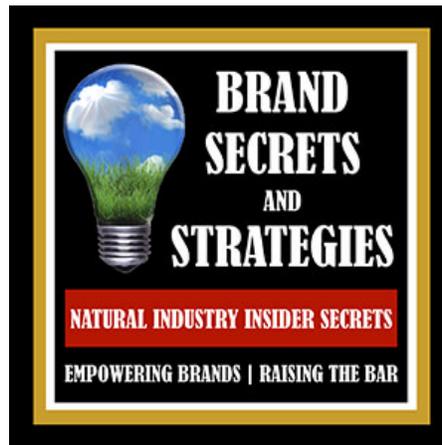


You can also use trade shows to learn about new trends in the market and other channels. As I mentioned, networking, get to know the other brands in your space, get to know new retailers, develop a relationship with them. A lot of the selling that we're doing in the natural channel is based upon relationships. Leverage that opportunity.

In addition, I'm always talking about the importance of being able to educate retailers and industry experts about your brand. This is a unique opportunity for you to speak with them one on one, educate the retailers, educate the influencers and educate the other people in the market about your brand, more importantly, help them help the customer that buys your brand know why your brand is perfect for them.

In other words, if you have two brands on a shelf, what's unique about the two different brands? If your brand has a unique customer that comes into that store that buys a lot of the other products that retailers want to use or want to sell, then be able to celebrate that. Highlight this fact to the retailer and the influencers through your brand selling story. Show them why your product's unique and different and why your product deserves another look, and more importantly, an opportunity to be sold in their retailer store or to be written about by an influencers, media, etc.

Remember, influencers are always looking for great content to be able to share with their audiences. Wouldn't it be great if their content, the content that they share with their audience included some education about your product? What's unique about it, what's different about it? Why should they be paying attention to it? These are things that you want to be able to communicate to everyone who stops by your booth. Remember that you may not know specifically who the visitor to you booth is because a lot of times you don't know what their role is or their relation to others.



Maximize each and every selling opportunity. View every person that comes to your booth is the most important influencer that could help support your brand.

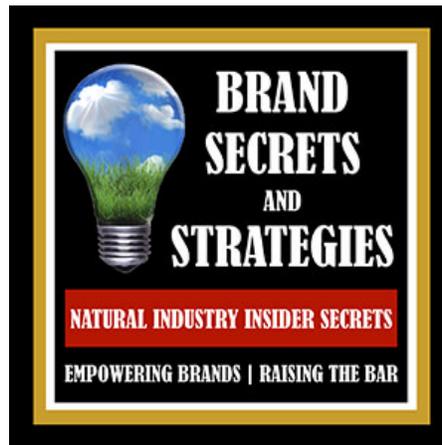
There've been a lot of times when I've shown up at someone's booth with a press badge and they've ignored me. I've got over 400 articles in print, including articles about specific products or product trends. Think about the opportunity, the missed opportunity by some of those brands. In addition to that, I have relationships with other brands, industry influencers, other retailers, and I might be able to help some of these brands out. Again, a missed opportunity. Now, this isn't about me. This is just an example.

Leverage every contact you make with anyone, no matter who they are as an important opportunity to celebrate your brand and communicate the value of your brand.

Use trade shows to maximize each and every opportunity and then, more importantly, use them to stand out. Be the standout brand that everyone remembers and wants to talk about after they come home.

A quick story about how this works and why this is so critically important. Last year I went to Expo East. There was a big storm coming and as a result, there were a lot of fears that the storm would impact the show. Because of that, a lot of retailers and a lot of brands didn't show up. There were a lot of empty booths. Think about how much you spend to buy a booth, send your samples, and then send all the people to work the booth. A lot of booths were empty. And so there were a lot of other brands that were sitting around frustrated, angry and upset that the amount of traffic at the show was down dramatically from years past.

Now, here's an opportunity to rethink about what that trade show could have been, and I've written about this in some of my articles. If instead of



being frustrated about the fact that no one's coming to your booth to try your products, why not leverage that opportunity to get to know the other brands that might compliment your products? Peanut butter and jelly, just as an example, but some other products. Think about the products that might complement yours. Then think about creative ways that you could go-to-market or promote your product with that complimentary item.

My point is this, try to find creative ways to make the win, to make every opportunity that you have to differentiate your brand and to help explode sales. And one of the best ways to do that is to promote your product with a complementary product.

I talk a lot about that on the trade marketing-focused episodes, so you're going to want to check that out. I've also got a course I'm in the process of building, *Soup to Nuts: Everything You Need to Know About Trade Marketing*. I'll cover it there as well.

So let's talk about the different kinds of trade shows or events that you could participate in.

One event is called a tabletop show. A tabletop show is usually where you have a couple of your products on display on a small table and you take orders, you try to sell your products. As I mentioned, that trade shows used to be largely about selling your products. It's about getting people to buy your products, taking orders.

Now, one of the challenges is, a lot of people would take an order, a retailer would say, "I want this product in my store," and then for whatever reason, they realize that they over-committed to too many brands and they would cancel a lot of the different products that they committed to buying. Figure out a creative way to remain top of mind to the retailer and see them engaged.



Another type of trade show you might consider is one in a different country. A couple of years ago I was the keynote speaker at the Mexican Healthy Product Summit. The point is this that's an emerging market where people want quality natural organic products, especially US-made products across all of Latin America. This is a unique opportunity for you to get your products in an emerging market and possibly even be first to market. It's something you might want to consider.

Another option is what ECRM has. ECRM's program is similar to speed dating. At least that's how they explain it. I've been the keynote at several of their events as well. The point is this, at ECRM you have dedicated time with several different retailers, guaranteed that you're going to be able to sit down in front of several different retailers to be able to sell your products and hopefully get your products on more store shelves and in the hands of more shoppers. And then there are virtual versions of this. For example, RangeMe, which by the way is owned by ECRM. But that's another opportunity for you to be able to get your product in front of retailers or potential customers.

So as you start thinking about what is your brand strategy is for next year, and as you begin to think about where do you want to commit your funds to, where do you want to commit your resources to, to support your brand?

I've talked a lot about your brand health and why this is an important measure that you need to be paying attention to. The health of your brand is the strength of your brand. It's calculated by the amount of trust and confidence consumers have in it. It's measured by your distribution and your sales, your ACV, all commodity volume. Effectively, it's what you take to the bank or rather what the retailer takes to the bank. Trade shows and industry events that align your brand with retailers can help dramatically improve your brand's health by connecting with key retailers and industry experts. Let me explain.



Have you ever heard of Dan's crunchy granola? Probably not. I just made it up. The point is that if I take my new brand to a retailer and ask them to put it on their shelves next to other products, I'm expecting them to take a risk on an unknown and unproven brand. Anything that I can do to help demonstrate and amplify the strength of my brand, the quality of my products and my brand's ability to drive category sales will help me get on the retailer shelves.

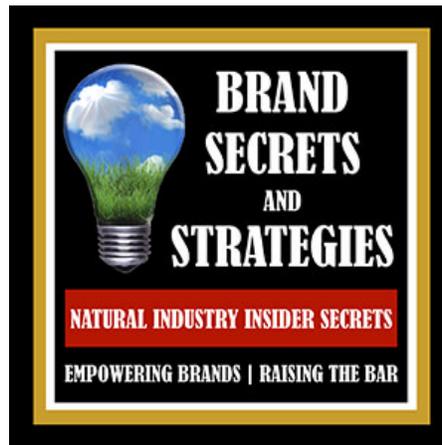
Trade shows are a strategic way to turbocharge the process of building a brand through exposure to key retailers by looking for innovative ways to increase sales. During the rest of the year, a brand sitting on a retailer shelf waits patiently for shoppers to trickle by and hopefully pick it up and take it home with them. This is further complicated by promotions or competitive products, essentially paying the shopper to choose their products over yours.

The hope is that your brand will prove itself so that you can increase your distribution. Nirvana for any brand is when the shopper chooses to pay full retail price for your product over the promoted product.

New and unproven brands need to continually fight for shelf space and profitable distribution. Increasing distribution means increased sales. Sales increase because your items are made available to a greater number of shoppers.

Successful, well represented and trusted brands have fewer hurdles to getting a retailer to accept new items and line extensions. This is because they've already proven that they can increase sales and shopper foot traffic.

One of the primary benefits of exhibiting at a trade show is that this gives new brands instant exposure to top retailers. Instead of waiting for a single shopper to buy one granola bar and then grow your distribution one store at



a time, trade shows make it possible to potentially sell several pallets to large retailers and several stores spread across the country. Trade shows also provide an excellent opportunity for brands to showcase new items.

Taking full advantage of every opportunity at trade shows can dramatically and almost instantly skyrocket a brand from obscurity to a brand in great demand. This requires a strategy to maximize each and every selling opportunity while the show doors are open. This means having plenty of samples, marketing materials, business cards, and friendly, helpful staff members to properly greet and engage as many people as possible.

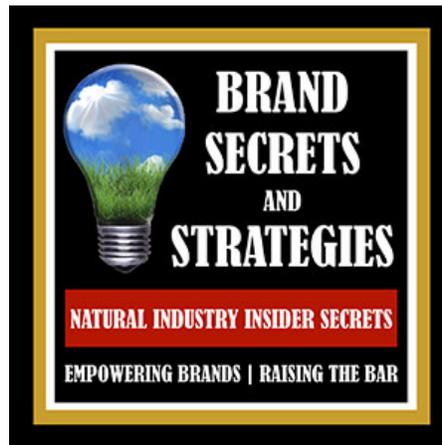
Brands also need to have a follow-up strategy including ways to reconnect and follow up with everyone. And I do mean everyone you talk to. Treat everyone who visits your booth with the same dignity and respect. You never know who has the ear of the store owner.

The key to maximizing every opportunity is by being properly prepared before you show up at the store.

Trade shows are an excellent opportunity for brands to showcase new items to retailers and consumers. Retailers are always on the lookout for innovative new items their shoppers want. Trade shows provide an opportunity for retailers to shop natural organic products in much the same way that their consumer shops their store.

You never get a second chance to disappoint a customer. Exhibiting brands need to make a lasting impression on every retailer, blogger, consumer, et cetera. They need to stand out against the competition and maximizing every selling opportunity.

I'm always amazed by the number of exhibiting brands who run out of business cards and sales literature the first day. Another pet peeve of mine



is when a lot of brands use "info" as their contact information instead of a person. For example, info@yourbrand.com. This is similar to, do not reply. In other words, we don't want to be bothered by your inquiry into our brand.

You spent a lot of money to get your product onto a trade show floor. You've spent the time, the energy, you brought your people, you've got the samples, you've gone out of your way to make this a selling opportunity. Do not make the mistake of saying we don't care about you because we're going to send you to an empty mailbox, to a generic mailbox if you have any questions about our product. Exhibitors need to make it easy for interested retailers and bloggers to learn more about and buy their products.

Here are my top seven strategies that every brand and retailer needs to leverage.

One: Be prepared to network, bring plenty of selling material and business cards. There's nothing more frustrating than wanting to know more about a brand with no way to contact someone at the company. To me, this is similar to standing in a long checkout line, cash in hand, ready to buy your product, but there's no cashier insight. Trade shows are extremely busy, noisy and full of distractions. We're all trying to visit as many booths as possible while on the show floor. Getting one on one time with the right person can be very hard and difficult, if not impossible. As a result, most of us collect information about the brands and the context so we can circle back and reconnect with them after the show ends.

Two: Be prepared to sell. Know your purpose and be prepared. This goes well beyond having plenty of samples to hand out. A sales team that's energetic, motivated and in an attractive booth. Why are you there? Do you want to showcase your new items or an existing product line? Ensure your



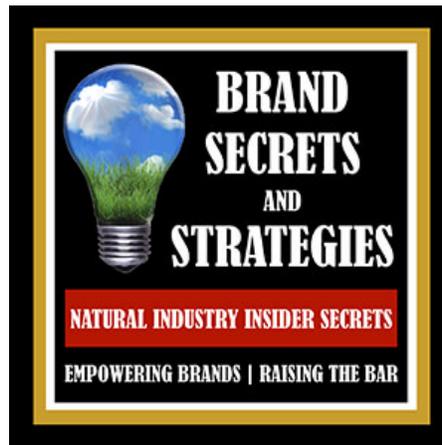
booth messaging is clear and consistent. Use the experience to educate retailers and bloggers. More importantly, you're there to sell. Make it easy for retailers to buy products from you. Make a lasting impact that encourages repeat purchases.

Three: Know your core customer. Retailers cannot possibly be experts in every category and every item they sell. Savvy retailers rely heavily on brands to help them address shopper's needs and wants by having the right products on the shelves. This can be the greatest differentiator between you and your competition.

Four: Leverage the show. Approach trade shows in the same as you would ineffective in-store demo. Use it to test consumer preferences, wants and needs with actual retailers, shoppers, and your friends and peers. Consumer research is one of the most important aspects of every brand success. It's the key to your long term success. Consumer research is very expensive. Imagine being able to get valuable real-world insights from your peers, retailers, bloggers, influencers, the media, et cetera. Conduct consumer research with actual shoppers in their environment.

Imagine getting instant feedback from people who actually buy and use your product more than once. Imagine being able to customize your product right away as you continue to develop it. Imagine how efficient it is to develop a product that consumers are actually searching for.

Five: Be an expert in every category in every product you sell. Natural organic brand's tradition has a close relationship with their core shoppers compared to their larger counterparts. This is what sets them apart and gives them a significant competitive advantage. Brands need to know how their consumers shop their category and what motivates them to make the purchase. This includes going well beyond canned topline reports. Savvy retailers already know how well your brand's performing on their shelves.



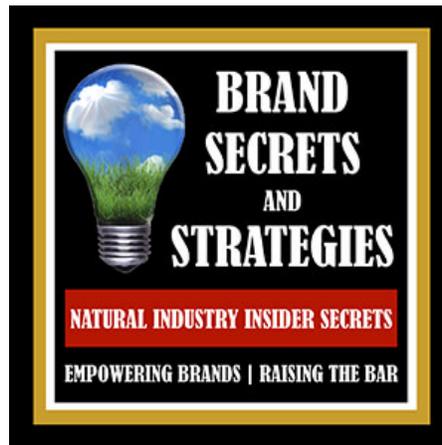
They need brands to provide actionable insights and recommendations. This includes knowing how their core customers drive sales in complementary categories. For example, organic bread shoppers frequently purchase organic spread, etc.

Number six: Be an expert in your competition. Knowing your competition and how you sell against them and how you differentiate your brand on a retailer's shelf. Retailers are not looking for another me-too brand. They want strong brands willing to take a leadership role in the category, a brand that appeals to their shoppers.

Number seven: Have a follow-up strategy. Few brands capture business cards, track who stops by their booth and then makes an effort to follow up with anyone. This is a huge missed opportunity. Trade shows are selling opportunities. You never know who the people are that are stopping by your booth and how they might be able to help your brand get hands and more shoppers. Never underestimate the value of everyone who takes the time to visit your booth. Have a strategy in place to capture retailer information. Important conversations to endnotes for follow up after the show. Thank people for coming to your booth. Not only is this courteous, but you never know when a contact might be in a position to grow your brand.

It's amazing how many times I run into people that I've known for years and because of the positions that they've changed or morphed into, they're better suited in many cases, many times to better help me sell my brand or help me get my brand in front of different retailers. Think about that. This is a small world and you need to keep those relationships intact and you need to nurture them and not lose track of them.

Follow these simple important strategies to maximize your trade show experience.



Now, from a retailer's perspective, here's how to maximize your time and impact at trade shows. Three steps to trade show success. Trade shows can be a huge distraction and an expense for retailers, but they don't need to be. Instead, you can maximize these opportunities to gain a significant and sustainable competitive advantage in your market.

The original purpose, as I've mentioned, is that trade shows were for brands to display their products to you, to introduce their products to new retailers. This is where retailers would typically order new products or decide what products to bring into their store.

Trade shows have changed a lot since then. Most people think of trade shows as an opportunity for brands to introduce their new products to influencers, retailers, the natural community and the public at large. Much of the focus on the trade show floor is about the exhibitor and the attendees, not what matters most, your customers.

What differentiates natural retailers from your mainstream competitors is your relationship with your consumers that shop your store. Instead of trying to be a one size fits all retailer, your ability to connect with your consumers on a more intimate one-on-one basis gives you a neat perspective. Your ability to connect with your consumers on a more intimate basis gives you unique insight as to what they really want.

For this reason, I recommend that natural retailers view trade shows as the ultimate shopping trip for their ideal consumers. In other words, what would your consumers want and like to find on your store shelves? This is a subtle but dramatic way that we think about trade shows and how they can be the difference between converting occasional customers into loyal evangelists instead of constantly trying to reacquire the same customer, like you're mainstream counterparts.



The three-step strategy I recommend is:

One: Identify the key trends that are driving sales across your entire store. Don't only look for specific categories, but focus instead on the shopper's market basket and work backward. Seek to identify the common themes and the choices your customers make as they check out of the store. For example, are the majority of the items in your shopper's market basket, plant-based?

Two: Ask your customers these questions. Why did you choose the items in their basket? This will help you identify common ingredients or product attributes. What problems are they trying to solve? This will help you identify their needs, like low sodium, reduced fats, keto, et cetera. A lot of brands and retailers overlook this powerful yet simple strategy. How do you know what your customers want if you don't ask them?

Big brands and retailers tend to rely on focus groups for this kind of information. It's my experience that focus groups rarely uncover real shopper buying habits, especially natural shoppers. There's no substitute for having a one on one conversation with your customers.

Three: Armed with this new information, consider what new items meet that criteria. At the show, look for new products that feature those attributes as well as those new and novel items that won't appear on your competitor shelf for months. This is how you get a jumpstart on your competition. Offer unique items your customers want and how to convert occasional customers into loyal evangelists by becoming the preferred store choice.

Thank you for listening. Today's free downloadable guide is The Essential New Item Checklist, Your Recipe For Success. This is ideal because these are the things, the foundational things that every brand needs to have in



place to be successful. This is where you start applying the many other strategies I talk about in other podcast episodes, YouTube channel, et cetera. Leverage this to grow your brand. You can download it instantly on the podcast webpage or in the show notes by going to [brandsecretsandstrategies.com/session143](http://brandsecretsandstrategies.com/session143).

Thank you for listening and I look forward to seeing you in the next episode.

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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.