

-- Speaker 0 00:00 <inaudible> make it right. The manufacturing podcast. Today, more and more people are looking for alternatives to products they've always used and innovators are out there working on new products and ideas to support the consumer. Every so often I'll make it right. We'd like to get the perspective of these innovators as they venture through development and manufacturing to gain an understanding of how manufacturers can better support those. Trying to do something different. Welcome to the makeup right podcast. I'm Janet Eastman and this week on the show, I'm pleased to have Mateus halting the co founder of Ramblin brands as my guest. He has an interesting story about how his company created the brand smile makers. It's align of sexual wellness products for women that are available around the world. And I'm really pleased to have him as a guest on make it right. So welcome to the show, Mathias.

Speaker 1 00:59 Thank you very much. Good mornings on it.

Speaker 0 01:02 So you've had a very interesting career before you ventured out to launch rambling brands. So just, you know, take us quickly down that road to, to where you, you launched Ramblin brands.

Speaker 1 01:14 So I, I started my, uh, career with Proctor and gamble and I was with him for about 11 years, uh, in a variety of, of roles. So first I was four years in Scandinavia. I'm mostly working with, uh, the sort of local sales and marketing. And then I spent seven years based in Japan and working all across Asia. Also there on a pretty wide range of roles from a global design team to a Northeast Asia haircare business. And then my last assignment was sort of an internal laminae assignment where, where, uh, I was integrating acquired companies and helping to divest parts of the business that, uh, we didn't see fit in. Um, but eh, but integrating the rest in terms of manufacturing, uh, organizations, systems, processes, reporting, uh, sort the whole range and um, yeah. And after that I decided to leave and set up on my own.

Speaker 0 02:11 Okay. So what was it that that actually prompted you to, you know, okay, we want to do Ramblin brands. We, we want to start with smile makers.

Speaker 1 02:22 So the, the part of the idea of remnant brands is a disruptive innovation. Uh, and that's a bit, but I felt was lacking and TMZ and I and I, and I think it's lacking in a long of the major companies really innovating at entirely unexpected angle because a lot of the approach that the, the, the normal innovation process is usually gathering a lot of people and asking them what they're missing and then you make whatever they're missing. Uh, what I had seen, especially of the companies that we were integrating in my last assignment, the smaller ones, like a U S haircare brand for example, is innovating based on sort of gut and intuition of where the market's going and looking five, 10 years ahead and innovating based on that. And then sticking true to that core idea. So that's what we wanted to do. We wanted to create disruptive consumer goods brands.

Speaker 1 03:19 Then in terms of how we started with a women's expo wellbeing, and that is my cofounder pit of extreme with whom I work, that P and G in Scandinavia. Uh, he was living in Shanghai at the time when I was on assignment in Tokyo and he had gone into sex shop to buy a vibrator for his girlfriend at the time. So his wife, a mother of two lovely daughters, uh, to buy her a present. And he came out from there and I'm saying that the experience had been absolutely horrific. Uh, the, the whole shopping environment was very seedy. Uh, the designs and the communications of what was sold there was, uh, was pretty explicit and some cases even offensive. Uh, and overall it was clear that it was more of an environment for men to buy products to use on women rather than women to buy products for themselves. So combining those two ideas of disruptive innovation and sexual wellness for women lacking, we decided to create the first truly mainstream brand for women's sexual wellbeing or create a brand whose core mission was to normalize the category in everyday shopping environments.

Speaker 0 04:32 Still, your whole approach has really been disruptive.

Speaker 1 04:36 Yes. Yeah. That's at the to do things completely different and that nobody else has done before. Is that the core of it?

Speaker 0 04:43 Yeah. So how much research and testin --

-- g did you do when you were developing your message and your marketing because you had to get away from that stigma?

Speaker 1 04:54 So, so in, in, in terms of the marketing, I say, I would say our, uh, the, the, the idea came out pretty organically and not with, with so much research and we used all the women that we knew as sort of inspiration for, um, you know, thinking about what would they want you sort of everyday women like my sister or my wife or my mother or the, the, the women that I know. So if taking them as sort of inspiration, uh, we'd really didn't feel that we need to do so much research on the marketing we worked with as a team, uh, based in Australia, led by creative director named Michael Walker, who is a, um, multiple award winning, um, advertising guru, uh, to come up with, okay, what's the, what's the right approach to communicating something and directly enough, uh, OBOD what the products are and what they can do for you without it being considered too sort of in your face or, or explicit.

Speaker 1 06:03 So on the marketing side, I would say it's a, it was a pretty just very creative approach, uh, without much testing. Uh, the testing rather came around, uh, the product. So how do you design products that are going to deliver something, uh, functionally and work ergonomically, but at the same time look sleek and luxury and premium. Uh, and then also on, on the mechanical components and the sort of the technical function of it, uh, there was quite a bit of research and, and well, what we found early on with it was that there is much more even scientific research into this than we had imagined. So there's actually a lot of stuff to go by, both from a O and G associations and from six ologists from departments of psychology at university. Uh, so, so the, the research was more on that part.

Speaker 0 06:56 Hm. And you've done it actually a fantastic job of creating stylish, high quality affordable products. Like when you see them, they're colorful. Um, they don't really, they don't look like your standard vibrator. Right? So there's something that could be sitting in on those stores shelf more or less. And it's not something that people are going to go, Whoa. Um, so you've done a fantastic job on that. So was that the marketing side of it, or was that part of your research or, I mean, how did you actually choose that? The look of them?

Speaker 1 07:34 Yeah, so that's a good question because it's, it's, I think it's the one thing to design something that that's sleek and beautiful, but I think it's another thing that it also has to work as a product. So what the process was there was working with, with, um, with Mike as team, uh, we came up with the idea of sort of injecting humor into the whole proposition to disarm the purchase. Okay. Occasion by poking a bit of sort of irreverent, fun that's stereotypical sexual fantasy. So, um, so the idea was, let's name them the Frenchman, the firemen, the tennis coach, the millionaire, the surfer, um, and then what we, what we, what we said on the design is let's start completely out there and design and make sketches and drawings based on those characters. And, you know, it was a freshman was everywhere for everything from a Baret to a crossover to a frog,

Speaker 0 08:34 the fireman from my house, from my helmet

Speaker 1 08:38 through a hose and so on. And then we got to the boring part and say, okay, functionally what do these products need to do? And every woman is different than every woman's body shape is different. So, uh, it's sort of a very functional matrix of, okay, what the various points of stimulation we have to achieve and what's the sort of average shape we have to make the product. So then starting with a really out there sketches, we say, okay, which, which of the sketches can actually be morphed into something that works that way ergonomically. So in the end of the, the firearm, and we morphed into a, a what looks a little bit like a flame, uh, which is an external product. And the, the tennis coach became a tennis ball in motion, just became an internal product and so on. So, so that's how we came around doing it. And then we looked at a lot of, uh, papers on sort of what are the average distances between points, uh, so to make the, to make this the, the sizing of the product. Uh, but it really started with sort of really out there sketches and then on the other side of it, the pure ergonomi --

-- cs and then finding a midpoint between them.

Speaker 0 09:57 Hmm. It's, I just think it's a fascinating story. And I guess maybe what we should let people know is that this is actually been about an eight year journey for you, hasn't it?

Speaker 1 10:11 Yeah. It's been a very, very, very long journey.

Speaker 0 10:13 Yeah. Yeah. So go ahead.

Speaker 1 10:17 Yeah. So the, the, the, the key challenge later was that, uh, we said that again, back to the mission is to normalize the perception of female sexuality. And if you want to normalize it, you have to remove yourself from the typical adult world. Uh, and it's not that we judge people who run sex shops or byproducts and sex shops, but it's not the women we know don't, uh, don't feel comfortable there. So the biggest decision was not to sell our products in an adult stores, but only in mainstream stores. And it took a long time to convince them that these products belong there. So we are launching this year with big retailers that I found old emails. My, the first times I reached out to them was back in 2012.

Speaker 0 11:06 Wow.

Speaker 1 11:07 They can easily seven years to convince them, uh, to launch our brand. Uh, but you know, I'm not, we're, we're, uh, we're helping to create the category of sexual wellness for beauty and fashion retailers in the U S they include sexist Avenue and urban Outfitters in the UK, places like Selfridges and Harvey Nichols, but also, uh, health and beauty stores, drug stores, department stores. Uh, but it, but it's taken, I, I always say that if I had known how long it was gonna take, I would probably have been too daunted to get into it in the first place. I may be have moved from P and G to Unilever instead. Yeah.

Speaker 0 11:47 I'm glad. I didn't know because I'm very happy where I'm at now. So, uh,

Speaker 1 11:54 there appears to be a bit of a different business mindset in Asia because when you first started out, you were able to work with a company to help develop almost a complete product over a nine month period with no money changing hands. If, if I remember how you told me this story before. So how surprising and valuable was that support for your business? Like, could you possibly have developed your product in that time without that support? I, no, I don't think so. And, and, and especially I, we wouldn't have been able to do with while still retaining any significant ownership in our company. So what, at the time when we, when we wanted to start manufacturing, I was introduced, uh, to a company that they make high end consumer goods, consumer electronics products, uh, brands like buying Olafson Fitbit. They worked on Nike FuelBand and um, met the CEO at a bar together with our, our a mutual friend.

Speaker 1 12:57 And I pitched the idea and said what we wanted to do and he said, great, I want to be part of that. And like you said, they put their engineers and designers and uh, everyone on, on the, on the project for about nine months. And it was only when they released the first batch of products that we made any payments to them. And I think had it been in Europe, it would have been, you would have had to come up with prepayments, financial guarantees, a lot of commitments, and we would probably had needed to raise capital, uh, even before starting in order in order to manage all those financial guarantees for the manufacturing partners, uh, or cashing out sort of along the way every time something needed to be done. Um, and that's something that in the end is pretty, it's very demotivating for entrepreneurs to all of a sudden own very little, uh, of the, of the dream that they're trying to pursue.

Speaker 1 13:51 And I think it's gonna affect the, the potential of the scale in the long run. But after we started, we've seen that in mindset, not only in manufacturing, but across all the touch points. It's the same thing with retailers. We built up significant, uh, distribution, uh, in health and beauty retailers in, uh, Asia way before we did in, in Europe. And a lot of that is when you pitch this to somebody, they say, that sounds interesting. I want to see that opportunity. I don't want to miss out on that opportunity what we've seen in, uh, in especially in Europe, uh, but also been in the U S as well. What are the risks, uh, what, what, what could potentially be the downside both with manufacturing partners that we've approached but also --

-- with retailers. So they are, it's more about patting the downside rather than, uh, seizing the opportunity of the upside.

Speaker 0 14:46 <inaudible> I think that's probably one of the major problems with the way business is as far as I've seen it in North America. By the time you get to success as an entrepreneur, you really don't have very much of your company left. Everybody else is making it and you know, you're just, you're just getting a little bit of the, the stuff that's scraped off the top or something. But, um, so it looks like Asia is a great place for you to be doing this development to and whatnot.

Speaker 1 15:18 Yeah, it, it's, it's fantastic. And, and what it really does is that it builds loyalty and longterm partners because obviously the manufacturers, the suppliers, the retailers, that took a chance on us in the beginning. We are 100% loyal to so when, when we get to the point where we are now, when you start rolling out into places like boots and Watson's and, and other, other suppliers and manufacturers see what you're doing and they try to take your business, we say there is no way we are leaving our initial partners because they were there for us in the beginning and they believed in us and now we want them to, to be part of the success. But obviously if they had been while you need to, you know, make this and this deposited prepayments, we would probably feel far less loyal.

Speaker 0 16:08 Yeah. Did manufacturers actually, were they able to offer you any solutions to any of your challenges when you actually brought the product to the manufacturing process?

Speaker 1 16:21 They w they were, yes, because they are, uh, so we have both vibrators and lubricants and I think in both cases their breadth of expertise, uh, is very strong. So like I mentioned in our vibrator manufacturer, they also work on, on things like Hi-Fi equipment, even work on solar panels and a vacuum cleaners. And so they have an enormous breadth of expertise where they can say, well, here's what we do in that other category in that product. Also on the, with our lubricant manufacturer, they make skincare products, they make shampoo, they make Listerine, they make, uh, the, the toothpaste brand I use, uh, my baby daughter used. So, uh, both and especially in terms of safety and quality controls, they could come up with a lot of things that were, uh, I believe we move to the category

Speaker 3 17:17 that's Matiaz halting the cofounder of Ramblin brands who's been on a very interesting eight year journey with their brand smile makers. Next week on the show, he'll share some thoughts and ideas on how manufacturers could better engage with new challenger brands. Casey's a business opportunity for those manufacturers who can provide specific support to smaller companies that are bringing new and disruptive products to market. I hope you'll join us then. That's our show for this week. Please check out our Twitter and LinkedIn feeds that on our podcast page and subscribe and share this podcast with your friends and colleagues through iTunes, Google play, Stitcher, Spotify on YouTube. Make it right. Podcast is brought to you by Kevin Snoop, leadership advisor and author of the bestselling book. Make it right. Five steps to align your manufacturing business from the front line to the bottom line. I'm Janet Eastman. Until next time, thanks for listening to the make it right podcast.

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