

Finding Comfort in Chaos: UTA's Julian Jacobs on Driving Impact

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The future of marketing lies at the crossroads of culture and commerce, where brands must seamlessly integrate into the entertainment world to stay relevant.

In this episode of The Speed of Culture podcast, Matt Britton speaks with Julian Jacobs, co-head of entertainment marketing at United Talent Agency and head of UTA NY.

Julian shares insights on how UTA bridges the gap between brands and culture, fosters meaningful partnerships with entertainment properties like Barbie and White Lotus, and navigates the evolving creator economy.

"How can we, as a brand, add value to not just the promotion, but to the creative experience you're trying to portray with your project? When we have been able to successfully broker those conversations, we see that those partnerships really not just sing, but also last," he says on the podcast.

Starting in UTA's mailroom, Julian climbed the ranks to lead partnerships with some of the biggest brands in the world. Known for his expertise in building cultural relevance, Julian

has been instrumental in iconic collaborations like Barbie x General Motors and The Bear x Coca-Cola Company. His forward-thinking approach continues to shape the intersection of entertainment, sports, and marketing.

Tune into The Speed of Culture Podcast as Julian Jacobs shares how UTA is helping brands stay culturally relevant through innovative partnerships and bold strategies.

Key takeaways:

[00:03:59] The Power of Embracing Discomfort and Mentorship – Julian's journey from the UTA mailroom to leading their New York office shows the power of embracing discomfort. "Being comfortable in being uncomfortable" allowed him to adapt, grow, and thrive in a competitive environment. He credits his rise to seeking mentorship from UTA leaders, including CEO Jeremy Zimmer, and learning to navigate uncertainty with resourcefulness. This approach highlights a valuable lesson: success often comes not from having all the answers but from being willing to learn, adapt, and lean on others for guidance. It's a mindset that young professionals and seasoned leaders alike can embrace to excel in a rapidly changing industry.

[00:05:30] Disruption Breeds Opportunity in Hollywood and Beyond – The entertainment industry is at an inflection point, with seismic shifts driven by streaming, changing audience behaviors, and technological advancements. Julian sees this disruption as a ground for innovation. While traditional Hollywood faces challenges like budget cuts and strikes, brands, and advertisers have a unique opportunity to collaborate with creators and media companies to redefine storytelling. He notes that this chaos has eliminated traditional rules, creating a dynamic environment for bold ideas and groundbreaking partnerships. For brands, the key is recognizing and seizing these moments to embed themselves in culture in a meaningful way.

[00:08:42] Cultural Relevance Is a Business Imperative – Cultural resonance is no longer a luxury for brands—it's a necessity. Julian explains how the “sliver of marketing” once reserved for cultural relevance has become a cornerstone of brand strategy. For CMOs, the challenge lies in anticipating cultural trends and aligning them with their brand's identity in ways that feel authentic. Whether it's through partnerships with creators, entertainment properties, or sports, brands must navigate this complex landscape to connect with younger audiences like Gen Z and millennials, who demand more meaningful and values-driven engagement. Brands that master this balance can forge lasting emotional connections with their consumers.

[00:15:51] Redefining the Creator Economy: Beyond Transactions – The creator economy, while thriving, has reached a saturation point, with brands struggling to stand out amid a sea of influencer collaborations. Julian believes the future lies in strategic, long-term partnerships where creators are treated as business collaborators rather than just channels for amplification. By supporting creators as they build their own brands—like Emma Chamberlain's coffee line or Issa Rae's ventures—brands can foster more authentic relationships and unlock greater value. This evolution offers a blueprint for brands to shift from transactional campaigns to collaborative partnerships that drive cultural impact and consumer trust.

[00:18:45] Sports as a Platform for Cultural Convergence – Sports have become much more than a stage for competition—they're now cultural powerhouses where fashion, streaming, and celebrity intersect. Julian explains how this convergence creates unparalleled opportunities for brands to engage with diverse audiences. From partnerships with leagues like the NBA to collaborations with athletes building their own ventures, sports offer a dynamic, live platform for storytelling. Furthermore, the rise of social media, fantasy sports, and even gambling has transformed how fans interact

with sports, enhancing its value as a cultural touchpoint. It's a platform where brands can tell stories, create moments, and tap into culture in a way few other mediums can. For brands, investing in sports isn't just about visibility—it's about connecting with audiences on a deeper level.

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