I Followed the Process. Where's My 6 Figures in 6 Months?

Just because you learn how the chess pieces move doesn't mean you will win the game. In fact, you can't lose the game until you learn the moves. But how the pieces move is just the beginning. To win, you need to know the strategies and philosophies of the game.

We all know this is true when it comes to parlor games. But when it comes to successfully building and monetizing a consumer package goods (CPG) brand, it's easy to focus on what you think your immediate need is. If you don't understand the end game and the strategies and philosophies to get there, you can choose to learn a process that gets you into big trouble fast! Why? Because what you think you need may not be what you *really* need.

The hype is out there, ready to take your money, ready to sell you the process you are asking for, but do you have enough experience to know what to ask for?

We met a young entrepreneur recently with a great CPG consumer packaged product. He was sure that if it was only in a big box chain he would be golden. So, he studied he studied the process. He filled out the new product forms, met with the category manager, and voila! He was "successful!" He was in the big box store. Even his investors were ecstatic! Everyone thought, "Wow! Now that we're in the big box stores, we'll be making six figures in six months!"

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But within six months, all the excitement had transformed to

into disappointment. They were discontinued! Why? “According to the scan data, the sales weren’t adequate to justify the shelf space,” the buyer flatly reported.

It was like he knew what the chess pieces did, but in four short moves, he was checkmated. He needed to know more but didn’t *think* he did – until he failed! He wasn’t prepared to play with the big boys. He hadn’t learned the retail philosophy, or for that matter, the strategies necessary to *stay* in the store. Learning the process of getting in to the store just was just the beginning, and perhaps getting that cart before the horse.

Here’s is what happened to him:

He identified the buyer of the store he though he wanted to be in. He filled out the forms properly. He got the appointment. He gave a compelling pitch. He followed the process perfectly, and got in.

He thought he knew enough to choose the *right* retailer for his product to debut. However, at this early stage, he lacked the experience to first seek the philosophical and strategic knowledge he really needed.

He was sure that if he just followed the cut-and-paste *process* of how to get in, he’d be a big success in that box store. The process got him *in* alright, but now he was vulnerable! He expected the retailer to give him more time to pick up traction, but the retailer was quick on the trigger. He was discontinued f*orever* from that big box store and all its outlets.

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Because he was discontinued from the big box store, other retailers were much less likely to give him a “second” chance. He had the stigma of a “slow mover” and “non- starter”. His

competitors were quick to “warn” the other buyers.

Before you choose the process, and certainly before you choose the store, here’s what our painful experience has taught us:

Appreciate the basic retail philosophy.

Shelf space is an expensive investment and can only be justified with high turn items. Sales are measured by scans *out* the front door, not *in* the back door. Your CPG brand must sell fast enough to *stay* in the store. You must know how many scans per month are required.

Respect and execute what it takes on your end.

Is it merchandising, advertising, or even recognizing and removing the sales stoppers inside the store? Is it in-store demonstrations, or physically bringing people in to the store to buy your products? *You* are the only one responsible for the movement of your brand. Don’t depend on the store, your broker, or your distributer.

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Make your mistakes in a small market.

Understand what the sales stoppers are …and how to remove them. Appreciate the true cost of sales and merchandising in a large chain before you attempt to sell there. We like to say “Get your act together *before* you take your show on the road!”.

To win the game with a CPG brand, you must make the right

moves. Don’t be pandered to by the promise of six digits in six months. You can’t cut and paste your way to success. Processes are important, but strategy and philosophy are absolutely critical.

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