



WWD VOICES: RETAIL'S RESPONSIBLE RESET PODCAST – BONUS EPISODE – BRAND PURPOSE

AUDIO TRANSCRIPT

ARTHUR ZACKIEWICZ: During the global pandemic, the purpose of a brand was kind of thrust into the spotlight as consumers shifted how they spend, where they spend it and why they spend, but what exactly is brand purpose?

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Welcome to WWD Voices, where we share the latest fashion, apparel and retail industry insights.

Welcome. I'm Arthur Zackiewicz, host of WWD Voices. And today, as part of the Retail's Responsible Reset Series with Accenture, we're talking with Jill Kramer, who's Accenture's Chief Marketing and Communications Officer, about reinvigorating brands purpose. Jill, welcome. It's great to have you here.

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JILL KRAMER: Thank you, Arthur. It is great to be here and one of my absolute favorite topics. So I'm ready.

ARTHUR ZACKIEWICZ: All right. So it seems we're hearing more and more about brand purpose. I think over the past earnings call, I've probably heard it about 14 times, but the concept is not really new. When you hear brand purpose, what does that mean to you?

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JILL KRAMER: Well, you know, I think there's good and bad in the fact that we're hearing more about it,

right? I mean the fact that people are re-grounding themselves in their businesses in the why, why do we exist, is a great thing. Maybe the flip side of that is you don't want it to lose its meaning. And I think that's the danger. So it isn't a new concept. I think the attention it's getting and the attention people are paying to it is what is new. And that also is what gives us the opportunity to make sure that we are doing right by purpose and that we are treating it in the way it should be treated. Otherwise, it will lose its meaning. And I think that's what I know in marketing, but also as business leaders, that's what we have to hold ourselves accountable to.

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ARTHUR ZACKIEWICZ: And so, when we say lose its meaning, you mean lose its value when you're actually putting it into practice, right?

JILL KRAMER: Absolutely. When you are embarking on assessing or creating your company's purpose, make sure you're anchoring in what purpose really should be and to your point, the value it should create as you take it on, so that you have a very strong North Star.

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ARTHUR ZACKIEWICZ: So how are consumers and employees, store associates, product managers, whatever, how are they impacting this rising interest in brand purpose or like over time and how has



brand purpose evolved?

JILL KRAMER: Well, I think that the way they're impacting it is by co-creating it with the business and the business leaders, the businesses that are really focusing on purpose in the right way have the people that work in their business, the clients or customers, that their business serves the communities in which they exist. They have them all as part of the process.

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And, you know, one of the things that's key about purpose is it has to be tied to the value you create as a business. It can't be confused with general CSR, right? You need to really say this is unique to us because it is so closely tied to what we do every single day and even how we make money as a business. That's where the authenticity comes from. And that's why the people who work in your business will be able to believe it and be able to prove it day in and day out. And that's why your customers will experience it authentically day in and day out.

ARTHUR ZACZKIEWICZ: So it's funny you mentioned CSR, so it's not like a chapter in the CSR handbook. It's getting dust somewhere, right?

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JILL KRAMER: Exactly. And, you know, a purpose should be inextricably tied to the value you create as a business. It should be pretty significantly evergreen. It's not something that changes at every moment in time. We know things in business and things in the world are changing more frequently and faster than they ever have before. A purpose and that North Star, it's grounding. So it has to be something that will be true today, tomorrow and in the foreseeable future.

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ARTHUR ZACZKIEWICZ: Okay, so I'm a retailer, let's say, and I realized after listening to you discuss this that I really need to reinvigorate my own brand purpose or even create one in this kind of new environment that we're in, this new landscape. What's the first step? How do I do it? What's involved?

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JILL KRAMER: Well, oh, there's so much involved. It is not a small undertaking, Arthur. I think that's the first thing is to recognize that, and it is not something to be taken on alone. So I'll tell you a little bit about my experience with that here at Accenture to maybe make it relate to any business leader or marketing or communications leader in any business.

The first thing is take it on in concert with your business strategy, right? We just said that it's tied to how you create value as a business. So what is your business strategy? Re-ground yourself in the value of your business creates. That cannot be done without the leadership across the organization at the C-suite level. I was very, very lucky that not only our CEO, but the entire leadership team was leaning way in when we did this here at Accenture. So that's a critical part.

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Another critical part is listening and learning from your people and from your clients or customers. Your people will tell you what is real and what you want to talk yourself into. They'll keep you very honest and your customers will tell you what's believable. So if you anchor yourself in strategy, you're doing this with and as part of the true leadership of the business of the company. And if you listen to your people and you listen to your customers, you're going to be in a really, really good place to build and recognize your purpose. It should not be something that is like, wow, I didn't see that coming. It should be right there in and of your DNA. But when it crystallizes, it should just be so clear and so true.

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ARTHUR ZACZKIEWICZ: When you say listen, you mean like active listening and not just like an assessment done once, it's ongoing, right?

JILL KRAMER: Exactly. When we took on our purpose, we surveyed all at the time, probably close to 600,000 people in the organization and we



wanted them to have a voice. But then we also used a team that regularly engages with people of all different roles and responsibilities in all different parts of the world as we were working. We brought things to them. We asked for input. We asked for reaction. So they were a continual part of the process as we went through, and it keeps you very grounded. It maintains your commitment to them that what comes out of this exercise is something they can live and embody every single day.

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ARTHUR ZACZKIEWICZ: And you need this as part of the C-suite to make it work, right?

JILL KRAMER: Absolutely. I've talked to so many people and in my previous career at ad agencies, you can tell when there's not that involvement. And I always feel such compassion for the team who's trying to work at it because they're so passionate about it and they bring it forward and one of two things

happens, either there's a complete disconnect or there's kind of a passing by, sure, that's great. And either one is going to lead to trouble with trying to live that purpose every day. When they're not only there with you but truly leading it, then the accountability to it is something that you're going to see in every next thing you do for the company. If your leadership isn't inherently asking, does that embody our purpose? Is that living our purpose? Can you see and feel our purpose in that? Then it's going to be so much harder to try to sustain?

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ARTHUR ZACZKIEWICZ: Is there a metrics to measure it? Like is there a return on investment that you've seen when companies have a clear brand purpose executed every day now and kind of go out to the market with it?

JILL KRAMER: Yeah, it's different for different types of businesses. But what we look at here is number one is recall, so awareness and recall across the organization. And I'll talk more about how you get to that in a moment. And then there's the impact it has to the outside world. So is that the ability to attract more people in terms of talent to your organization

and retain? Is it customers who want to do business with you? Like, you know, I think the stat I heard recently was 83% of people in a post-pandemic world say they care about what the companies they do business with or choose to frequent what their purpose is and what they hold themselves accountable to.

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So based on your business strategy, you can absolutely can and should set out your key performance indicators before you even begin of will people know what it is and how does it matter to them in terms of either choosing to work for you and with you or do business with you?

ARTHUR ZACZKIEWICZ: I think and so I think you were going to discuss like how is it used in as strategically as a tool?

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JILL KRAMER: Yeah. So when you want to drive that recall and familiarity inside the organization, one of the biggest dangers in a fast-changing world is you come out with this purpose, right? It's this wonderful realization of something that's so inherently true about your organization and your business. And you say, ta-dah, here it is. And then you go on to the next thing.

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And so, when we did it here at Accenture, we created a program, it was a multi-year program and we called it, launch it, live it, love it. And so, to launch it is only one little thing, but it's very easy to get focused on that moment. But then you have to start living it. So if you believe that this is truly at the heart of how you do business, how do you intentionally call out every time you are living your purpose? You over-index on it almost, Arthur, right, because you really want to focus on it.

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And then the third stage is affinity. That's when it becomes so natural that people can't help but call it out and use it naturally in conversation. And that's not a short-term commitment. That's a long-term



process that you use, so that the process to come up with your purpose or recognize and realize it is a significant commitment and take significant time. But so is the ability to launch it and truly live it and make it part of your culture.

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ARTHUR ZACZKIEWICZ: So, it starts with a kind of a brief, almost like a mission statement. And then you're going to say, okay, how does this play out when we were working with vendors? How does this play out when we're training sales associates? Is that what you're talking about? It's like throughout the organization then?

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JILL KRAMER: Exactly. Training's a great example. We were recently working with an outside team and talking about this very specific training program, and they said to us, oh, we know your purpose is to deliver on the promise of technology and human ingenuity. Let's call that out. Let's show because you are using both technology and human ingenuity right now in this moment. And that makes this training and learning process even more custom fit to your organization. So I loved that they were aware of it. They saw it and they challenged us to integrate it. So it absolutely applies to training and to vendor relations, as you mentioned.

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ARTHUR ZACZKIEWICZ: Okay, so you have the brief statement. It's kind of put into the daily practices and business decisions. And your act of listening, so you have to do you go back to that brand purpose saying, okay, we're doing this, but we're hearing this. Let's readjust, does that play into this?

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JILL KRAMER: Absolutely. And the question is, what are you adjusting? So there's two ways for active listening. Number one, and the most frequent in my experience is you start seeing your purpose everywhere in a really, really good way. And what you have to do is have the discipline to point at it every single time and think about channels like social media and the ability to call out. That's what I call

delivering on the promise of technology and human ingenuity to recognize that in training and onboarding new employees, etc. And then the other part is when you're not, when you're doing something that's kind of contrary to that purpose to make sure everyone in the organization is empowered to raise their hand and ask that question. Sometimes it's about a degree of dialing something in, and sometimes it's a really fair question to say, this feels contrary to what we stand for or what are we thinking here? What are we doing here?

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ARTHUR ZACZKIEWICZ: This is more from the perspective of the consumer. How do you create messaging or narrative of your brand purpose that doesn't seem like what everyone else is saying or doing?

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JILL KRAMER: Yep, that's a really, really good question. So when you go back to your business strategy and your unique value, that's why you can't do one without the other. Arthur. That if you know there's something special about the way you exist in this category, the way you create a moment for a customer, you have to make sure your purpose is as close to that point of difference as possible. What enables that differentiation? And we know some categories have greater differentiation than others but being able to really tie it back to that and see it in a way that is unique to you. Sometimes it's just the phrasing that makes it very special to you. It sounds like you. You know, when you have a really well-established brand, you know what your brand voice is and your purpose, of course, should be a perfect, a shining example of your brand voice in action.

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ARTHUR ZACZKIEWICZ: My daughter, who's a teenager, I can't lie to her because she sees through everything. So if I had a brand purpose, it has to be authentic too. That's another dimension of it, right?

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JILL KRAMER: 100%. You know, that's what I loved about this process. Hello, I've been in marketing and communications my whole life. Sometimes you're really going down a road and you're falling in love with a phrase or a sentiment. And they go, yeah, not really. And when you go back to your people and go, if that's the case, then why isn't this true or why do we do this here? And that's when you have that moment. I'm going to go back to the C-suites involvement. You can say, hey, guys, you know what? We do believe this is our purpose, but we actually have created an experience for our people or something for our clients or customers that actually is in opposition to that. And a great brand purpose makes you go, then we're going to fix that. We're not going to change the purpose. We're going to fix the experience that's in opposition to it. But just like your daughter, the people who work for your company every day, they absolutely know what's authentic. And if you listen to them, then you will make sure that that brand purpose is authentic and they will then inherently live it for you every single day.

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ARTHUR ZACZKIEWICZ: So as Accenture, as a company, you have over half a million employees. How do you embed that purpose into that workforce? Like what's the process like?

JILL KRAMER: We have such a gift here at Accenture. They do it for us and all we have to do is allow that. I remember, Arthur, when we launched it. The ideas that came back to us for a launch were so beautiful, so culturally varied, but spot on and we celebrated every single one of them, like almost like a festival. It was really beautiful. Some people wrote songs. Some people had their children talking about our purpose. There's just such connection to their interpretation of it. So we did that first and foremost.

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The second thing that we did was we looked at everyone's role and asked them to articulate what is their unique mix of technology and human ingenuity. And we had a fun technology enabled device that let them create part of our logo is the greater than symbol, right? They were able to create custom

greater than logos that showed their kind of view of technology, plus a picture of themselves to represent the human segment. And then we did other things like we updated the way we look at our case studies, our client stories and credentials in a way that showcased how did we deliver on the promise of technology and human ingenuity. And we invited our people to tell their stories.

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I was on this project and this was our – the human ingenuity and technology we brought to bear for this client or this community or this situation. So really, putting it back in the hands of our people who are so creative and so entrepreneurial and so varied in terms of their perspectives, it gives the purpose such breath. It's incredible.

ARTHUR ZACZKIEWICZ: So as a retailer, I think the first step is you have to acknowledge that the old ways of figuring out what brand purpose can no longer be applied. I have to recognize that I need to update it and I need to get help. I can't do it alone, right?

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JILL KRAMER: Yep, and in retail, I think specifically there's that customer participation. And retailers know it better than everybody. There's a beautiful co-creation of their brand every single day with the customers who frequent retailers, the way they review or share or experience or refer, they're constantly creating that brand. It's a community experience. So back to your point about your daughter, those customers will know in two seconds if that purpose is real and if they believe in it, they'll prove it for you every single day. Just like the people of Accenture prove it for us every single day and be on the lookout for that. See it, recognize it and celebrate it with your people. And every time you do that, it adds more life and more of that authenticity that's so critical for a truly centered purpose.

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ARTHUR ZACZKIEWICZ: And what relation - I just thought of this while you were speaking. What relationship does the brand attribute and how does



it differ to a brand purpose? That's one thing. And then the second part is it has brand purposes have to be consistent through every channel of communication, internal and external, right?

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JILL KRAMER: Yep. So let's take on the first part first. When you look at your brand and you're able to characterize your brand, what are those personality traits or attributes of your brand, including voice? As the purpose is being explored, that should be a constant check point. And so, just as much as the purpose has to represent the business strategy and how you create value as a business, that's the look and sound like you part. So it's different than an attribute. But it must express itself in a way that is true to your brand's attributes and your brand's personality.

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ARTHUR ZACZKIEWICZ: Yeah, I was just going to say for the second part of the question, how does it kind of - I guess, how does it play out in practice?

JILL KRAMER: Yeah, so that we're really rigorous about the use of our purpose. We look at every single message we're going to the market with and we say our business strategy, our purpose and our brand are all there. They're almost like precursors to whatever message, activation or moment you're taking on. The repetition and the rigor behind that is what will keep you true to your purpose. It's that live it phase. So it sounds silly, but just having it in that message hierarchy on the page of your creative brief, keeps you continually accountable to it.

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ARTHUR ZACZKIEWICZ: And has to be consistent. That's like whether you're speaking to somebody, whether you're having a meeting, whether it's a social media post, it has to be embedded in that?

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JILL KRAMER: It really does and back to the whole beginning of this conversation, I think people crave purpose. So if there is a void there, they will fill it. Your customers will fill it. Your employees will fill it. Different parts of your organization will feel it. Yeah,

if you're a retailer, one store over here will fill it with theirs. So being able to share it, makes it so much stronger than everybody filling in that void. And it's a great thing that people want it and crave it and, therefore, will fill that void. But it's an even greater thing when you have a shared experience that's tied back to that purpose, no matter where you are within the organization.

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ARTHUR ZACZKIEWICZ: So thank you so much. So as we wrap up, I had just one more question for you, it's kind of a personal question, but you work in a very demanding creative field. So what do you do personally to kind of stoke your own creativity?

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JILL KRAMER: So for me, creativity is highly tied to movement, so I am committed to moving every single day. You know how it is, Arthur, we all get stuck at our desks, we all get stuck and there's all different kinds of stimulus and stimulation. You might be listening to a podcast or reading a case study or having a conversation like you and I are right now. But for some reason with me, it will be when I'm on the bike the next morning or out for a run or taking a walk that the ideas then have a chance to pop up. It's the only time my brain seems to go blank and then ideas just flood in. So that's something I'm committed to. I protect it. I protect that time every single day, and I also recognize that that is when I am at my most creative and sometimes most thoughtful. So I tend to have either a sticky pad really nearby my bike or my phone available, and it goes right into the Notes, the Notes app on my phone.

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ARTHUR ZACZKIEWICZ: Amazing. That's a good habit to get into. I have a notebook by my bed, sometimes I wake up in the middle of night with an idea. It actually wakes me up and I'll jot it down.

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JILL KRAMER: It's the only way, right, you'll get back to sleep is knowing that you put it on paper.

ARTHUR ZACZKIEWICZ: I have to process it. And you



know, hey, we'll work on this tomorrow. Jill, thank you so, so much. This is really good. Thank you, Accenture, for hosting the series. It was just great. It was fantastic. Had a really good time. Jill, we'll see you soon, hopefully, maybe in person, maybe when we get through this post-pandemic period, things will go back to normal.

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JILL KRAMER: I look forward to that, Arthur. Thank you so much for doing this with us. It was a great experience and thanks for having me today.

SPEAKER: Ready, reset, grow. Accenture helps retailers around the globe embrace change to seize the future. Learn about the five imperatives of retail's responsible reset and how leading retailers are partnering with Accenture at [Accenture.com/Retail](https://www.accenture.com/Retail).

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ARTHUR ZACZKIEWICZ: Hey, welcome back to WWD Voices. Arthur Zackiewicz, and I'm with –

EVAN CLARK: Evan Clark.

ARTHUR ZACZKIEWICZ: So, yeah, we just wrapped up our, I guess, series. It was it was fantastic. It was the responsible Reset Series, Retail's Responsible Reset Series with Accenture and we had ten episodes and maybe a bonus episode or two and it was just a really great experience. We're going to continue to do these podcasts in the future, but I think this series was very strategic, smart, we kind of thought a different guest to have on, and it was a lot of fun. But, Evan, what do you think? What was your impressions?

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EVAN CLARK: You know, it was great. It was a great opportunity really to kind of during the - hoping it's the tail end of the pandemic, but to really like stop and think on how this corner of the world, retail and fashion has really changed over the pandemic. And as I look back over all the various episodes, one of the things I'll call it a couple, one of the things that really resonates with me is that there are really amazing people with lots of experience and lots of

being very innovative, very creative, and they're dealing with this incredible complexity and this kind of outrageous chaos with a real calm.

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We spoke with Dennis Mullahy, who's Chief Supply Chain Officer over at Macy's, and I think it might have been – it was sometime in November, in the middle of the whole supply chain crunch, when retail or everyone, Macy's, everyone's rushing to bring stuff in from overseas to stock the shelves. And it just really struck me, how calm he was, how just he's - we've got big - there's always challenges and to kind of take the world, takes that complexity and boil it down into addressable kind of items and really tackle it. And, you know, Macy's certainly got it done. Retail delivered for Christmas. I think that is one great example.

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Another one, we spoke with Velia Carboni, who's the Chief Digital Officer, Technology Officer over at VF. And she has a background in financial services and is kind of where that is an industry that was entirely disrupted by digital technology 20 years ago. And now she's kind of bringing that experience into all the nuance of AI and machine learning and all of this like understanding data and putting it to work. Another just a very complex set of challenges. And it's just completely, we're calm, we're in charge, we have a plan. You know, we're not going to do everything right, but we're moving forward and we've got all these ideas and this is how - and I just really think that that's – and just at this moment in 2022, as we're kind of if people start going back to work and maybe the world gets back to normal of we have this capability to handle big, complex challenges in really difficult times and the industry is doing it. Now, it can keep doing that.

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ARTHUR ZACZKIEWICZ: I think that was the first episode. We had Chip Bergh from Levi Strauss and Company with Jill Standish, our guest host. And it's exactly what Chip said, right? You know, you put in this kind of heated environment with a lot of



pressure and you had to keep your cool. You had to put things into practice like empathy. He mentioned that, I thought that was interesting, as everybody is working remotely, how do you keep going? How do you keep the business going and be a leader that is not going to kind of falter? And if you make a mistake or you have to like correct yourself, fine. But it was a real test. The pandemic was a real test. And the learnings from that, I think, is really what's interesting and will be lasting in this post-pandemic period.

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EVAN CLARK: Yeah, absolutely. I think we've really set the title of the podcast series was the responsible reset and we really have reset things. So the sky seems to be the limit, but we all have to make it happen. The industry still has to make it happen and we have to follow it. What stood out to you, Arthur?

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ARTHUR ZACZKIEWICZ: I really liked Nancy Mahon from the Estée Lauder Companies. She came on, she was talking about there was inclusivity and sustainable beauty, and what really stuck with me is it's a process has to be a daily process, right? You know, it's from the top down and from the bottom up, right? You can't just try it out for a while and then move on. It's got to be in everything you do. And so, I thought that was fascinating. As a matter of fact, this episode that we just wrapped up now with Jill Kramer from Accenture. It's exactly that when you talk about like brand purpose, it's the same thing. You got to have it embedded in everything you do and it has to be real. It can't be fake. It can't be something that's just, oh, this is our purpose. And it's on our website. There you go. All right. So I thought that was really fascinating to understand like, well, it takes work and it has to be part of your business decisions.

And then I think Nancy's episode really dovetailed nicely with Thomas Berry, remember from Farfetch, he talked about it.

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EVAN CLARK: Right, right?

ARTHUR ZACZKIEWICZ: Right? I think, I believe.

EVAN CLARK: Yes.

ARTHUR ZACZKIEWICZ: That was this kind of same messaging that it's again, it's a practice. It's not something 30 years ago, if you have corporate social responsibility, it was like a policy because you thought it sounded good and it was the thing to do, but nobody really put into practice. Now you really have to do the work. So, that was those kind of conversations are really fascinating for me.

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But my favorite, absolutely my favorite episode was we had Jaryn Bloom, who was the group president of retail at Michael Kors for retail stores. And, yeah, Jill was on that, Jill Standish was on that episode as well. And Karen or Jaryn, I'm sorry, was so energetic and energized, and the one thing she said that really stuck with me was, she said, the success of the future of retail lies in its past, meaning that the people, the physical store, the relationships that store associates have with customers, their expertise and servicing and helping those customers is what's going to make retail succeed in the future. So I thought that was really interesting.

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EVAN CLARK: Right, that's very much this has been a time about connecting the past with the future, whatever that - we're at that link right now.

ARTHUR ZACZKIEWICZ: So, yeah, so what happens next? You know, as I think about all these episodes and the learnings and the takeaways. It's resetting the reset, let's call it the great reset of retail is it takes some heavy lifting. You got to like, you know, it's a top down. Everybody has to be involved. Bottom up and we have to have a good clear vision that you have a role in this market, you have a purpose, you have a brand purpose, you have a product that consumers want and you have relationships with those consumers that you got to nurture over the long term.

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EVAN CLARK: Right. Now, I think also you touched



on earlier on authenticity, you that was wrapped up into purpose. And I think really what the one of the big unlocks of the potential here is that this is all happening while the nature of work is changing and how we're working and where we're working and what it means to collaborate and how all that happened. So I think we're going into this hybrid future now for the white collar workers are a lot, you know, we're seeing that and we're adding that component back in of in-office work, of being connected, of having more face time and that with retail and the store is always also changing with different kinds of automation and all sorts of different things.

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So I think now we're going to be seeing that the retail world is going to be seeing that on both end, retail's working differently. But then they're also going to be catering to people who maybe are home on Fridays and Mondays and have more time to run out to like grab something from the store. You know, does this change? You know, so this ability to think on your feet, to take complex issues and handle them and tackle them very forthrightly but effectively is going to be applied to a whole new landscape. And I really don't know where we're going, but I think it's going to be somewhere good; I think it's going to definitely be interesting to watch.

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ARTHUR ZACZKIEWICZ: Well said. With that, I want to thank you, Evan. Thanks for co-hosting with me.

EVAN CLARK: Yeah, thank you, Arthur. It's been great.

ARTHUR ZACZKIEWICZ: Thanking Jill Standish for being our guest host. And thank you listeners for joining us for these episodes and stay tuned for more.

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