



September 27-29, 2010 – Hotel Sax – Chicago

Hello and welcome to our Private Brand Movement 2010 podcast series. I'm Melissa Sundaram, Online Producer for the event and this year we've invited a few of our speakers to chat with us before we meet in Chicago. We'll be in Chicago at the Hotel Sax from September 27-29, 2010. Visit [www.privatebrandmovement.com](http://www.privatebrandmovement.com) for more information.

We had the pleasure of speaking with Maurice Markey, Vice President, Private Brands Sam's Club Wal-Mart Stores, Inc.. Maurice is part of the panel discussion, "Design & Packaging Roundtable: Stepping Out of Brand Name Shadows" on Monday, September 27 at 3:45pm.

**1. You've been on both the supplier side, spending about 15 years with Kraft and the retail side now – how do you feel that helps you in your role?**

**Maurice:** I think, Melissa, in a couple of ways. One, just generally for the last, in my previous career, working directly with retailers and really having an intimate understanding and knowledge of that business. More specifically, had the pleasure and the benefit to work with Wal-Mart during that time and Sam's Club. So, again, just having a greater understanding of the business, specifically Sam's Club. The business model of a warehouse club, I think, has allowed me to hit the ground running, if you will. More specifically to what I have the pleasure to do now that I'm at Sam's Club and that is to lead our private brand business essentially into a certain degree -- I'm doing what I've done in the last 15 years of my career previously being in the consumer packaged goods' industry and that is to try and build brands. Try to build brands that consumers want. Now that I have transitioned into retail and more specifically into Sam's Club, I'm trying to build brands that our members want, listening to our members and build strong, powerful brands.

**2. The best piece of professional advice you've been given was.....**

**Maurice:** Hmmmm. It's always difficult, Melissa, to pinpoint just one piece of advice. So, if you'll allow me, I'll give a few that I think have guided my professional career. The one that I'll start out with that a wise mentor gave me was to be a leader. What he talked about there was to be able to establish a vision for people and get and keep people motivated along the way until you obtain that vision. So, be a leader. Enjoy the people that you work with. For many of us, we spend a lot of hours at our place of employment and with our careers. So, really, continually enjoy the people. And then lastly, have fun. Life is much too short not to have fun. So, if you can find an occupation, a career that allows you to be challenged professionally, yet you go in every day and you have fun, I think you've found the best of both worlds. So, those are just three pieces of sage advice that I try to follow.

**3. What fascinates you most about your line of work?**

**Maurice:** It's creating things and I would offer seemingly and initially creating things out of nothing. So, what I mean by that is in my line of work really listening to our members and delving into what they are communicating to us; extracting that insight. Then, after you extract that very key piece of information, you interpret it, you transform it and often what I have the benefit of doing, you develop that into a tangible item or a product that will undoubtedly bring pleasure and usefulness to the member. So, it's just that whole process from idea generation to a finished product

or service. You would think that it would get old, but each and every time that I do that, that is what fascinates and excites me about the work that I have the privilege to do.

**4. What piece of advice would you give someone who's in the retail industry?**

**Maurice:** If you are in the industry, you probably already know this, but I think perhaps reinforcing a certain point can always be helpful. I think for those of us who are in the retail industry, we need to be comfortable with change because things are always changing and consumers are always changing. To win, one needs to stay out in front of the change. It's been quoted probably a million times when you think about the quote or the conversation that a reporter had with Wayne Gretzky. They talk about how he is so successful and achieves all that he had achieved on the ice and he talked about the ability to recognize where the puck was going before the puck got there. I think that is extremely applicable in the retail industry because consumers continue to change. Those retailers that can foresee where the puck is going to be before it gets in place will be the retailers that win.

**5. With all the business behind us, let's find out a little more about you – If you didn't get into retail what other areas do you think you might have pursued?**

**Maurice:** I always tell people a couple of different areas. One, education. I just have a passion for education and was it not for teachers along the way taking an interest in me and guiding me along the way, perhaps I'm not where I am today. So, education is always something that I had some interest in. Politics and community development is another area. Transforming particular neighborhoods or areas that have not historically had certain resources as others. I've had the benefit to do some community involvement work in that area. And then my last passion would be in the culinary space. My mom was a caterer, so I grew up in the business. I never had any formal training, but I often say that if I hit the lottery, I'd go study in Paris and become a chef. I guess I'd have to play the lottery first to be able to hit it, but those are just some areas that if I wasn't doing what I happen to be doing today that I would probably find myself in one of those areas.

**6. Best book you've read lately.**

**Maurice:** Hmmmm. I'm currently reading: "*The Shack*" by William Paul Young. It's a fascinating fiction book and it really tries to -- for those who are of the Christian faith and even if you're not and just have an interest, it delves into trying to explain The Holy Trinity. It's done in a very amusing, at some points, riveting in others and emotional in some. I'm not done with it yet. I'm about two thirds finished, but it's been a very good book. So, "*The Shack*" is what I'm reading currently.

We thank you, Maurice, for taking the time to speak with us today and we look forward to seeing you and our listeners at The Private Brand Movement in Chicago. Don't forget, visit [www.privatebrandmovement.com](http://www.privatebrandmovement.com) for further details.