



# THE CATEGORY LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE

September 27-29, 2010 – Hotel Sax – Chicago – [iirusa.com/category](http://iirusa.com/category)

Hello and welcome to The Category Leadership Conference 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 [iirusa.com/category](http://iirusa.com/category) for more information.

We had the pleasure of speaking with Joe Beier and Alison Chaltas, both founding principles of Interscope. Joe and Alison will be presenting, "Category Development Isn't Right for My Categories...or is it?" on Monday, September 27 at 4:15pm.

**1. You've spent over 20 years in the consumer products industry. What drew you to this industry, what do you like best about what you do now?**

**Joe:** It's been that long, huh? Geeze, time gets away. (Laugh). It's a really interesting industry in the sense that it never sits still, you know? It's really an industry that presents new challenges and new issues to kind of conquer every day. That's really what keeps me in it and keeps me interested. Technology changes, consumer mindsets change and every day you kind of go into work facing new challenges and new issues, which keeps it very fresh and very interesting for me.

**Alison:** For me, I wish I could say my initial entry was very strategic. But, like many of us, I fell into a job with Procter & Gamble and I was 21 years old and never really left for another industry. I stayed in the industry, though, because of a mix of different sides of the brain. It's one of the few places where you can use detailed analytics and pile on lots of creativity to try to solve for better solutions in store.

**2. You've been to our category management conference since 2006. In your opinion, what are the greatest changes to the industry and how have they impacted category management?**

**Alison:** Well, it's funny. Every year at this time when we look to this conference I think back to some of the conversations I had with Amanda in forming the original Category Management Conference. Back then we debated: "Was category management dead?" "Is there enough energy around category management?" "Is it still a growing field?" I believe then and I still believe now that category management is more important than ever. The reason it is more important than ever is that the data is just exploding. We really need folks who are in tune with taking traditional category management data, layering in shopper insights and bringing it to a whole new level. That's really the biggest analytic change. The two changes that happen around that – technology, technology, technology and speed. They are very inter-related, but the expectation is that we analyze more data faster, we make decisions faster and we make changes faster. And so category managers have to be more nimble than they used to be.

**3. What makes a good category leader?**

**Joe:** Well, there is a skill component to it, certainly. I think Allison has some thoughts on that, but there is also as importantly a mindset. Really, category

leadership is all about collaboration and really having an open mind to new ideas; to be able to take other's ideas and bring them to the next level, as well as contribute your own. It's really about this notion of thinking in terms of doing things with your partner and not to your partner as it regards to how you move forward with getting some new ideas executed.

**Alison:** It's interesting on the skill piece. As we think about the types of folks that we bring to this field to be thought leaders in category management and to guide our clients on how both manufacturers and retailers can step up and win at retail in new ways. It really is a unique combination of marketing brains, sales energy and discipline and research insights and bringing those three together are all a critical part of being a good category leader.

#### **4. What piece of advice would you give someone who's entering category management/shopper marketing?**

**Joe:** Well, given the breadth of skills that are needed to succeed and given the fact that that's really -- those disciplines are really becoming very much a hub of the wheel, supported by and touching a lot of different functions within an organization. We really believe that getting a broad and well-rounded skill set across a number of different associated disciplines is really, really vital. These folks, more and more in the future, are going to need to be good general business managers, as well as functional experts. And we think that that is going to be a powerful formula for folks going forward.

**Alison:** The only thing I'd add to that is just by definition of being a category manager or a category leader, your job focus is around a category. One of the greatest challenges today is getting beyond the category to: "What is that shopper's solution that we solve together as manufacturers and retailers?" So, for someone who is coming to the field to help, you've got to be an expert in your category and your brand and your department of the store, but you need to be able to think beyond that in what the big ideas are. A great way to do that, and maybe it's a little bit of a commercial for you folks, but coming to a conference like this is very valuable for helping people to think outside of their own box.

#### **5. Tell us a little about your session at the Category Leadership event – what's the focus of the session, what will attendees learn?**

**Joe:** You already mentioned the title of it where we're talking about: "Category Development Isn't Right for My categories...or is it?" We are trying to be a little bit provocative with that, obviously. But, the notion of this session is really to give folks a best practice roadmap. Folks that may be in situations where they are trying to enter into newer market spaces with some new ideas, ideas that have been kind of traditionally hatched in more of the classic, fast-moving consumer goods' space. The session really considers how a practitioner can best kind of import some of those ideas into market spaces that might not fit that classic, fast-moving consumer goods' mold. So, those other environments present some challenging situations and conditions that aren't always easy to navigate and to start to apply some of these ideas. But, we find that once that roadmap can be established and once those ideas can be applied, they can have a tremendous amount of impact in those spaces because again, it's largely uncharted territory and places where those ideas have not really had a chance to take hold. So, that's kind of the high-level notion. We build off of kind of four -- and we'll flush out four key stages that we recommend folks go through to kind of figure out and chart their course, if you will, into that opportunity space. And we are also putting a very practical edge on the conference, as well,

beyond some hopefully smart conceptual thinking. We are actually going to have some manufacturer practitioners who have actually gone down this journey in their particular companies talk about their practical frontline experience in getting into these spaces and what it has meant to them in terms of impact on the business. So, it should be a nice mix of some conceptual thinking, as well as some practical lessons learned from the frontlines that really help folks figure out how they might chart their own journey into this opportunity area called: "Category Development or Category Leadership" in their own particular spaces.

**6. With all the business behind us, let's find out a little more about you – Dream person you'd like to have over for dinner.**

**Alison:** Well, just by the way I'm going to answer this question, it says a lot about the two of us. Joe doesn't want to tell you. It's a secret. I'm going to have a party and I will let Joe come if he's good.

I couldn't pick one and I started thinking about professionally and publicly and personally and all these neat people that could be a good time. I came up with three folks that I'd like to bring back to this earth to have dinner together. The first is a professional one. Professionally, it would be Sam Walton. Game changer, not just in building Wal-Mart and coming up with this idea of delivering lower cost products that people really need in a standardized format, but also in the way he really pioneered a new way of thinking about manufacturer/retailer relationships in data. Without Sam's great ideas and those infamous canoe trips that the old timers talk about, I don't think we'd have category management the way we do today. The second one, I thought about public figures to invite to dinner. This is a part of my life. I'm a die hard Red Sox fan and I would absolutely invite Rogers Hornsby, which is a bit of a personal joke because my maiden name was Hornsby, as well. He's not my cousin, but he is one of the best baseball players to ever walk the face of this earth and he changed the way the game was played. And then personally, I thought: "Is there somebody secret that I would want to invite for dinner?" There's no doubt it would be my late, great-grandmother who was one smart, tough lady who was way ahead of her time. So, I'd have a little game changer dinner party and if you guys want to come, you can.

**7. If you didn't get into CPG (sales and marketing) what other area do you think you might have pursued?**

**Joe:** It probably would have been, somewhat by default, got into teaching. I grew up with a teacher in the house and have always enjoyed that dynamic. These kinds of conferences are a fun opportunity to do a little bit of that in a very professional context. So, I get to exercise my inner professor a little bit as we go through these conferences. So, it's a great opportunity.

Our thanks to Alison Chaltas and Joe Beier for participating in The Category Leadership Conference 2010 podcast series. We look forward to meeting them and you at the event. Don't forget, visit [iirusa.com/category](http://iirusa.com/category) for more details.