



THE CATEGORY LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE

September 27-29, 2010 – Hotel Sax – Chicago – 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 for more information.

We have the pleasure of speaking with Craig Geiger, Director of Shopper Insights & Category Management, Barilla USA. Craig will be presenting, "Category Management and Shopper Insights Defined! Align, Design, Mine and Consign for Success" on Monday, September 27 at 11:00am.

1. You've spent over 25 years in the consumer products industry, starting in sales management. What drew you to this industry, what do you like best about the industry?

Craig: Well, Melissa, I had worked in a grocery store in high school and I interviewed with several food companies in college and I just really liked the connection with the consumer through the meal experience. And also the opportunity to work on several well-known brands. The industry and retail environment continue to excite me today. I love how we are able to work with retailers to understand the shopper and grow the business. I love the innovation and technology and, of course, we still maintain the personal connection with consumers through food, which is something that I have always been attracted to.

2. The best piece of professional advice you were given was.....

Craig: Well, as I thought about this, it is very simply to actively listen with interest and respect to the customer, to the consumer, to the supplier and also your co-workers to be successful. I'm still not as strong in this area as I'd like to be, but I've improved over the years and try to apply this advice in my personal life, as well.

3. You were chairman of our last category management conference in 2007. In your opinion, what are the greatest changes to the industry since then, and how have they impacted category management strategies?

Craig: Clearly, Melissa, the understanding and application of shopper insights to category management best practices has been a big change. It is driving the category management organization, the data we are mining and the discussions we are having with our customers. Just looking at assortment, for example, we are now assessing the value of an item beyond sales contribution by adding the impact on the top shoppers at the retailer. That's just one example of, I think, the change of category management. It's an active, dynamic environment centered around shopper insights. We've also defined with greater clarity how shopper insights are utilized by shopper marketing and category management. And I think a few years ago we were just kind of figuring that out.

4. What makes a good category leader?

Craig: Simply, to think category performance first and foremost and be able to make the tough recommendations even when your brand is affected. Provide actionable insights that reflect and address the customer's objectives in the market and especially help them gain shopper loyalty. Communicate clearly and consistently and maintain unquestionable integrity. I think those are the things that make a true category partner.

5. What part of the business are you most fascinated by?

Craig: Retail. I love being in the retail environment as an observer and a consumer and experience the various in-store merchandising activities through shelving, displays and innovative new products. While I'm also fascinated by the depth of information we have on the retail transaction, for me the excitement is in the application and action at retail.

6. What piece of advice would you give someone who's entering category management?

Craig: Well, there couldn't be a better time or career opportunity in the consumer product arena than category management. Of course, I'm biased a bit, but if you are looking at category management/shopper insights, I really believe that it is a great time to be in the industry in this function. To be part of the traditional category management change from data supply to impact in your organization's competitive advantage through expert analysis, you know, it offers a real dynamic. I use that term again: "dynamic environment for growth." Also, in a category management role, you are exposed to so many areas of the business and you just gain so much excellent experience like cross-functional teams, as well.

7. With all the business behind us, let's find out a little more about you – Last great conversation you had was with?

Craig: My wife. Every day, we have a great conversation over coffee in the very early morning. It's been a tradition for us for well over 15 years. Every morning, we sit down and talk. I consider every morning to be a great conversation with my wife.

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

Craig: There are three main areas. Those involve radio, teaching (and I may still do that one day) and I am a political junkie. I really like politics. So, maybe that would be an area that I would be interested in down the road, as well.

Our thanks to Craig Geiger for participating in The Category Leadership Conference 2010 podcast series. We look forward to meeting Craig and you at the event. Don't forget, visit iirusa.com/category for more details.