



Transcript

Episode 055

**“The one where Dan Sullivan
talks with Dean about cheese
and whiskers”**

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Dean: I'm Dean Jackson, he's Joe Polish, and this is the I Love Marketing podcast.

Dan: Hi everybody, this is Dan Sullivan, and I'm in our studios here in Toronto, with a great, great favorite of mine and a true friend in Strategic Coach, and it's Mr. Dean Jackson, who I have come to appreciate as one of the really great marketing minds that I've ever met in my life. He was introduced to me by Joe Polish, who I can say exactly the same thing about.

If some of you have not yet had the pleasure, there's a wonderful podcast series that you can go to. Just go to Google and put in "I Love Marketing." There's just dozens of really superb one-hour discussions between Dean and with Joe, going over every single aspect of marketing, from around 360 different directions, and always with good humor and always with great simplicity.

So, today, we're going to just talk about a concept that Dean shared with me, and with about 25 other people in Arizona, in May. We were at a conference. This was Joe Polish's 25K group. And Dean just got up, in his very animatable way, just sat there, in about 15 minutes, delivered a concept to us, which everybody in the room just sat back and they kind of looked, and they said, "Wow! That's really amazing!"

So, without revealing – letting the cat out of the bag, I should say – Dean, just tell us what this concept is. Because every time I've used it, even though I'm not the originator, it has just been instantly communicated. Everybody gets it when you tell them this lesson.

Dean: Perfect. As I've been looking for a way to articulate this idea that's been developing for the last several years, just an observation and seeing how different dynamics work, especially in a business situation, a marketing situation where you're trying to present something to somebody in a favorable way, so that they'll want to do business with you.

So, my observation had been that there's always this fear that people have, that they're sort of tentative. And there's also this tendency of the person who's trying to

attract them to want to talk about things from their own perspective, talk about it as what we do as a business or as a company.

The thing that tied it all together was I read an article about mice and why mice are used in all the scientific experimenting, and found out that mostly mice are very similar to humans in the way that they react to things and their motivations. And, of course, their brains are much smaller, so they're only focused on the primary things.

And I started thinking about it, that mice, if you think about it, come preprogrammed with 2 prime directives. And those 2 prime directives, for a mouse, are 1) get cheese and 2) avoid cats. That's really the thing. And if you think about it, that's really the way, as humans, ultimately the part of our brain that actually drives what we do, not what we think or what we logically can think about something, but what drives our actual behavior, our brains are not that much different. We're programmed to get cheese and avoid cats. We want to get the good things and avoid the bad things.

So, I started observing and seeing how, in most situations, what happens is that companies, when they're presenting something, they're kind of focused on themselves and revealing themselves as cats. Instead of focusing on the cheese, which is the thing that your prospect really wants, the thing that is driving them to make this decision.

So, observe that the more you can just focus on the cheese and avoid showing your whiskers, the better off that you'll be. And I've had countless situations where that has played itself out, and I'll share a couple of them with you.

But the main one that completely clarified it for me was there's a company in Florida that does all of my postcard mailings, all of the things that I do for the real estate agents, and one of the divisions that they have of this company is a division that does birthday marketing for restaurants. So, they will send out postcards to people who are having birthdays this month, within a mile or 2-mile radius of your restaurant, to bring people in to the restaurant, to celebrate their birthday.

So, it's a popular thing, and it's a good program.

They had a list of 3,600 restaurants, just an email list that a food distributor had given them. They weren't sure whether these email addresses were for the owners of the restaurant or for just the general office, or the front desk. But they put together this beautiful HTML email that had nice-looking pictures. The headline was, "We'll fill your empty tables."

But it went on to talk about them, like, "We do this, we are the biggest in the industry, we've been doing this for 15 years, we know what works," all this stuff all about them. And click here to find out more about how we can put birthday marketing to work for you.

They sent out that email, and got zero clicks to their website from that email. They were kind of dismissing the email list, thinking it probably didn't go to the right people, or who knows how old that is, or some of those restaurants may not even be in business. They didn't have a very high expectation for it.

But I started thinking the reason that that's happening, because I'd really been kind of observing all of this, that it was a message that was very company-centric. The gist of the message is that here's somebody that is trying to sell me something. They've got something that they want me to buy.

So, I thought, "What's the real cheese here for this? What is it that these restaurant owners really want? And what would be a prerequisite to them getting what it is that they want?"

So, I wrote a little short message. I said, "Let's just send a message that has just the name of the restaurant in the subject line." So, it would say, "Dominic's," and then the message would just say, "Hi, does Dominic's do birthday parties?" or "Do you do birthday parties? Jim." That's it. And they sent out this message.

I said, "Let's just send it to a couple of hundred, because I had this idea that we would engage them one-on-one, rather than speak to the whole group of them, which clearly the HTML message was doing. It was treating them as a big group kind of thing,

So, they didn't send a couple hundred, they sent all 3,600 at once. And they ended up getting over 800 replies to this one message, to a list that, one week ago, got zero response.

So, what really became crystal clear to me in that is that in any business, on all levels of the business, and I think this holds true everywhere, that every person on every level of business is 100% authorized to bring money into the business. But to take money out of the business requires approvals, and only a very few people are authorized to take money out of the business.

So, no matter who gets that message, "Do you do birthday parties," it could be the front hostess, it could be one of the wait staff, it could be the general manager, it could be the owner, whoever gets it, here's a question that is only focused on the cheese. There's no whiskers showing there. "Do you do birthday parties?" "Yes, we do birthday parties. We do all kinds of birthday parties. We've got a special room for birthday parties. Tell me about your birthday party."

Now, they're pursuing them, because they see this as cheese.

So, the whole dynamic changes when now you're engaged with sort of a prerequisite. In order for somebody to be interested in birthday marketing, of course, they would have to do birthday parties. So, "Do you do birthday parties?" "Yes." Then, they would send a second message that they wrote, that was just an engaging message that said, "Perfect! I've been working with Roy's Restaurant in Sarasota on some birthday marketing, and I'm looking for somebody to work with in Toronto. Could you accommodate 5 or 6 birthday parties next month?"

And that's the message, too. Still no whiskers. It's all cheese. If you do birthday parties, could you do 5 or 6? And all these things.

Knowing what the end is, we know that if they do a typical response, a typical result would be at least 5 or 6 parties coming in to redeem their birthday gift card. So, we know that's kind of where it's headed. And people would engage them in that dialogue, "Tell us about, yes, we can accommodate 5 or 6." And then, they would say,

“Well, let me show you what we’ve been doing with Roy’s. Here’s a video that shows how it all works, and I’ll get back with you tomorrow.”

Now, there’s a video. It educates them on all of the birthday marketing, and then going with the momentum of the way that people typically like to make decisions. Like as a business, they were very interested in getting people to commit to a 6-month contract where they’re spending \$500 a month for 6 months, so it’s a \$3,000 commitment that they’re making. And they don’t even know whether it’s going to work yet. People are reluctant to engage in something if they’re not absolutely certain.

So, I said, “Why don’t we go with that? We know that it does work. And rather than overstating what’s possible, why not just focus on what would be the minimum acceptable standard that a business owner would be happy with, to continue doing something?”

So, we talked about that, and we thought that if I restaurant owner could double the money that they spend on the birthday marketing, that they would be reasonably happy enough to continue doing it because of all of the extra benefit that you get, of maybe introducing new people to the restaurant and the lifetime value, and all of that.

So, rather than focus on getting that long-term commitment, I said, “Let’s send a short message to them that says we’re sending out the August birthday cards next week, and what I’d love to do is just do a small test with you,” knowing that most people would much rather test something small than commit to something big. “I’d like to send out 200 cards within a mile around your restaurant, or 2 miles around your restaurant. It’s \$199 for the test. And if you don’t double your money, we’ll give you your money back.”

It’s effortless to go down that path. So, just thinking through that whole dynamic and thinking through the process, from beginning to end, you know where it’s going to end up, but you have to start where their interest is, which is primarily the cheese. What is the cheese in this situation, that they’re most interested in?

So, that dynamic is in play in any situation, in any type of business where they're interested in getting the result that you offer. And that's really what the cheese is. The cheese is the result that they're going to get if they could just push a button and make that happen, whatever it is that your business does. That's how you really have to kind of begin with that, and then just craft the whole message, the whole series of messages on advancing people towards getting the cheese, but only and always focused on the cheese, not on your needs or your desires out of it.

Dan: Dean, you've given this a lot of thought and you've had a lot of conversations about it. I just wonder if you could take cheese on one side and cats on the other side, and say what are the 3 elements that would be most present if you were doing a good job of selling the cheese. That would be the one side. And then, what are the 3 totally giveaway signs on the other side, that a cat is being communicated, if you could just talk in those terms.

I think everybody would like to get a practical handle on this, because I can just see people sitting there listening, and their brain is just going through – I call it – a cheese and whisker audit. And they're just reworking their whole presentation, just on the basis.

But I think if you could just give a couple, these are the 3 criteria that absolutely have to be there, if it's cheese. And the same thing, you would absolutely know it's cat if it's on the other side.

Dean: Okay. This is good for me, and I appreciate you doing this with me, to help articulate it. It's a thought that's still in formulation. I've really only articulated it for the first time just in Arizona.

I would say let's start with the whiskers side. I call it showing your whiskers, as soon as you see that it's there.

I think any message, when you look at something and the star of the message is you or your business, or your company, or your product, where it's all about that, as opposed to the benefit or what the result is going to be, that's one thing. So often,

people are proud of what they do, and they're proud of their experience, and they want to kind of highlight that in their advertising, that's a sure giveaway, right away, that somebody's trying to take money from me. It's the tone, when you really look at it.

In a lot of ways, it's like that whole – I don't know who said it – about, “Pornography, and how do you define it? You know it when you see it” kind of thing. And I think it's the same thing with the whiskers. You know it when you see it. You get the tone that this is trying to take, rather than give.

So, this is why when even in the look of things, I talked about the tone, the star being the benefit, rather than the sender of the message, I think in the look of things, the way things look, when they look like an ad, that's a giveaway as well.

That's why in direct response marketing, the standard things, the things that work the very best are, if you're in magazines, ads that look like editorial content. Or if you're sending mail, things that look like personal letters, things that are not adorned with the things that tip people off that this is an ad.

So, I think that is the kind of thing, like if you were looking at doing a cheese audit with your marketing, is to look at them and say, “Would somebody think this was valuable content or a personal letter, or a personal email that's only coming to me?”

Maybe that's another one, is a message that shows the whiskers is a message that appears like I'm one of many people who got this message, as opposed to I'm the only one that got this message.

If you send a message that's got the name of your restaurant in it, and just ask a simple question, “Do you do birthday parties? Jim,” I use this framework of sending messages that are short, personal, and expecting a reply. And those are the 3 winning ingredients, to engage somebody in a dialogue, because you can't go any further. Most people put too much pressure on the initial message. They're trying to send out an email, make a sale. Or send out a letter, make a sale. Or run an ad, make a sale. They're not trying to send a message that can engage one person in a dialogue.

So, logistically, there's a little bit more involved in doing it. But logically, it's the thing that works the very best.

So, you can always figure out the logistics. But I hate to see people kind of shoot themselves in the foot because they make logistical arguments.

Dan: Just to sum up the cat-and-whiskers side, what I got from going through the points, was 1) if it's immediately about the sender, you know it's a cat; 2) it looks like a sales job; and 3) it could be to anybody. Those are kind of cat-like signs. Those are whiskers.

Dean: That's right.

Dan: So, I'm sitting here, Dean, and I'm just seeing billions and billions and billions of dollars of advertising budgets going down the drain as people listening to this. This is going to be banned. You're going to be banned in the marketing departments of large corporations. The unemployment rate in the US is going to go up by another point as a result of this.

On the other hand, the unemployment rate in the US would probably go down by about 5 points, because people would actually be involved in creating value.

So, let's switch over to the cheese side. They're not just the opposites, because I think that there's some actual unique characteristics of what constitutes cheese.

Dean: I think what happens, one of the easiest ways to focus on the cheese is to be crystal clear on who you're actually talking to, so that you know what the cheese is for them. You have to really be able to take that outwardly-focused view, where you're not focused on here's what we have, but you're focused on what do they want. I think that's really a big difference.

Most people look at their prospects or they look at the potential people that they could do business with, and they try and create a category that's sort of an umbrella that can fit everybody under that category, rather than trying to identify the individual people, the different groups of unique people who could use their services.

In any business, there's very different needs that people have. I have so much experience in the real estate industry, so I'll use a real estate example of that. But most times, people do it geographically, where they'll talk about that they sell real estate in Northern California, or the tri-county area, making up words to encompass everything, rather than focusing on a specific geography. And not only a specific geography, but a specific segment of the market there. If you look, somebody buying their first home is very different than somebody who's buying what I call their "trophy" home, and they're very different than somebody who's downsizing from that trophy home into a smaller home.

Dan: And of course, Dean, that's the real genius of your day job. Someday, this might be your day job. But that whole thing, the way that you have literally divided up the world, in terms of what people want to buy, when, in the real estate market, and to understand it almost street-by-street and block-by-block around the world, and if people leave this street and they're going up in the market, which other street they're going to go to.

This is the great genius, is that you're actually thinking of them as an individual who bought a house for a particular reason, at this age, and they're in this income bracket, and they are going to be looking for a bigger cheese.

Dean: Yes. Exactly. And knowing where somebody is makes it very easy for you to focus on what they really want.

I use Proctor & Gamble as an example of a company that really gets that and is very able to focus on very narrow needs that people have. I read that Proctor & Gamble just had their 23rd billion-dollar brand, so 23 unique brands that do over \$1-billion each in sales now.

So, think about what they've really done, even in the laundry detergent category. You look at the thing that they've got all of the different sub-needs that people have in laundry detergent.

The big box stores, their solution to laundry detergent is they put some laundry detergent in a box, say “Laundry detergent,” and put it on the shelves. And for some people, that’s all they need. “I need the big box of laundry detergent.”

But there are some people that Proctor & Gamble really focuses on, people who have distinct needs for their laundry. People who want to get their clothes as white as they possibly can, Tide is the laundry detergent for them. Bachelors or people who just want to throw it all in the laundry and wash it all at the same temperature, they’ve got Cheer for them. That’s all they’re really focused on. They don’t want to have pink underwear by putting their red shirt and their white underwear in there together.

Proctor & Gamble realized that’s a need that people have, and let’s focus on that.

I think if you take that approach, that’s really a great way to start, by identifying what the cheese is and who your markets are.

Dan: Just so we create our list as we go along here, one of them is the narrowest possible niche is what you’re actually looking for.

Dean: Yeah, let’s say that. The narrowest viable niche.

Dan: Yeah. And then the other aspect is to get a totally personalized profile of who the actual individual is who’s in that niche. So, that would be 2. Is there a third that you can think of?

Dean: Well, I think one of the dynamics that really makes it work is removing any possible risk from the situation. In any dynamic, somebody has to take a chance on somebody. Right? It would be so much easier if you have enough faith in your product or your ability to deliver the cheese, that you’re willing to take the chance, because it’s just so much easier to get somebody to try something if you’re the one bearing the risk.

That’s not a new concept, for sure. That’s been around for ages. But there’s a distinction between reversing risk and sort of removing risk. The distinction is that in the worst-case scenario, that there’s absolutely no way that anything bad is going to happen to them for trying, for taking a chance on this. And that’s why when we say,

“In any possible way, if you can say, ‘If you don’t double your money, I’m going to give you your money back,’ so I’m the one taking the risk on that.

So, you have to be confident enough that your cheese is really good, that you can get the result that they really want.

Dan: Okay, I’m going to pick a point in time, and it’s your actual presentation of this for the first time in Arizona, and there’s 2 questions I’d like to hear you answer. One of them is what has the idea done to you, since Arizona, because now you’ve created a model and the model is starting to work on Dean. So, that’s the first question.

The other question is now that you have the model, how have you looked back at your previous marketing career and seen some things that were, in your case, maybe violations of the cheese-and-whisker, and some places where you’ve really done it extremely well, in terms of making it all about the cheese?

So, what has your own idea done to you?

Dean: Well, it’s great because this idea’s been kind of percolating and it’s been working on me for the last several years. And this, just recently, has been the articulation of it. It hasn’t so much changed me since articulating it, but it has changed up to the point where I’m able to articulate it now.

One of the things that was kind of the most impactful thing that I’ve done with this information is with our real estate websites. All of the elements of this have all kind of come together over the last few years. But especially over the last almost one year, 18 months since I really started working on this, I think I had the idea for this implementation that I’m going to share with you at our second workshop that we did last year. And over the summer and the fall, I developed this idea of creating a training program for our real estate websites that was completely cheese, that was all no risk at all for people, zero whiskers.

I read about this guy, Cyrus McCormick, who was the inventor of the reaper, the mechanical reaper farming tool in the 1800’s. It was a fantastic development. It was credited with being one of the top 3 developments of the 1800’s, with the telephone, the

railroad and the reaper. That was really the 3 big, sweeping changes that happened there, and really paved the way for the industrial revolution, because it let people come out of the fields and into the factories.

The primary thing that the reaper did was it allowed a farmer to do the work of 14 men himself. And it was just fascinating, that this revolutionized the way that farming worked. But it was expensive, and the farmers couldn't really afford the reaper.

So, what Cyrus did was he knew that he had something that was going to be incredible for them, and his words were that, "It's better that I should wait for the money than you should wait to use this in your farm, because it's going to be the thing that gets you a bigger harvest and gets you more money."

So, he would let the farmers use the reaper for the harvest that season, and pay him when they got the money from the harvest. So, it was like a no-brainer, at that point.

I started thinking that's exactly the same thing with our real estate websites, with the sites we do for real estate agents. We've got a tool that will get them get them more money, but the obstacle for some of them is the money that it costs upfront to get the website and the monthly fees to pay for the website. The websites are about 3 to 5 times more expensive than what traditional real estate websites are, and it's kind of a shift for people to wrap their mind around. "Well, it's very expensive for a website. It doesn't even have my picture on it." It's a completely outwardly-focused website.

But I know that it works. So, I started thinking, "Why wouldn't I take a chance on them? I'm going to challenge myself to make sure that I can create a training program that's so clear and so easy for them to follow, that they will be successful, and they can pay me when they do their first transaction."

So, I developed this idea for what I call "Project Cyrus." I just started inviting people, in a little PS in my Marketing Monday email that goes out. It was all cheese. I just said, "Listen, I'm starting a new pilot program, and I'm looking for some very specific people who live in a market of more than 10,000 people. If you're a single

agent with no buyer agents, you've got one to 2 years experience at least, you work personally with people, you're coachable, you're friendly, and you can keep a secret, if that's you, then reply to this message and put 'Project Cyrus' in the subject line."

And I sent that out, just as a PS, and got a ton of replies back. People sending back, "Oh, I'm this, I'm this, and I can keep a secret." And they're trying to tell me why they'd be great for this.

So, we were able to select the first 30 people for this program, and they were falling over themselves to be part of it.

So, every month since September, we've been adding 30 people a month to this training program, and it's just an effortless thing because it's completely focused on the cheese. It's completely focused on them getting the benefits.

So, the offer to them, I explained to them who Cyrus McCormick was, how he came up with the name and how it all works, and that over the 90 days I'm going to give them everything I know about how to be a ninja real estate marketer. And at the end of 90 days, they'll either have done their first transaction and they can pay me the money for the website, and then continue with the monthly fee, or at the end of 90 days they'll have a pipeline of people, they'll be excited about it, they'll see that this is going to work for them. And if they want to continue, they can just pay the monthly fees and pay me the development fee when they do their first transaction.

So, it's effortless for people. They can't believe that this is happening. But it's almost ironic that they don't see that that's the way that they work every day. They will list somebody's house. They will take a new listing, they pay for the advertising, they do all the work, they promote the property. They don't get any money upfront. If the property sells, they get paid very well. But if it doesn't, they don't get anything. So, why shouldn't I be willing to work the same way that they work? And really, they get that and appreciate it, and it makes it easy for them to make a decision to start.

And then, once they get going, it's the greatest thing ever for them.

We had a guy – we’re just wrapping up our last group here – who just closed on an \$895,000 transaction. It’s closing now, and the class isn’t even over yet. And he’s very excited about that. He hasn’t paid me any money yet, but here it is. Now he’s got the closing, I’ll get paid, he’s gotten paid, he’s happy, and everything is great.

Dan: So, let me ask you just in relationship to that, they’ve already got some cheese. What’s the cheese they’ll be missing out on if they just decide to take what they have and run?

Dean: Well, they’ll miss out on the future cheese. What I’m teaching them is how to offer their prospects something easy. All these things that I’m sharing with you, I’m sharing with them; things like using short, personal messages to engage people in a dialogue, all their websites are completely outwardly-focused on information that people who are looking for a home in that area would be very interested in.

There’s not a thing on these websites about the agent, at all. That’s sometimes an obstacle for them to kind of wrap their mind around, because they’re used to being so front-and-center, “Welcome to my website.” There’s none of that.

Dan: I remember the one episode of I Love Marketing, where you and Joe Polish were talking about the fact that any way you slice it, you’re going to pay for marketing, if you’re in the marketplace.

What I get from this, that you’re not actually paying for your marketing in a sense of it’s out-of-pocket, but I would say that you’re doing some goodwill marketing. In other words, it’s saying, “I think so highly of you, because you’ve qualified, by my standards, that I’m willing to invest in you because I know I’ll get a good return, because I’m going to take you to another level. And you’ll pay me out of your future success.”

Dean: Right. That’s exactly it.

Dan: So, there’s a compliment. There’s not only a great benefit built into it, but there’s a great compliment in the person. “I’m really willing to invest in you. This is very powerful knowledge. This is very powerful wisdom and techniques, that I have developed over many years. And because I’ve thought through your answer to my

questionnaire and I've seen that I think that you're someone who can take what I've created and you can really use it, I'm willing to invest in you because I know I'm going to get a return."

Dean: Right. That's right. In any situation like that, it's always less expensive for you to invest their money, than your money. I'm investing 1/10th of what they perceive that I'm investing, because they're saving that money initially. But my cost on delivering it is much lower.

Dan: Dean, you've been around the marketing game your whole professional life. It just seems to me that what you have done is that you've created such a fantastically simple template – I call it a template – for understanding marketing on a universal scale. And yet, immediately that template can be applied to any specific situation. Would you say that? You've kind of invented water.

Dean: I was trying to figure out how to articulate this, but I do look at them as a framework that you can install in any business. I started calling them stem cells, where they'll become whatever they need to become in that business.

But that idea of creating, I always look for the bedrock principles, the things that are going to be true across the board, and build on those.

It's not something that is only applicable to the real estate business or the birthday postcard business. It applies to everything.

Dan: Dean, what I was struck with when I sat there in Phoenix and I listened to your very, very simple message, I said, "This is just an incredibly viral idea." This is the kind of idea that can just go from mind to mind to mind, very, very quickly. Is that your perception? Are you getting a sense of a viral quality about that?

Dean: I really am. Because as soon as you say, "More cheese, less whiskers," you can direct people who are working on your marketing, you can get your team rallied around that of more cheese, less whiskers, and really look at it, and know that it's easy to kind of identify.

Dan: It just seems to me that this is such a fundamental model. I think of politics. So often, politicians are not only cats, they're like predators. You're seeing the teeth, you're seeing the claws, and everything like that. And they're not really talking about the cheese that people would like to have as a result of their tax money and everything else.

But you can go through any field of human activity, it's all about selling something. Every field of human activity is the selling of something, getting someone to engage with something that you think is really worthwhile.

Dean: Yeah. You're absolutely right. It's easier to get people rallied around raising money for a community center, or something specific that they're going to get to get. But nobody's going to be interested in just raising taxes. It's funny.

Dan: So, where do you go from here? You're in the marketing business. You have access to some of the smartest marketing brains, certainly, in North America. You have access to the smartest people.

So, you got this idea. You know this baby is going to grow into a really, really giant out there. So, from your strategic standpoint, how are you looking at this? It's very viral, which means that it can go very quickly, when you release it. But how are you going to do it? Because to a certain extent, you want it to do tremendous good for the world. But on the other hand, you also want to monetize it. In other words, this could make Dean Jackson one of the most famous...

I'm just saying what I'm seeing. I'm just saying it. I always said you're the marketing Buddha. And my feeling is that this is kind of like something that Buddha would say or that Confucius would say. It just seems to me it's got this profound wisdom aspect to it.

So, where do you go with this?

Dean: It's all still evolving. Ultimately, I think I need to do a book, like a *Who Moved My Cheese* or *The One-Minute Manager*, that size of a book that gets that message out. And then I think it can take off from there, because there's so many.

I thank you for helping today, help me kind of articulate and number some of the actual protocols for this, because there's a lot of that, and I think there's a lot of ways to create sort of exercises and consulting framework.

Dan: If I have an expertise, it's to break things down into thinking processes. In other words, if we had a cheese-and-whisker audit, what would the cheese-and-whisker audit look like? Maybe we can just talk about that. If we were creating an audit that anyone could take, what would be some of the questions that you would ask?

Dean: If I were looking at any situation, I would look at who is it that we're trying to offer this cheese to, so that we know what kind of cheese this particular person likes. If they've got a particular kind of cheese they like, then let's focus all of our effort on that.

I always want to be crystal clear that this only works if you are, as a company or as an entrepreneur, completely focused on the cheese, on creating the cheese that's really good. That's the thing: you have to have the goods. You've got to have something that delivers what this person that you're trying to attract really wants.

I mentioned Proctor & Gamble. I read a great book called *The Proctor & Gamble 99*, and they have 99 principles for how they look at brands. And one of the things was that they build the very best product, from the customer's perspective. They're not looking to cut corners or to compromise in any way. They look at what's the very best thing that needs to happen, to make clothes their whitest. And they focus only on that.

So, if you think about that person, what is it that they want, and how can you really make sure that they get that?

Dan: Well, it strikes me that there's an anchor experience. Let's talk about the restaurant. The anchor experience is they just had a month where they had 6 birthday parties and the room was constantly filled. That seems to me that that would be the anchor experience.

And then for their standpoint, the anchor experience is the person having just the absolutely best birthday party that they ever had. So, it strikes me that the starting

point for figuring out the cheese is that it's kind of like apparently around Apple Corporation. I think Apple is just the greatest cheese-maker in the world.

Dean: That's a great word. Maybe we could create our own language. Everybody who's into this, we could be cheese-makers. I love it.

Dan: Yeah. But the interesting thing about Apple, apparently, where they start is they start with the box. The person has brought the product home with the box, and one of their questions is, "What do they do with the box?" My experience is you don't throw the box away.

Dean: That's true.

Dan: So, what is the experience of the box? Apparently, they're busy designing the box before they even know what's in it. So, they're moving backwards from that. The person is home, they have the box, and they've taken something out of the box. But what do they do with the box?

I still have my original iPod box. We have cleaning time twice a year, and, "You want to throw those?" "No. I just can't throw this box out."

Dean: Haven't seen it since last time we did this, but I've got to keep it.

Dan: Yeah. So, you move backwards through the whole...

Dean: That's the thing, that it does have to start with you've got to have the cheese. You've got to have it in a way that you would stake your money on that working for them.

Dan: So, it strikes me that you have the anchor experience, but then you do just the reverse what cats do. Cats always move from the cat out to the mouse. But my feeling is, with the cheese approach, that you have the anchor experience of the very best kind of cheese experience that the mouse has, and then you actually move in reverse. You don't move forward from something to the mouse, you move backwards from the mouse. You're checking out each stage.

Dean: Let them keep coming. That's exactly right.

Dan: That strikes me that that would be one of the principles of the audits. You have to do a sort of reverse situation.

Dean: Yeah. And that's the thing. Ultimately, I think that the great guiding principle for it is what would you do if you only got paid if they actually get the results. That's a great way for thinking about it, even if ultimately that's not the offer that you're going to be able to make. It still is the best place for you to come from, because it makes crystal clear so many times people sort of package up things or add in filler and fluff. If they're doing something that's sort of just kind of selling it by volume, but it's really just one little thing that's going to actually deliver the result, if that's it, if you could just focus on the thing that gets the result and create a great experience around that, that's really where it makes your job much easier.

Dan: Dean, you're going to have suicides on your hands. They're going to be jumping from the windows on Madison Avenue, because of the amazing amount of convoluted psychology that some of the marketing theories of people who have gotten their PhD's on these very, very complex issues, how to look at the market and everything on those, and you've just reduced it down to one metaphor for the entire market.

But it strikes me, also, and see if this is true, because you've been at the beginning of this revolution and now we're right into the heart of it, it strikes me that this is a metaphor that's perfect for the new technologies of marketing. Would you comment on that?

Dean: Absolutely. The new technologies of marketing make it absolutely not only viable to make a lot of this work, but make it almost effortless for you to make it work.

It's very difficult to engage people without the idea of using technology, like we can easily do with email. That's the thing. The difference that we talked about was sending one email to 3,600 people, that nobody clicked on, versus sending essentially 3,600 individual emails that everybody responded to, because we were focused only on you.

That immediate feedback that you have, that immediate ability to engage people in a dialogue – email, we’re so used to being able to communicate with our friends in a dialogue way – why not take what we naturally like to do and craft it so that you can engage with your prospects, as a real person to a real person?

Dan: Well, here’s something from a positioning of the cheese-and-whisker audit that I can see, is that you could call it the marketing model for the 21st century. It’s almost like you can pay credit to what’s happened in the 20th century, when it was broadcasting, and you had to do broad mass-marketing and everything else. You can sort of say, “Yes, but the world has changed. We have an entirely new technology. And a new model is needed for marketing, and it has to be utterly simple, but it also has to be something that is highly responsive and you have to be able to change it on the spot.

You see, this is the big thing about marketing today. You can go through a profound transformation of your marketing between breakfast and dinner, just because of the feedback that you’re getting.

Dean: That’s very true. Yeah. I like the way you think.

Dan: That’s the biggest thing I’ve noticed about the Internet marketing world, is obviously it’s the extraordinary reach that you have with people, but it’s the extraordinary testing that you can do, that doesn’t take weeks and months and doesn’t involve focus groups. The focus group is actually somebody who would write you a check or give you pay.

Dean: Right. And if you’ve got a group of them, you’ve got a group of these people that you’re constantly in dialogue with, at different times, people have different needs.

Dan: Yeah. I’d like to ask you a question. Was a model like this somewhere in your horizon, or have you just stumbled on it? In other words, you knew, as you were developing your system for real estate agents, that you were applying it to a particular industry. But with you, just like Joe, Joe has a model of marketing that is incredibly bigger than the industry that he started with, which was carpet cleaners. I think that you’re right at that stage where the model you have is incredibly bigger than the residential real estate business.

So, was this a goal of yours, to actually break out in some way, to get much larger and much more expansive in the reach of your wisdom and your marketing?

Dean: I think ultimately, yes. I think that I've been pretty focused on the real estate side of things for a lot of years. But all along the way, I've always seen how these things apply to other businesses. I've always been interested in that, and I've always sort of had other opportunities to kind of apply the same thinking.

But I've always been a context builder. I've always looked for the patterns in things and the things that are duplicable and the things that work.

So, everything that I've done in real estate, because I take that whole sort of bedrock approach, looking at what are the things that are universally true in every real estate business.

It just so happens that they absolutely transfer to any other business. And that's what we've been doing with the I Love Marketing podcasts, is really seeing how here you've got 2 guys who have amazingly similar backgrounds, who started out applying marketing to their own businesses, me to real estate, Joe to carpet cleaning. And when you look at that, carpet cleaning is something that people do once or twice a year, and it's very little money; to real estate, where somebody buys the biggest thing that they're ever going to buy maybe every 7 or 10 years.

Somewhere in between that is every other business that you can imagine. So, we've been able to apply these principles, the things that we've developed, the models, to other businesses. One of my favorite episodes was we had a couple episodes where we played what we called "Yellow Pages Roulette," where we just opened the Yellow Pages to a particular page, whatever business was on that page, and we started applying everything we've been talking about to that business. And you start to see how that works. And we see that in the comments that people leave, and they get it, and see how everything applies to their business.

Dan: That's great. Okay, we're going to wrap up here, but there's 2 questions I'd like to ask you. One is if there were 3 things that you would really like cheese and whiskers to do

for you, what would it be? Just looking, let's say, at the next 10 years. I realize you're only 15, but this is 40% of your lifetime.

Dean: Exactly.

Dan: But what would be 3 things you'd really like to see this do in the world? Part of it would be for you, and part of it would be for other people.

Dean: Well, I think it's a concept that's big enough and, really, I think it could be the first book that I do, something to get that as a framework to get that out into the world. Really, now, it's been sort of among just my close circle of people that I interact with, and it's starting to get out, and I'm seeing the difference that it's making for people. Because if they really get it and shift like that, I think it's a big thing. It does great things for their business.

So, I would think that that would be a great first step, is to have a book from that.

And then, I haven't really thought beyond where that could go from there, but certainly it could open up other horizons. It could open up other possibilities for building a whole consulting framework around that, or an execution team around doing those kinds of things, implementing that model.

Dan: One of the reasons I was asking you for that, because you have a vehicle or a distribution world available to you than let's say somebody coming across an idea like this in 1985 or 1990. You have the ability to go viral with the power of the idea, but you also have the ability to go viral with the means of distribution.

Dean: Right.

Dan: So, my feeling is has your thinking gone to you talk about consulting, but the consulting could actually be online consulting.

Dean: Exactly. And that's what I meant, is creating that consulting model. But let me ask you, what would you do?

Dan: The biggest thing I would do, I've got this 7-step model that I created, which is called The 7 M's. Actually, I developed it from political campaigns. Because if you think of

a political campaign, in which I've been in 7 of them as a consultant or one of the marketing team in 7 political campaigns, political campaign is just an entrepreneurial product launch.

So, what you're doing is you're offering something to the public, and the payment is votes. And what you're looking for is that you're trying to get enough votes to actually get into office.

But the first thing is that you have to have a phenomenal message. And I've seen a lot of candidates who might be pleasing and they might be talented and they have great experience, but they just have no message. So, they just never capture any imagination out there. There's not a simple way of just totally understanding who this person is.

So, my feeling is don't even think if you don't have a message that would be of great interest to the public.

Then, the second thing is the thing that I call "The Middle," in that if you think of your entire market as a big circle, there's a group of people in the middle who are influencers. So, if they totally buy into your message, then you want to get them, and get them highly-motivated. So, you have message, you have the middle, and you have the motivation.

Their being motivated for your message actually creates a momentum, which then starts attracting money.

So, I've got 5 M's: I've got message, I've got middle, I've got motivated, I've got momentum, I've got money.

If those 5 things are in place, the magic happens. There's this wow factor that takes place in the marketplace. Any marketplace, for any product, there's a wow factor. And that creates enormous muscle. In other words, that idea has real power to it.

So, the way that I would look at it is I think you have a phenomenal message. And then, the question that I would look at, who is the middle that you have to capture? And I would say it's a discrete number. There's about 50 people who you would want to basically have them totally motivated by this, so that they would influence hundreds and thousands of other people, and I would get the marketplace totally marinated. Maybe marinate is the 8th M.

Dean: There you go, the 8th M, marinate.

Dan: But what they do is they go out there and they become early advocates of the idea, and they're preparing the marketplace. So, I would just concentrate on those steps of who would be the 50. I would see myself in a position kind of like the type of influencer that you would want.

Dean: Yeah. Then you only need 49 more.

Dan: When I get excited, Joe is, obviously. So, what I would think is discretely a group of 50 influencers that you just totally motivate on, and then you build from there and say, "Their motivation has to go out to here and here."

So, that's basically how I would approach it.

Dean: That's great.

Dan: Okay, last question. Since we started the interview, what have you learned about your own idea?

Dean: It's been great. The articulating. I've already got some framework from just you and I talking. We were looking for 3 things that would be a distinction between cheese and whiskers, and I think there's probably 33 things. So, that's an exercise for me to look through and articulate what those things are, the characteristics, how to identify cheese, how to identify whiskers.

And then, the implication would be to be able to remove the whiskers.

I love that idea. I think we've talked before about the cheese audit of going down and looking at the things that you're actually doing, and what are the dynamics. Is it cheese or is it whiskers?

Dan: And I'd be happy to work with you, because I deal in thinking processes. So, I'd be happy to.

Dean: Yeah, I appreciate that.

Dan: I'd be happy to work with you on that.

Dean: And then just what you just said, about the M's of focusing on those 50 people who are the influence. That's great to think like that. But, of course, I know those people. I have them on speed dial and have access to those people, which is a big advantage. I appreciate that.

Dan: I think there were a lot of them in the room, that you actually presented the idea to.

I just feel, every once in a while, I'm at the presence of the birth of something really, really great. And it was instantaneous, when I was in the room, watching you deliver this. It's just a real treat. I just feel that I want to give maximum encouragement to get this idea out into the world.

Dean: I really appreciate it.

Dan: I want to thank you for coming in and spending the time. I'm going to get this out to my people, you get this out to your people, and we'll see where it goes.

Dean: I appreciate it. Thank you.