

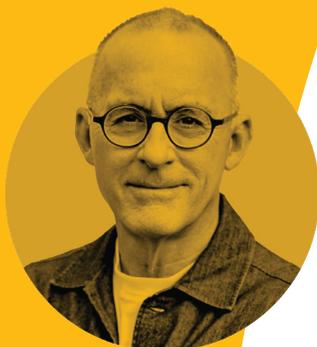
EPISODE  
**08**

**THE BRAND  
BUILDER'S**  
PLAYBOOK

**BRAND-LED LEADERSHIP:**

**BUILDING CULTURE,  
DRIVING CHANGE**

# HOSTS



**JIM**  
STENGEL

**In October 2008**, Jim Stengel shocked the marketing world by leaving his prestigious role as Global Marketing Officer at Procter & Gamble, one of the most admired brand building companies in the world. This bold move was Jim's first step on a new mission to share his passion for growing business through a focus on higher ideals.

To continue on his mission, Jim has embraced a variety of exciting roles: President/CEO of The Jim Stengel Company, LLC, host of The CMO Podcast, Author of *Grow: How Ideals Power Growth & Profit at the World's Greatest Companies* *Unleashing the Innovators: How Mature Companies Find New Life with Startups*, Adjunct Professor at Kellogg, Northwestern, speaker with the Washington Speakers Bureau® Advisor to several companies.

x **JIM STENGEL**  
COMPANY



**RYAN**  
BARKER

**Ryan Barker** is the founder of BERA.ai, and is known as “Alchemist of Brand Equity” for his ability to turn the emotional power of brands into measurable business performance. After 15 years in brand consultancy at WPP, Ryan grew frustrated by vanity metrics that won awards but failed to drive business outcomes. He saw marketers losing credibility, chasing short-term sales while neglecting long-term brand value.

Out of that conviction, he launched BERA.ai—the world's first real-time brand intelligence platform connecting brand equity to business results. Today, leading brands and private equity firms rely on BERA to predict performance, guide investment, and protect their most valuable intangible asset: their brand. Blending analytical rigor with creative empathy, Ryan's mission is simple: what gets measured, gets valued—and what gets valued, gets protected.

x **BERA.ai**

# TODAY'S GUESTS



**DAVID**  
AAKER

Marketing Professor Emeritus David Aaker is widely considered the father of modern branding. His pioneering work focused on defining brand equity and detailed ways to build and manage brands and portfolios. He has published more than 100 articles and 18 books on the theory and practice of marketing—including eight on branding—that have sold more than 1 million copies and were translated into 18 languages.

Aaker's first brand book, *Managing Brand Equity* (1991), gained attention because it defined brand equity at a time when there was no accepted definition. His second book, the bestselling *Building Strong Brands* (1995), developed his brand identity model, The Aaker Model, which is used by hundreds of firms to build and strategically manage brands. Other influential books followed on brand leadership, portfolio strategy, and relevance. His latest book, "Creating Signature Stories," was published in 2017.

Aaker serves as Vice Chair at Prophet, a global marketing and branding consultancy. In 2015, he was inducted into the American Marketing Association Hall of Fame for his lifetime achievements in marketing.



**MARCUS**  
COLLINS

Dr. Marcus Collins is an award-winning marketer and cultural translator. He is the former chief strategy officer at Wieden+Kennedy, New York, a marketing professor at the Ross School of Business, University of Michigan, and the author of the best-selling book, *For The Culture: The Power Behind What We Buy, What We Do, and Who We Want To Be*.

Marcus is an inductee into the American Advertising Federation's Advertising Hall of Achievement and a recipient of the Thinkers50 Radar Distinguished Achievement Award for the idea most likely to shape the future of business management. His strategies and creative contributions have led to the launch and success of McDonald's cultural resurgence, Google's "Real Tone" technology, the "Made In America" music festival, and the Brooklyn Nets move from New Jersey to New York, among others. Before his advertising tenure, Marcus worked on iTunes + Nike sports music initiatives at Apple and ran digital strategy for Beyoncé. He writes a column for Forbes' CMO Network, and contributes to business scholarship.



***You don't build community—you facilitate it by connecting people who share your beliefs.***

**MARCUS  
COLLINS**

# 08 BUILDING CULTURE, DRIVING CHANGE

In the series finale, David Aaker and Marcus Collins unpack how brand goes beyond marketing—it's a leadership strategy. We explore how brand shapes culture, drives alignment, and creates long-term value, especially in a world of AI disruption and constant change. From storytelling to strategic vision, this episode shows how CMOs can lead through brand.

## WHAT IS DAVID AAKER'S 5 B'S FRAMEWORK?

**Brand Portfolio**—Strong brands don't stand alone—endorser brands, sub-brands, and energizers work together.

**Brand Relevance**—Go beyond awareness; ensure the brand is credible and considered.

**Brand Image**—A set of associations that intrigue, resonate with, and, most importantly, differentiate the brand in customers' minds.

**Brand Loyalty**—Build long-term relationships through product development, culture, and customer journey alignment.

**Brand Equity**—Brand is an asset, not a cost. It fuels visibility, credibility, and financial performance.



Source: Aaker on Branding by David Aaker

## HOW DOES AAKER VIEW THE ROLE OF BRAND IN BUSINESS?

Strong brands generate long-term value by driving visibility, credibility, and trust across markets.

Without treating brand as an asset, organizations risk undermining both financial and cultural strength.

**HOW DOES COLLINS  
CONNECT BRAND  
AND CULTURE?**

Collins argues that culture is the most powerful driver of behavior — more influential than advertising or product features.

Brands become meaningful when they align with cultural beliefs, not just functional value.

In this sense, brands are vessels of meaning, interpreted through cultural lenses.

***What does it mean when Collins says ‘Know thyself and thy people’?***

***Know thyself:*** Brands must have a clear, authentic belief system and conviction, even when inconvenient.

***Know thy people:*** Leaders must identify who the brand is truly for, rather than trying to appeal to everyone.

This courage to segment ensures resonance and relevance.

**WHAT GIVES BRANDS  
PERMISSION TO  
TRANSCEND THEIR  
CATEGORY?**

A point of view that rises above products and services.

***Example:*** Nike doesn't just sell sneakers—it champions the belief that every body is an athlete. This conviction allows Nike to engage in cultural conversations far beyond footwear, giving the brand permission to transcend its category.

**HOW DOES COLLINS  
DEFINE BRAND  
LEADERSHIP TODAY?**

Brand leaders live up to the brand's convictions even when shareholder pressure makes it inconvenient.

True leadership requires courage, clarity of belief, and consistency in execution.

His guiding principle: “The most powerful brands transcend the category and operate at the level of ideology.”



***Brand is an asset, and all these elements  
have to work together. You can't have silos  
managing brand.***

**DAVID  
AAKER**

# COMMON MISTAKES TO AVOID

- |   |          |   |
|---|----------|---|
| Short-Termism.                          | —————→ ○ | Focusing only on immediate clicks, leads, or sales erodes brand equity. Mistaking marketing for advertising reduces its strategic role. |
| Confusing Mission with Differentiation. | —————→ ○ | Saying “we’re innovative, global, or entrepreneurial” without intrigue fails to set the brand apart.                                    |
| Ignoring Culture.                       | —————→ ○ | Treating culture as abstract rather than a measurable driver of behavior leads to misalignment and lost relevance.                      |
| Lack of Conviction.                     | —————→ ○ | Brands that back away from their stated beliefs under pressure weaken trust and leadership credibility.                                 |

## EPISODE TAKEAWAYS

It’s not about being first or second, but doing it right.

The strongest brands model beliefs, values, and behaviors that shape culture and strategy.

Aligning with cultural identity gives brands permission to inspire, energize, and transcend categories.

Effective leaders measure and manage both immediate outcomes and enduring brand equity.

Great brands don’t just sell, they lead.

CONTACT

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your playbook!**

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questions on our  
social posts!**

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