



How To Sell Your Brand

By Jane Iredale

Our brand will be 24-years-old next April. I began alone with one product, a mineral powder foundation called Amazing Base and I didn't have a clue what to do with it! I knew it was a good product, something that the market needed, but where did it fit in? Finding the right place for it was key to our early success.

I suppose you could call the product a disrupter now. It was, and still is, a foundation, powder, concealer, and sunscreen all-in-one, and more than that, it is actually good for the skin. We couldn't just put it on a shelf and hope that it would sell; we needed to educate consumers. After as much research as one under-financed person could do, it was clear that Amazing Base needed to be in the hands of professionals who understood skin and could translate that knowledge to the consumer. That's how spas and salons became the core of our business and they remain so today.

We opened one account at a time; me dragging around a makeup case with a growing line, knocking on doors. I didn't pay any attention to packaging. I was focused on how the product worked and what was in it. That was probably my biggest mistake and one that took years to correct. Packaging was important then, and is even more so now, with the amount of competition out there and the need for visual immediacy. It's hard when you start because your minimums are so low and

money is tight. But if I had to do it over again, I would find a contract packaging company willing to take a chance and build a relationship with me. Of course, finding one in those days would have been hard; I knew no one and there was no Internet. There was ICMAD however, and they would have helped me. I should have thought of that!

Relationships - in the end, it all comes down to that. Building them, in my view, is key to everything in our business. We live and work in a relatively small industry. News travels fast. Surround yourself with people who are positive and smart; people who can contribute and not drain you. Building your own company is tough enough; there is no time for negativity. I don't believe that conflict brings out the best in people. I believe that people work their best when they are supported and nurtured, when they feel part of a team that's contributing to their quality of life.

When I started it was difficult - no, almost impossible - to apply that philosophy to consumers. We rarely saw or heard from them. How things have changed! Now, relationship-building with the consumer is essential to a successful business. Our company uses Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter as our main sources of engagement. We are assiduous in following through with inquiries and questions. We never leave anyone hanging. We listen to complaints and suggestions and act on them. Our consumers play an important role in the continuing development of our brand. Relationship-building has become a 24/7 project and I don't see that changing.

So, if it's a 24/7 project how does this affect work-life balance? Well, actually, I don't believe in a work-life balance. It implies that work is arduous and something to endure before you can get back to life. If that's the way you feel, then find something else to do because your career isn't right for you. My so-called "work" has been my joy, my

inspiration, my foundation. It's what gives me my greatest satisfaction and interest. It's a pleasure; so is gardening, walking my dog, cooking for friends, and going to the theater. It's a constant flow of intertwined events that keep me interested and, I hope, interesting.

I did put my foot down last year and instituted "Freedom Fridays". It seemed to me that meetings were out of control. So, we banned meetings on Fridays. This is now a day when my staff has uninterrupted time to work on projects, catch-up on e-mails, and prepare to start the next week fresh. I really look forward to it and I know they do too.

I have struggled with one thing - philanthropy. We've always given back, locally, nationally, and internationally but not with any intent of publicizing it. But now, how you practice philanthropy has become an important part of how consumers view your brand. It gives them a sense of your values, whether they align with theirs and, therefore, whether they want to buy from you. I get that. My problem is when does publicizing philanthropy become bragging and, therefore, cease to be philanthropy? I still haven't reached a level of comfort with that one. Perhaps you will and can let me know!

Jane's Bio:

Jane Iredale is the CEO and President of Iredale Mineral Cosmetics. She founded her brand in 1994 after a career in the entertainment industry where she saw a need for a makeup that was good for the skin. Her line is sold in spas, clinics, and specialty retail throughout the U.S. and 52 countries. She was ISPA's visionary of the Year in 2014.