

EPIISODE 024

INGREDIENTS MATTER

IN CONVERSATION WITH

Abby Haddican, Abby Haddican Studio

Julie Kucinski, independent Brand Consultant and Strategist

AND

Tom Nientimp, Ingredients Matter

INTRODUCTION Welcome to The Follow-up, a weekly podcast that goes in depth into projects recently reviewed on Brand New featuring conversations with the designers, and sometimes their clients, uncovering the context, background and design decisions behind the work.

ARMIN VIT Hi, this is Armin Vit and welcome to episode 24 of The Follow-up.

This week we are following up on Ingredients Matter, a growing consumer brand with distribution online and at Target that offers laundry soap, NOT laundry detergent. Its soap, which comes in paper boxes — no plastic jugs in sight — is made with coconut soap flakes, natural salts, and natural scents and oils. The product was created and launched by Wayzata Brands.

The project, designed by Saint Paul, MN-based Abby Haddican Studio with strategy and copywriting by Minneapolis, MN-based Julie Kucinski, was posted on Brand New on January 13, 2021. You can pull it up on your browser at bit.ly/bnpodcast024 that is B I T dot L Y slash bnpodcast024, all in lowercase.

This week we are joined by Abby Haddican, Designer at and founder of Abby Haddican Studio; Julie Kucinski, an independent Brand Consultant and Strategist; and Tom Nientimp, Co-Founder and President of Ingredients Matter.

In this conversation we learn how quickly the team behind Ingredients Matter realized they needed to rethink their brand after the initial launch. We get to hear about Julie and Abby's unique process in the early stages of the project — nicknamed “Ways it Could Go” — and how that helped set Ingredients Matter on a new, more purposeful direction. We also delve into the details about the logo and its flag and into the design of the packaging and its copywriting, as well as into the push and pull necessary to figure out the right tone of voice and personality of the brand.

Now, let's listen in as Bryony follows up with Abby, Julie, and Tom.

BRYONY GOMEZ-PALACIO If there is anything this past year has granted us in general terms is the opportunity to question and reassess aspects of our daily lives. How to protect our physical and mental health has become a priority for many, as well as a care of our planet—this last part is a growing area for companies worldwide. And today we get to chat about the anti-detergent option that is Ingredients Matter with client, strategist, and designer. Tom, Julie, and Abby, welcome to The Follow-Up.

TOM NIENTIMP Thank you.

BRYONY I like to start with laying down the foundation. I'll start with you Tom, Ingredients Matter of which you are the Managing Director and the President is one of two entrepreneurial businesses that Wayzata Brands—is that how you say it?

TOM Wayzata.

BRYONY —has recently created. Can you tell us a little bit more about how the Wayzata brand businesses came to be? And then, what drove you to create an anti-detergent brand in the current market?

TOM Wayzata Brands is the brainchild of our co-founder Jeff Brazil, who is the third generation owner of a family soap business in Memphis, Tennessee that's been around for 75 years. And Jeff and his family have primarily over the years created products under customer

brands in the personal care and cleaning industry. Jeff took over those businesses about 12 years ago, became the third generation owner. And as he did so, he really dove into the industry of both, from a natural cleaning and a personal care perspective, and looked at the brands that were in the market from other big companies that were consumer facing. And he really saw an opportunity to do some things differently. Frankly, to do some things that would better serve the consumer and deliver them products with high integrity, from a quality perspective, high efficacy, from what they were looking for most from those products and messaging that really came from real people that had integrity of their own and wanted to do right by consumers, and right by the planet first and foremost. So he formed Wayzata Brands to be an incubator of brands that could do all those things, but also leverage the capabilities that he and his family business had built over the years to kind of give them a running start and get going. So Ingredients Matter is the first of those. And then Pete Brothers is the second of those, which is a palm-free personal care brand. Really Jeff's brainchild, and then he brought myself in to lead the Ingredients Matter business.

BRYONY That is a really interesting business start. I've become familiarized myself with the incubator term and how it all works. Here in Bloomington, there's the Dimension Mill, which is perhaps a small incubator that I now serve on the board for, but it's really fascinating how projects come about. So I'm wondering what prompted the team to undergo this redesign? And in a way, I wonder if you were facing that second stage of a new business where you get it started, it launches, and I've seen this a lot with startups, all of a sudden, it's like, okay, now feet on the ground, this is working, we need to rethink a few things.

TOM That's a great question. I think that it all comes down to the question of "you want to be different, but how different can you be?" As a new brand in the marketplace and still get consumers to appreciate you for what you can deliver that they would expect from the category, but also understand how you're different. And frankly I'll own it, I think we,

I, was a little too conservative in the first approach. You know, cleaning in general is a pretty literal, pretty functional category and it's largely unchanged for many, many years. And so I think our goal initially was as a new brand, let's play within the conventions of the category. And then let's be very literal about how we're different and tell our story to consumers, and hopefully enough of them will pay attention. The reality was we were not strong enough. We weren't strong enough with our points of difference. We weren't strong enough at shelf. And so we learned pretty quickly that we better do some things differently if we really wanted to stand out. Found, through some networking Julie, and then Abby, and was thrilled to embark on them on the journey that led us to this point.

BRYONY And how long was that time span of you trying the first brand?

TOM Yeah, we launched into market in... sometime in 20, mid-2019, and we were able to get in store a small number of stores right away and started to see some good performance and build, but it wasn't trending in the trajectory that we want. So we were probably in the entrepreneurial fail, fast, learn, fast, move, fast mindset. It was pretty obvious within about the first six months that we needed to do something differently. So we made that call very early on, probably took five months that we needed to rethink our brand expression. And we got going. So it was probably mid-summer when we launched. And by Christmas time we knew we needed to be doing some things differently.

BRYONY Well, kudos for that quick thinking of realizing where one of your hindering points was. You mentioned a little bit of networking. Julie, can you expand how it is that you got involved in this project?

JULIE KUCINSKI It's basically the oldest story in the world: referral. Previously, I was the CMO for a natural cleaning brand called Aunt Fannie's and the woman who did the social media for that brand, just so happened to move to Minneapolis where I live and started working with Tom at Ingredients Matter. So, she called me up one day and said she was working on

a cool new brand and felt like it needed some sharpening and edge in terms of story and strategy and kind of really making it stand out. Anyone who works with me for more than 10 minutes gets that I dive right in [laughter]. And I say exactly what I think. I came in to talk to Tom and Allison and we hit the ground running.

BRYONY So what did you say in that first meeting?

JULIE Well, Tom probably remembers it better than I do. You know, we're Midwesterners, we're Minnesotans. And with that often comes a sense of reserve and people being a little more polite. Somehow I didn't get that gene. I've been working in the natural products and eco space on and off basically for my entire career across a lot of categories. So we sat in right down and we talked about the package and realized, you know, Hey, this is okay. Here's, what's missing. We talked about what was really important to the founder and some of the true points of difference in the brand and how they were getting buried. And right then all three of us had a very deep freewheeling conversation and it was pretty clear early on what the goals were. And I think we left that meeting feeling like we were already collaborating, and in partnership. We knew we had a strong founder with some really strong points of view, and that's a situation that's really familiar to me. So we just went for it.

BRYONY That sounds like a great start. And it shows throughout a very comprehensive well-rounded brand in the end. So you knew what the goals were, did you receive any other parameters or guidance that eventually led to the design and where in this process does Abby come in?

JULIE It was apparent from the narrative that was already out there. When you're really doing a rebrand. It's not for you to recraft everything and tell the people in the brand, what it should be it's to listen, observe, dig deeper, and find the golden nuggets to pull out, shine a spotlight on, and bring like a fresh context to that is easy for anybody to understand. And in these mission purpose-driven brands, which

again I've worked in so many, often those clear shining lights get buried in detail, right? So when we were in that conversation, we could check-off that list of really important things straight away, and in the narrative that was already there, we knew that the brand wanted to be, as you say, an anti-detergent brand. It wanted to stand out. It wanted to stand up. And it wanted to shake up a positive ruckus, but it wasn't happening yet.

So we knew some of those things were going to come to life. The question is how, because you can create a positive ruckus in a lot of different ways, and that's some of what Abby and I explored, which I'm sure we'll talk about. Before I think I even left that meeting. I knew I wanted to work with Abby on it. We had worked together on many projects in the past and she had just opened her own studio very recently. For me, Abby is someone I admire very much as a designer, as an amazing typographer, as an incredible illustrator, but also a really good problem solver. As Tom had said before, the cleaning category, generally, and laundry specifically, has been really dull. These purpose-driven brands can often end up just preaching on the mountain and telling everybody what they're doing wrong or terrifying people and making them feel guilty and scared and running away because there's TMI.

And none of them have really taken an approach that could be either strong, and or lighthearted. And I knew in partnership with Abby, we would be able to look at all those nooks and crannies and have fun with it and really see where it could go while still being very true to the founder's vision. Because when you're working on a founder vision, that is always important. It's not just data. Some of the data you work with is the founder's vision. So how do you make that sexy and exciting and desirable and approachable to consumers? That's kind of the story. And I think Abby's not only very talented, but I think she and I have a very unique dynamic that produces really good, deep work. And it ended up being pretty fun.

BRYONY Well, and it helps to have access to the founder when you're pushing a certain thinking. Abby, can you expand on what that dynamic is from your perspective, and further elaborate on what the initial phase of work looked like?

ABBY HADDICAN Julie and I come from very different disciplines and I think we approach things very differently. Julie's like a culture vulture. She is just a sponge. She's always introducing me to new words I've never heard... new trends I've never heard of... new brands I've never heard of, and what she brings to any project that's different than most strategists is such a deep cultural awareness. I've worked with other strategists that are really good at synthesizing what the client tells them. They're really good at finding those nuggets of goodness as Julie said. But then when I think what Julie is able to do is bring her cultural sponginess into it. And she expands those nuggets of goodness in a way that is really unusual and different than anybody that I've ever worked with. I've collaborated a lot in my career with other designers, and I think sometimes when you're working with other designers, you can kind of lose the forest for the trees, but because we come from such different disciplines, we just have different personalities, we both have very strong opinions. We don't always agree. And I think that there's a good push and pull there. So when Julie and I work together, we like to do an exercise that we call "Ways It Could Go", which—we keep trying to come up with a better name for this, but it seems "Ways It Could Go" seems to be the best way to encapsulate this. When Julie and I started working together on this project, and in many projects where we worked together, she started with some of the initial strategic work before I get involved in the project, but she loops me in very early. And in this "Ways It Could Go" process that we do. She shares her initial strategic platforms, which I think in this case had already been shared to some extent with Tom and Allison, with the client to fairly well-developed strategy at this point.

But when I come in with the "Ways It Could Go", what we do is essentially visualize the strategy. It's kind of a mood board process, but it's a little

bit deeper. What we're trying to do is marry each possible strategic platform with a very specific visual look. So rather than chasing trends or doing what we want to do or asking the client, like, do you like this? Do you like this? What we're trying to do is make sure there's a very specific conceptual and strategic underpinning to any of our visual decisions. I'm creating visual mood boards, bouncing them off Julie, she's telling me what she thinks doesn't work visually. I tell her what I think isn't working in the strategy in terms of where I want to go visually. So there's a lot of back and forth at this stage. So, not only are the visual moods changing, but the strategy is changing a little bit in response to the visuals as well.

This is sort of an internal process that we undergo to make sure that when we talk to the client, we have a good game plan in mind, and we know exactly where we want to go in terms of both the way it's going to sound and the way that the visuals are going to be. It helps us sort of test and sharpen the strategy, I would say. I don't know Julie if you would agree with that—basically we go through a lot of internal iterations on these boards before we ever share it with a client so that we are really in agreement about strategically where we want it to go and what your strategy is going to look like. And then at that point, we bring it to the client and we just have a really good, deep, and specific conversation where the strategy is going to go and what it's going to look like, what those visual implications are going to be. And that just allows us to have a really meaningful and specific conversation before we get started.

BRYONY So two questions come to mind. One is just a clarification when you're speaking of the mood boards, is this something that you're taking visual references from different places and adding them to a board in the traditional kind of mood board way? Or are you generating some of the preliminary potential design and is that the actual mood board?

ABBY So it's a little bit of both. It's inspiration images, other brands, other cultural references, pieces of design history or cultural history, that we

may be bringing in. And then it is sometimes specific executions that we're thinking of. We don't like to get too executional at this point. So it'll be really loose sketches or really, really loose ideas at this point. We don't want to box ourselves in, but at the same time, we want to have a specific conversation about what those visual implications might mean for each strategy.

JULIE Can I build on this for just one second?

ABBY Yes, please do.

BRYONY Of course.

JULIE In my experience, I've worked on a lot of different kinds of teams and I've worked in collaboration with firms like Sterling Brands in New York. I think what we've created here is a very unique piece that is almost like skipping a step in the typical process because it's pretty deep. It's much more than a mood board. At this point we kind of understand the platform concept and point of view for the brand. If it goes that way, we know how it might visually come to life. We have a sense of how the storytelling might be involved. We even potentially have implications for retailers where it might do better. We have a slight slant on the consumer persona that we've been given, or that we believe is to be true.

It's a very unique sort of bringing to life. If you think of Frankenstein's monster, it isn't quite yet standing up and speaking, but you know what it's going to look like. It's on the table, right? And we usually do that for at least three or more different brands. So when a client like Tom or anyone else comes to the table, you're not just picking a mood board, which is often very typical now, you're not just grabbing a scrap. You really get a sense of how this brand is going to live and breathe, how the implications of this could change your marketing, your storytelling, your retailer, without it getting too executional. It's a very unique hybrid tool that allows the brands that we do together to feel really unique and to have legs because I think right now anybody

can make anything look good. But when you're sitting behind the desk as the team or the content creator or the CMO, or whoever has to keep that machine going and going with the constant feed and desire that the content beast has now, it's got to have legs.

It's got to have depth. It's got to have things and layers that the consumer isn't going to see on that first package or that first iteration, but you know, where it can grow and go in months or years. And I think we really try to capture that and Tom can tell us if he agrees, but in those "Ways It Can Go" initial platform sessions, I think you really understand the different ways that this brand can come to life in the world. And even though they're all based on the same core truths, they feel and behave very differently. But Tom, you'd be the ultimate judge there [laughter].

BRYONY I would love to hear from Tom's perspective when you're receiving all of this information.

TOM Yeah, sure. It helps that they're both crazy smart. So that's mission one, but it, you know, just to reiterate what Julie and Abby were both saying, this wasn't about designing a package. This was about re-expressing a brand of which the packaging was going to be part of it. And so I really, not to be clichéd, but when I hear mood board I think sometimes visually, but the way that Julie works and Abby as well is that the intent is to have you feel something. And really feel differently across each of the opportunities expressed and then decide what you want to feel. And obviously then what you want your consumers to feel. I was really impressed and energized by the way that each Way In was expressed, not just for a package, but for how the brand could really stand up and live in the world around us, not just from a packaging perspective, but on a website in written form, in visual form, it was very comprehensive and complete in that regard.

BRYONY So I'm curious to know if the flag was part of one of these mood boards and how the flag started becoming the actual brand.

ABBY The flag was on one of these original mood boards. I think conceptually the idea of the flag is a very strong and Ingredients Matter is literally waving the flag for good quality ingredients that appeared on one of the mood boards. And we all liked the idea behind it. Tom and Allison, and of course Julie and I really liked that idea, which is why it ended up in the mood board in the first place. And then the reason the flag stuck around is in part, it solved the visual problem, which is that the name Ingredients Matter is very straightforward. It can be a little aggressive, it can be a little preachy. And actually, if you look back at the original packaging, the words Ingredients Matter were extremely large and they ended in an exclamation point. So it was a little bit off-putting I think for the consumer, it's a strong set of words and it doesn't need to be emphasized strongly. So what the flag did, putting it in this illustration, essentially of a flag as the logotype, just softened the tone a little bit. So it allowed them to say what they wanted to say and create this underpinning across the whole brand as future products roll out, that this is what we stand for. But without being preachy or off-putting, there is a sort of sweet spot to it.

BRYONY Tom, what was your main attraction towards the flag?

TOM I wish I could say I was smart enough to pick it from the beginning, but we actually came up with two designs that brought the brand to life that were high potential. My background is in food, and food marketing. And so one, they were both very different and they both express the brand. I thought in a unique way. One took some conventions that I was very comfortable with from the food category and brought it into cleaning, which I thought was really interesting. I was drawn to that first and foremost, and then felt honestly like this design might be a little much for consumers to kind of get their head around and might have gone maybe a step too far. Until we slept on it, and then really realized that if the challenge that we gave ourselves in the very beginning was to really be different, and really be bold, and really take a stand, the flag was perfect. To Abby's point, it's about putting a stake in the ground that you're that committed to following

through on, even when you're not rewarded for it. And to stand for something. It was kind of that two or three day process of looking, feeling, soul-searching, and then it was kind of like, Oh yeah, there's no way we could go any other way. So... it was a journey, just took us a little while to get there, but it was kind of a no brainer once you had a little bit of time to think about it.

BRYONY So it seems that so far, the whole process has been a little bit of coming and going, push and pull. Julie, what comes next? Once a direction has been given? What were your next steps?

JULIE Well, to be honest with you, I feel like by the time we landed on the direction, we were pretty, fairly well baked.

BRYONY Okay.

JULIE So at that point it became about trying to balance the education piece of how we want to educate on these points of difference and wrestling with that, to keep it in a way that's still digestible for the consumer. So that was a lot of the push/pull. And at that point, I think we have a little illustration that Abby did that says, "say no to jugs" also was the seed for us, knowing that as the brand continued to develop, we were going to want to have some illustrative elements, some visual elements that could pull people in to some of these points of difference for this brand, and bring a lightheartedness that would balance some of the heaviness.

You know, as I mentioned before, sometimes purpose-driven or natural brands, it can get a little heavy because they really want you to know how much went into it. So it's a balancing act of going back and forth to make sure that the consumer is still going to get it. To get that point, it was very much in the executional pieces of making all of that work. And I think the other thing that we did on this package that was retained—because we all worked on it we forget—we retained one side to really act as a billboard, to act almost like a placard, like a sign that you would proudly put up and wave, or put in your front

yard, or let people know how you feel or see. And the goal with those were to create a clean space on the shelf because the detergent aisle like all cleaning and basically all big box, I mean grocery store aisles have a lot going on. So having the courage on the client's side to retain the clarity of that one side panel really is a big deal. You know, it sounds funny to say that with everything that's going on in the world, like really that's a big deal. It's like, yeah. You know, it is because it's always tempting for clients if they see a little white space, to fill it in. But from the beginning, we were very much sold in that we want it to have that billboard side space that married sort of an idea or a claim from cleaning and laundry that you had heard a million times, with the betterment and the positive appeal that you could make for the earth in a way that was just really simple to get. And I think because we played on familiar tropes and gave them a slight twist, it allows immediate recognition, not reading and processing.

You don't have to think about it. You're just like, boom, get it. The synopsis fire, and it created like a voice and a point of view for the brand too, that... I think goes with the flag really well. It's like, Hey, we're here, we're positive, but we're not backing down. We're not just trying to be your cute best friend, or your green leaf, who's like a little hippie-dippy, or like the Seventh Generation, like super earnest detail, detail, detail, detail. We have a slightly different point of view that's rooted in the truth. And rooted in reality. Balancing all those moments was kind of the work. I don't know if you'd agree with that, Abby.

ABBY Yeah, I would agree with that. One of the great things about the copy is that it's funny, there's a little bit of levity to it, but the design really, you know, other than the slight levity that the flag brings to the name Ingredients Matter, like the design is pretty serious and some of the visual things we were looking at back in the "Ways It Could Go" stage work, things like protest posters, things like broad signs, things from visual culture where people are trying to get one message across, and get it across really clearly and often very serious messages. The copy tone was incredibly important to this project because if there wasn't

some levity in the copy, I think the brand could go quite serious and quite aggressive. And it doesn't come off that way because of the magic that Julie's spun verbally.

BRYONY Definitely words matter. Did you find any particular challenges with the packaging as you start to look at the different skews and different applications? Did something really make you have to step back and reassess?

ABBY That's a good question. This was one of the least challenging projects in terms of revisions that I've ever worked on. The process was extremely smooth and extremely quick. I think that's because we did a lot of work upfront to make sure we knew where we were going and make sure that Tom and Allison were aligned with that. Also to give credit to Tom, he's an incredible leader, an incredible decision maker. And at any point where he made a decision, he really stuck with it. So the process was extremely streamlined. It's interesting that you should ask that though, because we... so we started with the laundry soap, but in fact, Ingredients Matter has a lot of other products. You can actually find them still on the website and they're still in the old design, but we're in the process right now of working on the redesign for those products.

They're smaller. So with the laundry soap box, you know, we're looking at broad science as inspiration, and we had essentially just a really big box to work with. So it was easy to make that incredibly bold statement of like laundry soap is this huge type on the box. And so now as we're getting into actually smaller products with different forms... the challenges, how do we take that extreme boldness and competence that we have on the laundry soap box and apply it in different forms?

BRYONY So the challenge is upcoming more so than in the past. Tom, a two-part question. For you personally, what is the most compelling or your favorite part of the packaging as you see it, what exists and what's

coming? And what is the perception from your audience as to the packaging?

TOM Yeah, that's a great question. There's so much that I like about it. And Julie really hit, I think really well on, on the challenges of what we needed to and wanted to communicate with the package. The way that we've talked about it, and I think describes it really well is if you look at the category today, you've got a lot of conventional brands that are very functionally and benefit-driven that almost like scream at you with bright colors and messages of more stain power, and more supercharged this, and more supercharged that, and then you've got kind of the quieter, more purpose-driven, a bit eco clichéd maybe natural brands. And I think these two did a brilliant job marrying those two worlds together and took the best of both sides. And so we've ended up with a design that is as stoppable on the shelf as some of that bright high-energy conventional stuff, but also very clearly conveys a sense of purpose and the mission behind the brand.

And then does the difficult, heavy lifting of trying to tell an ingredient story in a category where ingredients aren't very well understood as well as get across a couple key points on our efficacy, and our commitment to eliminating plastic packaging in the category. So, I guess I'm grateful that we were able to communicate as much as we were able to communicate. And I think it was done in a way that gets consumers attention at the shelf and the two seconds that you might have, and then invites them into a conversation to learn more, but in a way that is approachable and personal and conversational, rather than shouting at them or, not giving them credit for either their interest in doing the right thing for them and their family in this category, or for what they may or may not know about what goes on in the category. So just the completeness of it, the stopability, clichéd word, the completeness of the communication, and then it just struck a really nice right balance in getting all those points across.

BRYONY And have you been getting any messages from customers commenting on the package?

TOM Yeah, it's been very positive, very positive. I think that the whole sense of purpose and mission and intention we have in the category to help take natural cleaning from where it is now to the next evolution is just very apparent. This has a sense of urgency to it. And I think rather than just feeling like another player in the category, the feedback I've gotten is we now are much more living our intention to feel like what's next in the category and really pushing the category forward and trying to take it to the places that consumers are expecting it to go. And as a result, helping customers to grow their category and their loyalty with their shoppers at the same time. It's got energy. When I lay this in front of a customer or I, you know, we've redesigned, obviously our sales presentation kind of in the spirit of this look and feel—it has an energy, a momentum, and you can't ignore it, whether you're a consumer or a customer and it just starts a conversation. And that's really all we're trying to do.

BRYONY Well, it sounds like the initial goals were hit right on the head.

TOM Absolutely.

BRYONY Julie, from the copywriting perspective, I get the sense that coming up with a copy was natural and somewhat easy, correct me if I'm wrong, but I'm wondering if there's a part in all of this that you enjoyed the most or found the most challenging?

JULIE When it comes specifically to the writing?

BRYONY Yes. 'Cause it definitely stands out. It needs to be noted.

JULIE Oh, well I hope that's a good thing.

BRYONY Absolutely.

JULIE [Laughter] I mean the category is, it's one of those things that we all take it for granted. You don't really think about it, but when you think

of how many categories have been totally revolutionized... when we really drilled into this category and honestly, a lot of the things around, let's just say home porn, cleaning porn, organizational porn, because it is a thing when you reduce it way down and Tom knows exactly what I'm thinking about here, it's a very strange carbon copy of the '50s. Looking at the perfect kitchen with everything clean and white side-by-side with some of the images from the '50s, change the hair, lose the puffy skirt, turn it into a top knot. And a lot of it is actually kind of eerily similar. It's kind of crazy. And once I made that realization by pulling together sort of a strategy board of imagery next to each other, I couldn't unsee it. I couldn't, un-ring the bell to be like, this is actually a very strange perfectionism conformity thing that's happening here, that we won't get feminist on the show 'cause I know that's not the intention, but think about it. My point being, I think again, the balance was to keep it informational, but still have a spirit to it. And that did flow pretty easily. I think for us, and Abby and I think for better or for worse, are starting to make a reputation amongst the projects that we work on together. Like we will fight the good fight. We will fight the good fight. We, Tom is nodding his head right now [laughter]. We may not always win the fight, but I think we both take our work very seriously. Ultimately, it's your company. Ultimately you will make the choices, but we are going to advocate for what we think is going to be successful for the consumer in the market to do what it needs to do from a human perspective. Because we're all people, we're all busy, we're all overloaded. So we have to advocate for the brand success. And sometimes that requires going to the mats with a client and Tom can attest to how sick of it he got. He never really told us 'cause he's far too good natured. My feeling is when you tell me to shut up, finally I will.

But I'm really here to advocate for the success on behalf of the consumer. In a really weird way, I feel like ultimately my mandate from a client perspective, from a project perspective, is to make sure it's going to work for the consumer because therefore it will work for the brand. And again, because I've worked with so many purpose-driven

brands and eco brands, if we really want to have a positive impact on the world, people have to change their behaviors. People have to want to buy the better stuff. People want to have to change their behavior. And you do that by seducing them and drawing them in and getting them to feel something bit by bit, not by pounding their heads into the wall about how good or bad something is. So that was kind of a long-winded answer. I guess maybe Tom can attest to the good fight and there's some twisted part of me that I guess really loves the good fight [laughter]. So it's good that I work on all these purpose-driven brands because I was just selling, I don't know, your everyday insurance policy or something, I wouldn't have enough of an outlet.

BRYONY Tom, do you want to expand on that?

TOM You know... fight is such an interesting word. It was a battle for the soul of the brand if you want to call it that. And it was great. I guess you could go find people out there that'll just do what you ask them to do. But that's such a failure from my perspective. And both Julie and Abby came in, not just with a process, you know, Julie talked about the process. It was so minds-on before it was hands-on and it was so much in service of the consumer before it was in service of the client that you were already like there and immersed in the right True North, if you will, which is exactly, as Julie said, and Abby said, is the consumer at the end of the day and what's going to work for them. And then it's just fun from there, right? Because now that you're deep in that it's about battling for different ways in to capture their heart and mind. And then it's about saving ourselves from ourselves or myself from myself frankly, in some of these instances where, you know, I'm this close to it. And the things that I think matter probably matter in the greater sense, but they're never going to matter as much to the consumer quite like they matter to me. And so how do we figure out how to bridge that gap so that we can get our point across, but without being a little bit too full of ourselves or to convince that we've got exactly the right answer—you got to bridge that gap. And so for me, that was the wonderful debate and discussion and it was always a

fight for what was going to work best, not a fight for my point of view or their point of view. It was always in service of the brand and it was always in service ultimately, which it has to be of the consumer.

BRYONY Abby, I would love to hear your perspective on this.

ABBY Well, it's funny because a moment ago, I, I made it sound as though the process was the walk in the park and the revisions were so easy. And I stand by that. I think that was true, but I think the struggle that everyone is referring to, I think it was really specifically how strongly we talk about the ingredients. Ingredients Matter, that's the whole thing that this brand stands for. And so I think our struggle was really... and where the back and forth, and the good fight came in was in figuring out how to balance that message, because it's a real message, and the ingredients in this product are fantastic. They're much better for the environment and they work really well compared to other natural brands. So a lot of that fight for us was trying to figure out how much of that do we message? Versus how much of that do we simplify for consumers?

And I think also how much do we take on the competition because this is a challenger brand. And I think some sense the brand itself is fighting the good fight. There is a lot of misinformation in the cleaning category and even in the natural cleaning category, a lot of the brands that you think are really green are in fact not. So the challenge was how much do we take them on how much do we spend our precious packaging and branding real estate taking on these competitors, challenging their claims, versus putting forth our own claims in the simplest, clearest way that breaks through to the consumer.

BRYONY I definitely get the sense that it wasn't a fight in the traditional sense of the word. There is great energy and fantastic dynamic between the three of you that you can tell is just a back and forth, back and forth dialoguing in order to get to the common goal—versus just, yeah, whatever you say, or, you know, I like blue let's do blue, so that's really great. And it's always beneficial to the brand or the product itself when

there's that back and forth, push and pull. I'm going to go ahead and start to wrap it up. I had several more questions, but I'm just going to ask the one question of all three of you. And that is, kind of looking forward, what are you excited about in regards to this brand?

TOM The mission as a new brand and a challenger brand is to just get more places, and earn the right to be in front of more people. At the end of the day, I'm excited about the purpose and believe in the purpose. I think the package we've put together, figuratively and literally, is one that has earned the right to be at the forefront. And you know, the momentum that this change created in the marketplace is giving us the credibility to take this more places. What's exciting to me is we finally have married up what's in our hearts and our guts about what's going to matter and why we're different with how we're expressing ourselves in the marketplace. So to me, that's exciting and it's working. When you put it out there and you see a change, and you have the conversations that you're going to have, or that you have as a result of that earned performance, that page, the path ahead, and then just lets us be more places and talk to more people and hopefully, you know, win more loyalty.

ABBY Tom touched on this a little bit earlier, but I think what we have done here is we've created a brand that stands out both in the natural category, which is sort of where it gets shelved, where people see it now. But I think it really does also go head to head with these conventional big competitors. And so to me, what I think is so interesting and it's always great to provide an even better alternative for the people who are already into green cleaning, which is what Ingredients Matter is doing right now for a lot of consumers. That people who care, care a lot and now they have an even better option. But I think the bigger picture is educating more people about this topic and getting them to make the move from Tide or Shout or something like that, into something that's much better for the environment. You know with a lot of natural products, performance has been an issue in the past. You maybe tried it 10 years ago or 15

years ago, and it didn't do a good job. And so you went back to the conventional. But I think with Ingredients Matter the performance is there, the ingredients are fantastic, and I think the branding just really shouts from the shelf. There's a huge opportunity here to bring people who'd never consider a natural cleaning into the old and make a legitimate difference in people's health and the environment.

JULIE I think we created a brand that has the elements to grow and change and evolve, and still be recognizable. It is very stalwart where it needs to be, but it's elastic where it also needs to be. And I think that toolkit combined, honestly, with Tom's openness, a lot of people talk about data-driven marketing now and test and learn. And the truth is, a lot of times behind the curtain, people really aren't that open to the feedback and to coming back to the feedback or the data in a creative open-minded way that can kind of take it to the next level. And I think Tom uniquely has the sensibility to do that, to not just react to the data, but to respond to the learning. So I'm excited to see how the brand can get more confident, and in that confidence get more clarity, and in that clarity get more confidence. And really continue to change and open people's minds to the options, to not have a big plastic jug that lives in a landfill for all eternity. And to question, why are there blue dyes? And to realize that just the way we've been doing things and told we need to do it, which is often overkill, isn't necessary, but to do it in a way that opens new doors for them. Because again, if we want to improve this planet, we live in, we all have to get excited about the opportunity to do those things and not feel sad about the trade downs. And I think with all of the things we've talked about, the brand has the opportunity to really open that up to some new people. And that is great.

BRYONY That sure is great. From my personal perspective. It's funny when we first posted the rebrand, I both looked back and forward in the sense I was raised in Mexico City and for my entire life that I can remember every two or three months, my mom would take a few hours to make her soap, her laundry soap. What ingredients I don't remember. But

that's how we did it. Then she would scoop it all out and use it for our laundry. And when I moved out and moved to the U.S., obviously that was not in my cards and I always try to use the green stuff, but to an extent, trying not to focus too much on the labels because I know they're not the same. So I'm really excited to have purchased this at Target a couple of weeks ago. I still have about an inch of laundry detergent—OK, I have to finish it because otherwise that jug is going to be in the landfill for no reason other than wasting it. Very soon, I get to use my Ingredients Matter and go back to my original roots, which is clean ingredients for real. So I'm very excited about that personally.

JULIE Cool. Love that.

TOM Thank you. That's awesome.

BRYONY With that. I think we've come to an end. I used up an entire hour of your day, so I'm very appreciative.

TOM No, that was fun.

ABBY Thanks everybody.

ARMIN Even though we all probably do it to some extent, the concept of thinking about the initial round of strategy and design explorations as “Ways it Could Go” feels like an empowering way of expanding our own range. Like, we don't have to go that way but, yeah, let's consider that that's one way it could go. Anyway... it was great to listen how well Julie and Abby's synergy worked along with Tom's decision-making process in creating a challenger brand that rises to the challenge of standing out with something to say.

Today, thanks for listening. Until next time, we'll be here, we hope you'll be there.