

EPISODE 029

PACIFIC GOLD

IN CONVERSATION WITH

Amy Hood, Hoodzpah

AND

Jules Torres, Pacific Gold

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 29 of The Follow-up.

This week we are following up on Pacific Gold, a minority-owned and minority-operated business, that makes responsibly-grown, all-natural cannabis oils and products that are available for purchase at dispensaries in California and Oregon.

The project, designed by Orange County, CA-based Hoodzpah was posted on Brand New on March 3, 2021. You can pull it up on your browser at bit.ly/bnpodcast029 that is B I T dot L Y slash bnpodcast029, all in lowercase.

This week we are joined by Amy Hood, Co-Founder and Principal of Hoodzpah and Jules Torres, Founder of Pacific Gold.

In this conversation we hear about the role that Jules' previous, successful experience in the cannabis industry played in this project. Not as a way to coast through it but to improve on it. We learn that designing for the cannabis industry is a moving target with rules changing constantly, forcing unexpected design changes. We also hear from both Amy and Jules about the importance of having a good relationship

not as client and designer but as people with shared appreciations of many things, including shoe choices and favorite NBA team. But most importantly they also both share that trusting each other in this process was key to arriving at a design solution everyone loved.

Now, let's listen in as Bryony follows up with Amy and Jules.

BRYONY Over the last few years, I have been fascinated by the emergence of the cannabis industry in its legal and legitimate presentation—one that is full of personalities, as varied as people are in the world. I am eager to hear more on what makes Pacific Gold stand out from the rest. Jules, Amy., welcome to The Follow-Up.

AMY Thank you, excited.

JULES Thank you.

BRYONY So Jules, let's get started with you. What was the inspiration behind launching Pacific Gold? And if you can even dive into the ethos of the brand, and what drives you from day to day?

JULES The inspiration came about from a transition from a medical world to a gray area to I would say a recreational stage. And I noticed that everything was hardcore. Everything was just in your face and it was a transition to a normalization. Very scary. So it was a need for a cannabis product that wasn't about how high can you get, because not everyone wants to be stoned all the time. I felt like some people wanted to smoke and enjoy without having to announce it, or just be part of the stigma, just partake and enjoy. The ethos was just driven by creating an inviting product that would make consumers feel more comfortable with, again, just enjoying cannabis again or for the first time. So ease you into the world.

BRYONY And is there a story behind the name?

JULES Pacific Gold? Yes. There actually is. Pacific Gold came about where we were thinking about what's classic, what's timeless. And you know, we started

talking about different products like beers and whatnot. We started thinking about how there's certain connotations in certain countries with certain brands, for example, Corona is very popular in America, but not very popular in Mexico. And so in Mexico, there's a very popular beer that I prefer, Pacifico—started thinking about it just popped up where it's like, oh, Pacific Gold, timeless and quality like Pacifico.

BRYONY That's great. I am always interested in where naming comes from, especially when it's personal brainstorm such as this one. Amy, how did you get involved with this project?

AMY It's funny. I was thinking back, I was trying to remember back how we got hooked up Jules and it was through Justin Moore-Brown, his brother, Jason was working with you through Weedmaps through some consulting. And I knew Justin back from one of my first jobs in design, which was just doing ad layout and magazine layout at this local magazine. And I just think it's so amazing how you really never know how those old connections are going to come back and serve you well, because this ended up being one of my favorite projects with one of my favorite clients, and it just came from a random magazine job from my first two years in the industry. Keep in touch with people, keep in touch with people you like, and who do good work, because they'll go on to do cool things with other cool people, and hopefully they'll bring you in on it. You know?

BRYONY Jules how did you find Amy?

JULES I have a funny story—I have a friend named John who told me about this really cool group called the Hoodzpah that was doing really cool, amazing stuff. Very different than everyone, because everyone seems to kind of have very similar styles and Hoodzpah was doing something that was different and very unique. And I tried to reach out to them, but didn't get a response. Three months later I'm talking to my friend and he says, you know, why don't you get started? Do you have a good name... I said, because I don't really like the vibe of anyone out there. And I said... he said, is there anyone you do like? I said Hoodzpah

Design. And he said, I know them, I'll reach out to them right now. That's how I got introduced.

AMY It was so funny because when we first met, you were like, um, I tried to reach out to you when you guys ignored me. And I was like, what? No, but I think you had reached out on Instagram DMs or something... And it had just gotten lost in the shuffle. Everything about the project was so cool. And I had never worked in the weed space or cannabis space, everything about the project just felt so, oh no, this is like somebody who wants to do it right. So, I was so glad that we had this random mutual connection that was like, oh no, I can make this work. 'Cause if we hadn't done this project Jules, I just, it would have been so sad! [laughter]

JULES Yeah. Like normally I'm not good with rejection, but this time I was very persistent and I, I just had to do it. If you like someone out there and you vibe with them, go at it, just go after it.

BRYONY It seems like it was meant to be just by that mutual connection. But also at the same time, if you really like something, pursue it. Without a doubt, be it through direct messages on Instagram or knocking on their door even, one day show up and be like, I want to work with you. How can we make this work? Let's start at the beginning, once you coordinated you are all on the same page and you started working on this project, what did the initial work entail? And who was involved on either side as you took these first steps towards the brand itself?

JULES For the cannabis industry, it's very highly regulated. There's no other industry that's regulated as much as the cannabis industry, and we're talking about pharma included. Not like alcohol, tobacco, everything, anything like that. They try to compare, but it's not that way because it's such a new industry. So the government is actually learning as we go, rules and regulations are changing every day. One day you have to put a sticker on it, the next day you have to change the size of that sticker. So it changes all of your packaging. So it starts from a legal perspective of just, can you even get a trademark for cannabis and

right now federally, no. You have to figure out ways around that. It was basically a year of research and making sure that I did things right, so that I didn't build something that can be torn down easily.

After that it was on a design side, I was hitting a lot of brick walls. And I just noticed that everything looked like a copy of something else. That's the main reason why I wanted to go with Hoodzpah, because there was a lot of originality there to it. And it was just trend-setting in a way, for me... from my viewpoint, it was doing a lot of research. Looking at tons of other packaging, looking at the psychology of it, a lot of research, R and D, and then from that point, it started with the conversation at a restaurant. And I was able to get a lot of guidance from Hoodzpah, from that point.

AMY It was fun. It was like really collaborative, because like I said, we knew nothing. Hoodzpah had never worked with a cannabis brand before, and I didn't even smoke up to that point really. But my sister smoked a lot. Because it was kind of like a gray area in California at the time of legality and like people using loopholes. So anyway, I was asking my sister a lot of questions. I was polling friends, I was doing a lot of research, and I was mostly relying on Jules and his team for filling me in. They kind of gave me like, okay, like here's the heavy hitters in the industry. And then we basically just deep dived, what are they doing well? And what do we, not at all think they're doing well? And how can we make a place for ourselves to stand out?

And it was really fun because the first thing that we all agreed on at that first restaurant meeting was, we don't want it to look anything like the two main design tropes that you see in cannabis, which is the neon green stoner-bro culture, or the very all-white medicinal medical marijuana thing. So it was like, okay, how do we make something that's approachable? That feels it's for everyone? Kind of like the Coca-Cola, the Pacifico, you know, Topo... like anybody would want to be associated with that. It feels good. It feels trendy, but it has this nostalgia to it, to where you feel like it's trusted and it's, you know,

it's done right. And so then it was diving into the aesthetics. I mean, Jules went to USC for business and marketing, so he also had a lot of experience in starting a company. He was very business minded about it. And we all kind of trust each other in our lanes, which is honestly so rare with clients, you know? For them to say, I trust you... at the end of the day, here's my opinion, here's my feedback, here's what I want. I trust you to execute and help me on the visual side. Key all this in with all the business side on his end, and like he said, it was constantly changing. It was like, okay, now this rule just came out, we have to change the packaging. Now this rule came out, we had to change this wording. It was fun to figure it all out while everything was so new in the industry, and the space.

BRYONY Jules it sounds like you came in very strategic and slow-paced in the sense of a new company. Making sure you were dotting your I's and crossing your T's, and making sure everything was taken care of. Every little detail looked into before you went to market and developed the brand.

JULES Yeah, absolutely. I had actually developed a brand before this brand. Actually, three other brands in the cannabis space—I was pretty well versed when it came to it. My claim to fame is I was of one of the first people doing it in 2014 from a branding perspective, and a real packaging look. The first brand that I created is known as...I think Rolling Stone did an article about it and said, they talked about it being the most counterfeited cannabis brand in the world at that time. Also, a very well known dispensary and a flower company. So, I kind of took what I learned there, and like Amy said, what we had done wrong. And now looking at that from a point of, okay, how do you take what you've done there and transition it? And put a lot of strategic thought into it because you want to create something like the Topo Chico, the Coca-Colas. Something where it's classic and timeless, because at the end of the day, really good design transcends through time. It's like, hey, you kind of recognize that, just timeless. A lot of strategic thought, a lot of planning, a lot of second guessing, a lot of analysis

paralysis, but luckily I had Amy to help guide me through a lot of that stuff. That's why I think it was more of a collaborative effort. I think for me, it was more the thinking and what I wanted to message. And for Amy is her taking my words and showing me actually what I wanted to message. It was really cool.

BRYONY So let me see if I got this straight. You're coming in with, I want to be this with words and Amy is finding the visuals to match those words on your strategy. You did not come with visuals saying, you know, I really like this, let's go ahead and go in this direction.

JULES I did it first. And then I was like, you know what? I'm not the guy, you're the person. So why don't you do it? You have to really trust the people you work with, especially with their designers. You have to really kind of vibrate with them. I think it got to a point where I was thinking, I really like your style, I like the shoes she wears, like everything about it. So that gave me the confidence to put my baby in her hand, so to speak. There was times where I wanted to meddle in it, but I'm like, okay, you know what? I need to step back and just let her do her thing.

AMY It's funny 'cause at the beginning we always do a discovery process with clients, which, you know, most agencies do where it's like deep dive into Jules telling us all about the company, his vision for it. And it's funny how when you start you have an idea, of course, but it evolves as you start trying things. I always ask my clients initially, if there's anything that you like aesthetically send it to me just so I kind of have an idea, but then I usually try to cherry pick out the best of those and then build out a new mood board from there. I always like to get a feel for like, okay, like what is in your mind? Like nostalgic? 'Cause we both were really inspired by vintage fruit crates and the feel good illustrations, the feel good colors....

Even when you look at those today, it looks delicious, it looks inviting. So, it was kind of fun just getting his initial ideas, then coming back and being, okay, we built that out, here's kind of aesthetically what we think. And then like going from there. From there it was just presenting

concepts, and we did three fully-fleshed-out concepts. Did really rough applications and pretty much immediately, it was like, okay, we know the favorite. It was one of those really easy processes. And I think that's one of those amazing things of, he said he liked our shoes and all that kind of stuff, but it's like, we both wear Vans., we both grew up in California, we both love the Lakers—there was just a lot of commonality to where... as dumb as it sounds sometimes those little things of just knowing you kind of understand each other as people, between clients and designers, it can just be so handy and helpful to just be like, okay, we get each other, we can make something, we can understand what you're going for, and visualize that.

BRYONY Jules, Amy mentioned that she presented three different concepts. Can you walk us through your reaction to the three? Did you see the one, and knew? What was that process like for you?

JULES Looking back on it, I feel like it was a set-up. I feel like they presented me a couple of things, but knew what I was going to choose. The first presentation was more of what, like Amy said, what I liked versus what I didn't like. But I think from there, what I call the real presentation was about 85-to-95% of what you see today. As the meetings progressed, it made me feel more comfortable and closer—made me feel like we were about to have this hit. Or what I think what it's like to be an artist inside a music studio where they're just working on something and it's building, and you play it back, and it just gives you that feeling. After that first meeting, it was the first initial, just excitement of, wow! I really like where this is going! It's not quite there... let me think about it a little bit more, but I'm really feeling it.

AMY It is funny. I went back to look at our old proofs 'cause I was like, oh yeah, what were the first proofs like? It's amazing how quickly you forget once everything's launched and you just know it in its current form, fully formed. It was so funny looking back and seeing some of the proposed color concepts and some of the other proposed marks and things like that, and none of that would have worked. And sure,

design... there's like a hundred right answers or even a thousand right answers to any design problem, right? Seeing it fully formed now it's like, no, it couldn't have gone any other way than this way.

BRYONY Do you have the same feeling Jules?

JULES Exactly. I would sum it up to where I had a vision in my head, and this was it, but it took someone else to express it better than I could, and interpret it and express it and what it came to be.

BRYONY That is where the expertise comes in. Amy, if we can geek out a little bit, let's talk about the typography. You knew what vibe you wanted to go for, how did you go about your typography exploration? How did you make the choices that you make?

AMY It's funny 'cause when we would talk about inspiration, it would always be so like off-the-wall sometimes... we'd be like, yeah, like the type on the umbrella of the taco stand or the fruit cart in downtown LA. We had all these very specific references that you can't find on Pinterest. It's just, you have to be in the kind of Southern California and Mexico area, to have grown up and experienced those very West Coast, endless summer, warm feelings. So it was really fun to be... he would just come in and be like, oh, I saw this thing, you know? Or I would be like, oh yeah, fruit crates or these different things... and so I gathered all these things and I'm Googling fruit stands, downtown LA fruit stands, and all these things trying to find pictures, and he's sending pictures and things like that.

The type we ended up using was this font called Hebden Incised—it's crisp and clean. It doesn't have any—a lot of fonts will give you the kind of roughened edge to make it look aged. And we all agreed, we don't want to roughen it initially, we want to print it embossed. It'll get that feeling on its own. The actual process will do the texture for us. We don't want to make anything feel too forced, too fake, too like we're trying to make it look heritage—just let's go through the process, let's do the process just like any type designer, or designer back in

the day would have all these items that we love now. And it'll just automatically age as it's supposed to. We picked out this font, and then I was looking at all these different examples. There's always like some sort of like a flow that makes it kind of feel friendly. So, we gave it this nice little flowing arc and we slightly adjusted the P and the G to feel bigger, we added a drop shadow, and an outline. Just all those extra little details that they used to do on design in like '20s, '30s, '40s, everything was a lot more maximalist than it is now. Just adding a lot of those little touches, like the drop shadows and things like that, it turned out great. I love that font. It was perfectly used for it. But definitely my *pièce de résistance* in the whole thing, is the little rising sun marijuana leaf. That by far, is probably my greatest achievement as a designer. [laughter]

BRYONY Yeah. I want to dive into the illustration as well. If you can give me more juicy tidbits on it.

AMY Yeah. It's interesting 'cause Jules is thinking about this in the perspective of the key interaction point with users, which is in the dispensary they're looking at the packaging. That is the design experience that has to just sing above anything else. It's great if it looks good on the website, it's great if it looks good on Instagram, but we want this packaging to just stand out. When we were thinking about some of our favorite brands that we wanted this to feel like it lived with... if somebody was buying stuff for a party, it's like you get the Pacifico, you get the Coca-Cola, you get, you know, these brands. We wanted it to feel like it lived in that area, in that zone where people would want to buy these things together. Almost all of them have this—Pacifico definitely has it, Topo Chico has it—they have this seal illustration. It's funny, 'cause if you look close at most of them, they're not that great, but they give you a feeling. A feeling of summer. And I think our tagline even was "That weekend feeling" that it's summertime feeling, no matter where you are. We decided we have to do a wave crashing in on the shore, Mexican getaway, with the palm fronds, and the cannabis leaves. That was the more detailed seal that would be embossed with

the gold leaf around on the packaging. And then this nice little, tinier, simplified logo would be the thing that was on the pens, in those smaller instances, like on the Instagram for the avatar and things like that. So we had this like bigger, more embellished mark or seal I would call it, and then we had the simplified logo mark.

BRYONY That makes a lot of sense. Jules, you mentioned the colors that you wanted to avoid at the beginning. Can you tell us about your reaction, and overall assessment of the color palette that you went with? And how, now that you see it in retail shops and the distilleries, how does that stand out?

JULES This was a massive education for me because I'm red/green color blind. I bought so many Pantone books just to be able to tell the difference. Amy was able to guide me through it. Whereas Amy said, everything was really bright gold or neon green. It was more of a, hey no, these are the colors. What do you think of this? And I thought, wow, like I've never thought to put those two colors together because I'm taking a technical view, or standpoint from it, where I'm doing research and saying, well, blue is more friendly or white is more clean and it, how does it make you feel? But Amy was able to put things together and match things where I thought, wow, that really stands out. And sure enough, a lot of feedback from dispensary's is we love the packaging. Some people buy it just for the packaging and then fall in love with the product. So when you put it next to another product in the shop, it's not too medicinal, and it's not very hardcore, in your face. It's super friendly and super inviting, kind of like your favorite soft drink, when you walk into your favorite store.

BRYONY It's your friendly neighbor in a way, huh?

JULES Yeah. [laughter].

AMY Yeah, it was fun. When we presented concepts and we do this with all our clients, especially when it's like a consumer good. We mocked up the logo that we had presented, and we roughly mocked it up on a box

because that was the main use case, and we put it next to all the other packaging. ‘Cause we were like, this has to stand out and we want it to feel different—that was our whole goal going in. And you know a lot of companies say that, they’ll say we want to be different, we want to stand out, and then by the end of it, usually by design by committee, it ends up getting watered down to exactly what’s out there because that’s, what’s been done before and that’s what safe and that’s what they can see someone else has succeeded with.

But for us, we stayed true to the end, and I was so proud of that. Jules was willing to be like, no, this is going to be different. It was really fun when we presented it and we would show it next to, you know, the main hitters in the industry. And I even took a picture of a dispensary case and would mock it up in the dispensary case to show how this red and yellow pops off and draws you in. I love doing that kind of comparison. It really sells it to the client that this is the right direction. And if you can’t sell it within that competitor analysis, then you need to go back and re-look at it before you send it to the client. I find it’s a great gut check for me too like, sure, this can look good, but is it actually standing out, like the main goal?

BRYONY It’s interesting because one of the things that was most commented on Brand New was the color palette. A lot of people were saying, you know, this is a beautiful color palette, this is amazing, totally unexpected, and definitely caught everybody’s eyes in that respect. You mentioned Jules some of the feedback that you have received. What have you heard from customers themselves?

JULES So the consumer feedback, and the product innovation, is what drives me in this company, and I personally respond to most of the emails and I engage with our retail partners on Instagram. You can see a lot of comments is like hashtag “we don’t package the same” or a hashtag “we design different”. Dispensaries are really proud to carry the product. And it’s just gotten the feedback that we expected, it’s inviting, and it just takes the product to the next level. That gives

us a really strong base and inspiration to create an innovate with new products. So I was able to take the inspiration as far as the color palettes and the knowledge that I got from Amy, and now with the product that goes through five different whites, where I ended up with a blank de blank from the Pantone color book—it just made everything so much better, and you can see that reflected in the feedback that you get. That I see on Instagram and from the dispensaries, and the budtenders at the locations... they really fall in love with the product., they ask me for swag all the time. I have people in Argentina, people in Thailand, people in Amsterdam, asking me to send them swag all the time, which I do. They reach out to us on Instagram, we do a lot of limited drops on merch and swag. It was really difficult because the whole COVID thing to get to certain places of the world, but we try our best to get it out there. And it's like, some people don't even smoke and they love it. They just love the look. They just want to wear it. They want to rep it.

BRYONY That's awesome.

AMY And ya'll did so much swag! You guys did custom Adidas slides and stuff, it was amazing. There was umbrellas, slides, T-shirts... Bryony, they even did—know how Armin always makes fun of people for using the mock-up of wheat pasted posters on a wall—they actually, wheat pasted a wall. They did not do a mock-up, they did it legit, the right way. They went all out when they launched. It was really cool.

BRYONY Sounds like I missed an epic event. Or maybe series of events. Jules, I get the sense that your relationship with design, and design firms was different with your prior companies and it's going to be different from this point forward.

JULES Yeah. I'm spoiled now. [laughter] I'm definitely spoiled now. Before I actually had a friend who I really trusted and we could sit down over a couple of drinks and just geek out on certain things, certain vibes, certain fields, and then he went off to do other things... and now you see everyone kind of copycatting. I don't have any other words for

it. Everyone is kind of so used to just saying, oh, I want my thing to look like that, but change it to my colors. Now I'm definitely spoiled to, where, I think about it constantly, and sometimes I'll randomly text Amy and I'll say, hey, doesn't this look cool? It has nothing to do with Pacific Gold or anything, but it's my appreciation for her introducing me into a different world, and a different level of design and thinking and what goes behind it. So for that, I'm very appreciative.

AMY Yeah, it was funny. You had like so much already intrinsic design sense before even coming to the meeting. And I guess that's just because you've run companies before. You like well-made products, so you already have a sense for quality made unique things like that. We would geek out for the first hour of our meetings about Lakers and product releases and stuff. It was so funny. Our meetings went like four hours longer than they should of [laughter], but I think it's great when you can find clients you actually like to work with. Work can be such a grind already and it can be so hard creating something new, there's a lot of time invested, there's a lot of trying things that don't work before you find the thing that does work. Finding ways to just make the process enjoyable. We always did all our meetings over tacos or coffee out in Long Beach and LA and all that kind of stuff. So just like any excuse. And at the beginning it was fun too, 'cause you would bring in some of your consultants sometimes to, you know, Jason would meet us out or whatever. It was such a fun process.

BRYONY I'm a firm believer that good relationships actually show in the final product. You can definitely have a more cohesive final product when there's good rapport between client and designer.

AMY Oh yeah! I mean, I think it's a trust thing... even when I hire people, if they don't explain to me the process or if they're not taking the time to make sure that I'm understanding what's going on and feeling included, I immediately want to grab the reigns and start to helicopter them and be like, where's this at what's going on? What's happening? You know? I try to treat my clients the way that I'd like to be treated,

which is filling them in and making sure they understand the design choices that we made and why. Jules is like a sponge for knowledge. He was just soaking it up. Design can feel so... there can be such a question mark there, everyone has their own opinions in a lot of ways. Tying it instead to actual factual things of, you know, look how much this color actually makes it more readable off the shelf—tying it to things other than just “do you like this color?” not just randomly saying, what do you think about this logo? Do you like it or not? Explaining why it works, and why it stands out, and how this can be a win instead of just, do we like it? ‘Cause that can be very iffy. Just because you like it, it doesn’t mean the demographic will like it, you know? Just making sure that you are thinking about all of those... data points can make it just so much easier and make the process just feel less daunting and scary.

JULES I think it’s very important to trust your designer. I approached it from a sense of what I really liked their style, so I’m going to trust them. At the end of the day, if I don’t like something, I’m going to tell them why I don’t like it. And then that’s going to keep an open conversation and transparent relationship to where they can take that, and use that, and understand where you’re coming from. Instead of trying to guide a designer. I don’t think from a client standpoint, you should ever try to guide a designer, if you really like their style, that’s number one. Number two, is trust them. All else just comes down to communication and having that open line of communication. I think you’re right. I think this is definitely something special because of that.

AMY And you did at the beginning, I remember we had one meeting after an initial proof and you’re like, no, no, no, I want the seal to be more prominent, and you were like, and I just feel strongly about this. And I was like, all right, let’s do it. I want to make sure that we’re letting you have your input too. You’re paying the bill at the end of the day. I want you to be happy, you know? So we did have some moments where you did give us pushback, but I think that’s good. It kills me when I see these designers on social media, they post these, uh, subtext, videos

of them talking trash on their clients for giving input. And I'm, the client/designer relationship is supposed to be a two-way street. You know way more about your industry than I could ever hope to know, even if I did a year-long discovery, I would never know as much as you know, 'cause you've been doing this for 10 years. Designers who inversely don't trust their clients to also help make decisions, that kills me. I hate those videos so much. They're all over Tik Tok. And I just want to write in and be like, do you realize no one's ever going to hire you if you keep talking trash on your clients this way? [laughter] It's wild out there.

BRYONY I am not on Tik Tok, I am not aware of those videos, but I can definitely picture them. So Amy, I get the sense you thoroughly enjoyed this process, but what was the most satisfying aspect of working on this project? of this whole journey?

AMY Oh, hands down was when we got like the first proofs of the actual packaging, because the logo looks great. Amazing. But it's so nebulous and until you apply it to that main customer touchpoint, it can just feel like, does this really exist? Are we really making any progress? When we got that first packaging proof back from the packaging company... and we had gone all out! Left it all on the dance floor with this packaging, Jules was like let's make this sing— it's okay if it costs a little bit more, which is so rare for a client to say. So we did the gold foil, we did the embossing, we had a custom cutout in the insert that you slide out to where there was a little sticker for swag that would tuck in on top of the pen. There was like all these really fun little interaction points so that people just couldn't help themselves. They would have to Instagram share it! Getting that first proof back and being like, they actually executed it, if not, as we imagined it... better than we imagined it. And it was just so cool. And of course we ended up conceding, a few things. We went all out and we kind of reigned it in a little after. The end result was just so beautiful. That was probably the most exciting part for me.

BRYONY And have you spotted the pictures on Instagram? Like you wished?

AMY I have seen them. Jules, you would know better 'cause people usually do it in stories, so they are tagging you.

JULES Yeah, we're constantly getting tagged on stories. I mean, it's pretty insane. You see people setting up their own photo shoots with our products on the beach and I'm like, wow, we created something so good looking and unique that people actually take the time to take it with them and do mock photo shoots and send it to us. It's great.

BRYONY So they're experiencing the product in more than one way, h uh? [laughter] One final question for you Jules. Now that you have a really strong foundation, got your brand... What excites you most in terms of the brand moving forward?

JULES What excites me most is that I have a strong foundation for packaging and design. And now I feel I can focus on product development. I don't have to worry about adapting packaging, or changing any design, or any iterations. The foundation is there. I feel it's a classic. I could focus on expanding into new markets because this is a highly regulated industry. You can't just go across the U.S., you have to go state by state. And it's different in every state. For me, the most exciting part is taking this product in this package that I feel that the packaging is nice, and so as a product. So it's a win-win. Taking it to these new states, these people loving it, and for consumers to enjoy it and have a strong relationship with it for a very long time.

AMY And I remember we talked about that. We were like, we don't want it to be too trendy. We don't want this thing to be like a flash in the pan trendy brand. 'Cause everybody was jumping onto the scene, starting new brands once it was legal. So he was like, I want to do the long game, I'm not going to rush this, I'm going to grow it. Right, grow it to where it lasts. And I think it was executed that way for sure. I'm so excited to see where it goes.

BRYONY Hopefully you can go state by state to the point where Indiana will join on this adventure [laughter]. I have hopes that someday we'll see more growth in that area, around the Midwest in general.

JULES Well, we're actually very close without releasing too much information. We'll be in Ohio and Michigan very soon. So keep an eye out. But we've been working on that for actually three years now.

BRYONY Yeah, it takes time. I cannot thank you enough for all the insight and all the wonderful information that you shared with us. Thank you for being on The Follow-Up. Thanks for having us.

JULES Thank you very much. We appreciate your time. And again, thank you Amy, for helping this come to fruition.

ARMIN There were so many great details and lessons in this conversation, like Amy's advice to not diss client relationships by propagating silly social media memes. Or Jules advocating for clients to trust their designers. And aside from hearing about the importance of Jules' strategic approach or Amy's attention to design detail, the single most important lesson we can take from this episode is to always — ALWAYS — check your Instagram DMs because you never know who will be sliding into them with a project as awesome as Pacific Gold.

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