

EPISODE 047

HARTZLER

IN CONVERSATION WITH

Carly + Chris Comella, C&C Design

AND

Joe Hartzler, Hartzler

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 47 of The Follow-up.

This week we are following up on Hartzler Family Dairy, a family-owned dairy producer located in Wooster, Ohio. Founded by Harold and Patricia Hartzler, along with their eight children, the family's flagship product is their half-gallon bottles of milk packaged in glass containers — old school. Servicing grocery stores, coffee shops, restaurants, bakeries, and colleges across Ohio with their iconic milk (in various versions, including chocolate), they also produce seasonal eggnog, cheese, and ice cream, the latter of which can also be enjoyed at their own storefront, which looks as delightfully Midwest as it gets.

The project, designed by Cleveland, OH-based C&C Design — that's the letters, C and C, for Comella and Comella, the shared last name of the studio's founders — was posted on Brand New on January 19, 2022. You can pull it up on your browser at bit.ly/bnpodcast047 that is B I T dot L Y slash bnpodcast047, all in lowercase.

This week we are joined by Chris and Carly Comella, owners of and designers at C&C Design; and Joe Hartzler, owner of Hartzler Family Dairy.

In this conversation we hear how the new, young generation of the Hartzler family helped identify the need for the development of a formal brand identity to take the family business into the next, logical phase of its growth and the owner's desire to impact more people through their quality, health-affirming milk. We also get a glimpse at a design process gone wrong as Hartzler went through a previous design exercise with a fancy New York firm who never quite bothered to learn about the family, which lead to a design solution that felt completely off. By contrast, we learn about how much more personally committed and invested Chris, Carly, and the rest of the team were, building a 5-year-long relationship that, as you will learn in this quote unquote "love fest" of an episode, yielded a wonderful result that benefitted from this personal rapport. And fear not, we get into all the nitty gritty details about how one of the best script wordmarks of the year so far came to be, along with the rest of the nostalgic yet contemporary new identity for this family business.

Now let's listen in as Bryony follows up with Chris, Carly, and Joe.

BRYONY Wholesome is the first thing that comes to mind when I look at any Hartzler Family Dairy products. From the large glass bottles to the fun, and covetable tiny serving, the bold cheeses, and of course, the ice cream. With a family-driven, Midwest-vibe, ready for a new chapter it calls for you, at the shelf, politely suggesting that you take it home. Joe, Carly, and Chris, welcome to The Follow-Up.

JOE HARTZLER Thank you.

CARLY COMELLA Hi there.

CHRIS COMELLA Thanks Bryony.

BRYONY Joe, let's go ahead and start with you. And let's take a few minutes to establish the origins of the Hartzler Family Dairy beginning with how the business got started. There was some decision making around

1964 that kind of defined years to come. And if you can take us all the way up to when you decided to rebrand.

JOE Well 1964, to put it in perspective is a time in the history of farming. That the idea was... you take down your fences, and you plow from fence row to fence row, big fields. We're gonna grow corn for the world, all this idea. And that's what agriculture was at that time. Getting away from the small farms, you're getting bigger, you're getting better. Science has really, really become involved in agriculture at that point. The newest products were the fertilizer, the herbicides, pesticides, all that stuff. And here we're gonna grow for the world and we're gonna make a lot of money for the farmers. Well, in that time period, we actually went 180-degrees, and went the other way, because of experience my father had in what he saw with his fields. And, you know, he was going along with the whole concept until we had a weather event where it rained really hard.

We had just sprayed a field, and it washed down into the neighbors field, and took out his hay fields. He comes storming over when he realized what happened and you know, wanted to know what we were gonna do about it, so forth and so on. And before he left, he told my dad, he said, "you continue on this path and you're gonna destroy your farm. Basically what you're doing is put poisons on your farm". And he left. Just created a thought in my dad's mind, going forward. My grandfather was probably the most progressive farmer in the area. He was the first person in his time period to have a corn—that was like really, really modern. So he adopted all this stuff, passed it on to my father and my father was going, you know, with it. And this actually stopped my dad in his tracks, you know? And got him to thinking. Well, he did some research, found out that basically what you have on farms, the biggest asset is your, and it's actually an ecosystem which you have to take care of.

Basically turned him around. He went cold turkey, no longer used any of that stuff, went against the tide. And we were actually shunned from

the family and from our neighbors because we're doing something completely different. Well, it probably goes with my dad's personality. You know, he can be a very contrarian. If you tell him not to do something, he's gonna ask why, and if he thinks he should do it, he'll do it. So, we call it innovative. But at that time not everybody appreciated. So in 1964, he started us on a path to become organic before the word "organic" was founded. And then you fast forward a generation. Well, when we moved off the farm, we took what we learned there... and there were six boys and two girls. And in some form, we were all involved in agriculture. Five of us had our own farms at that time, milking cows. This was the '80s into the '90s and we got to about 1990, and we started thinking that because of how we farm, we had a product different than everybody else. What we wanted to do with that? Well, in 1992, we made the decision that we were gonna opt out of the conventional dairy agriculture. We jumped into it both feet. By 1996, we had built our own processing plant. In April of 1996 we processed a hundred gallons of whole milk, and we all grabbed about 10 cases, and we went out to pedal it to whoever would buy it. That's kind know where we started, and up until probably... and then again, I'm gonna go back to Chris on this exactly the date we connected with him. I'm thinking it was probably four years ago, but I'm not sure Chris. But again, we grew we've grown, last year our gross sales were over 5 million. We're moving from a kind of a mom and pop processing business to where we're gonna step out and really get into marketing. So looking for somebody that had more insight, and somebody that could help us down that road. That's how we become acquainted with Chris.

BRYONY That's wonderful. Seems like there was more than one pivotal moment in the history of the company.

JOE Yeah.

BRYONY And it speaks to not only the origins, but the driving force behind it. And indeed organic long before it was trendy to be organic.

JOE Yeah. It was, um, more of core values than in order to make a profit.

BRYONY Now you did say that you were shunned by neighbors and people around you. Did the one neighbor that came over knocking after having his hayfields destroyed. Did that one shun you as well?

JOE No, but he was an older gentleman. Had farmed for a number of years at that point had gotten out of it.

BRYONY Okay.

JOE He wasn't influential in the community.

BRYONY But he was influential in the outcome of—.

JOE Oh yeah, absolutely.

BRYONY —our path that that's fantastic. There are certain conversations that the other person might not realize how much they can change the path forward for others.

JOE Yes, very much so.

BRYONY So it was important to keep that in mind.

JOE Yep.

BRYONY Let's move over to about four years ago. Chris, how did you get involved?

CHRIS It was 2017, I believe Joe, coming up on five years. It's been a nice ride. In terms of us meeting, Carly do you wanna speak a little bit to how that came about?

CARLY At the time Chris and myself were working for another boutique studio here in Cleveland. We were actually the entire design team, I will say that, it was a smaller studio. I think one of the Hartzler team members reached out to the studio, our account manager, just inquired about our services, and I think that's really where it started. We had the team in, had some discovery conversations and it all moved forward from there. It's funny, Chris and I were both fans of beverages—we're

foodies—when we saw the potential to have a milk client, I think it was probably the most excited we'd been in a really long time. I'm a huge fan of milk myself, I grew up drinking two cups of milk a day. [Laughter] This is my ideal project for me, and Chris can speak to the excitement on his side, but I think the whole team was feeling a lot of energy around the project. And we just knew that this was gonna be a project that we had to land, and a relationship that we wanted to start.

CHRIS Yeah, definitely from my end, I guess I wasn't just a general milk fan, as much as I am these days. You know, around that same time, there was a big craft coffee boom in Cleveland, that was such a big part of my daily routine, getting a good cup of coffee. And that was just such a fun thing to see the new places innovating in that space. And they all used the same milk, and it was this glass bottle of milk. And I always started associating the Hartzler milk with a really high end cup of coffee. Like cappuccinos, they just were flatout different. You know, once you have of something that is next level product, you can't really go back to what you had previously. And for a while, I'd say, you know, before we met professionally, I had this association with the Hartzler brand about this really high quality product. Craft beer branding was really big and popular in the design world. We had a chance to work with a couple beer brands, but really Hartzler to us felt like such a huge opportunity to do something that hit a little bit more close to home, that was along the same lines. And I think that's what Carly meant, we were really excited to work with a beverage. Kind of relates back to that, to me. They kind of represented some cool stuff. I remember, you know, Brock and Jenica, the two brand ambassadors at the time... You know, I'm not sure exactly what their roles were, but they came in, and I was almost embarrassed 'cuz of like how big of a fan I was. I was just like, guys, I swear, I'm not this passionate just about milk. [Laughter] You know, it was bordering, it got kind of like embarrassing, but I love coffee, I love your guys' product. This would be a perfect partnership. That's kind of what I remember from getting started.

BRYONY And Joe, you mentioned earlier, you're growing a little bit away from the mom and pop shop. Normally that would mean a change in production, and distribution, and things like that, but you focused on marketing. Can you expand on what the thinking is, and what you saw as potential for growth through marketing, at that point?

JOE You know, there's kind of a little bit of our history and it's involved in the decision making is that we have never marketed anything up to this point. It's been word of mouth, and our products have done the marketing for us, but we're to the point where we think that we can step out and really make an impact in people personally. One of the things that we talk about, and that is in the Bible, it talks about when the Israelites were coming out of Egypt as slaves and moving to a land of their own, they always referred to it as a land of milk and honey. There was a reason behind that because that was the high end food of their time. That's not something that they got all the time. So, you fast forward to here in America, you know, milk can be such a great and important part of people's health, but also there's this nostalgic connection to it.

And we've experienced this a lot, where we will go to and do demos, or even talk to people, and what we've done with our product is we've not altered it anymore than we have to. The way we process our milk is technology from the early 1900s, where we do that pasteurization. And in that process, we've come and figured out that, doing it with this old technology, people that are lactose intolerant—not allergic—but intolerant, can actually drink our milk. And people were having such a phenomenal reaction to that. I mean, we would have people cry when they talked to us about being able to drink their milk and how it affected their lives. We love to impact people. One of the biggest reasons it's motivating us to get out there and market, because we want to impact more people.

CHRIS Joe, I'm curious. What was that push when Brock and Jenica first reached out. Was it really, you know, that generation of the Hartzler brand that was looking at the product and the packaging, and how it

looked on a shelf being like, you know what, we really need to bring this to a new generation? Do you remember any conversation that might have spurred thinking about the packaging? And how it looks on a shelf that set the table for meeting us? Is that something you recall?

JOE Oh yeah. My kids aren't bashful, they're pushers and you know, Brock and Jenna are, you know, again, they're part of this business in a lot of different ways. My son Jay is the same way. They have a passion to take this to the next level. And again, they all have that passion to impact people, and Brock and Jenna were a large part of that. Of wanting to get out there and make this more modern-looking and more attractive. You know, only by the grace of God that we come up with Carly and Chris, I think they are meant to be here, for this purpose [laughter].

BRYONY And just for context for our audience, can you tell us who Brock and Jenna are?

JOE Oh, I'm sorry [laughter]. Jenica would be my daughter and Brock would be her husband.

BRYONY Okay. And what role do they play?

JOE Well at that time, Brock was President and Jenna has been in the business and really takes it to heart. Those two are foodies too, and they're always out exploring new places, meeting new people... You know, they identified the flaws in our branding.

BRYONY Well, it sounds like they found the flaws, but they also found how to solve those flaws, and move forward versus getting stuck there.

JOE Yes, very much. Yeah. [Laughter].

BRYONY Carly and Chris, when a project like this comes your way, how do you structure internally? How do you prep in order to get it launched?

CARLY The boutique studio that we worked at at the time kind of had a nontraditional setup when it came to the creative process, we didn't

have Account Managers overseeing creative work, communicating with Joe and the team. While Chris was our Art Director, he wasn't the main person speaking with the team. The way that we were setup was we had our creative team and everyone was hands-on. When it came to any discovery conversations, presenting work, it was a collaborative team effort. Everyone was in the room for those conversations.

CHRIS That freedom that Carly was speaking to, without any kind of hierarchy involved, that was really taken to heart. And for us as the designers to manage and run the project ourselves, which is part of our role and responsibility there—to talk directly to Joe, and then the stakeholders in the project for the brand over at Hartzler, it was very intimate. That's the process for us. There wasn't a complicated intake process. And in terms of gearing up for it, I think it was just a matter of getting to meet each other, and then hitting the ground running.

BRYONY When you have small firms and larger companies, it's always interesting to see what the dynamic is. Joe, from your team, I am assuming Brock and Jenica were involved. Were you involved in the day-to-day, and who are these stakeholders that Chris is talking to?

JOE I'm involved directly. And I'm probably trying to think... at that time it was Brock, myself, and James. If I remember right, Chris, I think there was the three of us.

CHRIS Yep.

JOE When we started, but really what was interesting when they came down, they brought the whole creative team. We sat around a table, which was unexpected. I figured we talked to one or two of them, but they brought the whole team down, which I think was a game changer. They got to know us. They wanted to know everything about us. We didn't talk about profit. We didn't talk about that. They wanted to know us, who we are and, and why we were doing what we were doing.

BRYONY Sounds like a good creative team who wants to get down to the nitty gritty. Chris and Carly, if you can walk us through the first phase of

design, where you looking at different concepts? Did you go back with a single direction? Did you go back with 20 designs? What was that process like? And what did you come back with?

CHRIS One of the really interesting things about the creative process starting out with Hartzler was, you guys had actually a year or two prior done a redesign with a firm out in New York. And you got so far as to get it on the bottles, you got your vans wrapped. You know, that was one of the most interesting things because you guys came with that work in hand. And I think my impression, thinking back on it was that it just wasn't quite right. I'm sure the process, everything was great and you guys were happy, but in the real world, maybe seeing it on the shelf and in application, something was kind of missing because that was one thing that we heard loud and clear when we got into the creative conversations. Was that, the more you saw it living in the world, that something was just missing and it was a very modern take on what a dairy might look like. You know, getting to know you guys, the story of your dad and just obviously your character. We tended to agree in that, you know, there was a big opportunity to create this kind of nostalgic classic, beautiful brand that, you know, maybe wasn't the opportunity that was taken previously. A lot of our process is spending a lot of time understanding the audience, the demographic, and the people that we're marketing to and who we're designing for... you know, the different age ranges, what are the generations that we're talking to. Who are we essentially designing for? For this particular project, we had this big starting point of almost what not to do, or kind of where do work from, that really, really gave us a narrower point of view and a direction to look in for us to really sink our teeth into. This project in general, benefited from that, in that myself and Carly, we could do a deep dive into this direction that we were all looking together, for this classic, quintessential, Midwestern brand and exploring that really meant not putting on blinders, but not having an entire field of view to explore, but just looking in the right direction.

CARLY That was definitely one of the most unique starts to a project that we've seen. Typically, the way that we like to start the creative process, when we don't have something like that to really narrow our focus, the world is our oyster as far as exploration goes. We typically like to start in the first round by exploring a full scale of different options. And the way that we start is by showing multiple concepts. So we would position each one of those concepts along that scale, the two extremes and then something that sits in the middle. So this was unique in that it did bring us in a little bit and allow us to explore concepts that we knew were headed in the right direction to start with.

CHRIS Right.

CARLY Do wanna hone in on what Joe was saying, as far as getting to know the Hartzler family, before we got to know the Hartzler brand, right? Those discovery conversations, having everyone there to hear who they were, and who they wanna speak to, and how they wanna talk, how they wanna be perceived. We have a lot of discovery conversations up front, and our first round of creative really isn't diving into the creative visualization itself, putting pen to paper. Our first round is typically what we would call written concepts. So we would take everything that we heard in those discovery conversations, and we would form two or three written concepts that would communicate back what we were hearing. And that was our way of saying, did we hear you right? Are we representing the family, the brand, and making sure that we're all on the same page? In each one of these very vastly different concepts. Is the root and is the foundation what we needed to be?

JOE So the branding that we had just done was so impersonal. It was from a firm out of New York. And, you know, again, as farmers and so forth, this is not a world that we know well, and we were advised that this was the best place to go, to get the most bang for what we needed to happen. And they really didn't even come out to visit us. It was all done—I don't even know if we even had a Zoom meeting, it was all done on the phone. They went to our website, tried to figure out

who we are, and they missed it. Bad. And we were actually a little embarrassed [laughter].

BRYONY I'm so sorry to hear that. That's not how graphic design and branding should be represented.

JOE Yes. But again, we—

BRYONY I'm glad you gotta redo.

JOE —again, we never give up. We knew would find the right people. And we did.

BRYONY So you had that initial meeting where everybody showed up and you were surprised by—

JOE Yes.

BRYONY —the investment from the team. When they came back with these written concepts, what was your first impression?

JOE Um, actually got chills on my skin because the “H”, I mean, they nailed it. The “H” was like my dad.

BRYONY Wow.

JOE It was an “H”, but my dad, wasn't a typical person. He doesn't think like everybody else. He's innovative. He was different. And that “H” nailed it. And it was their first try! [Laughter]

CHRIS When we got to the visual point. At that point, we had honed in on some of the key aspects of it. I think that the first round was that written concept and taking a step forward, we knew right away that it needed to be so personal. And what Joe is referring to in the ultimate logo, the “H” it's also used as an icon. It's the brand mark. And it came to embody a lot of the spirit of what we wanted the Hartzler brand to feel like. It had a kind of energy to it. Once we got to that point, we had put in some time. Moving on from those initial written concepts... to give you an example, like one might have been written as Modern Farmer,

that was the title. The second one might have been Retro Inspired. And the third one I think was called Signature. Each of those are just accompanied by a very concise paragraph. How do you boil down a direction in just two or three sentences to make it as clear as possible. From there we weeded out one, that was our least favorite. And then when we had the two, I believe were titled Signature, and then the retro one. At that point, we came up with a couple of sketches that essentially established this spectrum. On one end, we have, I believe the signature one was like this mono weight script, kind of contemporary. And on the other end for the retro one, it was a more decorative script typeface that we honed in on. And we thought was really beautiful. And what it ended up happening in the back and forth process was that, in talking about those two iterations, we thought there was a lot of ground in the middle to explore.

And that's when ultimately the brand logo that came to be was born out of. Was that process of having those two extremes, something very contemporary and a script that was like a mono weight, and then something highly decorative, very vintage or from a different era. I think what we wanted was something that was classic in a sense that it was timeless. So, exploring that middle ground was a process for me and Carly that was very intense, and it was so much fun. Typically for us, you know, we're partners in work, but also in life. And at the time we were working together in the studio for six years, and more often than not, we look at things from the same point of view and we can grab something, and finish each other's work and understand what we're kind of going for. See the vision. But this was work that we both were so personally invested in, and ultimately I feel like led to what Joe was talking about, which is this logo that was forged over, you know, this passion for wanting to get this right for this company that, you know, we met the people we loved, and then the product that we loved as well.

CARLY Kinda a funny story. And Joe, I don't know if you've ever heard this story, but our boss at the time, he, like Chris said, typically we're on the

same page as far as when we knew something was headed in the right direction, or where exactly we needed to take it. And I think we were both so passionate about this. Our boss commented on the fact that he knew that we were pouring so much love, and time, and effort, into this because he's never seen so much creative friction. [Laughter] You know, I think there were a lot of little arguments. It was a lot of push and pull. Like Chris mentioned, this was a unique project where we were both so hands on in creating a custom script, a custom logotype. He would work on it, and then I would take it, and I would work on it. And then he would take it back. And it was kind of this baby that we were passing around, and just pounding on it, and making it perfect. It had to be absolutely perfect. And there was a lot of really unique characters that went into the script itself. We talked about the "H" and a little behind the scenes, a lot of the shapes that were incorporated into that "H" had to do with the way that milk is being poured, and a drop of milk flows into a glass. So I think that's a little behind the scenes that we haven't necessarily shared with the world. It was a really fun process exploring those, and making sure that we got them just right.

CHRIS One of the things that we had from the very beginning was this picture of Harold, Joe's dad, it's this amazing portrait. There's a couple variations, I've come to learn of it. One he's like holding this piece of corn, but he has like massive hands, he's got like bear hands, but another one he's just kind of sitting there smiling. And so it's like, I always had Harold pulled up while I was working on this. And so the "H" had this double meaning, "H" for Hartzler, but also Harold doing something that felt right, just knowing what we knew about him and the person he was. Honoring him in a nuanced way was something that was always a personal goal of mine, 'cuz I know Joe and you guys had such an amazing relationship, and he's such a crucial part of the brand story.

JOE Oh, absolutely. Yeah.

BRYONY Two more things about the logo that I wanna know. Tell me everything about the angle, where did that come from and why? And then the very muchly talked about on the Brand New blog, the “T and Z”, I wanna call it a ligature, but it’s not quite a ligature, but it is. How did that come about?

CHRIS You know, myself and Carly at the time we would bowl every Monday... we’d just be in that world, and this bowling alley, wasn’t a new bowling alley. It was an old bowling alley. And there was a lot of old school things happening there. We’d always drink like a High Life. So having a Miller High Life from the table, and then doing a deep dive into the world of scripts, I just really loved how optimistic the scripts that had that angle, that slant, and what that brought to the table. And not only that, I felt like it added some dynamism to lockups that came down later in the visual identity. And I knew that this was a brand that was growing, and the products that were being made. A little bit of a clue there in my mind on how to develop this script, obviously going to be paired with different product names, then what makes for an interesting way to do that with this logo. And it’s really enough for me to just say that I love that optimism in the scripts, when it has that upward facing slant. It’s a pretty small detail, but it’s really kind of hard to get right. Sometimes when you’re working on it, it’s impossible to have an objective point of view on it ‘cuz you always want to move it slightly, in the process of making it. This doesn’t feel exactly right... is it too slanted? Should I just flatten it? And get rid of this whole problem just to begin with? There’s just something with the way that the letter forms came out of the design process that we felt comfortable with it pretty quickly and maybe that was happenstance. And I can’t really say there was a technical process that achieved that perfect visual balance. And I don’t even know that it is, but for me personally, it is. And I think in all the products, it looks very gratifying.

CARLY I also think the “H” had that inspiration of pouring milk into a glass. If you think about it from that perspective, if you imagine the Hartzler logo, if it were flat, it wouldn’t have that movement as much. It

wouldn't emphasize the pour in the nice bowl of the "H" there. The movement in the overall feel of the way that the logo moved was also something that we were considering.

CHRIS And as far as the "T-Z" goes, that ligature, you know, we're not classically trained typographers whose day-in-day-out really involves the minutia of crafting and tweaking the typefaces. I certainly love adopting that level of attention to detail when warranted in an identity. That's something I certainly enjoy, you know, when it comes to really dialing those in like on the scientific level, I'm really following my eye. And especially in this process, you know, Carly brought her point of view in that she does a lot of research in finding a lot of historical references that "T-Z", I can't really speak to anything specific that was, you know, seeing a convention that was similar was probably what happened. You know, there wasn't really a reference point, something that we applied directly to it, but I think starting with it not being a ligature, it was just an obvious point in the word itself to make something better.

CARLY It was almost begging for those letters to interact in a way that was more unique. The "Z" is so unusual, I almost had to remember how to write a cursive "Z" because [laughter] it is really unique. Not a lot of "Z's" are in logos. I can say from my point of view, without that ligature there, it felt like there was an opportunity to make this more unique. When it wasn't there, it felt like something was missing and it was an opportunity. So that is my kind of recollection of it. Was there anything that went into your thought process Car? 'Cause this truly... when we say we passed it back and forth, that's literally how it went. I wish I could remember how many times that handoff happened, 'cuz you know, we could reach out six feet and we'd be like high fiving. We were literally physically next to each other, bickering... [laughter]. As our boss at the time would say, that's what he was hearing, but that was kinda my 2 cents on the ligature.

We took inspiration from traditional handwriting cursive script. I think that helps get at the fact that this is a heritage brand. It's not

something that's taught really anymore, or at least you don't see it often. I thought the "Z" was a really unique element when it came to the overall logo. And then what Chris said is right, the "T-Z" was just born out of being so close to it, and it just felt like a natural thing to do. Like he said, it felt like the two were begging to be connected and that's what did.

BRYONY And then moving on from the logo as you started to develop the packaging, and communication materials, and all of these things, can you give us a little bit more insight into your typeface choices, the pairings that you created, the little seals and that kinda stuff?

CHRIS A foundational concept for Hartzler was to balance the Midwestern kind of friendliness and classic nature of the script, to balance that with some things that you would see in a real farm, which has some more industrial-leaning elements. So the badges while refined, were born of the need to express a more industrial aspect of this process. And when I say industrial, I don't mean like overly industrial or robotic, but I just find that when pairing to—not contrary—but the Midwestern meets industrial, you get a really kind of delicious mixing of flavors, right? Like they pair really well. So that's kind of where the badges came from. And if you look at a lot of dairy products, they're used very functionally. There's the weights and the measures, and then there's the verifications that go into a it. So, really looking in that industry, there was gonna be no way around using some of those badges and classifications.

Creating a set of our own was almost a no brainer. We were very conscious of having those distinct aesthetics playing off of each other. You know, one makes the other, one more shine brighter, when they're both there. And as far as the secondary typefaces go, I'm trying to think of some of the projects that were being released, and Car, I know you mentioned this when we were talking, but KFC... the rebrand that they were going through was something that we were looking at as work that was really wonderful. And I believe that we were really liking it. From my point of view, they almost had that kind of industrial

look too as well, but they used a lot of graphics and motifs to create something that really made a unique flavouring. And for us, it was taking that broader perspective on how we could apply it to Hartzler. You know, what we learned from looking at that particular project. And the pairing typeface is, you know, the big, bold one, that's probably the main through line in the product line. That really came to life with the ice cream. And we knew that we wanted the brand to be classic, but to allow this kind of volume, so to speak, of how we can turn up the volume on the Hartzler brand. How do you bring in more colors? How do you make something more impactful, and speak to the flavors of the ice cream? You wanna match some of that vibe. So while you have the as gorgeous glass bottle of milk on a shelf, the ice cream, you wanna, you know, have a classic classy sense to it. But we knew that we were talking to families and kids. We knew the brand couldn't be overtly static and one note.

We wanted to build in this convention of turning up the volume, so to speak. When you have a script like that, it pairs so well with big bold type we found in exploring the aesthetic and the characteristic of the brand voice, that it was really just a product of exploration. And right out of the gate with the ice cream, we've set a convention that would for the next four years be fully explored. We set this volume level, right? You can turn down the volume when you need it to be a little bit classier, but if it's ice cream, or the cheese that we made, you know, really getting people's attention. And using type as a way to do that was something that we built into it.

CARLY I think it really, really was all about having that flexibility, right? So the volume scale, or the scales of extremes, which now that I think back on it is typically something that we inject into every part of our process. We explore the written concepts in the extremes. We do that in the visual. And then even when it comes to the final solution itself and the identity, what do the extremes of the identity look like? Having that flexibility to be able to turn the volume down, turn the volume up. You imagine the script on top of the black and white image of Harold

and just how classic and refined that looks. And then you look at the ice cream brand, or the cheese, and you can sense the change in the energy and the playfulness. And the fact that one brand can achieve all of that really shows that no matter what direction or product we're trying to pursue in the future with the brand, the brand has that flexibility built into it to be able to adapt and allow us to do really whatever we wanna do with it.

BRYONY And Joe, what was your take when you started to see these very bold cheeses? And as you started to hear about this volume control of the brand? [laughter]

JOE Well, it's interesting to listen to Chris and Carly talk. From our point of view, what we saw when they were presented to us was, they married the old school with modern, but it also goes back to our core values. We have glass bottles, but we also wanna go where milk has never been. So in order to do that, we gotta have the branding to be flexible. But also carry on the tradition and heritage, the foundation of the brand. They've done that so, so well. And like they said, the sky's the limit, where we go with it. I think the branding's gonna be able to follow and really project what we want to project.

BRYONY And what has been some of the feedback that you have received, both internally and externally, you know, from employees to distributors, to... what have you heard out there?

JOE Our focus has been impacting people with our products and this goes right along with it. Everything has been positive. It's something different, but also traditional. That is hard, hard to do. And we love it. And everybody we've talked to loves it.

BRYONY Definitely it stands out on the shelf for me, as I said in the beginning as a polite, you wanna take me home right now [laughter], but without screaming, without begging, it's just the perfect balance. From your vantage point, what was the rebranding process like for you and your team in this redo?

JOE Actually after going through a rebranding before, this was a walk in the park, especially with Chris and Carly. And it has to do not only with their gifts, but also their personalities, and the fact that they had a vested interest. And you could tell that. They were on board. Maybe it doesn't usually go this easy, but for me it was just phenomenal. We didn't even have to discuss, we like this one better than this one, everything that they brought to the table, we could see where we could use it.

BRYONY Any words of advice for anybody else in your position, in any industry, who's trying to take the next leap forward and wondering if branding is the way to go?

JOE Oh, absolutely. I mean it basically, and I think you said it yourself, looking at our product is the first thing you're gonna do. Before you taste it, before you smell it, anything. So, you have to want that ability to speak to people on the shelf, and they do it so well with the branding that we have.

BRYONY So now I have a question for everybody. In a personal level, what was the most satisfying aspect of working on this project from start to finish?

CHRIS I kind of alluded to it in the beginning with, you know, a passion of mine, is coffee. And then working with someone who's in that space and making that happen was an initial point of excitement. That was a feeling right out of the gate. But pretty quickly after meeting them, understanding that this is a partnership that was going to happen. And with the first step in the project, being the branding, it was pretty clear at the very beginning that this feels like one of those relationships that can be one that grows over time. And one where the design work being made, is made to work over a longer period of time. And that level of work was something that was so interesting to us. Having a relationship like that. It's like why you were work for so long in the industry to find, every five years or something. You might hope to find one client that you have a relationship like this with. And I knew that this had the potential to do that. So at the beginning, it was pretty

clear to see that between how well we meshed, and just the personal level of interest, that it was exciting, but now looking back at how long it's been—four or five years—it kind of proved true, right? We've known each other for quite a while now, the product line has grown, the design work that we've made has evolved in interesting ways. At the time, really was just so exciting to actively work on something we were both really passionate about, both from a product standpoint and a design opportunity. A takeaway right now is having this opportunity to continue for it, to grow, and see where the Hartzler brand goes.

CARLY What it evolves into is just such an exciting prospect. That some of that growth is actively happening in new places like on social media, kind of like our little experimental ground, where we get to try out new ideas and what we post directly to our audience, engaging response from them. That's even moving forward. There's obviously gonna be new products, new things down the line, new places that we market to. But, moving forward from here, it's still very much feels like one of those projects where anything can be possible with a brand that you really love and love working on.

I'll kind of echo some of that too. And before I share my personal favorite aspects of the project, I have to give props to Joe and his team, because I feel like in our industry with branding projects, it's rare to have a team that sees their brand as a living thing, right? Your brand is a living thing. It's going to change and adapt over time. And it's something that you have to continue to put work into, and allow it to grow and adapt. A lot of times we see these branding projects come in, we do the brand work, and then you check back on it in two or three years, and it's exactly the same. The fact that they're putting effort into their social media, they're releasing new products, they're allowing the brand to continue to grow and invest in that, I think is really rare. And I think that feeds into that partnership that we've built with them. It's a dream project, right? One thing that Chris and I have always said is as designers, we get projects in that might not be too exciting and we always try to find at least one thing in every project

to get excited about. And in this project, there was absolutely nothing that we weren't excited about. It was one of those projects that the team allowed us to pour ourselves into it, and to continue doing that. And we've built this long standing relationship—it's truly something special when you can create that partnership.

JOE I would echo that. We are just excited about the future. I like to call it innovative in how we think. We don't think like normal people, we think differently. And I think that's important going forward, especially in our industry, we want to take milk where it's never been. So we gotta have people who have a vested interest. If I think back to the things that probably was so impressed with, is how they poured their personal selves into this project. And it was wonderful! And you could see it all over, every part that they touched. And again, relationships, probably the most valuable thing in business. It's not the profits. It's about relationships. We're of a holistic mindset and we enjoy people, not in what they can do, but the relationships that we make with them.

CHRIS Bryony, I don't know if you were ready for this love fest. I don't know if it's our [laughter] Midwest vibes here, or if it's just how grateful we are, but, you know, I don't wanna beat to dead horse. But I think it's clear how much we love this brand. And you know, the, the opportunity ahead of us to continue making it special. This has really been a wonderful partnership [laughter].

BRYONY Those relationships are the difference between moving a rebrand forward versus having vans wrapped and waiting, and not going out because there is that lack of relationship and passion in the process that keeps you from moving forward. Even though you have the materials, you have the things, something was stopping you. And you needed that relationship growth, because that is a core value of the company. You need relationships to drive the process of each aspect of the brand. That's definitely going to take milk into more places. I am really excited to see how the brand continues to evolve. Thank you so much for joining me today, and for sharing the love fest [laughter] and

all of the details._even the bickering. The bickering is part of the love fest, because it means that you care [laughter].

JOE Passionate!

BRYONY Your heart is where it needs to be. Thank you so much for all of that.

JOE Well thank you for having us on.

CHRIS Appreciate it. Thank you so much. Yeah.

ARMIN One of the best quotes from this episode was from Carly, who said, and I paraphrase, “It was important to get to know the Hartzler family first and the Hartzler brand second”. While not all clients we work with are family-owned, the sentiment is that it’s as important to understand the motivations that drive the people we work with as it is to understand what the business does, sells, or offers. Making that type of personal connection is the kind that leads a client to get chills, as Joe did, just from exploring the verbal brand territories his business could go in and his desire to, in another fantastic line, quote “take milk where it’s never been”, end quote. Now, if you will excuse me I must find a cookie and a glass of milk because that’s all I can think about. Today, thanks for listening. Until next time, we’ll be here, we hope you’ll be there.