

# a branded world

PODCAST

with  
**Luiza Campos**



025 | HOW FOCUSING ON QUALITY AND  
BUILDING COMMUNITY ELEVATES A  
BUSINESS WITH GARETH LUKES

**EPISODE TRANSCRIPT**

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## A BRANDED WORLD PODCAST – 025 | HOW FOCUSING ON QUALITY AND BUILDING COMMUNITY ELEVATES A BUSINESS WITH GARETH LUKES

- Luiza Campos: [00:00](#) You're listening to a branded world podcast, episode number 25.
- Announcer: [00:08](#) Welcome to a branded world podcast where we explore a great brands and give you tips, tools, hacks and guides to create brands, the captivate clients and drive growth in revenue. And now your host, Luiza Campos.
- Luiza Campos: [00:28](#) Hello everyone and welcome to another episode of a branded world of branded world is a member of the Alberta podcast network powered by ATB and talking about atb, if you are an artist, Atb Arts and culture branch is something that you need to check out. He understands that if you're an artist, you know that banking can be difficult because your income is not traditional and ATB new arts and culture branch was built for people like that. You can finally get your banking done in a way that works for you and the industry you work in, the arts and culture branch opening in Edmonton and Calgary in the next few months and you can find more details about this by going to atb.com. My next guest is Gareth Lukes. Gareth is certainly someone who appreciates art and in fact promotes many artists. And Gareth is also the owner of Luke's Drug mart now.
- Luiza Campos: [01:28](#) Look straight mart has been in Gareth's family since 1951 when he's grandfathered. Jim opened it. Gareth himself has worked in Luke's Drug mart store. The first store was in Bridgeland since he was 15. He's been working there full time and when he was 19 he was the manager of that store. And finally five years ago, Gareth purchased the business. Since Gareth took ownership of the business. It has been completely transforming what that space means and what that space is like and in fact has opened two other stores in Calgary and is really creating this movement around these stores. So this interview is really interesting because it shows you how by looking back at the roots and by creating a business that is much bigger than just the products that they sell. Gareth is really succeeding and certainly he has transformed that space from a store to a community building space where people want to hang out and there's such a high energy and vibrancy and his attention to detail and the quality of the products that he sells and not sacrificing quality for

profit or for growth and paying attention to the needs of the community, each community that he is in, making sure that he's addressing any needs, any gaps, and the desires of that space, that unique community that he's in is certainly been what has made this business so successful or part of what has made this business so successful. So I hope you enjoy my interview with Gareth Lukes. Here we go.

- Luiza Campos: [03:09](#) Hi Gareth. How are you?
- Gareth Lukes: [03:09](#) I'm well, and yourself?
- Luiza Campos: [03:13](#) I'm great. I'm very excited to talk to you. I think you are doing such an amazing job with Luke's drug mart and and for the community as well, not just for the business but for the community as well, so I'm super excited to hear all about it.
- Gareth Lukes: [03:13](#) Thank you, I look forward to talking to you.
- Speaker 4: [03:32](#) Awesome. So I just want to start by asking you, obviously Luke's drug mart was established back in 1951 by your grandfather, right, Jim?
- Gareth Lukes: [03:44](#) That's correct. We've been in the same location in Bridgeland since 1951. The neighbourhood has changed quite a bit over over the years, but yeah we've been in the same place.
- Luiza Campos: [03:54](#) So how was it growing up there? Were you at the store a lot? Did you see, was it very much part of uh, of your childhood?
- Gareth Lukes: [04:06](#) To some extent. I've been working full time here since I was 15, so I've been here for my entire life for the most part, but I've sort been getting roped into with the family business, but especially I think retail, family business. You're sort of more vulnerable. You end up working here. So
- Luiza Campos: [04:28](#) yeah, they get all the help they can take a right.
- Gareth Lukes: [04:31](#) Yeah, pretty much.
- Luiza Campos: [04:32](#) OK. So tell us a little bit about this. So you started working there since you were 15, so you were very

familiar with the business, but when did you become the owner?

- Gareth Lukes: [04:43](#) I bought the store who'd been about five years ago now. And uh, yeah, so it's, we meet, we meet a lot of changes fairly quickly after I took over. There was some stuff I did like because that was the man I've been a manager at Bridgeland since I was 19. So I've been actually doing this for 11 years, so it's like a lot of stuff, a lot of stuff I ended up doing, like when we took over and became the owner was stuff I had been wanting to do and I never thought I could never really justify doing it because it was a little bit too outside of the box of conventional pharmacy was and I felt like nobody would go along with it
- Luiza Campos: [05:21](#) Yeah so I wanted to get into that with you because you know, for the, for the listeners who don't know and we have listeners from really around the globe. So looks drug mart is, is sort of your neighborhood pharmacy, right? That's traditionally or before you took over, that was how you would describe it?
- Gareth Lukes: [05:41](#) Yeah, I would say probably more in the ilk of sort of what independent, what you would see you as independent pharmacies across the country. Like it was pretty traditional, like our product mix was pretty basic. There weren't a lot of specialty goods in it. It was very straight forward.
- Luiza Campos: [05:59](#) And you were mentioning that you were managing the store and while you're managing the store, it was, it continued to be, you know, the same pharmacy that you used to be, but you mentioned you had a vision, you had some ideas that you wanted to implement that were, we're very different from what the store looked like. When you, when you took ownership of the store, you had sort of this vision of what you wanted the store to become or was it more like you just want to experiment with a few things?
- Gareth Lukes: [06:30](#) I think it was a lot of trial and error. I think there was a lot of things that I felt Bridgeland should have because we're sort of a strange neighborhood. We have quite a few people but we have very little retail so there's things like we Bridgeland doesn't have a record store, which is something that a community like Bridgeland and in Portland or Seattle would have a record store. So

that was something we wanted to do. So we started carrying vinyl records and we just started carrying them in white cardboard boxes and just sort of built into this thing but we sell a fair amount of that and that's a huge component of the front store. Things like that where we just wanted to sort of experiment, use a drug store and like what else can a drugstore carry besides we kind of thought you'd seen shopper's drug mart and uh, we were just trying to figure a way to diversify and sort of look at potential opportunities that aren't really being catered towards the community.

Gareth Lukes: [07:26](#)

And that was another thing too when we went to coffee was that was the reason why we wanted to do that would because we sort of felt a sort of what was happening in the west coast wasn't really being true. Like wasn't really here at that time, but there wasn't really a lot of other options. So we thought bringing Stumptown to Calgary, something we're really excited about at the time. And we sort of felt with something that people in Calgary would be really excited about just because of just talking to people who are my friends and stuff and sort of three sort of felt like that was a niche we could fill. So it's just basically just been an exercise in filling niches and just trying to figure out things but calgary sort of should have or the neighborhood should have.

Luiza Campos: [08:10](#)

So it was a bit of a mixed in terms of the needs or gaps that you saw in your neighborhood in the city and also sort of interests that you have personally that you thought could also be, you know, sort of a profitable tangent for the store to take.

Gareth Lukes: [08:26](#)

Yeah, yeah. That would be through the thing if we could. We felt we could do volume with and things that we felt were safe. I don't think anything we ever brought in me was completely thinking that it was going to fail. Like I don't think any likely be through taking, but it's just been basically trying to create a more dynamic retail mixing Bridgeland . And I think a lot of stuff we've done has been copied and duplicated by places in Inglewood and like I feel because we've done one of the things I think like by us being here, we really have the retail scene a lot faster than it would have normally been. Just be could we broaden in a lot of stuff a lot quicker than it probably would have traditionally had been drawn in. I think we've made it even retail scene in is pretty competitive right

now. But like when we started five years ago it wasn't that all like almost every line we were bringing in, we were the first one in Calgary, Alberta to be carrying it. But now like it's pretty hard bringing anything a meet somebody else hasn't already brought in.

Luiza Campos: [09:28](#)

you certainly have done that. And how do you manage that because you know, you're saying that you are trying to bring products that stumptown coffee obviously it's very well known. So in a way they already had some brand recognition and could be, you know, sort of a lower risk as you mentioned by trying to bring new things and try new things but not having a huge risk associated with that. But it is very different for a pharmacy to become this sort of eclectic space where you can buy coffee or records and as well as your, you know, your medicine. So. So how was that experiment? Obviously was successful but in the beginning, you know, what was sort of the reaction that you got the end that kept you going?

Gareth Lukes: [10:15](#)

I think it was pretty positive. I think historically I don't think anything be done is really out of the pharmacy has been like prior to the 1950's, 1960's pharmacies who basically soda fountains, like just because of the amount of prescription or even this store, like I have the first week of prescriptions we filled in the fifties and like he's still like one or two prescriptions a day. It wasn't like a viable business with my prescriptions, but you could provide like, you can make sandwiches or milkshakes and like that was the way pharmacies need money up until basically the 1960's when that model sort of became antiquated. It wasn't that the fact that those businesses like those lunch counters, that model was unprofitable. It was just sort of scene in the 1960's, late 50's that it was just sort of antiquated like it was just sort of like he wasn't, he wasn't contemporary.

Gareth Lukes: [11:08](#)

So they were sort of a push in the states, uh, by a gentleman named Justin Dart, who was the head of Rexall, was basically the largest independent pharmacy group down there to sort of pull away from the Soda Fountain Model and pushed away towards what was sort of the piggly wiggly model, which is sort of a conventional supermarket model or a conditional Shoppers model. So there was sort of a, uh, pushed up, happened there, but like news through service businesses were still profitable. And so I, I'm, I'm not

really scared of food service because of that. Our records a boosts up until probably when virgin and all those other stores starting in the 80's and stuff in the 70's, they were pretty much the place you could buy music in the UK. So like pharmacies in records have always had a very, like a close connection.

Luiza Campos: [11:59](#)

I didn't know that. So That's interesting. So in a way you were sort of bringing what the business used to look like, which was more of a gathering place where you could do different things rather than just a getting your, your medicine.

Gareth Lukes: [12:12](#)

Yeah, and I think what happened was because our funding, like we problem with retail pharmacies, your funding is constantly being cut. So almost five years ago we had a fairly substantial cut happening in the industry and I had to offset that revenue and that was one of the biggest issues when I took over, was trying to figure out a way to offset that revenue. And so I was looking at sort of what traditionally has been done in pharmacies are what these are successful businesses elsewhere that we can incorporate into this business. Because I felt like there was no real way we could offset that lost revenue in the pharmacy, so it's sort of like, I think we've gone down a bit of a rabbit hole here with the business, the fact that now we're like opening standalone cafes and stuff, but I feel like we are trying to diversify because we honestly feel like the pharmacy, industry as it is now and with how the government have been reacting to various things. It's not as sustainable as it should be. Like if the store is going to be around for another 50 years, it's not going to be because of the pharmacies are going to be because we're something else.

Luiza Campos: [13:13](#)

Yes, you can't. You can't just depend on that. You have as a business you have to obviously offset all of those cuts in and become a profitable business. You obviously you have done that so five years into the business now. How would you describe the brand?

Gareth Lukes: [13:29](#)

It's a big complicated. I think it's a bit of morphism. I think its more focused basically on producing as much quality as we possibly can and sort of building our hosts brand and sort of focusing on making sure our stores or community spaces and making sure they're, they make sense of the community that we exist in a but at the same time giving people an experience that you can't

really get anywhere else. And I think that's the one thing that we've been really trying to focus on the flag bringing soft serve ice cream and some of these other collaborations we have with a um, my friend, chef Eric Hendry where we're trying to sort of do food things that really haven't been done in the city in a certain way before and like try to be innovative in that sense.

- Luiza Campos: [14:14](#) I wonder if you can give us some examples because I know a few things that you are doing certainly along with uh, Eric Hendry as you mentioned, but also beyond that, that, that you're not only making the Lukes Drug Mart spaces and community spaces, but you including a lot of different members of the community in terms of the products you do, but also artists. So can you give us some examples of some of the things that you doing?
- Gareth Lukes: [14:44](#) Um, For awhile there we were doing this parking lot show with Sled Island, so every year we'd bring it up a musical act, a, the Alberta advantage of the rappers shad a shabby and galen and we just basically put up with a free, show in the parking lot. And I think last year we had about 4,000 people out to it like over the course of the day, so it was a fairly successful event and I think we might look at doing that again down the road. It's just, it's just the logistics situation with the neighborhood at the end there because you're just bringing so many people in the neighborhood and like just dealing with the complaints and the logistics of putting on a show that, that, that large and that just to like open the general public was pretty difficult. Um, uh, we
- Luiza Campos: [15:30](#) But you're been a supportive music for a promotion and artist management and promotion agency.
- Gareth Lukes: [15:38](#) Yeah, that was, I did that for about four years. Managed a band called the pack Ed, which was a two piece, a rock group out of Vancouver that was a really cool experienced. They've got nominated for Juno for a new group. Uh, the with allison chains, a bunch and they opened like Arctic monkeys and, but it was a very interesting experience and we've got them like the theme song show that was on NBC briefly. And it was just a very interesting experience from sort of seeing a different sort of a different business than what retail and pharmacy is and a lot of ways. But it was really, it was good from a marketing standpoint. I learned a lot about sort of how to manage expectations and sort of like, I think it was good

for budgeting and it was good for. He gave me a level of sophistication and things that I would never have gotten if I was just doing retail.

- Luiza Campos: [16:39](#) So tell me a little bit, um, you know, in terms of other suppliers that you work with for products of the store, I know you were a lot of work with Eric, of course, but what else do you do? What will give us some examples of some of the too?
- Gareth Lukes: [16:54](#) Uh, we've uh, passed the sauce we've developed, so that was about a year in the making of just getting prototypes sent back and forth. So we, that's right now for sale in our stores and we have a ton of retailers that are going to be bringing on a couple of weeks to a month. So we're going to probably start doing some press on that. We have that sort of good distribution in, the city, then it makes sense to start doing city wide press. So we have that in the works. We have a bunch of other food items that we're probably going to be launching in the next six months. Uh, Eric and I are working on a coffee roastery that's going to be opening up sometime in 2019. We're just right now sort of looking at trying to find a space and then, uh, trying to figure out how we're going to sort of screen coffee, trying to figure out what of equipment we're going to be using. So that's a big logistical thing. We have the two library cafes that are opening up, so those are, we have one on the main floor of the new central library and we have one on the second floor and that's uh, for those who don't know, it's a \$245,000,000 building and it's said the hundred year lifespan and it's done by a firm out of Europe called Snohetta, that's probably considered some the best architects in the world. And uh, it's, it's a project that we're really excited about and probably taking up at least eight hours every day.
- Luiza Campos: [18:27](#) Congratulations on getting that. What I actually interviewed Susan Veres from East village and we touched a little bit on the Central Library, which is a remarkable building so for those listeners who haven't checked that out, they should and they probably should wait until it's open so they can go to your cafes
- Gareth Lukes: [18:46](#) November first to the public. Uh, everything is on time and uh, it's looking amazing. I think it's really going to elevate the city and I think it's going to make people think a lot differently about Calgary.

- Luiza Campos: [18:57](#) I keep seeing you doing new things like, like the library and like I mentioned that you will open the and also this coffee roastery and the house brand. So you creating these products as you mentioned, that are Lukes drug mart, house brand, right? Like the pasta sauce is the soft serve ice cream. Also the ones that you serve that you serve at the store also a house brand?
- Gareth Lukes: [19:24](#) Yes, its a house brand. It's made by Eric and we do it in 15 litre batches and it takes 1 hour and 15 minutes to make a batch and it's a very labour intensive and we're going to try to figure out a way to like make it a little bit more than a mass production mass production kind of way, but like actually use a proper steam kettle and proper equipment starting this year so we can. So we don't keep running out because that was the big issue of summers. Like we like we hit several times in which our machine and we were using the exact same soft serve machine that Mcdonald's uses. So it's like it's made for like really high volume and like. But like the problem is because of like just how much we were going through. Like the machine was incapable, cooling the ice cream fast enough. So we are having a situation where we literally just had to wait for the machine to cool the way you have like a lineup of just people waiting for the machine to cool down because you are selling so much of it. So it was, it was a very weird experience from a, just from like a, from a retail standpoint because you just never experienced that before where we had like 40 people in the store just waiting for the ice cream to cool down.
- Luiza Campos: [20:24](#) So that tells you you're doing something right.
- Gareth Lukes: [20:30](#) Yeah, it was, it was, uh, it was fun.
- Luiza Campos: [20:32](#) What I would love for you to talk to us a little bit more about that because I think that's a perfect example of how you know, you're, you're becoming so successful because of the care and attention on what you're doing with the story and the products that you are bringing. So this is soft ice, but this is not any soft ice ice cream. I mean this is really amazing. You know, the, the product and he's done, as you mentioned, it's labor intensive. There's, there's amazing ingredients that go into it and it's something you can't find really anywhere else. So talk to us a little bit about that and some of the brands that you are bringing in and how do you select, you know, who to work with, how, how do you build, you know, what kind

of products are you looking for when you're creating your, your house ran products,

Gareth Lukes: [21:37](#) Soft serve ice cream in most places is 70% of air, you're using oil as you're fat and you're using a lot of synthetic flavoring in a lot of ingredients to sort of create. It's like it's basically like if it's a bit of a science experiment it's like it's very like I need to equate it to something like cigarette but it sort of feels like that way when you start getting into like how like most soft serve ice cream. So what Eric really wanted to do was like make soft-serve ice cream. Like you'd make ice cream. So using like actually actual cream and using cream as a fat instead of like Linden oil and then using milk, like actually in both our cream and milk was from the Dutchman dairy that's is out of BC, using real eggs and using like actual flavors. So like everything we all our flavors or me from the actual ingredients, we use no synthetic products or flavoring and we use no coloring and preservatives.

Gareth Lukes: [22:35](#) So, and that sort of thing with the sauce, the sauce is just the same as Eric was going to make sauces. There's no stabilizers and there was no, uh, preservatives. It's. So that's something we want to do is sort of make things like you would make them at home for yourself instead of making food products so they can look good on a shelf in a year and a half. I think that's sort of, that's sort of been our focus. It's sort of trying to elevate sort of sort of store brand products to a point where they really haven't been before and doesn't mean we weren't with the sauce is like, it's just going through that exercise of making sauce through how most companies make sauce. You start realizing that the reason why a lot of sauces aren't gray or like why they're big because they're not living up to where you can make it home use because they're adding water to it.

Gareth Lukes: [23:28](#) Because the ingredients are so expensive, so like if you're getting to try to get your cost down like you can by adding water pretty easily, you can by using cheaper tomatoes, you can by using light. You can just go through all your ingredient list and just use inferior versions and you can get your costs pretty quick. You end up with an inferior product. But like you can sell it for. So if it's one of these interesting exercises were like, but it's not as that much cheaper but it's just like if you're trying to. Like. I think what ends up happening with a lot of food companies too is they get, they become

reasonably successful and then they bring on a wholesaler and that wholesaler is charging them or the distributors charging them 30 percent on top of that. So they're making a clean margins when they were selling direct to the stores.

Gareth Lukes: [24:14](#)

But when all of a sudden they have this odd distributor in place, then all sudden they aren't making any money. So the only way they can make more money by increasing the quality of their product to increase margin. And that. And I've seen this happen so many times with brands, but that's one thing we just sort of want to avoid. It's like we'll just keep making a great product and will keep selling directly to customers, but like we're never going to bring in a distributor because at that point I know that we're going to have to make the product worse in order to maintain margins. I think it becomes more of a brand exercise and I think like a we've seen like blue bottle, which is a big growth right in San Francisco who just got bought up by Nestle and then listening to the sort of like sort of like how that company is a bald and stuff since that transaction.

Gareth Lukes: [25:00](#)

And I feel like the same thing has happening with quite a few other like iconic brand where the brand is still there and the logos are still there. But the product is not like. I don't know, it doesn't feel like it was the same when they were just starting out. And I think that's one thing we want to do with Luke's is like, regardless of how big we might get a regrowth of what we do, we want it so it's always the same. So like we're not getting better. I mean we're never getting worse. We're always just trying to improve things. But we're not like making sacrifices to increase because I think that's that. I think that's the biggest thing I've seen in businesses that I loved that have become horrible. Just the need, the sacrifices.

Luiza Campos: [25:40](#)

I think that's actually something that we can really experience when we go to Lukes Drug Mart, I feel that's part of your brand, that is the, you know, you're going to get a good quality and his attention. It's almost like you bring in what used to be, you know, as, as you were mentioning what pharmacies used to be back in the fifties and having that more personal attention. The care of the quality of the products. It just feels more that way. And it's, it's more of a community space versus a pharmacy, you know? That's how I would describe more the experience of and the space itself. Of course you

have some a coffee shop, so you have coffee shops and your stores and tell me a little bit about the sleeves and the design of the cups

- Gareth Lukes: [26:36](#) Our sleeves are designed by a guy name Josh Halinary out of Edmonton. He is a great Illustrator. He's done a lot of concert posters. He's done a lot of youth. I think he's doing a lot of restrictions for children's books and he. We asked him to sort of do, you sort of gave him some sort of general idea of sort of what we wanted and he came back to us with these really rough sketches and we really liked them and then he's like, OK, so you have the Ross and then you send the more finished versions of them. And we were like, well I don't know. These are a little bit too polished. And then we sort of went back to the rough sketches services. So sort of the idea of what we wanted with the cops was sort of an idea of like if you don't know, if you had to think of if you had a piece of chalk, like chalk art on the cups was sort of like what the inspiration was and we just wanted something that was a little bit different from what everybody else was getting the city into something that's sort of just a stood out.
- Luiza Campos: [27:25](#) I think it's so awesome that you involve local artists and local vendors to to be part of the store now you sell some groceries. Right?
- Gareth Lukes: [27:40](#) We've been doing that since the seventies I feel like our mix is evolving pretty aggressively right now we're working with Eric to sort of bring in some more specialty food stuff that we had three you can get in bridgeport. I think one thing that's happened the last couple of years with blush, lane opening and with like bridgeline market, we're sort of doing their own things down the street is sort of a lot of stuff. We were doing it now very derivatives to what everybody else is doing. So now we're sort of now rethinking what should grocery for us since we have all these other, all this competition with like law was opening up across the river. So right now we're sort of looking at bringing in things like you would normally have to go to t, t to get or you would normally have to go to a specialty retailer to get that because there's some pretty amazing pre-packaged foods that you can fly. So I think that's one of the things we're sort of going through and try to figure out like what would make sense for us.
- Luiza Campos: [28:36](#) Yeah. And one of the things that I heard, and correct me if I'm wrong, is that instead of just getting your groceries

from your traditional grocery suppliers, you actually are getting them from restaurants suppliers.

- Gareth Lukes: [28:50](#) Yeah. We're buying a restaurant suppliers. Yeah. Just the quality issue. Can you sort of a weird situation because their growing season is very limited in what we could actually produce here is very limited and like it's just like Safeway and stuff. We help farms in California and so like basically all their produce is because it's difficult to get good quality produce through sort of the traditional sources just because of the limitations of the distribution networks at grocery stores utilize in this city. Any distribution networks in order to have affordable produce or or even the traditional sense, we don't mark up our produce that much but we do get a lot better quality stuff because we are utilizing the same places that like Eric was using when he move that bottle milk or the places he's using now at Vondra fells. So the quality's a lot better.
- Luiza Campos: [29:46](#) Yeah. And again, I think that's such a great example of that focus that you have on quality because I, for a lot of the things that you were mentioning, you know, the making of the soft serve ice cream and the projects that you buy, you would probably have been a lot easier to just just using the normal or traditional grocery suppliers or using cheaper products that you can make it in bigger batches and not spend so much time. But you know, I love that attention to the detail, to the quality of the product and the level of importance that you give to that. And I, I think that that's one of, one of the essential elements to your success.
- Gareth Lukes: [30:31](#) Go back to this whole thing of like, our focus has always been about quality. We're talking about margin and stuff. Like we're trying to make money or to the whole concept of the store falls apart pretty quickly because it's like, why are you doing that? Like I've had a conversation with a lot of people, like why are we using document quite a bit more expensive than like Lucerne or what else is available? We use it because it's just that much better. And like people know, like people can notice it and I think that's the one thing that a lot of cafes in the city that have went to cheaper dairied in order to be more profitable or it's neither products supper substantially.

- Luiza Campos: [31:17](#) Yeah. And as you were mentioning before, you're not willing to sacrifice the quality of the products for the growth of the company.
- Gareth Lukes: [31:24](#) Yeah. But I don't think we can grow. I think that's the problem though, is like, I don't understand that how that happens, but I knew that that's the one thing that always perplexes me. Like how do some companies that have, I guess maybe a different era, but like, I don't want to call anyone specifically, but like how do certain companies that have become so massive with a product that's like not really that great. You know what I mean? Like I'm sure you've had experiences where you've had something that's a mass consumer blight and you're like, how did this company becomes too generic company even though this product is not that good. And that's one thing that always perplexes me is like if something is going to be successful it should be good for that to be a bare minimum in a lot of cases. But I, I just don't wanna I don't really understand that world. So I just sort of ignore it.
- Luiza Campos: [32:13](#) So tell us a little bit now. You're doing so many different things and it seems like there's always something new happening and exciting happening with Lukes ks drug mart. So tell us a little bit, what is your vision? I mean, you already told us about opening this coffee roles roasters,
- Gareth Lukes: [32:32](#) so that's happening. Um, uh, we have a lot of stuff in the work. I think the biggest thing right now, and I've sort of put everything aside and try to focus on opening the library cafes in trying to execute those as well as possible because a lot of the solutions we're coming up with for that space use, um, it's one of those things where we're like, we're trying to come up with something that hadn't really been seen before in Calgary because Calgary has a lot of fine dining and it has a lot of like fast casual but it doesn't have anything that's like, well, I would say it's sort of elevated, fast casual. So you sort of have that casual pricing but it's a little bit healthier, a little bit better. We have some sort of examples like why isn't a right and a dirt lot and places like that, but they're not really accessible to the average person.
- Gareth Lukes: [33:22](#) So one of the big things we want to do with the libraries have affordable food, but it's still be healthy. So that's one thing we're, Eric and I are really racking your brains and

like looking at all the examples we can possibly find in the world of things that fit that model so we can actually execute that in the library because I think that's one thing we really want to make sure that space is affordable for everyone and we're not being elitist or we're not being [inaudible]. It's a library. It's supposed to be a mean. It's a municipal building and it's supposed to be for all people in Calgary. So that's one thing we really want to focus on is making sure that the food we serve there was healthy and sustainable, but at the same time it's within a price range that like you could afford to take your kids there and it's not like you're not worrying about it and we don't have.

Gareth Lukes: [34:11](#) Yeah. So I think that that's our focus right now is trying to tackle that issue and Eric and I are going to go to Europe at the end of April, the sort of go through a bunch of places in which we've been studying and trying to like understand like what kind of ideas can we incorporate those places into the library café try to really do something that I don't think we've really seen done before in Canada and that's. It's really exciting. But at the same time it's very daunting because there's no like it's not like opening a café. We're serving stumptown coffee where we know like, well sometimes we're really busy in Portland. This is good to be really busy here. We're looking at examples of like this is really successful. These couple of items are really successful in Australia who's a couple of items are really successful in Paris.

Gareth Lukes: [34:56](#) Maybe there'll be really successful here. And I think that's the one thing we're doing with libraries. We're going to be taking some risks with the food program and we're going to be trying some things that hadn't really been done before in you didn't like in North American a lot of ways, so that's one way we're going to sort of. It could be a great learning experience and I think a lot of stuff we're doing is very straightforward and who's going to be accessible to the consumers in Calgary, but at the same time it could be different and I think a lot of people will be surprised by what we're doing.

Luiza Campos: [35:27](#) It sounds very exciting. I can't wait to. I mean I suppose it depends on the success you have in the library, but if it is something successful, is this something that you see opening up in different areas of the city?

- Gareth Lukes: [35:39](#) I think we've sort of. I sort of like the model of like what David Chang is done in a group where he sort of opened these separate businesses, but they're all sort of unique in their own way and I think that's one thing we sort of want to do. I can't speak for what Eric's ambitions are, but like personally I'd like to be involved in sort of different businesses that are not necessarily. I don't want to start a chain thing going. I think that's one thing I sort of want to avoid making sure everything we're doing is unique and special and different in its own way. In that word on sort of just creating like a million [inaudible]. I think it's just, it's impossible to duplicate and stores or like food service aspects we I think is impossible, but I think it becomes a static into the authenticity and all the things that people love about the store would probably disappear quite quickly if we decided to try to duplicate it. So that's one thing you'd want to do with like every time you open something, do we want it to be unique and we want it to be exciting in its own way or be innovative in its own way?
- Luiza Campos: [36:45](#) Yeah. No, I can see that because yeah, if you, if it Lukes becomes a chain, then you will lose. You lose what makes it special writing. It will lose that, that magic that he has, that cool vibe that he has.
- Gareth Lukes: [36:58](#) Yeah, and I think you, you'd be standardizing thing. He started making things like. I don't know, it's just, I've seen it happen so many times. Businesses use, you start looking like a franchise. You start looking like something that's not. Yeah, it's not, it's not something that fits the neighborhood is something that could fit any neighborhood. It becomes very sterile. I think that's one thing we want to make sure that he has never used this trial, like we want it to, like you'll buy gifts for the community or for the, uh, for a certain group of people, like it doesn't exist necessarily for the sake of just making money. I think that's the thing, like as, as businesses we want to be sort of feeding into the neighborhood and sort of connected to the neighborhood, but not just like this thing that just sits there and just make a bunch of money at that point. I think there's no reason to do this.
- Luiza Campos: [37:57](#) It's so refreshing to hear a business person say that because in my opinion, the most successful brands and the most and that I think the ones that have a real future in, in terms of becoming more successful are not the ones whose purpose is to be more profitable, were the

ones that have a much bigger purpose behind them and I think you certainly have and you've just expressed them, you know, is this connection with the communities making sure that it is a space for the community that are addressing the needs and the desires of the community stands for quality, right. And accessibility, know unhealthy quality products. So I love that. That's the focus and I think that that's what has made you successful and ultimately will make you even more successful in the future. Tell us where can people find out more about you and about the Lukes Drug Mart.

- Gareth Lukes: [38:54](#) He, we also are somewhat similar. So, but yeah, we have updated daily. We're probably for the next six to nine months. Probably every couple of weeks we got some sort of a smudge or something else coming out. So, uh, it's going to be an exciting time and I'm really looking forward to a lot of these projects. We're, uh, we're working on and you can actually finally announced and we can.
- Luiza Campos: [39:22](#) I'm looking forward to hearing about those too. And thank you so much for spending the time with us here at a branded world.
- Gareth Lukes: [39:22](#) Thank you so much.
- Luiza Campos: [39:31](#) and there you have it. I hope you enjoyed this interview with Gareth. Luke's. Keep an eye on that company because I know they will be doing some new and very exciting things and I see a very bright future for this company and it's great to see that happening. I also wanted to let you know that the Alberta podcast network powered by ATB is a sponsor for these year spots summit, which is western Canada's podcast conference. So if you are a podcaster or you're thinking about creating a podcast, this is the conference that you must attend. It is on May fifth at sea in Edmonton. It is a full day of learning and a great way to connect with other people who are already podcasters or who will soon become one. If you have a podcast, you will learn at the conference how to make it sound amazing, how to grow your audience and create a show that your listeners will love and if you are thinking of creating a podcast, you will learn how to start one and you also will have the opportunity to become part of this community and the Alberta podcast network certainly is an amazing community to be part of.

- Luiza Campos: [40:42](#) Tickets are just a hundred and \$50, but there is a limited amount of tickets so don't delay in getting them and you can get those tickets at pod summit dot. So I hope to see you there. If you liked this podcast, please share the link with a couple of friends as well as leave a review in itunes. Those reviews help other people find podcasts that they may enjoy. Thank you so much. And until next time,
- Announcer: [41:12](#) thank you for listening to a branded world podcast. Discover more at [abrandedworldpodcast.com](http://abrandedworldpodcast.com).