

a branded world

PODCAST

with
Luiza Campos



040 | NICE TO MEET YOU: HOW KNOWING YOUR AUDIENCE WILL ENSURE AN EFFECTIVE INTRODUCTION TO THE MARKETPLACE - THE GE IN MEXICO STORY

EPISODE TRANSCRIPT

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A BRANDED WORLD PODCAST – 040 | NICE TO MEET YOU: HOW KNOWING YOUR AUDIENCE WILL ENSURE AN EFFECTIVE INTRODUCTION TO THE MARKETPLACE - THE GE IN MEXICO STORY

- Luiza Campos: [00:00](#) You're listening to a branded world podcast, episode number 40.
- Announcer: [00:08](#) Welcome to a branded world podcast where we explored great brands and give you tips, tools, hacks and guides to create brands that captivate clients and drive growth and revenue. And now your host, Luiza Campos.
- Luiza Campos: [00:28](#) Hello everyone and welcome to another episode of a branded world. A branded world is a member of the Alberta podcast network powered by atb. Between the ages of five and 14. I lived in Rio, Brazil. Brazil is a country with a rich culture. Most people when they think of Brazil, they think of Carnaval, the music, the dance, which is Samba and of course the exotic costumes, but Brazil is also rich in terms of flavors. We think of flavors such as coconut and pineapple and black beans and rice and of course the barbecue styled meat, which is called Churrasco. Now growing up in Brazil, we had all of that, but what we didn't have, which is a staple in many north American countries is peanut butter. And as a child, I remember one day coming out of our classrooms for our break and there was a kiosk with samples of something that we have never seen before.
- Luiza Campos: [01:29](#) It was peanut butter. All the kids of course got very excited thinking this was going to be a new treat and standing in line all excited to try this new treat. I was paying attention. I was looking at the kids in front of the line and every single one of them, as soon as they would put it in their mouth, they will spit it out. It was funny for the kids that were standing in line and we of course decided not to even try this because everybody just hated it, but not funny of course, for the company who was trying to introduce peanut butter to the Brazilian market. Now it's easy to understand that different cultures have very specific flavors that they grow up with and did not grow up with others. Like in this example of peanut butter. So therefore introducing a new unknown flavor can be a difficult thing to do in a different culture.

- Luiza Campos: [02:22](#) But the same applies for actually almost any kind of product or service. If it is something unfamiliar or if it is something that is too closely attached to a specific culture, it doesn't translate the same way. Even a service, even a product that everyone may use. It doesn't quite translate the same way. You really have to understand your market before you try to penetrate that new culture. Now, I wanted to talk about this topic this week for two reasons. One, because I think it's incredibly important now in this globalized world and brands are expanding into different markets to understand the importance of knowing that market even before you ever think about setting shop there, but also because even for brands who are not going internationally, who are not going to a completely different culture, the fundamentals of moving your brand to a different culture can be used and should be used even if you're staying put in the same marketplace.
- Luiza Campos: [03:31](#) Because fundamentally it is about learning about your audience and we shouldn't make the mistake that we only need to learn about our audience before we introducing our brand or a new product or service. We need to keep this as a constant. Our audience is always evolving and changing and so should our brands, so many brands have been put out of business because they have not kept up with the demands, with the needs of the audiences. They stopped being meaningful and relevant to their audience. So if you are thinking of expanding into a different market or not, the fundamentals in this episode would still be meaningful and useful for you. And the second reason I wanted to talk about this topic this week is because the brand that I worked for that really gave me this first-hand experience in this topic ties back to the place where I am this week, which is Philadelphia.
- Luiza Campos: [04:34](#) And it ties back to my alma mater of Drexel University. Are you curious about which brands ties back to Drexel University and Philadelphia? Well, that's general electric. Most people know that GE was founded by Thomas Edison in 18, 92. What is not as well known is that one of the cofounders of GE was Anthony J. Drexel, which of course was also the founder of Drexel University located here in Philadelphia and my alma mater. When I graduated from Drexel, I started my career in Mexico and I actually started in a big events company. We made huge events for major companies and one of the

companies that I did an event for, was GE and soon after I went to work for GE as their brand manager for major appliances. Now, GE was represented in Mexico by a company called Mabe. That's "M", "A", "B", "E". Mabe had the rights for the GE brand in Mexico and we worked closely, of course with GE Headquarters in Louisville, Kentucky.

Luiza Campos: [05:45](#)

This link to the headquarters in Louisville was really important because of course, regardless of where you are, your brand needs to be consistent, so it's really important to always have a deep understanding of what the brand is all about. What is the DNA and the essence of that brand so you can translate it in different cultures but be streamline, true and consistent with the brand. Now, when I joined GE, the situation for the brand in that market was that Ge had been in the Mexican market for over 20 years, but he didn't have anywhere near the market share that we thought we could get for that market. He had some tailored products for the Mexican market. In fact, he had a rain barrel washing machine and for those listeners who don't know what that is, I don't blame you this are washing machines from like back in the fifties and I'll try to describe them for you.

Luiza Campos: [06:41](#)

I will have a photo in the show notes, so if you want to see what I'm talking about, you can go there and see the picture, but it was basically a cylinder, a big cylinder where the water would go and where your clothes would be at to be washed, but it didn't have a spin cycle. So on top of the cylinder there would be two rollers where you would grab each piece of clothing and you would roll it through this rollers to take the excess water out and help with the drying process. So as I mentioned, very old technology. So even though this product was tailored to a lower social economic level in Mexico, as it was a cheaper product, obviously it was not on brand, it was not suitable for the audience that GE wanted to target, a medium to high level socioeconomic level and it didn't quite hit the purpose of the brand.

Luiza Campos: [07:35](#)

So GE as any good brand has evolved through the times to stay relevant to their audience and to the demands and needs of their audience. So as they've evolved they've had different slogans or different representations of what the brand stands for. And in the 1990's the slogan that was used was "we bring good things to life". So even though you could argue this product would do

that to the population that was using it, it wasn't a good fit. With the brand image of being this innovative company that is well established, has been around for a long time. It is known for the quality of their products, but it's also known for being a modern, innovative and optimistic brand, a brand that looks into the future with enthusiasm and wants to arrive there first. Wants to make sure it's always delivering on the client's needs. It's always giving them more than what is expected, so you can see how that product really didn't fit the brand.

Luiza Campos: [08:37](#)

On the other hand, most of the product line, were actually products that were being manufactured and were tailored for the US market, so although these were modern products that fit the brand, they were developed to the US market, so they were not developed with the Mexican marketing in mind, so we were just using and trying to use the same product line that was used for the US market. In fact they we're just using the same marketing materials. They would just translating them and my theory was that vis products, we're not a good fit for the Mexican market and certainly the way we were presenting them, the story we were telling, although in alignment with the brand did not fit the Mexican culture, the Mexican audience could not see themselves reflected in the marketing promotional materials and advertisements that we were using at the time, what we had essentially was the peanut butter problem.

Luiza Campos: [09:33](#)

It took me back to my school yard where they gave us the peanut butter samples and nobody liked it, but perhaps if they had known what we did like and have given us samples of peanut butter and jelly or peanut butter and Pineapple Jelly for instance, maybe we would have liked it. So what we could have done. We could have increased our advertising. We certainly had a healthy budget to do that so we could have increased our presence in all advertising, radio, print, tv. We could have engaged celebrities to endorse the brand and the products and we could have also increased our sales efforts. We could have hired more salespeople and doubled down our efforts that way. Now, one thing to keep in mind is that GE did not own a GE specific retail store. We sold the product to other stores and what happened in still happens is in the sales floor you will see appliances particularly displayed side by side, independent of the brands.

- Luiza Campos: [10:33](#) They may have a specific brand starting from the left and then as you go to the right, the brands will change. But if you try to imagine in your head, if you try to remember what your appliances look like, your refrigerator, your stove, your washer and dryer, your dishwasher. It may have perhaps the one inch logo that is stuck on the door, no more than that, but the most gazes nowadays, that's even gone because consumers want that sleek, clean front to all of their appliances. So the added difficulty with appliances that you would be sitting side by side with your competitors and there's really no way for the consumer to identify your brand or for you to even try to expose what is the brand of that product. And on top of that, there is a low brand recall, meaning some products have a higher brand recall.
- Luiza Campos: [11:25](#) So if I ask you what brand of car you drive, you are very likely to know what brand of car you drive. But if I ask you what brand of refrigerator or what brand of dishwasher you have, you may not remember as well. The same thing goes for other brands. Maybe your dish soap, you may not remember what brand it is. So brands spend a lot of time and resources trying to make sure that you buy a product because of their brand. So not to become a commodity, not to become just a toothpaste or just the a soap or just a refrigerator. You want to really sell your brand sell your story and create the relationship with your consumers. But it's very difficult to do so when you can't put any recognition of your brand on your product itself and you have it sitting in the sales floor, side by side with your competitors.
- Luiza Campos: [12:18](#) And let's be honest, most, almost all refrigerators, almost all appliances, they look very similar. So I think it's fair to say that this was a difficult challenge. To recap, we have a well known, well established and beloved brand around the world that has been in this market place for over 20 years and it had not been able to really get the traction that they thought they could and should by that time. We had a product that have very low brand recall, was very similar in terms of look with other competitors, were all sold by the same stores that were not owned by the brands and did not have very big brand recognition at all. We're not able to really promote which brand that it specific product was from. So it was a big challenge and fundamentally I believed that our product line and our brand story was not in alignment with the GE brand and he was not relevant to that market place.

- Luiza Campos: [13:22](#) But how do you become relevant? How do you become compelling and meaningful to a different market will. To do that and to do that properly, I think you need to do two things, which is what we did and this is the part where it's applicable whether you are going to a different market or you staying put and those two things are number one, you have to get to know your market. You have to study your audience and really learn as much as you can from them. And this is important to do on a regular basis because even if you conduct a research on your audience when you first launched your product or your brand, depending on how long ago that was, you need to do a new one because your audience changes with time. They adapt, they have different needs and if your brand is not addressing those new needs that they have, it's not in tune with what your audience needs and wants, then you may lose a big market share.
- Luiza Campos: [14:20](#) And of course this is extremely important. If you are going to a new market. If you are not familiar with the culture, with the lifestyle and how people would use your product. So that's step one and in our case we hired a research team to do both a quantitative and qualitative research. Now this was a really in depth research. So I remember going with the research team because I wanted to see it for myself if I was going to manage that brand, I really wanted to understand the client myself. So I went with the research team not to all but to many of the actual consumer houses and we ask their permission to see their appliances, to go into their kitchens, to open the refrigerators to the pictures of the content of the refrigerator and to really learn from them what were some of the things that they wish their appliances had.
- Luiza Campos: [15:13](#) Some of the features and also what do they think of the brand of the GE brand. And of course our target market, which was people from a middle to high economic level. They knew about Ge, but the associated the brand with that old washing machine that I mentioned in the beginning, that cylinder with the roles that you had to crank, like back from the fifties. So in the market place, the GE brand was associated with very old technology and was unreliable, was an old company, it was something that may be their grandmothers would have, but certainly not something for them. So now our big challenge jut got worse by not introducing the brand to the marketplace initially in the right way, GE had actually deteriorated their brand and deteriorated their chances

to actually have the market share that they wish they have. So we knew that it was going to be difficult to change that brand perception.

Luiza Campos: [16:17](#)

As I mentioned in other episodes, it's the hardest thing you can do is change a negative brand perception. And that's what we were facing. So we knew it was going to be difficult and we knew we would have maybe the second chance, but we would not have a third chance. So we really needed to do things right. We did our due diligence, we analyzed all of the research that we had and we set down back to the drawing board with our engineers, with our research and development team. And we actually realized that we needed to develop a whole new product line. This is a big deal, of course, in a costly endeavor for GE because changing your whole product line actually meant that GE had to build a new manufacturing plant to be able to build specific products for the Mexican marketplace. So he was literally back to the drawing board, the engineer's design, new products.

Luiza Campos: [17:13](#)

Based on the research findings, we did focus groups of prototypes of the product. So of course before we actually start manufacturing this product, we developed prototypes that we presented to focus groups to get feedback and make any adjustments needed. So when he hit the manufacturing plant, we knew we were developing a product that would be ideal for the marketplace. So it ended up being a project that took much longer than we first anticipated. And it was of course much costly than we first anticipated. But it was an important project to get it right. It was GE second chance to penetrate that Mexican market alongside with the product line development. And the second thing that we needed to do and any brand needs to do, is to interpret your brand, is to tell a story that is compelling to your audience. So even if you are put, you still need to tell a story that is compelling and relevant and meaningful to your audience and you if you are moving to a different market than you really need to do the research that I mentioned before and make sure that you stay true to your brand values, but present them in a way that is relevant and meaningful to that audience, to that culture.

Luiza Campos: [18:26](#)

So in the case of GE, we needed to show them what we meant by bringing good things to live. We needed to show them that while GE was a very well established

brand and a brand that may be your grandmother would have used, we needed to show them that grandmothers knew best, that they use that brand because it was a reliable brand. Because he really did bring good things to life. And now with this new product line, we needed to show them that these new products could do the same for them as well, and we worked alongside with our agency, Mexico to tell stories that would really reflect that, that will really be compelling and relevant to the Mexican audience and all of our research findings, what the refrigerator would look like, what the kitchen's would look like with the people in the ads would look like they all needed to match that market, the Mexican market needed to see themselves and their lifestyles and their culture reflected in those stories with the GE brand behind it.

Luiza Campos: [19:33](#)

So in a way I feel that what we did was actually what Thomas Edison set out to do, which in his words he said, is to find what the world needs and then proceed to invent it. And that's exactly what we did. We went to our marketplace. We asked and researched what the marketplace needed, and we developed the products, brand new products to address that demand and those needs. Now, a lot of you may be thinking, well, that's a great story, but we don't have the budget that Ge has to conduct this type of research and to hire agencies to do that. But remember, this is scalable and this also took place in the early nineties. So there was no internet. There was no social media and it wasn't as easy to do research. So I think, and I've seen it done now in a much more cost effective way and this is something that any business can do to any scale.

Luiza Campos: [20:32](#)

So think about the platforms of the opportunities that you have to engage with your audience and to try to find out more about them. So these could either be social media platforms so you can post questions there or send surveys online. Or if you have a retail store, if you do events. So if your customers come to your offices, how can you engage with them and find out from them what their needs are? What are they liking or what are they hoping to see change and make sure that regardless of what market you may go into, to always reflect her brand story, to always tell your stories based on your brand values and engage with the audience in those different markets based on those brand values. I did learn a lot from that experience with Ge and we then did the same

processing different markets internationally as well, and I still to this day apply the same learnings that we did at GE for my clients or for other brands that I worked for and I hope you can take these learnings and apply to your organization and your specific situation as well.

Luiza Campos: [21:42](#)

Now, besides founding GE and Drexel University, Anthony J. Drexel, also founded the fairmount park art association, which is now called the Association for Public Art. So Drexel, loved art and even though that association was founded many years ago, if you are in Philly, even now, you can experience public art pretty much everywhere you go. So Drexel really left amazing legacies in terms of the GE company of Drexel University and the Association for public art in Philadelphia, which I think can be credited to creating an appreciation for art in the city of Philadelphia, which is still very much present nowadays. So in Drexel's honor, when I needed to talk today about our sponsor, ATB, I right away thought of their branch of for arts and culture. So atb has branch for arts and culture in both Edmonton and Calgary because they know that artists don't have traditional incomes and so they need to do business.

Luiza Campos: [22:47](#)

They need to do their banking with a bank that understands their needs and provide the types of services that suits their needs and their requirements. Sound familiar? Atb has been doing their research just like GE did and they have created different products to cater to the needs and demands of the different audiences that they serve. So if you are an artist, checkout atb.com/forward the branch. I will have this link on the show notes as well. And of course, the show notes can be found@abrandedworldpodcast.com. And finally the Rotary Club of Edmonton West is putting on a conference in October. The conference is called district 53 70. There will be amazing local and international speakers sharing their stories at this conference. Among them is Susan Morrice, founder and chair, woman of Belize Natural Energy. She is a and an explorer with a passion for the protection of our environment and a vision to uncover the true potential of everyone she meets.

Luiza Campos: [23:53](#)

Besides these amazing speakers, you will also meet many rotarians from all over western Canada and the world. The conference takes place at the conference center in Edmonton from October Eighteenth to the

20th. And to learn more, you can go to conference five, three, seven, zero hyphen two zero, one eight.ca. And again, I will have this link on the show notes@abrandedworldpodcast.com. If you like the show, please consider sharing with your network and leaving a review on apple podcasts. Reviews are really important for people searching for a show like this to be able to find it, so if you have a couple of minutes, I would really appreciate if you could leave it a review on apple podcasts. Thank you so much for listening and until next time.

Announcer:

[24:45](#)

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