

## DeLu Jackson Transcript

**DeLu:** We talk a lot about purpose and mission. And when profit and purpose come together and we make the world safer when we do our job, it's pretty exciting to think about all the different ways to provide our existing and future services to help people have peace of mind and feel safer. That just actually gives me goosebumps when I think about it.

**Matt:** To thrive in a rapidly evolving landscape, brands must move at an ever-increasing pace. I'm Matt Britton, founder and CEO of Suzy. Join me and key industry leaders as we dive deep into the shifting consumer trends within their industry, why it matters now, and how you can keep up. Welcome to The Speed of Culture. Today, we're excited to be joined by DeLu Jackson, the Executive Vice President and CEO of ADT, the company providing safe, smart, and sustainable security solutions for people, homes, and businesses. DeLu, great to see you today.

**DeLu:** Great to see you, Matt, and thanks for having me today.

**Matt:** Absolutely. So, excited to dive in here, and I'm looking at your background. You've worked with so many impressive brands and companies like Nissan, McDonald's, Kellogg's, et cetera. As you look back on your career, what were some of the big, I guess, transformational moments where you had to take a step back and say, I need to maybe redefine what it means to be a marketer, given all the changes that we've seen?

**DeLu:** Yeah, it's been the scale or advance of technology at the consumer level. Again, look back to the past two decades, the advancement of digital experiences, websites, really mobile transformed the way we operate as people. Access to information on the go, search engines, and then the sequencing and managing of all that information at the consumer level, has changed the way we engage as marketers or interact with consumers from a sales and product perspective.

**Matt:** Absolutely. And of course, now the big buzzword here in 2024 is AI, which has been for the last 18 months. How do you look at AI transforming your role as a marketer and marketing, in general, looking ahead?

**DeLu:** I think it's going to increase the speed and scale of the activities we have as marketers. And it will create, I think, more and more value for brands, distinctive assets, and distinctive offerings to the marketplace. Because it's going to talk with it. I think it's going to demonstrate the things that are more standardized and more common. So standing out, I think, will be more important than ever.

**Matt:** Right, because in some ways, the barrier to entry and execution is lower now, meaning like anybody can create social media content, anyone can put stuff out there. So the barriers to entry are sort of gone. And now for you to stand out, you have to be more creative and you have to do things that I guess are in some ways innately human and do things that the machines can't.

**DeLu:** Absolutely. They become differentiators. Because if you think about a lot of discussion on AI, it's about finding those repeatable tasks that are more common. And obviously, it's

expanding that. But I think to your point, it's going to allow us to be more creative, more thoughtful, and more impactful as marketers.

**Matt:** Yeah, for sure. So just to kind of wind back the clock a little bit, tell us a little bit about your career. At what point in your life did you know that you wanted to be in the world of sales and marketing? And how did that manifest into you seeking out positions at brands early in your career?

**DeLu:** Well, I started in sales and field sales. And I think it was my first, I won a contest for my region and had the most sales in the region. I got to go to one of those big national meetings and all the brand folks were on stage and they were presenting these great brands and these great strategies and programs. And for me, it was like, wow, that's what I want to do. I love the way they thought about the customer. I love the way they presented the strategies. I love the way they thought about how to grow businesses. And to me, it just seemed like such a combination of art and science. And I said that's where I wanted to see myself having an impact on companies.

**Matt:** So it's interesting that you're starting to deal with sales. And I think sales is just so underrated as just a skill set that's needed really in any position that you have. What do you think made you good as a salesperson early in your career? And what are some of those traits that you think are still valuable today in the CMO position?

**DeLu:** I think it came back to listening to the customers, the concept of jobs to be done. What is the customer trying to solve for? And then I always say, I listen even now to customers calling and they're trying to solve something. Do we have it? Can we clearly articulate that to them? And then if we don't have it, could we? So we can innovate. So it just comes back to the customer and that hasn't changed, and I think it's been valuable across my career to touch the customer at so many different levels.

**Matt:** Yeah. And of course, all of those skill sets are probably really in high demand in your everyday role at your current job as CMO of ADT, where you've been for a little over three years. Talk to us about ADT. What made you decide to leap to this role? And what's unique about the category that ADT plays in that makes you have to, I guess, stretch some of those skill sets within the marketing and sales realm?

**DeLu:** What I think drew me to this was a longtime brand champion. This brand is going to be 150 years old this August. And I think the great responsibility of stewarding a brand of that caliber as a category leader is just what a tremendous opportunity. And then to think about, we talk a lot about purpose and mission. And when profit and purpose come together and we make the world safer when we do our job, it's pretty exciting to think about all the different ways for us to provide our existing and future services to help people have peace of mind and feel safer. That just gives me goosebumps when I think about it, just how important it is when we do our jobs well. There's 13,500 employees that are so excited about doing that every single day for people. That's exciting for me to be a part of an organization that's doing that work.

**Matt:** Yeah, and I would imagine as a marketer of security solutions, especially when you're talking about residential, you're talking about Maslow's hierarchy of needs, like number one feels safe and secure for you and your family. I would imagine when you look at the brand

pillars of ADT, trust is probably very high on the list. What other things with trust do you want ADT to stand for moving forward?

**DeLu:** The trust is a big one. Innovation and relevance are highly important as the space evolves the needs change and the needs expand it's important to know that we're innovating and bringing new solutions to meet those different needs. Things like self-setup or DIY solutions for people who are more mobile or in different spaces who move or rent and those types of things. We have health solutions as people age in place. We have multifamily solutions as people and builders support those facilities. So it's really neat to see how the consumers, again, as we continue to listen to consumers and their needs evolve, that we continue to evolve as a brand and bring those innovative solutions to market.

**Matt:** Yeah. And in terms of the breakdown of the business, what percentage of it is on the consumer residential side versus the business side?

**DeLu:** It's largely residential, which is a big part of it. We did have a commercial business at one point, but it's largely residential. And again, it's more of an expansion of residential into those different categories and uses cases like self-setup or self-install. But that's just an evolution of how the consumers are choosing to interact with the technology. But it's still, it's the core of our business.

**Matt:** And you're saying, because obviously, there used to be this notion of the American dream, where you would buy a house with a white picket fence and a two-car garage and two kids and a pet, and you kind of stay there until you retired. And then maybe you'd move to Florida or Palm Springs or something. And now we see with millennials, especially post-pandemic, especially in the age of remote work, where you have a much more mobile consumer, where they're much less likely to be in the same home their whole lives. Does that provide headwinds or tailwinds for a company like ADT?

**DeLu:** It's a combination. It's a great question. And I think the move is a big trigger when someone makes a choice, right? You go to a new place and back to your hierarchy of needs, you get your first order items and then you get the next thing, security and safety. And we call it empowering people to protect and connect what matters most. And as people move or relocate or resize or add locations to their portfolio of homes, all of those things tend to be important and they tell us that, hey, this is what I'm doing, right? I've added a new property or got a vacation home or I relocated because I downsized. And so all of those things are very important and where we engage and often consumers contact us looking for solutions.

**Matt:** And you also talk about self-service because I think the millennial generation, really Gen Z, who's starting to soon enter the head of the household, Gen Alpha is now the new young consumer, so to speak. They are much more tech-savvy. And when you talk about self-service and DIY, I remember when I first got ADT installed in the home, and it was just such a major ordeal with wiring going throughout the house, et cetera. And now, obviously, with Wi-Fi and very soon 5G permeating throughout the home, I would imagine the installation process becomes much easier, which I also think creates some maybe tailwinds in terms of getting new customers, but it probably lowers the switching costs in terms of other competitors because you aren't actual pipes in the home, so to speak.

**DeLu:** Interestingly, a lot of the connectivity mentioned is a critical thing. The importance of the app and mobility and that experience have transformed significantly. And what we see as a combination of things, I'll use myself as a good example, is I can do DIY. I have a lot of DIY packages for different things set up at my home. But sometimes we find that time and then confidence is really important. This is a really important decision. The good news is we're an omni-channel business. If you want to go online and buy it and do it yourself, to your point we want to make that possible. We even have virtual support if you get in there and you just want a little help. And then we still have this amazing group of people who can come to your home and help you if that's what you need. And I think it's the recognition of this sort of omni-channel approach. Consumer needs evolve and we want to be able to address these. But at the end of the day, we want to give them the peace of mind and confidence that they made a great choice and that they feel safe. And so having those different options to do that is important to us.

**Matt:** We'll be right back with The Speed of Culture after a few words from our sponsors. And of course, a CMO of ADT, I mean, it's not like being CMO of Coca-Cola, where it's a volume-driven business where you're selling at a Target, Walmart. I mean, you guys are going door to door. You have a massive network of field reps. And I believe there was a company called Defender that I think ADT acquired, which was the biggest sort of outsourced sales arm. So sales is still a big part. It's interesting because it's kind of come 360 to your early roots in your career. Given all that, what is your role like as CMO of ADT? How do you spend your time? And how do you ultimately get success in everything that you oversee?

**DeLu:** I think that the priority for me, and I believe in this transforming this idea of the role of the Chief Marketing Officer, and I have great support to do that, that we're everything from growth leader to customer advocate, to customer experience advocate, to culture leader, to lots of transformation given our role in MarTech, technology, AI, all of the things you discussed. So our team focuses on demand planning and data and understanding customer behavior, obviously creative and advertising and messaging. But again, MarTech and technology, e-commerce, and even sales enablement are all part of the role that's critical for us. And I think that's important as we think about the evolution of this role, that it continues to evolve as all these different ways to engage evolve.

**Matt:** Yeah, and I mean, ADT is a company that's fortunate enough to have first-party data, where a lot of companies don't, that sell through Amazon or sell through big box retailers where you sell direct. And one thing, going back to AI, that's unlocked is the ability to sort through the noise of so much data that I'm sure somebody like yourself undoubtedly has access to, help drive decisions in terms of this channel is working, this market is working, we have new competitors, market, et cetera. So I guess, how far are you along that journey in terms of having access to that data and allowing it to drive decisions on an everyday basis?

**DeLu:** We work a lot with our partners. Performance marketing is a very big part of what we do because customers contact us through so many channels. They call us, they email us, they send in requests, and they go to the website. So all of that generates an expectation of a meaningful and personalized response. And so we use that, to help the customers, right? Get through that process and reach that state that we'd like them to get to as efficiently and frictionless, as frictionless as possible. And it is, I say, a benefit and a responsibility for us to make sure that we handle that with the utmost care and responsibility. So it's a really big part of what we do in creating value for our customers.

**Matt:** Yeah, that makes sense. And in terms of actual communications to your customers, what channels have you found to be most effective as a marketer, either in gaining acquisition or retention and loyalty amongst your consumers? As we mentioned earlier, the world's changed so much. It used to be all about the 30-second spot. We're in a different world right now. What are some of the areas that you're particularly leaning into?

**DeLu:** Yeah, clearly digital is picked up, and seeing how the next generation consumes information, finds brands, and understands information, whether it's YouTube or Instagram, TikTok, Facebook, that's just such a great space for people to consume and learn. So we're active there. We're doing more on e-commerce. Again, we're historically a physical selling business. E-commerce is growing very much for us as consumers seek solutions and compare solutions and want to get them delivered quickly. So activation and communication through those channels just continue to grow. We still operate in some of the, you know, CTD is growing and we still operate in linear, big moments, live sports. So the key is that we know this audience is we can find them in different places around their passion points. And I think that's the beauty. Go back to the data they're telling us, where they'd like us to show up. And if we do that authentically, that is creating a lot of value for us.

**Matt:** Absolutely. And of course, again, like the access to the data is so important in terms of really being channel agnostic and just going to where you're able to drive the ROI and able to drive the impact that you're looking for.

**DeLu:** That's right. And you see customers right online, they're asking for these things. You see the queries, hey, I'm trying to find a solution in my neighborhood or, hey, I've moved. I need a solution. So it's great that we can respond properly and assist when people are seeking solutions.

**Matt:** For sure. So shifting gears a little bit to you and your leadership style, obviously you oversee a team at ADT, and your success is only based upon the ability for you to surround yourself with great people. What have you found to be a common theme throughout your career in terms of what makes somebody effective as an employee as part of your team, particularly in earlier stages of their career?

**DeLu:** Yeah, I think it's what I've learned is probably the most efficient. I call it the three C's, communication, communication, communication. Going back to my career, we often didn't have forums for people at different levels to interact and communicate. You would interact with your manager and your team, but you wouldn't see your leaders. You often wouldn't hear things directly. So I think Agile has created an opportunity, and I do this, where we do daily stand-ups with the team just for 30 minutes. And it allows us to communicate, but also collaborate, and better understand the decisions that we make, the shared decisions. And finally, one of my favorite leaders I work for, he calls it collective intelligence. I think that's the greatest benefit of the way we communicate today, the frequency and the depth of our communications, I think helps people advance faster because they learn more, they get mentored, and they understand how decisions get made.

**Matt:** Right. And in terms of areas that you think maybe young marketers should be focused on right now that are coming out of college or trying to establish themselves so they can be in the CMO one day. What are some of the areas that come to mind?

**DeLu:** Well, you said it earlier, Al. Make sure you're paying attention to Al. But understand, again, back to this, I say across my career, I love the fact that across the different businesses, categories, and geographies, someone taught me to just focus on the customers. Because regardless of the market, regardless of the business, you'll find a lot of them are the same consumers. It's just a different part of their basket of goods. And if you take that with you through your career, these are customers or households and your understanding of what their buying behaviors are, that travels. Again, in my career, I've been in auto and food and brand strategy financial services, and now security. And I'm seeing a lot of the same households, life stage changes, life stage advancements, and having the ability to think about how a brand can participate in that. It travels as a marketer.

**Matt:** Yeah, I'm truly understanding the consumer, their life stages, a different generation, how cultural and social and business trends impact them, really allows you to be effective regardless of what you're selling, I guess.

**DeLu:** That's right.

**Matt:** So as we wrap up here, DeLu, if you look back at your career, and not everyone ends up in a CMO role or can work at such prestigious brands as you have, what decisions do you think you made right along the way where you focused in the right areas that set yourself up to be in the role that you are in today?

**DeLu:** I think there's two things, and I'm just really fortunate to have had great leaders around me and great mentors, great partners, was I got the advice to watch the technology as it was advancing. And so there were always opportunities to probably take a role that today seemed like, wow, that's the best opportunity. And I had people say, keep doing what you're doing because a few people are doing that, and go deep. Be good at this MarTech and this technology. Watch how this is going to change the business. I had someone give me that advice. And I stayed with it. And so it was watching the things that were transforming the business. And he was just great. He said because that'll be the difference maker. So just staying in tune with that, networking, finding those things. The second thing that I would say is taking the opportunities that some people would say are kind of risky, like going abroad and going to Japan and switching companies, you know, because we build so much equity in a given place. And I loved every place I worked, but some things were offered outside that said, wow, that's a little scary, but I think we can do it. And so when I look back on my career, some people would say you took opportunities that most people would have probably not chosen. But I learned so much. Most of them worked. Some of them didn't. But it gave me an expansive view of what's out there and the opportunities. And again, I just met so many great people and great leaders. It's helped me immensely.

**Matt:** Yeah, it's interesting you brought up the international experience because that's a common theme that we've had here at the podcast with CMOs is that early in their career, they took the opportunity to work internationally. It really kind of opened up their worldview. And I think especially when you're younger, where maybe you're not as kind of held down by kids and family where you don't have that opportunity, you should probably take it because it's going to be much harder later in your life. And it gives you a level of experience that's unparalleled.

**DeLu:** It transformed it for me in my career. And I had this great leader. He said you become the best leader you've ever been when you realize you're the outsider. I went to a place where I

didn't speak the language. I had teams all over the world. He said you'll have to learn how to lead so many different types of people with so many different cultural differences and nuances. You'll have to learn how to communicate differently in all these different ways. You have to slow down. Your frequency changes. What happens when you're speaking to people whose English is not their first language? So all these different things. And I think it taught a different level of humanity and humility when it comes to leadership. And I'm hoping that it created a sense of empathy to understand from all directions, mine and the other side, what leadership requires.

**Matt:** It's interesting because there are so many things that as marketers, I feel like we maybe take for granted and we're always on to the next shiny object. Sometimes you need to be like in the case of AI, but sometimes to your point, you lose sense of empathy and like the actual consumer and the person at the other end and their needs and wants. And when you have to, I guess, go back to the basics and understand everything from the language and the culture, et cetera, you re-immersing yourself. And I guess changes your perspective in so many different ways.

**DeLu:** Absolutely. Again, it's life-changing. And it's a reminder of this whole idea. We talk about IDB or inclusion experience and all this stuff and how important it is. I do work with BECA, the Black Executive CMO Alliance, and we talk a lot about this, but that's what inclusion's about is that there's this recognition that there are so many different types of consumers and marketers and businesses and brands and cultures and geographies. And that we're kind of those culture navigators as marketers. We must help the next generation of marketers understand that and understand that worldview or that broader view does create an amazing perspective and opportunity for us as marketers to have more impact. It's been, again, a great experience for me throughout my career.

**Matt:** For sure. So as we wrap up here, DeLu, given everything we just talked about, is there sort of a quote or mantra that comes to mind that is kind of your thing that you like to drive your career by?

**DeLu:** Interesting. I like this one. People do the best they can with the light they have to see. And that's both consumers. And I think about it for my team. It's my job as a coach and a mentor and we often have expectations for people, but we realize they have different experiences. They have different backgrounds. They come from different places. It's always great to understand the light they have to see and then think, what do we want them to know? What would we like them to know? What can we help them with to keep advancing that or spreading that light? And so I just have always liked that one as a great way to think about that back to humanity and humility, seeing the person, seeing the humans, and seeing the people helps advance teams and help people develop and be there.

**Matt:** Yeah, but that's been a real common theme in everything we talked about. So it's clear that empathy and understanding the consumer is sort of something that, along with understanding the technological changes that are driving their lives, has been a big common theme throughout your career. And it's no coincidence that you've been able to achieve the success you have. So congratulations on that. And thank you so much for joining us today. It's been a great conversation. I can't wait for our audience to hear it.

**DeLu:** Thanks for having me today. And it's great talking with you.

**Matt:** Absolutely. On behalf of Susie and every team, thanks again to DeLu Jackson, Executive Vice President and CMO of ADT for joining us today. Be sure to subscribe, rate, and review The Speed of Culture podcast on your favorite podcast platform. Until next time, see you soon, everyone. Take care. The Speed of Culture is brought to you by Suzy as part of the Adweek Podcast Network and Acast Creator Network. You can listen and subscribe to all of Adweek's podcasts by visiting [adweek.com/podcasts](https://adweek.com/podcasts). To find out more about Suzy, head to [suzy.com](https://suzy.com). And make sure to search for The Speed of Culture on Apple Podcasts, Spotify, and Google Podcasts, or anywhere else podcasts are found. Click follow so you don't miss out on any future episodes. On behalf of the team here at Suzy, thanks for listening.