

**Todd 00:00:00** When you think of how endemic a lot of our brands are to the game-day experience — whether it's at a tailgate outside the stadium, in your home as you're doing viewing parties — it just seemed like such a natural fit.

**Matt 00:00:16** 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.

We're here live at the POSSIBLE conference in South Beach, and I'm thrilled to be joined by Todd Kaplan, the Chief Marketing Officer at Kraft Heinz North America. Todd's one of the most recognized marketers in the industry, known for building powerful brands and products and leading iconic businesses like PepsiCo and now helping to shape the next era of growth for Kraft's powerhouse portfolio. Todd, so great to see you today.

**Todd 00:00:58** It's great to be here.

**Matt 00:00:59** I'm a big fan. Always have been ever since the PepsiCo days, and yeah. Now I know you're here at Kraft Heinz. You've been at Kraft Heinz for a couple years. What is your take on the culture and the overall brand portfolio you oversee? And what's one thing that maybe surprised you about working at Kraft that you didn't think?

**Todd 00:01:15** Yeah. I think just the breadth of the portfolio is unlike anything else, right? We have 70 brands in North America. Between these brands, it's 96% household penetration, which is if I were to open up your pantry or fridge in your kitchen, I'm sure you have five, six, seven of our brands without even thinking, right? And some of these things, which is amazing. And a number of these brands are over 75, a hundred, a hundred and fifty years old, right? These are also a lot of legacy brands that have been around for a while.

So it's a really interesting, dynamic portfolio because of that, where you have these high-awareness brands that need to be kinda reimaged or reintroduced to today's consumer. We need to accelerate growth between so many different business dynamics in each of these subcategories we play in as well. So we play in over 50 categories. So the competitive set's different. The consumer needs are different and evolving, which makes it really fun and dynamic to come in as a marketer and think about how are we gonna build these brands, how are we gonna grow from start to finish. So it's been a lot of fun.

**Matt 00:02:10** And when you kinda onboard for a role such as this, where you have about 70 brands, all the people under you, all the partners, where do you start in terms of onboarding, getting your arms around this opportunity?

**Todd 00:02:23** Yeah. I mean, obviously, there's been a lot of onboarding over the last year and a half since I've been there, and it's been great. It's a lot of starting with consumer insights. I

always start with the consumer in everything of, like: what's the consumer doing? How are our brands doing? You know, you look at everything from the business performance all the way to the brand health to how it's innovation. You look at all the kinda core levers of any business.

And as you get under the hood, you realize that each brand needs kinda different things given to where they are in their lifecycle. Some around—as we've changed some of the brand strategies. We've looked at brand positioning, visual identities, the packaging clarity, even down to the product quality of working with R&D. And so there's everything in between, and each brand is getting a little bit of something different based on what it needs. But what's great is we're doing a lot of the foundational things that have been needed on a lot of these brands and businesses and really setting ourselves up for some really great growth in the future.

**Matt 00:03:12** And when you look at the portfolio of brands across all of them, what are some of the biggest, I guess, common consumer drivers or insights that you think you can tap into to unlock growth based upon the changing consumer?

**Todd 00:03:25** Yeah. I think we need to continue to evolve our products and offerings to meet today's consumer needs. So you think of, obviously, health and wellness—

**Matt 00:03:32** Right.

**Todd 00:03:32** A lot of the trends that are happening here and there, making sure that we have the right proteins popping. And with that, we just came out with something called Power Mac, which has protein and fiber in Kraft Mac & Cheese. So, like, there's a lot of things that you can figure out very quickly where we need to kinda plan certain other things. Others are more just making sure our brands are kinda modernized in a way that they're still relevant for today's consumer with the right offerings—not just in the product offerings, but how we show up, what's our social strategy, and what does our brand stand for.

Even our growth strategies—there's brands like Philadelphia Cream Cheese, for example, where it is *the* cream cheese if you have a bagel or anything like that. But at the end of the day, a lot of the growth in that category is gonna be getting beyond the bagel. And so using cream cheese as an ingredient brand, seeing how you can put it in your eggs, make it in your pasta sauce, put it in your mashed potatoes to make anything creamier—which is actually a lot of top chefs use cream cheese as a recipe ingredient. And so there's a lot of different growth strategies for each business that's unique and different to each of them, but that's what else makes it fun and dynamic.

**Matt 00:04:31** So I'm gonna double-click on that. I mean, some of the, obviously, wider aperture trends, if you will, that probably impact the entire portfolio is GLP-1 adoption, for example. So you mentioned protein, and I just spoke at the American Meat Association conference. Do you believe there is such a thing? And they are doing very well based upon

people really gravitating towards proteins, and—and it doesn't surprise me to hear that, but are there other also things you look at with the GLP-1 trends, like new packaging and form factors?

**Todd 00:05:00** I mean, there's a ton of stuff. And as you look at consumer trends, it's always interesting when everyone says "health and wellness" because there's—there's the removal of negatives, there's the addition of positives, there's perception of health. So if I said all-natural ingredients, that's healthy, but it could be tons of calories or tons of other—right? If I said fat-free or I said removal of, now with this percent less, whatever, that's a different thing, you know, and addition of protein. So it—it depends on the perception of health and wellness.

And relative to each of the specific categories we play in, the different brands and consumer needs, it's gonna vary on what's needed most in each of those things. We're looking at it across the board and really excited, you know, of taking this iconic portfolio of amazing brands that we have and figuring out: how do we set them up for the next ten, twenty, thirty years, you know, of growth platforms?

**Matt 00:05:49** Another trend that we've seen coming out of COVID that it seems to just have staying power is just online ordering of groceries, platforms like Instacart. And I would imagine that also changes the way that you think about merchandising your product.

**Todd 00:06:01** Totally. We do a ton in that space. Instacart's been a huge partner of ours. You know, we did something with them last couple Super Bowls and all the way just through the line. They've been a great partner of ours. But even just across the board, you know, as you look at the emergence of DoorDash and Uber Eats and all of that stuff, even just down to the ecommerce offerings as people are buying more of their groceries online through walmart.com, through Kroger, through a lot of our partners.

And so we're doing a lot partnering with their retail media networks and some of the lower funnel marketing tactics that can also help drive basket and conversion on that, all the way up to the upper funnel, and then how we partner deeply to build physical displays in store all the way to our advertising and everything else. So you really gotta look full funnel in this, but I think that lower part of the funnel and ecommerce in particular has been growing like crazy.

**Matt 00:06:45** For sure. And you mentioned retail media networks. Is that something you're bullish on moving forward across your partners?

**Todd 00:06:50** Yeah. I think it's a big thing that we're gonna be playing in, and we obviously—like, it's an "and," right? At the end of the day, you need both parts of the funnel working and talking together and pulling through, and so it's an area we've done quite well with, but also just making sure we maintain our above-the-line relevance and saliency and all these things we need.

**Matt 00:07:07** Yeah. So as a CPG marketer, one area, obviously, that I'm sure you're clamoring for is first-party data and the ability to really truly understand your consumer. You sell through

channel partners. So to have that, I'm sure, is incredibly important for a lot of reasons. I would love to hear what your strategy is on that overall across your portfolio.

**Todd 00:07:24** Yeah. I think we look at a lot of different things in terms of how we wanna target, who's buying our product, what we wanna look at. And we have a lot of tools internally that we use to analyze all of that stuff and make sure we're targeting the right consumer with the right message at the right time is critically important. And how, from a first-party standpoint, how we collect some of that stuff as well is something that we're continuing to work on as well.

**Matt 00:07:45** Right. Because, obviously, in the AI age, your ability to mine that data, extract insights on a consumer. So let's talk about AI. For a minute—

**Todd 00:07:53** Heard about that. It's a thing. Yeah.

**Matt 00:07:55** I mean, I think we set a record here—about ten minutes into the podcast without talking about it. Would love to hear first and foremost how you're using AI personally on an everyday basis.

**Todd 00:08:02** Personally, I mean, much like everybody else, I'm dabbling. I'm learning. Um—use it to help plan itineraries on a trip that I'm gonna take or try to figure out—you know, do research on certain things and—and just kind of explore the limits. I've dabbled with the image creation thing, you know, just having fun and stuff with it just to kinda learn and explore a little bit.

But I think from a work standpoint, obviously, there's a million applications that we can figure out. And what's great is at Kraft Heinz, we've built a lot of proprietary in-house tools.

**Matt 00:08:29** Oh, really?

**Todd 00:08:30** From a secure standpoint, there's certain things that you don't wanna share documents externally and things like that. And so they've built some really good tools that we've been working with our digital team and our IT team on. We're building some tools around creative development internally that can help kinda rapid iteration as you think about innovation concepts for a brand, all the way to image generation for personalization at scale. So if I wanna have someone eating a—hand, eating holding a hot dog, putting mustard on it, I can change what the hand is, the mustard, the background, the thing—like, those things very quickly.

**Matt 00:09:02** Though, you could have the Sears Tower. Correct.

**Todd 00:09:04** And as we try to then target then and pair that with our targeted media is where you can really start to scale. So we're at the early stages of a lot of that stuff still, and we

definitely use it and are dabbling in it, but it'll be an interesting accelerator of a lot of the things that we're doing as well.

**Matt 00:09:18** Yeah. There's a weird pushback about AI-generated creative, where some brands are really hesitant to push it out there. Sometimes consumers get really upset when they see it. How much do you think this is gonna penetrate the creative?

**Todd 00:09:31** Yeah. I don't think we're looking to build, like, just AI-only generated creative in that, and you've seen some ads that get a little weird and look a little like, that's not the goal. It's not about replacing humans; it's not about changing creativity. And if it's about driving efficiency, and if it's versioning, if it's resizing, if it's cutting that—like, go nuts. Like, that's easy stuff when we already have a lot of the things we're doing. So I think that's an area where we're—we're looking to utilize it.

**Matt 00:09:56** Yeah. It's interesting. I mean, some people say nobody would ever look at AI creative, but then if you look at, like, the Electric Daisy Carnival, 500,000 people go to Vegas and watch DJs play music that isn't made by instruments. Because it's really about how it makes them feel, yeah. So my take is over time, as the technology gets better—

**Todd 00:10:14** As it gets better, it's gonna be a different game for it.

**Matt 00:10:16** . Yeah. It could be indistinguishable.

**Todd 00:10:18** Right. So essentially, right now, we're very much focused on our creative partners, our in-house agency, like, all the people who kinda connect the dots and our brand marketers as we build these things out, but it's an exciting time. I think everyone gets all nervous and worried about the future of AI. "What's it gonna mean? Oh my God. Marketing..." It's like—it's not even then when the internet came around, and everyone was just like—it's like, it's gonna change. Like, at the end of the day, if you even go back to, like, the 1960s, right, people would go to work every day, and they would sit at a desk. They didn't have a computer. They didn't have an internet, but they would sit at a desk. They'd have papers. They'd have meetings. They'd—you know, they'd also have cigarettes and other stuff, whatever.

But, like, there—it was a—yeah, Don Draper, right? But it was a very different time, and, like, then the internet came about, and people now still come. They now do emails and virtual kind of meetings and whatever. Then now it's at home with, like, Zoom and calls and Teams and all. And so it's like, it's gonna keep evolving. There's gonna be stuff for people to do. It's just the type of things we focus on given, machines will help on other things. It'll be more efficient on other things. We'll focus on different parts as the journey continues. But I'm very bullish on the role that AI can play in just kind of accelerating a lot of things that we're doing—not replacing anything, but I think there's a lot of good to be had.

**Matt 00:11:27** Yeah. The parallel I think about is, like, before the telephone was invented, if you needed to know the guy who could do Morse code if you wanted to actually communicate

across borders or across state lines, right? And then once the telephone was invented, the economy really were the people who were communicators in the orders time because they actually knew what to say, not actually how to build the communication tools.

**Todd 00:11:47** Correct.

**Matt 00:11:47** I think it's a good analogy of where we're going now where people with the ideas, the critical thinking, creativity are gonna be able to use the tools.

**Todd 00:11:55** But aside from the tools, everyone's focused on the efficiency in the industry, and what does it mean? But, like, I think what's fascinating is how people understand what brands matter and they discover brands is going to dramatically change. So I think of when Google and search first came about, when everyone was, like, jockeying for keywords, making sure, like: what does it mean? And like, if someone goes to AI tomorrow and says, "I want a Friday night dinner for my family that's high in protein for \$10, what should I make them?"

**Matt 00:12:27** Hey, give me a recipe. Right.

**Todd 00:12:27** Give me a recipe. "What products come in? What brands do they recommend? If I say, "Hey, what are the best brands for this?", if you're not in that shortlist, you're invisible, right? And so how do you understand how the algorithms scrape the internet to actually grab the different pieces of data? What are you doing for your brand to show up and make sure you're not invisible? There's a whole other side of the coin too because it's how people discover what to do, what not to do is really gonna change dramatically.

**Matt 00:12:52** And where it all connects is, yes, today, people are asking for recipes. Tomorrow, it's, "I'm having 20 people come over, order everything for me." Agent-to-agent.

**Todd 00:13:01** Correct. And it just shows up. And once it knows your preferences, you're in on the—it's like it's the automatic carts and stuff like that. It's like, once you're in on the preferences, then, "Oh, I know you like this brand. I'm gonna reorder that kind of toilet paper, that brand of milk or whatever it is." And so it's all going there very quickly.

**Matt 00:13:18** We'll be right back with the Speed of Culture after a few words from our sponsors.

You know what's interesting? I do a lot of AI coding, a variety of different things. I learned how to be a full-stack engineer. And as I'm building, if I need a tool, Claude will say, "You need this tool." Like, for example, if I need a form, it'll say, "Use Formspre. Here's the link and paste me back the API code." And I'll just listen, I'll go there, I'll enter my credit card—

**Todd 00:13:41** Yeah.

**Matt 00:13:41** —like the API key, and I'll give it back to Claude. And, basically, that company has zero customer acquisition costs. Claude told me to do it, and I did, and—

**Todd 00:13:49** —you did it. Correct.

**Matt 00:13:51** And that's gonna go to CPG. That's gonna go to retail. That's the future of where I believe we're headed.

**Todd 00:13:54** That's what I'm saying. Says, "Oh, you hurt your back. Use this kinda cream on it. You whatever. Like, go click here.". It's like, okay.

**Todd 00:14:01** I guess, that's it.

**Matt 00:14:02** Right.

**Todd 00:14:02** You know, like, it's going there.

**Matt 00:14:04** And I think people are gonna trust it more and more as they put more and more data in there.

**Todd 00:14:07** As it gets better at personalizing, knowing your preference, knowing other things. And so it's a really interesting dynamic for marketers because if that's discoverability, if that's how it works, what you have in the real world—like—is: where is it pulling its data from? And it's also gonna get more sophisticated how it pulls from different real-world and other elements as well, but it's fascinating.

**Matt 00:14:25** Companies like Kraft Heinz, they have world-class brand managers, as you know. But how do you see everything we just talked about changing what you look for in the next brand manager? Like, how are the skills gonna have to evolve?

**Todd 00:14:37** Yeah. I think marketing is one of those things where it's not rocket science at the end of the day. You need people who have the right, obviously, strategic rigor, analytical ability, creativity, you know, sense of an issue—all the kinda core things. But I think the number one skill that's needed today and will still be needed tomorrow is really this idea of agility.

And people who can kinda—like—it's not a formula when you do these kind of things. It's you're thrown into something, and it's gonna change as you go, and you gotta zig and zag with it. And making sure that as you can learn and be agile on how you learn on the job and how you can shift what you do, and so you might have started your career doing this sort of thing, and as it continues to evolve, you'll need to evolve along with it.

**Matt 00:15:15** Right.

**Todd 00:15:16** And that involves with the creative agencies and media partners, and that needs to evolve alongside as well, which, everything right now being disrupted.

**Matt 00:15:23** Speaking of partners, and I've always wondered this. I can't imagine what it must be like to be somebody like you who sits on top of these big brands—first, PepsiCo, and now

you're at Kraft—where everybody wants your time. Everybody wants you to partner with them. Everyone wants your budget. And, ultimately, you have a job to do, right? And you have a lot of things. First of all, I wanna know what that's like. And, B, what does it take for an outside partner to capture your attention, add value, so you're gonna wanna spend time with them, and they'll have an opportunity to work with you?

**Todd 00:15:51** Yeah. I think it's one of those things where, listen, the great thing is we have kinda everything at our disposal. We can call whatever media partner. We can talk to whatever agent, that like—there's no shortage of that. Obviously, the inbound and, you know, even coming to a place like—there's always salespeople calling, cold calls, emails, pitches, and it's like—I mean, I've seen them all. And there's—

**Matt 00:16:12** There'll probably be people waiting outside the door.

**Todd 00:16:13** Exactly. Exactly. And it's like one of those things, and it's like, listen. At—at a company this size and with the brands we're doing, like, we can find you just as easily. Like, a lot of these things, there's very few things that have been like, "I've never heard of this, and let's talk about..." Like, we know the ecosystem of things, and so a lot of it is kinda—

**Matt 00:16:32** —bought, not sold, is what you're saying.

**Todd 00:16:33** Correct. It's one of those things. And so it's one of those—you know, I think the idea of having patience and coming along, you know, it's sometimes it's an interesting thing, but it's not the right time, or we don't have the budget, or our company is not there yet, or it's not a big focus window for us. So it doesn't mean that a lot of these other areas and opportunities that we get pitched all the time aren't important, but we also have to be choiceful on where we spend our media, who we partner with. We only have certain people that we bring in.

And so it's trying to figure out all that. I get that people wanna be a part of a big company, and brands and these turnarounds, which is—

**Matt 00:17:03** They have jobs to do and all that, right?

**Todd 00:17:05** —jobs to do, right? So a lot of times, our media agency will help sift through some of that. A lot of times, it's relationship-based where you've worked with someone, you know, ten years ago, yeah, "Oh, they'd be perfect for this kinda—" so there's no formula to it, but we're always looking to make sure—

**Matt 00:17:20** What's the best way to get on your radar, though? And for the audience listening, it's not spamming Todd. It's not cold calling.

**Todd 00:17:25** Definitely is not.

**Matt 00:17:25** What is the best way to get on your radar?

**Todd 00:17:25** To get on my radar is just by making sure—just, you know, it's about building authentic relationships, obviously, at the end of the day. But I'd say also just—it's mainly need-based on a lot of things. You know, if we're—if you have some great service and you're the best at what you do, but we have no need for it, like—

**Matt 00:17:46** —it doesn't matter. Right.

**Todd 00:17:46** At the end of the day, if we're really looking and it's a time where we're—

**Matt 00:17:50** And you've heard of them.

**Todd 00:17:51** —looking at the name of it. That's it. Right. It's not as deep as people—people think

**Matt 00:17:56** I know. And that's where I think a lot of people don't realize. They have a quota to make, etcetera. And it's like, these guys aren't thinking about this, or these ladies are not thinking about this right now. But do great work, be known for it, get out there. And over time, you build a reputation.

**Todd 00:18:09** You build a reputation, you can connect. Exactly.

**Matt 00:18:12** Yeah. I think in this day and age of Instagram—and I have two kids in college right now, right? And, like, what I see with them is they're on Instagram, they see everybody else, quote-unquote, "killing it," and they're comparing their lives against everyone else's highlight reels, yeah. And because of that, they don't have—kids don't have patience because they want it right now. But you got to where you got to, I got to where, through a lot of ups and downs, and we did things we didn't wanna do for a long time. And you get there, and you can't get there overnight, and you have to build a reputation. There's no exchanging for time and reputation.

**Todd 00:18:41** Totally. It's not just about rationale also. Like, there's a million things I get pitched daily that are—yeah, it's a good idea. Or I—I get it. Yeah, we could use something like that, but we're already doing these other 10 things. Right. That's not the priority, or it doesn't mean it's wrong, you know? Some of it is just, yeah, we're not gonna do that. But it just—for the most part, it's just a lot of it's timing as well.

**Matt 00:19:02** And I would also imagine—and this is kinda moving on to a new point, which is that given the evolution in the food and beverage industry specifically, you are dealing with rising costs and tariffs and all sorts of different externalities that are putting cost pressures on you. So are you more bottom-funnel performance-focused now than ever before? Do you look at—

**Todd 00:19:21** There's a lot. Yeah. I mean, right now, it's a very crazy time in CPG. You have the rise of private label as the economic pressures are coming more and more. You have SNAP

benefits changing with our consumers. You have tariffs coming and going on certain categories creating a lot of back and forth. There's all sorts of consumer trends changing of, like, you know, whether it's GLP-1s, whether it's protein.

So there's a lot going on at once, and then each subcategory has its own thing. And so it's a very dynamic time to be a CPG marketer, and so it's been tricky to kinda navigate. But I think the most important thing is staying connected to our consumer and then making sure, to your point, the lower funnel stuff is gonna be critical, but it's an "and". We need to make sure we do the long term too, because you can't just run a business quarter-to-quarter. Eventually, you're gonna run out of steam if you just keep cutting, cutting, cutting, and going that way too.

**Matt 00:20:12** That's right. So my favorite stat of the week is this year, for the first time ever, the average age of a first-time mom is Gen Z, which means she grew up looking at her TikTok, etcetera. And that's obviously your core consumer, I would imagine, as the mom who's shopping for the household. So does that make you think differently about your media planning? Because I think so many brands look at things like creators as sort of, like, alternative spend at the very bottom. But if your core target didn't grow up with the television, does that flip things?

**Todd 00:20:40** It does. Well, it's interesting as you look at kind of these generational cohorts. And, again, we're doing a lot more, like, psychographic targeting and all that stuff as well. But when you look at channels like discoverability on TikTok versus, you know, someone watching broadcast TV or something like that, you need a bit of a mix of it all because most people use multiple channels. But it does really change, you know, as you think of your media mix, as you think of what creative, you wanna be native to that kind of media and how you build it.

And it's just interesting as you look at different cohorts and how they consume data. This is a—a great story. I remember when—so I'm a big Lakers fan, and so is one of my sons. My oldest son is a big Lakers fan. And I remember once I was talking with my dad and my son, and we were recapping about a game—a Lakers game. And what was very clear as we were going through the discussion is we had the same information, but a little bit of a different context because we saw it from a different vantage point.

**Matt 00:21:32** Interesting.

**Todd 00:21:32** My dad watched the whole game. I watched the highlights on SportsCenter, and my son saw the highlights on TikTok—a couple dunks, a couple three-pointers. And we were having a conversation about this critical moment of the game that was, like, one of these, like, marquee things, but the context around it had changed because we'd all experienced it very differently. You know, seeing the dynamics of the whole game, you can see all the different back and forth. Seeing kind of the highlights, you get, "Okay, I understand a little bit of the CliffNotes of the storytelling." And then on TikTok, you just—yeah, "So that was a crazy dunk. Oh my God, I can't believe he made the buzzer-beater." Can fly.

**Matt 00:22:06** Fantasy team.

**Todd 00:22:06** Yeah. But that's also how my sons get their information—

**Matt 00:22:11** It's a great idea.

**Todd 00:22:11** —directly from social. But it's like, when you think of that lens, the same information is happening, but you have different snippets of how you digest and process it, which I think as a marketer, you need to understand that viewpoint is gonna be very different depending on who you're talking to, and understanding and empathizing with that.

**Matt 00:22:27** It's almost the music analogy. Like, your dad listened to the whole album, you listened to the song, your son saw a clip of the song on TikTok.

**Todd 00:22:33** That's it. Correct. He saw it in the context of a TikTok dance or something as opposed to the artist. He doesn't even know, like, who did the original song. Right. So it's all of that, but that's exactly right.

**Matt 00:22:42** I mean, where is it gonna go next—that people's agents are gonna watch the game for them? Like, who knows?

**Todd 00:22:47** Probably it's gonna hit your agent and say, "Here's what you need to know. Here's your stats of the people you follow or like." It's crazy.

**Matt 00:22:52** So what's that mean for your content strategy?

**Todd 00:22:55** Yeah. We need to be talking to different ways to different cohorts depending on the medium, right? So for certain brands that need more linear TV, and reach is really important, again, of course, you can get scale and tonnage, and we just partnered with the NFL as a big strategic partner of ours across over 20 brands. So that's gonna be a critical way both on broadcast, to online, to in-store, to all those different things. But, again, we need to tailor the message. It's marketing 101. You need to know your audience, know how to reach them, but also know what's gonna resonate with them.

**Matt 00:23:24** Yeah. We just had, um, a couple months ago, Tim Ellis on.

**Todd 00:23:26** Yeah.

**Matt 00:23:27** He was fantastic. Former actor, which—like you, he walks in the room—

**Todd 00:23:30** —he's got that. Yeah, totally.

**Matt 00:23:32** —so, yeah, the NFL obviously is incredibly powerful. Arguably, it's the last bastion of live viewing. So tell me about the partnership, you know, why you thought that was a great place to invest in for your brands.

**Todd 00:23:42** Yeah. I mean, listen. The NFL is a powerhouse, right? To have that many fans... you know, you look at live sports is where all the kinda consumers' really high engagement scale. One of the last places you can actually reach them. NFL is the top of the mountain of that here in North America.

And I obviously know a ton of folks at the NFL, having spent years at PepsiCo running the Super Bowl halftime show and the partnership there with them and all of that stuff. And so coming to Kraft Heinz, when you think of how endemic a lot of our brands are to the game-day experience—whether it's at a tailgate outside the stadium, in your home as you're doing viewing parties, all that stuff—it just seemed like such a natural fit.

And so I've been working on this partnership with the league. So we're very excited that we're partnering with the NFL across more than 20 of our brands. It's a five-year partnership, global in nature. And there's a lot of really exciting things. So we just kicked it off at the NFL draft, which was in Pittsburgh.

**Matt 00:24:34.** Thousands of people showed up.

**Todd 00:24:35** It was crazy. I think over the three days, over 800,000, they said. Day one was over 300,000.

**Matt 00:24:40** That just shows the fandom and why you're investing in it to begin with.

**Todd 00:24:43** It's insane. At the draft, like, nothing happens. The guy gets out and reads the picks—like, it's amazing. But so in Pittsburgh, the birthplace of Heinz, we did a lot of really great stuff. We had this thing called Mr. 57, where the fifty-seventh pick on day two... I've got a lifetime supply of Heinz. I have an endorsement deal with Heinz and a big, nice red jacket.

And so there's just a lot of fun things, just taking over the city of Pittsburgh, but it shows just the power of when you use a property like the NFL well. But it's not just about fan engagement; it's really using it—back to what I know we were talking about earlier—about full funnel, right? So everything from how it shows up in retail when retailers are building their displays for Super Bowl or for fall football, our packaging. You know, do we do limited-time offer products and custom packaging to speak to football fans? Our advertising and our media buy, obviously, and how we'd use thematic kind of stuff all the way down to a lot of the lower funnel things where we can also online and whatnot. So it's a great property across the board that we're really excited to partner.

**Matt 00:25:40** Yeah. And what a lot of people don't realize is that the NFL—is—if you look at the top 100 most-watched TV shows, the NFL is, like, 95 of them, but not just amongst male viewers, but female viewers as well.

**Todd 00:25:51** All of the above. It's an anomaly. And so it'll—it's great. We're really excited to partner with them and do some really fun stuff.

**Matt 00:25:58** The other reason why I think the NFL is so powerful is in a world that's increasingly polarized, yeah, when you go to an NFL game, it's one of the only real unifying moments that you feel in America, unfortunately, right now, where everyone is cheering for the same thing. And to have your brand be a part of that, I think, is really powerful.

**Todd 00:26:14** And our brand is an endemic part of it. They're all eating a hot dog with ketchup on it. They're having a lot of our things while they're at home watching the game on TV. And so it felt like such a natural fit, and we're really excited to take this partnership to the next level, obviously, in the fall and as we continue to move forward.

**Matt 00:26:30** Awesome. Anything else that you're working on that you're excited about moving forward in terms of campaign-type work?

**Todd 00:26:34** Yeah. I think across the board listen. A number of our brands are always launching new campaigns, and we have new big creative ideas coming out from each of them. I think one of the big broader themes I'd say across the board as you look across our portfolio is really trying to drive deeper relevance and connection of these brands with culture in different ways. And so whether it's through sports like the NFL, whether it's through music like we did with DJ Mustard a while back with all the stuff we did, there's always a lot of these fun areas where we can find these brands that, again, are just iconic brands that everyone has in their pantry and find a way to connect them on a deeper emotional level with consumers.

**Matt 00:27:09** Contemporize them, make them relevant for today's consumer.

**Todd 00:27:12** Totally. Totally. We've been having a lot of fun with that.

**Matt 00:27:15** Very cool. I'll have to check those out. We'll— yeah. Look out for you at NFL stadiums across the country.

**Todd 00:27:18** I love it.

**Matt 00:27:19** I can't wait for football season to start.

**Todd 00:27:21** Let's go. Let's go.

**Matt 00:27:22** So shifting gears as we wrap up here, would love to hear a little bit about your journey. We have a lot of younger listeners on the podcast, all of which I'm gonna give your phone number to after—

**Todd 00:27:30** Of course. Please.

**Matt 00:27:32** But. they wanna end up in the CMO seat or leadership seat one day. What are some things you think they need to focus on to future-proof themselves in this world?

**Todd 00:27:42** I think it's really on—a lot of it is everyone's so focused on getting next and getting what—moving and all that stuff. I think not enough people focus on: just do great work. Just focus on, like, the thing in front of you right now and become that indispensable, invaluable asset to your team. A lot of people are moving around very—and, again, and I come from a different generation.

I spent almost eighteen years at PepsiCo, which sounds unheard of, but it's because they rotated me into so many different roles at the time and stuff. And a lot of people say, "Oh, I'm gonna spend a year here, and then here, and then..." and a lot of the places where they wanna work also might not be the type of thing. It might be a cool company. It might be something, but it's the different kinda quality of work of what they're actually doing in the day-to-day might not be what's needed to get to that seat at the end as well. And so they're focusing on such a small niche or area of the thing. And so making sure to push and kinda grow and expand your remit of what you're trying to do and pushing yourself not to just go deep and narrow, but to kinda go a little bit wide and explore, especially at the early days when it's a lower cost to say, "I'm gonna try this." Do this, try that. What was great about a place like PepsiCo where they would rotate you every so often into new things is you would know what you loved, and you would also know what you didn't love. And you would also still learn a different side of the business even though you'd say, "Okay, now that I'm at a higher level, I've gotten that broader breadth of experience to bring with me to my new job."

**Matt 00:29:01** Yeah. It's fantastic. And when you look back at your career, what are some of the things you think you did right along the way to put yourself in this position?

**Todd 00:29:09** Like, a couple things. I kinda went with the flow and trusted a little bit as the company would move me at PepsiCo into new roles and new opportunities and stretch me into new spaces and stuff. But I think I also have this mantra, of this point of view, of: you make the role, the role doesn't make you. And so a lot of people take a job description, so, "This is what I'm supposed to do, and here's my job, and this is the five things that are being asked of me," or this other person before me did it, and, "I need to fit into this box."

At the end of the day, you're in the role. Take an enterprising view of how the role sits in the organization. Obviously, you gotta do your job description. But how you would approach that role is gonna be very different from how somebody else would approach that role and how the next person would approach that role. And so the most consistent thing about that job is that you are in that role. Like, you're the only person who is bringing yourself to each of the jobs that you're in. You're the most consistent thread to each of them. So what is that approach?

And so I've always brought a very entrepreneurial spirit, kind of this enterprising view of being consumer-led and kind of being a pain in the ass at times as well of, like, wanting to kinda say, "Hey, I know you want me to do this, but have we looked at this?", and how you pitch your leadership and say, "Let's figure out how to grow."

**Matt 00:30:16** —want today, right? That's what you're looking for to be.

**Todd 00:30:18** I want people with initiative, people who will drive and who will push—obviously, who will do the job asked of them at the end of the day—but we're not looking for people just to be executors and running the play and put the X's and the O's out there. Like, you want people who can think, who can push, who understand the bigger chessboard going on, and can figure out those right pushes and things to do.

And I think that's one of the things, if I look back at my career, that I was very successful of figuring out how to be an entrepreneur at a big public Fortune 50 company, almost treating the company as the PE or the VC funding all the things that I wanted to do as I've built new brands. I've launched new products. I've tried new campaigns, done things that have kinda pushed a little bit more, that I would encourage people to kinda bring that mindset—that challenger mindset and that entrepreneurial point of view to their company.

**Matt 00:31:06** I love that. It's really inspiring. We're gonna leave it at that. This has been great discussion. I think that we have so much to learn from people like you who've been through so many different brands, so many different opportunities and situations, and have come out the other side the way you have. Huge fan. Can't wait to see what's next for you and the great brands you oversee in 2026. So thanks for joining us.

**Todd 00:31:24** Thanks so much. Happy to be here.

**Matt 00:31:25** Absolutely. On behalf of Suzy and Adweek team, thank you again to Todd Kaplan, Chief Marketing Officer of Kraft Heinz North America, for joining us today. Be sure to subscribe, rate, and review the Speed of Culture podcast on your favorite podcast platform. We're here live in South Beach. See you soon. Bye-bye.

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 Adweek's podcasts by visiting [adweek.com/podcast](https://adweek.com/podcast). To find out more about Suzy, head to [suzy.com](https://suzy.com). And make sure to search for the Speed of Culture in Apple Podcasts, Spotify, 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.