



Navigating the *Beauty Marketplace*



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Inside insights from top beauty executives on how to win on Amazon, DTC, and everywhere in between.

At Pattern, we believe the best strategies come from those doing the work. At this year's Accelerate Conference, we sat down with three standout leaders in beauty to talk about how their brands are navigating today's rapidly changing retail environment. From Amazon dominance to DTC loyalty and the shifting sands of CAC, our panel brought real-world experience and smart strategies to the table.





Meet our *Panelists*



KATIE



MITCH



JAMIE



The *Chat*

KATIE

I've been in eCommerce since the dawn of time—or at least it feels that way. Back in 2002, I was working on the Lancôme brand at L'Oréal and helped launch their first-ever global eCommerce site. That's when I first brought up Amazon as a serious opportunity. *We called it “Project Amazing” and pitched it to the CEO.* The response? A very polite merci—but not much else.

Fast forward to today, and Amazon is a must-have channel for beauty. In later roles, I've overseen both DTC and Amazon strategy—one brand I worked with had Amazon driving 70% of total sales. I've also led eCommerce for Kiehl's and other specialty brands, and it's been incredible to watch how much this space has evolved. Beauty brands can't sit this one out. It's time to embrace the channel and build smart, integrated strategies that meet customers wherever they shop.

JAMIE

I'm with Dr. Squatch, a men's natural personal care brand known for bold creative and a distinct point of view. *We started as a DTC-first brand and found significant early growth by leaning into strong storytelling and direct customer relationships.*

When I joined Dr. Squatch, Amazon was viewed as more of a necessary evil something we needed to do, but didn't want to divert too much attention from our DTC business. That mindset has completely shifted. We now see Amazon as a major growth lever and a valuable place to build brand presence, not just drive transactions. It's an exciting time for beauty and personal care brands to think more strategically about how marketplaces fit into a larger omnichannel vision.



MITCH

I'm one of the co-founders of Dime Beauty, a clean, non-toxic skincare, fragrance, and beauty brand primarily focused on women—*though yes, I use the products too, and I'll credit them for the glow. In addition to Dime, I've co-founded several other* eCommerce brands.

Dime started as a 100% DTC brand, and we were all about owning the customer relationship. But as the landscape shifted, we had to accept the reality: customers shop everywhere. That's why we expanded into marketplaces like Amazon and other retail channels, making omnichannel strategy crucial to our growth.

Now that you've met our panelists, it's time to dive into the Q&A.

We're excited to hear from these industry experts, who have a wealth of experience navigating the complexities of omnichannel retail.

From Amazon to DTC, we're about to uncover some valuable insights and strategies that can help brands thrive in today's fast-evolving beauty marketplace.

Let's jump in!



Dime Beauty started as an extremely successful DTC brand. So what led to the decision to take your brand onto marketplaces like Amazon?

MITCH

We launched Dime in 2018 as a side hustle and found our stride in 2020, largely through influencer marketing. That worked—until Meta's algorithm changed in early 2023 and wiped out a big piece of our performance. We had to diversify fast. Amazon was our first move. At first, we didn't do much to push it because we wanted to own the customer. But traction grew. Consumers changed how they shop. Amazon's convenience became undeniable, and it's now our fastest-growing channel.



How has your thinking evolved around marketplaces as part of a beauty brand strategy?

KATIE

For beauty brands, Amazon used to be the third rail—don't touch it. But now, companies like Shiseido are leaning in, and *Amazon's even rolled out premium beauty programs to meet brands halfway*. The key is: you can preserve brand equity on Amazon. It's not the discount bin. You just need to manage your presence, protection, and performance. Once brands understand the mechanics, the hesitation starts to disappear.

JAMIE

Our thinking shifted big time. At Dr. Squatch, our off-Amazon marketing drives serious lift on Amazon. There's a real halo effect. Now we're building the brand holistically and leaning into an omnichannel model. If someone finds you at *Walmart and then wants to reorder on Amazon—great*. You need to be there for them, wherever they shop.



Let's talk Walmart. People say Walmart is where Amazon was 10 years ago in beauty. How should brands approach it today?

JAMIE

It depends on where you are in your journey. Walmart can be a lift—just like Amazon used to be. At first, we were cautious about cannibalizing DTC sales, and the platform felt early-stage. But now, it's becoming table stakes. Even if Walmart.com isn't a huge revenue driver today, you don't want to be caught flat-footed if it breaks out in the next 2–4 years. Build a strategy. Start testing.



How do you maintain a consistent omnichannel strategy while still leaning into marketplaces?

MITCH

It's a huge focus for us right now. In the early days, we'd chase any shiny object. But now, we're more strategic. Ulta has been a great partner because it fits our "approachable luxury" brand positioning. Each channel offers something unique—DTC gives us loyalty and data, *Amazon gives Prime convenience*, and Ulta gives the in-store experience. We try to balance all three without losing sight of our brand identity. Measurement is tough, especially with limited data from Amazon and Ulta. So now, we zoom out: is our active customer base growing across channels? That's our north star.



Customer acquisition costs are rising across the board. How are you thinking about CAC and attribution across marketplaces and channels?

JAMIE

CACs on Amazon have gone way down for us as brand awareness has gone up. *Our off-platform media (like Meta) boosts our Amazon sales.* We use media mix modeling (MMM) to better understand how our channels influence each other. There's no perfect solution, but MMM gives us a clearer picture of how media spend impacts total revenue.

KATIE

Totally agree—it's all connected now. You can't look at performance in silos. One of my favorite early roles was at a small company called Canapé, and the GM told me, *"Grow the whole pie."* I love that. Be customer-centric and channel-agnostic. Your shopper doesn't think in channels, and neither should you.



Let's talk brand protection. With knockoffs and resellers running rampant, how do you maintain control and defend a premium position?

MITCH

That fear kept us off Amazon for a while. We use unique branding—black and gold metallic packaging—to help stand out. And we've been lucky not to face direct knockoffs, but resellers? Yeah, those are annoying. We work with an agency that helps with takedowns and enforcement. At the end of the day, if your brand is strong across all touchpoints—DTC, Amazon, Ulta—that equity carries over and helps drown out the noise.

KATIE

You can't knock off the full brand experience. Rich content, storytelling, and consistency win. If you own the narrative and show up as the *trusted, authoritative seller*, customers will choose you—even in a sea of cheaper options.



Balancing Short-Term Performance with Long-Term Brand Building on Marketplaces

KATIE

It's a real balance. Earlier I asked who in the room is actually having these conversations—because it's critical to get the right stakeholders involved. You need cross-functional alignment and clarity on what growth looks like, and what you're willing to invest to achieve it.

Marketplaces like Amazon don't operate in a silo—*your omnichannel strategy matters*. If you go on sale at Ulta, Amazon's going to scrape that pricing. Then you're dealing with blocked buy boxes, pricing whack-a-mole—it's a constant dance.

So the answer is alignment. *It starts with leadership, a clear brand voice, and a plan that respects both the brand and the channel dynamics.*

MITCH

We bootstrapped our brand, so there wasn't a big budget for brand marketing early on. It was all about conversion.

I'm more on the performance side, and my co-founder handles brand and product, so we had that constant push-pull. Over time, I've come to really respect the long game. Awareness efforts might not give you instant ROI, but over time they reduce your TAC and help build sustainable growth.

JAMIE

Yeah, I completely agree. We've had to ensure our retail, DTC, and marketplace teams are in lockstep. It's about trade-offs and recognizing that you're not just optimizing for channel KPIs—you're optimizing for the business. That often requires a culture shift.

We've had to make decisions like shifting spend from brand to performance—or vice versa—based on what's needed to drive full-funnel growth. Internal alignment is everything.



What are the top levers for driving growth on marketplaces?

MITCH

For Amazon specifically, we saw a step change when we started actually feeding the beast with marketing dollars.

It started with PDP optimization—our pages were up, but they weren't optimized. We brought in a team to tighten up keywords and backend content, and that's what kicked off our organic growth. That flywheel is real.

With Ulta, it's definitely been brand awareness—events, partnerships. It was hard to spend on those at first, but we've seen the downstream lift.

KATIE

My recent work has been about moving premium brands from unmanaged *3P chaos to a controlled 3P Premium Beauty setup. And the results have been massive—25x growth in some cases*—because you control the experience.

Amazon had to adjust for beauty. They created the 1PE model, then realized premium brands still struggled with counterfeits and gray market sellers. So they built the Premium Beauty program. Yes, it's expensive—but it gives you brand control. And that's worth it when customer experience matters.

JAMIE

Totally agree—*getting listings right is just the price of entry*. The big unlock for us was switching media vendors and really dialing in PPC.

It might sound basic, but good Amazon media buyers are rare. Once we cracked that, we unlocked double-digit growth. Now we're thinking ahead: how do we scale efficiently, resource smarter, and stay ahead of changes in how marketplaces operate?



What do you see is the Future of Marketplaces for Beauty and Personal Care?

JAMIE

Brand has become a moat. A few years ago, anyone could launch a white-label product and win. That's no longer true. Big brands are now all in, and challenger brands are investing in branded experiences.

Look at MaryRuth's—they've built a store page on Amazon that feels like a DTC site. *That builds trust.* That's the future brands that show up with polish and consistency across channels.

MITCH

Consistency is huge. But also, adaptability. *We've changed our approach multiple times, and now we're going deep on TikTok Shop.*

It's evolving daily, and like Amazon, they reward early adopters. Getting in early gives you leverage with the algorithm and visibility tools. If you're not nimble, you'll fall behind.

KATIE

Absolutely. And TikTok Shop can't live in your social media team—it's a marketplace. It needs supply chain rigor, marketplace ops, and brand stewardship.

There's a lot of sexy marketing talk, but if you can't deliver the product or control the experience, none of it works. More brands are realizing this and starting to treat these platforms like core sales channels, not side hustles.

JAMIE

Yes—and internally, we had to break down silos. We pulled in growth, marketplaces, and product teams to get TikTok Shop off the ground. No one team could own it alone.

It forced us into a new operating model, which honestly has been a positive thing—especially as more platforms start acting like marketplaces.



What do you see is the Future of Marketplaces for Beauty and Personal Care?

MITCH

Same—we're vetting TikTok Shop agencies now. We tried to patch it together with existing resources, but we've learned you need specialists.

Every channel wants a deep investment. And unless you commit, you're just doing the bare minimum. That's not going to move the needle.





How Do You Handle Customer Service Across Marketplaces?

JAMIE

The best setup I've seen is a centralized customer service team handling all channels. That way, messaging stays consistent.

Whether someone's asking about ingredients on Amazon or TikTok, your brand voice needs to be the same.

Outsourcing can be a great option—as long as your brand voice is clearly defined and trained into the team.

KATIE

Totally. I've even trained partner customer service teams. It's that important. And you should also treat your customer service team as a goldmine of insight.

They hear what customers are saying in real time—use that feedback to inform marketing, product, even inventory decisions. It's the same mindset I had back in the arts world—I'd talk to the box office team to understand what the audience actually cared about. Ecomm is no different.



TikTok Shop



TikTok Shop

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Final Advice for Marketplace Leaders

KATIE

Don't give up. Be relentless. Trust your gut, but also your data and your customer.

If you're passionate about the brand, that comes through. Combine that with rigor and resilience, and you'll figure it out.

MITCH

My advice? Be willing to adapt. *Expectations rarely match reality in this space.* Marketplaces evolve constantly—if you're not evolving with them, you're falling behind.

JAMIE

I'd add: build a team that's actually great at marketplaces. You need merchandising, ops, media, and analytics all humming together.

Amazon is unforgiving run out of stock once, and you're paying for it for weeks. So get the systems and talent in place, then rinse and repeat.



Ready to Scale? Let's Talk Strategy.

A huge thank you to our panelists for sharing their wisdom, wins, and hard-earned lessons.

Whether you're scaling your presence on Amazon, building brand trust on TikTok Shop, or simply trying to keep your customer experience consistent—these insights are a powerful reminder that success in marketplaces is a cross-functional, long-term play.

Pattern helps leading brands take control of their marketplace strategy—from smarter operations to better performance and sustainable brand growth.

Let's chat about how we can help you sell faster, smarter, and win big on every channel.