



EPISODE 2

Driving paint trends with Behr's Color of the Year

Host: Alan Hart, leader in marketing and customer strategy, Deloitte Consulting LLP

Guest: Andy Lopez, SVP, Head of North America, Behr Paint

Alan Hart:

Are you ready to go beyond the basics of marketing? I'm Alan Hart and this is Marketing Beyond where we talk about the questions that spark change and share ideas that challenge the status quo. Join us as we explore the future of marketing and its endless potential.

Today on the show, we got Andy Lopez. He's the senior vice president and head of North American marketing at Behr Paint, and he's the youngest global head of marketing for Behr in more than 75-year history. He leads the brand marketing department overseeing global B2C and B2B brand strategy, creative, media, PR, design, digital, innovation, consumer experience and research. And Behr is one of the most trusted paint brands in the US and Canada.

On the show today we talk about his history, where he got his start in the advertising world, how he made his way to Behr. We talk a lot about their program of "Color of the Year." How does it work? How does it work from a marketing standpoint? How do they come up with these colors and the names for the colors to boot? And then we'll go a little bit further in talking about how they're seeing success in social media and the partnership that they have with The Home Depot. That and much more with Andy Lopez.

Andy, welcome to the show.

Marketing Beyond | Episode 2

Andy Lopez: Thanks Alan. Glad to be here. Thanks for having me.

Alan Hart: Yeah, I'm looking forward to talking about paint and color ...

Andy Lopez: Exciting topic (laughing).

Alan Hart: I know very exciting, especially if you like decorating or changing the look of things around you. Before we go there, I normally try to get something from people that's personal story, a fun fact, a hobby, but I hear you have three kids under the age of 8. So you probably have time for none of that.

Andy Lopez: Yeah, exactly. My interests usually lie within whatever is that of interest to my kids and whether that's on the hockey rink or on the soccer field, or I recently actually just signed them all up for jiu jitsu, which has been pretty fun and exciting. I get asked a lot how you do it? How do you manage what you're able to manage from a professional perspective while having three kids under the age of 8 and I'm not saying my situation is more difficult than others, but I think one thing that gets me through the day is every morning I wake up around 4 AM, I'm able to get a quick exercise in and then I come back and I'm usually able to, at minimum, squeeze one if not two cups of coffee and catch up on some email news. And then, you know, I think about the movie Jumanji when they are all sitting in the living room and they hear that stampede come in—and that's pretty much my daily is all three kids usually wake up at the same amount of time, come in, that's ready for breakfast, packing lunches, and it becomes a little bit hectic. But that little bit of time, that little small window of opportunity, that's what gets me through the day and that's what makes me come back the next day. That's how I get through it.

Alan Hart: I'm reflecting on your choices of activities for the kids, and I'm actually a little scared for you. So you first gave them sticks with hockey. Then you gave them balls with soccer. Now, they're going to take you down.

Andy Lopez: They are going to take me down, exactly.

Alan Hart: You live dangerously.

Andy Lopez: Yeah, exactly.

Alan Hart: All right, from kids to career where did you get your start in your career and you are now the senior vice president and head of North America marketing at Behr Paint.

Andy Lopez: Yes. So I started my career in the advertising industry. And right after college I got a job at Saatchi & Saatchi working on the Toyota business. And then grew up in the advertising industry, before I came to work at Behr paint. And so, through that experience, I was able to not only work at amazing brands like Toyota, but also really diversified my background in different industries, worked at smaller shops, worked at larger shops. And then found this opportunity at Behr to just continue to grow and expand my career and challenge myself in a different way, while still hanging on to something that I was passionate about, which was the creative and strategic process of being able to take brands to a, to a new level.

So I started my career at Behr almost eight years ago. And through those eight years I've always been within the brand marketing space, and I just continue to be able to elevate my role and take on additional scope. And last year I elevated to heading up the entire marketing department. And so, been super rewarding and exciting to just take on new challenges and do some exciting stuff for the brand.

Alan Hart: Love it. Love it. And unless my listeners are living in a country that you don't reach or living under a rock, they probably already know what Behr, as a paint company does, but maybe you can give us just a like a sense of the size and scope of the business.

Andy Lopez: Yeah, definitely. So Behr is a nationally recognized architectural paint business that has been around for over 75 years, and we employ around 4,000 people across the United States and in other parts of the globe, across multiple departments. Not just marketing, but we have R&D, we have an amazing sales team, finance, product, everything that you can think of from a manufacturing company.

Marketing Beyond | Episode 2

And so, within the 75 years, over the last 45 years we've been an exclusive brand at The Home Depot. And so that has been an amazing trajectory of being there when The Home Depot opened its first stores in Atlanta. And we really have just grown beyond just paints. So a lot of people know us for interior paint products, but we also have stain products and we've expanded into other adjacent products like spray paint and interior stain. And so, we've been around for 75 years. We are the most trusted paint brand in America. And so it's been an amazing brand to work for, and I think that's what makes it so exciting to be at the top of the marketing team and being able to drive this brand forward.

Alan Hart: I think the thing that caught my eye was your recent release of "color of the year." And maybe wonder like why did Behr decide to begin this kind of annual color of the year program in itself?

Andy Lopez: Yeah, no, that's a great question. So color of the year has been almost a table stake now for our industry and really you know a way to talk about color in a big way. So we started our color of the year about seven to eight years ago. And the reason why we started it to begin with was really to make it easier for consumers to feel confident about the color that they're putting on their walls. It's a pretty big decision. It's an exciting one to be able to transform your space with a different color, but it could be a little bit intimidating. And so, that really is what drove us to launch color of the year, was to help give people that validation that, hey, this is a trending color. We've done our research. We've been able to do the leg work to make it easier for you to feel more confident about transforming your space with a specific color. And so that is how we launched it and then we just continued to evolve that over the years with the goal always being to help consumers feel good about the color that they're putting on their wall and using in their space.

Alan Hart: It is definitely exciting. Like, how do you choose the right color of the year? It is a very stressful process for me anyway.

Andy Lopez: Yeah, definitely. It's a collective and collaborative effort, and it's pretty iterative process. And so, obviously without giving too much away, we start really looking globally across trends that are happening across the globe in different industries. So we're not just looking in home decor—but we're looking in fashion and tech and auto and just understanding what is resonating. We are also looking outside of the United States, we're in Europe, and understanding what is some of the trends that are happening that will eventually hit the United States across some of those industries. And then we partner closely with The Home Depot and they have an amazing trends and design team that look at designs and trends that are happening across other categories obviously outside of paint. And so, we work with them. And then we do some consumer validation as well. And so before we go to market and before we really put the stake in the ground on one specific color, we want to make sure that it's a color that people would be able to use in their space, and it's evoking the emotion that we're trying to convey through our messaging about how this color can really transform the space. And so that's some of the process that it takes over time, in order to really come out with a color of the year to again make consumers feel better about using it in their space.

Alan Hart: I love that. And not only do you come out with the color, the visual, if you will, but you got to name these colors too. How does—where do the names come from? They seem very inventive.

Andy Lopez: Exactly. It's so funny, because we always get that question. People are very interested in how we come up with the names for paint colors. And so we have some legacy color names and we have some names that we've changed over time, but really we like to make sure that it's relevant within culture. We look at specific macro and micro moments that are happening and we want to make sure that the name feels relevant and relatable to the color that they're looking for. But it also is able to evoke the emotion that we want them to feel by using this color in their space, whether that's interior or exterior. And so, that's how we go through the processes. We look at whatever the color is, we start there and understand the hue family. And then we figure out some of the trends that are happening of how we came up with that color and maybe there's some language there of the way that we describe it that could help create the name. But then we look at moments that are happening and things that are happening in language that people are using to describe different things or different feelings or different moods. So

Marketing Beyond | Episode 2

we try to make it as relevant as possible, and something that would also be a little timeless. So people would understand the rhyme and reason of why that color that they're choosing has the name that it has.

Alan Hart: Love it. Interesting. It's not that different and in many cases it is different, but it's from naming brands like a new product or new brands very similar type of process.

Andy Lopez: A lot of it is such an iterative process, so I don't think anyone can say whether they're naming a new product, a new brand or even a color that they're single-handedly doing that themselves. It is something that takes an effort of a team. And really, that idea of great ideas can come from anywhere. And we don't have just one person doing it. It's really a team effort.

Alan Hart: It's a huge effort. I'm curious as you think about color of the year, it's definitely a moment, if you will, that kicked off, I'm sure quite a bit of work for you guys, but how do you think about it in terms of driving both interest and purchase across the paint category?

Andy Lopez: Definitely, because we've done it now for the last eight years, we have been able to build some equity in where people are now looking forward to this announcement, and they expect it from us. And so that has been nice to build that over time. And so, then since we have that expectation and that excitement, we really want to make sure that we're evolving and continuing to change it. And again, it always is grounded in the idea that we want to help people feel great about the color that they're choosing to put on their wall, but what we tried to do is launch it in different ways, both to our media—when we do a large PR event and really immerse them in the experience of how we came up with the color and how the color will transform the space of the readers that are reading their magazine or publication. And then what we want to do is bring that same type of feeling, that same type of experience, to our consumers and our professionals and our designers. So we have different campaigns in order to reach that specific audience.

And so for this color of the year specifically, we've been able to launch it with the media and create a very immersive experience to really bring the color Rumors. So for those who don't know that are listening Rumors is our 2025 color of the year. And so it is a deep ruby red. And it's the first time we've come out with a shade of red for color of the year. So that was new and that was exciting for our brand.

And then in addition to that, as many brands are doing, they're finding ways and relevant ways to tap into a younger generation that is starting for our home improvement space, buying homes and looking for ways to transform their homes. And a way that we were able to connect with them in a different way that we haven't done before is through a partnership with a nail polish company called Olive and June. So we were able to create a custom co-branded nail polish with our 2025 color of the year Rumors, and launched that around the same time across our social channels. And so that was a really exciting way for us to, again, do something new in the space, be able to reach a new audience but still stay very authentic to our brand and the idea of color and just really looking at ways that you can get inspiration from anywhere to really drive that color leadership for our brand.

Alan Hart: That's interesting. And I like the application outside of your core business. People, they pick a color—they pick a color because they like it and they want to potentially flaunt it.

Andy Lopez: Yeah, exactly. And that's the thing ... and that's why when we're picking our color of the year, it's not just about home décor. Because to your point, the way people are getting inspired today. There so many ways people get inspired, whether they're traveling or they're on social or just real, life experiences where they want to be able to take that inspiration and be able to apply it to their home and create an experience that they can continue to get that ... evoke that same feeling that they got where they initially got that inspiration. And so that's why we always look for ways that are not just within the home but outside of the home, whether that's collaborative partnerships or different ways that we can bring color to life.

Alan Hart: I know within the social channels you've had a lot of success on TikTok and just wondered like how are you achieving that success? You are outpacing other brands, if you will.

Marketing Beyond | Episode 2

Andy Lopez: Yeah, definitely. And social as you are very familiar with and I'm sure a lot of your listeners are very familiar with has been a very evolving platform for brands and with new and emerging platforms coming into the space. And then as you're just catching up to how to best deliver content and advertise on one, a new one pops up—that this is the way you're going to reach this new audience. And so you have to adapt and evolve, and really because there's so much content out there and so many ways for people to engage with your brand.

The way we did it was really just to focus on where we felt like the prioritization was for our brand to be able to get out there and provide the inspiration that we wanted to provide and really motivate people to take on more DIY painting projects.

And so, we really homed in on partnering with platforms like TikTok to be able to create something new for the platform that hasn't been done before. And so three years ago, we launched what we call To DIY For, which is a home improvement series that's exclusive on the TikTok platform, that we really partnered with them in order to launch. And what it does is it's a way for us to showcase a series of content that people can watch. Where they are able to learn different how-to projects, on how to use products from our brand to really help them transform their space. And through that we've been able to significantly grow our following and really grow our engagement across the platform.

And it's been very successful—that we actually just wrapped our third season of it. And so those are the types of initiatives and campaigns and focus areas that we've been able to do in order to really be successful across social and specifically on some of those platforms like TikTok.

Alan Hart: Congrats on the third season. That's great.

Andy Lopez: Thank you.

Alan Hart: You've mentioned Home Depot a couple of times and you have a strong partnership there. How does that partnership between Behr and Home Depot help elevate your marketing?

Andy Lopez: Yeah, definitely. We have an incredible partnership with The Home Depot really across all facets of our business. And, as I mentioned, it's been a partnership that has really been since the inception of Home Depot, 45 years ago. And so, within that, specifically from a marketing perspective, we really look at their team as an extension of our team.

And so, we really try to strategize and make sure that we have collective marketing efforts that are really going to engage our DIY and professional audience, the way that we feel like is going to truly make an impact and help grow our businesses.

And so, I would say that has been, you know, a lot of times, I think, from a manufacturing perspective you don't necessarily always have that relationship with the retailer. But the one that we have with Home Depot is special. I think that comes through with a lot of our collective marketing efforts. They're a huge part of our color of the year initiative. We partner closely, as I mentioned, with their décor and design team in order to select the color of the year and then also bring it to life and be able to sustain that not only through the efforts that we're doing from a marketing perspective, but even leveraging their platforms, like, across their Orange Apron Media network, being able to leverage that platform as a way to bring color to life in a big way as well, and to tap into some of those strategic audiences that we talked about.

Alan Hart: You've got a huge platform here, both a great partnership with Home Depot, but also the color of the year as an annual event, if you will.

Andy Lopez: Yeah, exactly. Something that you have to look forward to for the next one.

Alan Hart: Yeah, exactly, exactly. A lot of extensions. And really interested in the stuff that you're doing on TikTok as well with the DIY series, I should say.

Marketing Beyond | Episode 2

Andy Lopez: Yeah, exactly.

Alan Hart: One of the things I love to do is to get to know you a little bit better as well. So I've got a series of questions I ask everyone that comes on the show. My favorite one to ask is has there been an experience of your past that defines or makes up who you are today?

Andy Lopez: Yeah, that's a great question and a way to really reflect. And I think there's a lot of experiences that have happened to define who I am today. But I would say to just go back to the very beginning and talking about the kids. I think, having my first child would probably be the one thing that really defines who I am today and has really transformed me in a big way. And I would say a way for the better as well. And I think prior to having kids, I think, if you ask me this question, it would be my work really defined me. And I think after having kids it's not that my work doesn't define me as well, but I think you add on the layer of being a dad and being a husband and being able to have all of these other things that really fill you up and really define you in a way that you haven't—you didn't even know that you could experience. And so, I think that has been probably the biggest thing to make sure that I'm staying passionate and excited about the job that I'm doing while being the best dad I can be, while being the best husband I can be, and making sure that you still, that you're getting that balance within your life the way that makes it right for you and I think that's different for everyone.

Alan Hart: That's beautiful. What advice would you give yourself if you were starting this journey all over again?

Andy Lopez: Oh man, so much. So I think it's a hard one to ask, because obviously I think that I have ... I've obviously made, you know, some good decisions to get to where I'm at. And so, I think my younger self, if I could say one thing would be to just not over think too much, and to go with your gut and take some risks. But to counteract that too, I think sometimes when you do overthink and you don't take those risks, you also learn from that and then it motivates you to do something different the next time. I think that's what I would say is learn from the risks that you don't take and then try to take some risks and go with your gut when you're feeling really confident about it.

Alan Hart: Is there a topic either you're trying to learn more about or you think marketers need to be learning more about right now?

Andy Lopez: I think for me, something that I've continued to really look into is how we can leverage the data that's available to us to show the ROI of our marketing efforts. I think that's what a lot of people within my role, and really within any role in marketing is trying to do. Because I think at one point really we didn't have the access to the data and we didn't have all the data that we have today. And I think now it's gone to the complete opposite side where we have all of the data and now you're trying to track through which one is really going to make that impact, right?, and which one is something that you can take and optimize from or take it and prove that, hey, it's doing the thing that I wanted it to do.

And so, I think it's trying to find that whether that's a dashboard or specific KPIs that you're looking at in order to really show the success of your marketing initiatives, and no matter what brand or marketing budget you have, you want to make sure that it's driving the impact that you want it to do. And you want to be able to articulate that to those that are outside of marketing. And so, I think that's something that every marketer is looking to do and wishes they had the exact answer that would apply to everyone, but I think the case is that there's not that one answer. And you really have to just do your due diligence and figure out how you can best prove out the impact of your marketing efforts and how it's successful in driving your brand forward.

Alan Hart: So I got two more questions for you. Are there any trends or subcultures that you follow and you think other people should take notice of?

Andy Lopez: I think trends that are happening right now, obviously there's so much with artificial intelligence and what that means for brands and where that's going to go. And I think that is something that whether you're in marketing or really within any organization you have to understand the impact that's going to have, not only from your internal operations perspective and how to make sure you're leveraging it to be efficient and effective, but

Marketing Beyond | Episode 2

then also from a consumer experience standpoint and how is it going to change the landscape of your consumer experience and how is it going to make sure that you're leveraging in order to add value to that journey that you want your consumer to take with your brand.

So I think just really making sure that you're staying ahead of the trends that are happening in that space while understanding the risks that come with it as well, because there's a lot there that people don't know. And I think that's the beauty of it as well. It's you have to ... in order to stay ahead of it you have to really learn a lot about it and make sure that you're staying ahead of it as much as possible in order to plan accordingly to make however you leverage it be successful.

Alan Hart: Yeah, to think about is you have to have one eye on the horizon while you focus on what, what's applicable today.

Andy Lopez: Exactly, and it's changing so fast. I mean, a lot of things are. And I think that's another thing is not even just from an AI perspective, but as you think about, as I mentioned, like the social platforms and new social platforms coming out or new ways of how people like to engage with content. All of that is evolving, but I think that's what makes marketing so incredible, is that you never get bored, you're always staying challenged and it creates a new dynamic that you get really excited about and you find a new challenge that you are able to solve for.

Alan Hart: I like to think that it'd be hard to be a good marketer if you're not a good learner or at least passionate about learning.

Andy Lopez: Definitely. Yeah, staying curious all the time.

Alan Hart: Last question, what do you think is the largest opportunity or threat facing marketers today?

Andy Lopez: I think the biggest opportunity and I guess the biggest threat at the same time is this idea of authenticity.

And I think as things change as fast as they do and as we were just talking about whether that's artificial intelligence, you are learning new things, you have to stay true to your brand and you have to stay authentic to your brand. And that's really the power, I believe, of a lot of the successful brands that you see in the market today. It's they stay true to themselves. And even though they're adapting to some of these changes and evolutions that are happening in the media and social landscape, they stay true to their core. And so, I think that could be the biggest opportunity for brands and I also think it could be the biggest threat if they don't if keep a pulse on it.

Alan Hart: Andy, it's been a great conversation. I loved getting to talk much more about color in general and how you guys are making use of it. Thank you for coming on the show.

Andy Lopez: Thank you so much, Alan. I really appreciate it.

Alan Hart:

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