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Building billion-dollar brands with purpose: Insights from Mars Wrigley North America & Global Ice Cream President Anton Vincent

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

Guests: *Mars Wrigley North America & Global Ice Cream President Anton Vincent*

Alan Hart: Today on the show I've got Anton Vincent. He serves as president of Mars Wrigley North America & Global Ice Cream. Since joining Mars in 2019, Anton has led the acceleration of value creation for one of the world's largest and most iconic consumer brand portfolios. Prior to joining Mars, he was the CEO Greencore, a leading co-packer, co-man company.

He spent 20 years at General Mills before that building award-winning brands and leading three divisions, as well as helping execute the \$10 billion acquisition of Pillsbury company. On the show today, we talk about just the sheer size and breadth of the Mars portfolio that spans pet care, pet services, all the way through CPG brands like M&Ms and Snickers. We talk about the talent that needs to power those brands and how he thinks about it, as well as the combination of creativity and technology and how those things need to work together. That and much more with Anton Vincent.

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Alan Hart: Are you ready to go beyond the basics of marketing? I'm Alan Hart and this is Marketing Beyond, where I chat with the world's leading chief marketing officers and business innovators to share ideas that spark change and inspire you to challenge the status quo. Join us as we explore the future of marketing and its endless potential.

Alan Hart: Anton, welcome to the show.

Anton Vincent: Alan, thanks for having me. I've been really looking forward to having a good chat with you.

Alan Hart: Yeah, me, too. Me, too. Now, I was prepped a little bit, and the one thing I heard is that I should never take you to school on the basketball court.

Anton Vincent: [laughs] Well, there's probably some truth in that, Alan. I will say, I was fortunate, I was an athlete most of my young adult life. I had a very, very influential high school coach—legendary high school coach—that really was a big part of my life and, I think, helped me develop as a human being, as a man, as an athlete, as a person. And he taught us some pretty fundamental principles around competitiveness, setting a standard, and really putting effort in under pressure. So, think those things really helped me in my life, in my business life, personal life, so on and so forth. So I account back to my athletic days very fondly. I think I'm still living off the learnings that I think I was able to acquire.

Alan Hart: That's awesome. Well, one of the things—you know, people that know me are going to laugh when they hear me say that, in particular, because I'm also, like, on a good day—on a *good* day, Anton—5 foot, 6 inches. [laughs] So you've got probably a foot on me, I'm guessing, just by the fact that you played D1!

Anton Vincent: [laughs] I was just going to say that—just the opposite. So I'm 6 foot, 5 inches. [laughs] So...I guess I've got a few on you!

Alan Hart: Yeah, yeah, you do. You do. My daughter plays bask—. So my wife is almost 6-foot tall.

Anton Vincent: Oh, wow. OK.

Alan Hart: My daughter ended up in the middle. She plays basketball, and she laughs because she can put her hand out and then I can't reach her.

Anton Vincent: [laughs] OK!

Alan Hart: It's a really funny—

Anton Vincent: It's a power-dynamic grab!

Alan Hart: Yeah, yeah, yeah. I'm the only male in my house, and so, you know, it is what it is. [laughs]

Anton Vincent: But you have high self-esteem. I know you, Alan, so that doesn't bother you.

Alan Hart: Yeah! Well, I get to walk around with these two tall women all the time. So it's great. It's great for me. Great for my ego. You know, sports can teach us so much, and it sounds like this was a pretty impactful part of your mindset, how you approach life. Is that true? Is that the way to think about it?

Anton Vincent: Yeah, it's very true because, like I said, in the younger part of my life, it sort of dominated my life, my time, my energy, my mindset. And I'm always amazed at the student-athletes now because it is tough. You need to be a student first. I still believe in that. You're an athlete second, but you're representing your university, you're representing your community, your school. It's a tremendous amount of pressure, but it was probably one of the most rewarding times, I think, in my life from that perspective—just a tremendous amount of development. And like

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I said earlier, I just think it helped provide me with some foundational principles and mindset that I think have propelled me professionally. I think those things that I still sort of really lean on to this day.

Alan Hart: Well, you are now the president at Mars Wrigley North America and over Global Ice Cream. Where did you get your start? What were some of the chapters along the way?

Anton Vincent: Yeah, it was really interesting. When I was in undergrad, I was a finance major, and, for the longest time, I wanted to be on Wall Street and do the stockbroker thing—old language now. But I didn't go to one of those schools where those kind of people came to recruit, but that was sort of always my intent. I was fortunate. My first real job out of college, I started to work for Fidelity Investments, who happen to have a big regional investing center in North Dallas, and was really able to reach my dreams. There was only one downside, Alan. I came out of my training. My first day “on the floor,” as we call it, was October 17, 1987. If you know your financial history, that was still the largest percentage market crash in US history. [laughs] So, it was one of those things that was like the absolute fabulous job at the absolute wrong time. And so, I was there!

Alan Hart: Wow!

Anton Vincent: Yeah, I made it through the end of the year, and then about two months later, probably February, there was probably 300 of us that came in. They usually hire a lot of finance types in what we called tax season investment, which is really the last three or four months of the year, and probably 90% of us got called into a room and it was over. So it wasn't as devastating as it may sound, but it was one of those things like, wow, I was right there! I was literally right there! I did my dream job. But it's funny. I look back on it very fondly because I actually learned a lot in a short period of time, but also it actually set me up for the rest of my career. I went from there to go to MCI Telecommunications, which, for those of you who would know the history about telecommunications industry, was essentially the [company] that opened up what we call “open competition” in the telecommunications industry in United States. And so I was able to sort of be at, my words, “the Google of its time”—in this case, fighting AT&T—and set the modern-day telecommunications industry up as well. And then from there, went to grad school, interned at Kraft Foods. It was a fantastic summer, and that really sort of locked me in, in terms of wanting to be in the brand management/CPG space. Came out, worked for General Mills, had a great 23-year career there, ended up running three of their big divisions. Left at the end of '17, did some private equity work, and have been at Mars since 2019. And it's been quite the whirlwind, to be honest with you. I came to Mars in 2019, and one of the things I think we're really good at, particularly for senior leaders, is really helping us to understand the culture and to really try to onboard in a very proper and a very intentional way. And so I think I took that time. And six months later, COVID hit!

Alan Hart: [laughs] Man, you have impeccable timing! What is up with this?

Anton Vincent: I know. It's either great or horrible! One of those things, Alan. But it was interesting because, in times of stress, you do one of two things: You unite and get through it, or you break apart. And I must say, the culture at Mars, we really united. I think our first thing was making sure that our associates were treated right. We helped them to get through it—all associates, all around the world. It was a tremendous understanding of how our principles kick in from an internal perspective and being able (A) to take care of our associates, (B) to successfully navigate and thrive through COVID. We really set ourselves up—sort of set up for a big post-COVID world as well, which has really been interesting. So, it's been six years in May, which is interesting for me to say, because it sort of went by very fast. But we've been able to be tremendously successful, to really lock in what we're about at Mars, and still advance our economic model globally and continue to grow and develop and be very purpose-driven because we think we can do both of those things. So we can grow our business, we can drive purpose, and we don't think those things are in conflict with one another. And so I think we're very, very focused on making sure that general concept is executed at scale. Yeah, I think that's what makes us different.

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Alan Hart: Yeah, that makes sense. And most people will know Mars and Mars Wrigley, the name, but it wasn't until I was looking at your portfolio—the scope of the brand portfolio is very large. Could you give us just a sense of some of the things that—the household names—everyone would know?

Anton Vincent: Yeah, so let me go back a little bit. Mars is a company that's over 100 years old. It's probably one of the true great American entrepreneurial stories that you would study in terms of Clarence Mars way back in the day. People know us from our primary business, which is confections, which is a beautiful business. It's been around for a very, very long time. We've been able to grow that business over time, been able to add brands, buy brands, so on and so forth.

Anton Vincent: We've actually been in the pet food business since the '40s or '50s. We've always been a business that's sort of built on multiple pillars, and we've been able to advance those pillars over time. So today, we are the largest confectionary company in the world with the largest pet care company in the world, which includes a whole pet care universe from nutrition to services to vet services to diagnostics, you name it. Of course, we have our burgeoning what we call "food and nutrition" business as well. So those are the three pillars that we stand on, and we're north of \$55 billion today, and we do business in most legitimate countries around the world as well. So it's quite a significant economic engine. But a little bit like I said earlier, yes, we're a business. We have to make money and earnings and those types of things, but I think we do it with a very, very intentional purpose that runs right alongside that economic model. And sometimes that's not easy to do, Alan. [laughs] You know, sometimes it can really be hard to sort of achieve those two concepts. But as leadership, as management, with a family, that's what we're uniquely charged to do is to be able to advance both of those things with some level of integration. So we don't want to do things economically that don't make sense. We want to grow our business, but also we don't want to do things that are going to harm the earth or do things to our communities that don't make sense as well. So we're always trying to uplift on both sides: the economic side, the purpose side, the community side.

Alan Hart: Makes sense. I didn't realize the breadth that you talked about—the pet care side as well as the confectionary and the food side. Some of the storied brands that everyone knows in my world, in my household, to be honest, is M&M's, Snickers. One that I was looking down the trail of brand names was Hubba Bubba. That was my go-to bubble gum back in the day.

Anton Vincent: [laughs]

Alan Hart: That sustained me in middle school and elementary school, to be honest.

Anton Vincent: Yeah. For some of us, it still sustains us, Alan! [laughs]

Alan Hart: Yeah! Well, I don't know if you'd call it, like, I aged into more the Orbit and the Extra side of the game? But yes, yeah, Hubba Bubba is still—when I see it in the store, I think about buying a pack, and then I think about what my wife's going to say when I'm chomping on the big Hubba Bubba. But anyway!

Anton Vincent: Yeah, it is interesting because I think one of the things that sets us apart, and while we are a big Mars family of brands, but we just have just iconic brands. I mean you talked about the chocolate part side, which is the M&Ms, the Snickers, the Dove, Twix, so on and so forth. And of course, the gum portfolio—we were able to acquire that back in '08-'09 when we bought the Wrigley company, which has a fantastic set of market-leading, global-leading gum brands that has really helped us add to our confectionery portfolio as well. And as we get into pet, in terms of nutrition and pedigree, and you get into the vet health services and things of that nature, we have an interesting construct in terms of having a big CPG business, on the confection side and on the pet nutrition side. And then we have a very significant service-based business, essentially an animal health care system on the pet care

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side as well. And so, very large businesses, very scaled business, but very different businesses as well. So we get a bit of a portfolio effect with those different verticals as well. So you can imagine a person coming into Mars, just, literally the world is at their feet. You can be marketing to pet parents one day and you'll be marketing to a range of consumers on the chocolate side and the confection side, but also we have a center-of-the-plate food business that is very unique, very high quality, very premium and has some very distinctive brands on that side as well.

Alan Hart: You think about the scope we're talking about—just the brand portfolio and the services and the products—how do you think about, as a company, scale versus independence of those businesses or brands?

Anton Vincent: Yeah, I get this one a lot, Alan, because the question I usually get is, what is your favorite? Of course, we love all of our children. [laughs] And by loving all your children, you need to invest in your children, from that perspective. So I think as resource allocators, really, at our level, it's important for us to understand that those brands have their own individual consumer groups, their own individual communities as well. And so we have to stay true, what I call, vertically to that brand universe that we've built over time. At the same time, these things sit on platforms as well. They usually compete in the context of categories and have a very, very rich, competitive set as well. And I think the one thing that really sort of runs through all of our brands is that we have an understanding around how do we want to present those brands to the world. Even those things are different from a product and a service portfolio. We also have a marketing code that suggests that we won't do certain things. And so there, again, you see purpose showing up even in how we articulate and communicate and present our brands and services to the consuming public. So there's a thread that runs through that. But I say at the end of the day, we are brand marketers. We invest in those brands, we want to get more people into our franchise, we want to grow that globally as well. And then, again, that all sits on top of a very foundational purpose in terms of how we do that. Because, again, we want to do it very intentionally, very purpose-driven, and we still think we can get good economics in doing it in that way. We certainly have proven that over the last hundred-plus years.

Alan Hart: You talk about the brand management philosophy and the brand managers that are running these brands and businesses. How do you think about, you're building brands, but how do you think about building the people and the thoughts that you have in terms of what does talent for you look like as you go forward from here?

Anton Vincent: Yeah. No, it's a really, really good question, and it's interesting. I don't think the precepts have changed over time. One of the things we want to do is we want to go and really recruit great people, great human beings. And we want great human beings that have great capabilities, so we put those two things together. We can now expose them to some of the biggest, most iconic brands in the world. Right. And so it's almost a perfect setup. You bring great talent in, and you put that talent to work against great iconic brands. And then I would say the thing that supports that is that we have to train and develop them. Some of that is peer training and development. Some of that is making sure that they have access to very, very differentiated experiences as well. One of the things that we're getting better at—I think we'll see that more in the future—is while we do have these three big verticals, the real value is how do you move people across those verticals? How do I say, hey, look, you've got Pedigree, one of the biggest brands in the world we have today that is all about pet parents and animal nutrition, and how do we switch that person over to maybe to M&Ms? Very, very different consumer set; very, very different brand objective, but still a big, iconic brand. And now, we've got the whole extension of services, which is, again, running essentially an animal health care system—what we call the ecosystem. That just allows great talent to give very, very differentiated experience potentially on a global basis. So as a person that's coming to an organization, there's tremendous opportunity in that for growth and development and capability building right here in Mars. You don't have to leave to go and get something, in some cases, significantly different from a professional experience.

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Alan Hart: As you think about taking these brands to market, the ecosystem of marketing has been evolving, right? And it continues to evolve. You've got creators and new media formats and other things in terms of new partners potentially to work with. How do you think about that evolving marketing ecosystem as it applies to growing your business?

Anton Vincent: Yeah, it's a really good question. I think one of the things—and we always talk about this—we are truly in an attention economy. You don't need to have structure and resources to go and get attention. [laughs] If you know how to build a social media presence, you can do that in your pajamas every morning. So, it's interesting in terms of how people can interact with how do we build messages, how do we distribute messages, and therefore how do we influence what we need to influence, whether that's a message, whether it's a selling message, whether it's commerce, what have you. So I think it's the first thing, just in terms of the message generation. And when we think about influence and attention, how is that generated? That's number one. Number two, the digital revolution and how that is made much more efficient and how we hopefully can get better measurement off of that. Because if you've been in this game for a long time, you know that, OK, look, I can probably measure some things, but I really can't measure the entire impact. And so I think our ability to measure, to put analytics against it, to build algorithms that give us a little bit more understanding with precision around how our messages are landing. While that has been building, I think we're getting to a world now where that precision is going to be more precise than we've ever had. And the question is, what do you do with it? What I always sort of say is, in a perfect world, if you could build the perfect message and you can actually measure it, the difference maker is creativity. So the whole idea around creativity cannot leave you. [laughs] Because I think that's going to be a difference maker. I can have perfect targeting, I can have a perfect audience, I can have a perfect message. If I can't build a message that is compelling and differentiating and draws consumers or customers into me, I'm dead in the water. So I still think the foundation of consumer marketing is still around how do you help creativity drive a message against an audience. I don't think those foundations are going to leave us.

Alan Hart: Yeah. Makes perfect sense. One of the things I talk to clients about in particular is everyone's got their marketing model, they're optimizing their resource allocation and things like that. And I always say, well, that's great. You need that. You have to have that. You need that to guide the ship, if you will. But to your point around creativity, the thing that breaks it the most is when you dramatically change a lever, right? And creativity has the power to do that, as well as thinking about new ways to market that are not in the model, right? And break the model.

Anton Vincent: Yeah, absolutely. Yeah, I think the wonderful thing about this space is it is constantly changing. And we have a consumer base that is constantly changing, in terms of what they want, their needs, their aspirations, how we message to them, how they accept those messages or not, how they co-create with us. I just think that whole world continues to change. And so I just think the idea around agility as a marketer, as a marketing leader, is just something you just can't lose against you. And that's something you have to stay resident with, be comfortable in, hopefully excited by. Because the one thing you know about consumers is they will change. [laughs] There's the one constant about consumers is they will change, and if you don't have a marketing ecosystem that can acknowledge it and leverage it, you're going to be behind. You won't be able to grow your brand.

Alan Hart: Yeah. Makes sense. And for a company like Mars, you guys, literally, every person almost in the world is a potential customer or a customer of yours. You've got to really adapt to the changing dynamics.

Anton Vincent: No, we really do because, particularly, it literally goes back to the construction of our business. Like I said, we've got a big, great consumer business on the CPG side, but also once you start to talk about pet parents and things, you start to expose yourself to a very differentiated, highly locked-in consumer base. So the attention is high. The message has to be very, very crisp. And again, you're dealing with someone who is going to accept what

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you're feeding them or not accept what you're feeding them. They're going to accept the service or not. We get very sophisticated on our pet side in terms of how we message to primarily what we call the "pet parent" and how do we build that ecosystem around the entire animal ownership experience.

Alan Hart: Yeah, yeah. Well, I've got two, I call them two "knucklehead" mutts in my house as well. And they are treated like babies, so they are part of the family. I wouldn't say I love them more than my daughter, but they're definitely on equal footing, from day to day. So yeah.

Anton Vincent: Yes. We call ours the most spoiled animal in the world, right?

Alan Hart: Yes, that sounds right. Awesome. Is there any recent work that you're really excited about? Something the company's put out in the market that just kind of lit you up?

Anton Vincent: I'm generally excited about all the work that we do, but I'll try to pick some from each side. On my side, on the confectionery side, we just have some wonderful brands. A lot of work that we're doing on the Skittles brand I think is just incredible. Skittles as a global platform reached a billion dollars last year. We continue to break records on these iconic brands. It's a very irreverent brand, so we give it a lot of latitude from a marketing strategy perspective.

Alan Hart: Right.

Anton Vincent: But consumers accept that, and they may expect it. So I think the creative expectation around what's next is always sort of palpable, I think, from that front as well. I look at a brand like Snickers. Snickers is growing in double digits, and this whole idea around satiation on a campaign idea we've been running for a while, but we've found new ways to make it relevant as well. And of course, we have the connection with the NFL. We've been big sponsors of the NFL. And so I think that brand is just expertly positioned, And I think we're inserting it inside of people's lives in very natural, organic ways. And in some cases, we're using sports as a leverage mechanism to make sure we open ourselves up to younger audiences as well. So that's what I think of those two things. But I'll think of something like your favorite brand, Hubba Bubba. Hubba Bubba is one of our smaller gum brands, but trust me: When we hit Hubba Bubba, it has massive impact in terms of how we do it. That's typically a socially driven brand for us these days, but we do a great job in targeting. We do a great job in making sure, again, it's contextual to people's experiences. And so those are examples of big brands and small brands that are doing things in ways that are relevant, that are impactful, that are inspiring, and that are driving business growth.

Alan Hart: I love it. I love those examples. Well, one of the things we like to do, Anton, on the show is get to know you even a little bit better. And my favorite question to ask everyone that comes on is, there been an experience of your past that defines or makes up who you are today?

Anton Vincent: Wow, boy, there have been so many. Mostly because, like any of us, by the time you get to this point in your career, you've made a fair amount of mistakes. [laughs]

Alan Hart: That's true.

Anton Vincent: And I have no problems admitting those. But no, I think there's several. I'll just keep it in the brand world. I used to be the marketing director on Top Secret Popcorn, and this is back when General Mills owned them as well. And we had come across what we called the Holy Grail, and that Holy Grail meant that I could actually create popcorn with caramel on the outing. Now, if you know anything about science and caramel and heat, you know that they don't really belong together. And so when you put something in a microwave that gets up to 420 degrees in 20 seconds, that's combustion—the potential for combustion. So we found a way to help that scientific process

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crystallize such that it was safe. So you could put it into a microwave oven, you could pop it and it'd come out and you'd have a very nice sheen of caramel around. Very, very, very hard to do from a technology and a science perspective. We figured it out. So long story short, we had to execute a Class I recall to put out in the marketplace. It was insanely successful. We had just got a big order in Walmart, and they were about to re-up. Like most reputable food companies, we saw things from a quality perspective that we didn't like. It didn't quite hit "you're in trouble"; we just say we have zero tolerance. We don't want to let it get to a level where it can even remotely hurt us. And so we made a decision to go in and recall the product. It was only the second Class I recall in the history of General Mills at that time. I don't think they've had one since. So I might have been the last one to have a recall! [laughs]

Alan Hart: Right! [laughs]

Anton Vincent: But what was interesting to me was you can imagine that was expensive. I think that was my first real adult experience where, boy, a company said, we have this incredible product that we know we could see years of growth down the line, but we're not going to compromise our quality or consumer safety. So we're going to make the hard decision to remove it. And so I think for me as a young leader at the time, it just really taught me a lesson around the responsibility, particularly that large companies who impact millions of consumers have to the consuming public. It just imprinted on me, from a safety and quality perspective, in terms of how to think about these businesses and the impact that we have on people, both in their enjoying the product, but also in keeping them safe. It was one of those things where a big company did the right thing, and we were right at the epicenter of it as well. So not that I didn't have an orientation towards it. I just saw it in action in a very powerful way. Because we could make a case to keep it on the market. We can make the case that the experience rating around safety was OK. Math would have told you. But you don't want to be in a position where you're going to remotely a consumer, and so, seeing a company step up and make the right decision, a costly decision, I think was just imprinting on me as a young leader.

Alan Hart: Yeah, I really like that example of making the right decision even if it's the hard path. That's when you really have to have the fortitude behind making the right call.

Anton Vincent: No, you do. No, and honestly, I thought I was going to get fired. [laughs] I really did! It's like, you know, this could be my last go-round! [laughs] And I didn't have the wherewithal to understand, all right, there's bigger things at play here, but made a tough, expensive, but right decision for consumers. And so you can stand up and feel good about that over time.

Alan Hart: Yeah, absolutely. What advice would you give young Anton if you were starting this journey all over again?

Anton Vincent: [laughs] Oh, I would give you so much advice! No, I laugh, and I'm sure most people laugh at their younger selves, but they sort of have some perspective now. But I think there's a couple of things. I don't think I was unique in this, but you come into a CPG system, especially a large company, it's all about getting to the next level as fast as possible. And I think during my time, I just think I overindulged that too much. I had great experiences. I had a lot of very differentiated experiences in a very short period of time, which is the value of going to a big brand company. I had experienced different targets, different categories, different business models with a fair amount of intensity in a short period of time. So you learn a lot. Your learning agility is very high. And as a result of that, I want to be rewarded and get to the next place as fast as possible. My advice to myself is just, slow down. Enjoy the experiences that you're getting because they're so valuable. They're so valuable. Even today when I run a big enterprise, I lean back into some of those early experiences, some of those early learnings, being able to be in the trenches and understand—sometimes at a very tactical level—how things get done, because that actually helps to build your enterprise thinking because you can reduce strategy to action and being able to appreciate that,

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particularly once you get into broader enterprise-types roles is just a beautiful thing. So I think my first thing would just be to slow down, enjoy the journey, which I've tried to do, I would sort of say over the arc of my profession. I'd say the second thing, and I've been very public about this, is I don't think I had a very good relationship with feedback, during my younger leadership days. I was a bit too focused on being right versus wrong, versus understanding the developmental part that would make me better over time. And I think once I started to appreciate the value of what really good, well-intentioned feedback means to me in my development, and once I got off my ego a little bit on that, I just started to flourish. I stopped being resistant to things. I stopped being resistant to certain people. I started to listen to feedback for feedback's sake and for development and try to find the value in it. And then I tried to incorporate the things I thought were valuable, if you would, from that perspective. And I think once I changed my mindset—and obviously my perspective changed, clearly—but I believe my ability to lead escalated. And I wish I'd had some of that earlier in my career.

Alan Hart: That's great advice. Is there anything you think marketers need to be learning more about right now or anything you're trying to learn more about personally?

Anton Vincent: Yeah, I mean, it goes without saying, obviously, technology is a part of our life—kind of always has been a part of a marketer's life. I just think with the recent advances—call it as recent as AI—and AI as a concept, as you know, is not a new thing. Our ability to really interact with it and for it to be highly usable for us is fairly new—call it the last four or five years. This whole idea around how do you connect creativity in a rapidly growing technology environment? I think that is the issue and opportunity of our day. At the end of the day, we need to have precision. Technology allows us to do that. We need to map that with creativity and inspiration. I still don't think technology in its best form is going to allow you reach into someone's heart and tug at it like really good creative folks can do. So I just think that whole exercise of technology, intellect, of creativity and inspiration. How do you manage those levers in a way that gives you something differential in the marketplace? I think marketers have to really, really, really get comfortable with that. That's number one. Number two, I just think the agility around changing techniques, marketplaces, social commerce, you name it. I just think our routes to market, our ability to land messages, our ability to co-create messages, our ability to have influences help us with our brands, even though they didn't build the DNA of the brands, but we got to incorporate those audiences that influence offers as well. So just the whole idea around agility, from marketers, it's going to continue to just be something that we have to practice over and over and over again and get more efficient at it. I always say the world is changing, but the world is also changing at an increasingly rapid rate. So the speed of change is continuous. And so if you can't be agile in the context of a high-speed-of-change world, you're going to be left out. And so it's just really, really important around that agility and the speed of your agility.

Alan Hart: Yeah, I a hundred percent double down on the agility comment. I like the other pieces, too, but to your point, the world is continuing to move faster, not slower. Your ability to learn as well and the capacity of learning, I think, has to go hand in hand with the agility piece too.

Anton Vincent: Yeah, I agree. I think, one of things I always say, I was like, there is no steady state. We don't go from one thing, go there for a while, go to another thing. It's just this only constant change. And that is a hard mindset. I think all leaders, not just market, all leaders, have to figure out. And so in a world of constant change, what does leadership look like? What does agility look like? And then, how do you set it in your environment? And how do you develop it—particularly in your marketers as well. But they're typically the first ones to touch it, feel it, see it.

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Alan Hart: Right. Well, I've got two more questions for you. Are there any trends or subcultures that you follow or you think other people should take notice of?

Anton Vincent: No, I always like to say I'm a big observer of top of politics. I'm not a participant of, other than doing my civic duty and for voting my interest. But people always ask me, "Anton, what's a typical day?" I give them a typical answer. There is no typical day. But the one thing that I'm spending more and more time on is how do geopolitics impact how I think about how to insert brands into a consuming marketplace? Because we always thought of those things as very separate. There is no separation of anything these days. Everything is connected. Your brand, particularly big iconic ones that can get messages out there, have a point of view. And how do they assert that point of view in a world very complex views? Very complex views. I can name two or three things that happened in the last week that is very much representative of that. That's just a new world that we're in. But I think that's information, that is activity, that while we think it's tangential to the brand exercise, it has impact because it is a part of the attention economy. And how do we start to coexist in it? So how do we think about those things in the context of trying to build a DNA for a brand, to have consistency around that brand, to advance the brand and grow it, to make it relevant, so on and so forth. I think it's one thing. The second thing I think is what we touched on earlier. I just think it's the connection of man and machine. How do we do that in a way that's thoughtful, that's deliberate, that's safe, where we're leveraging the best of technology and the best of humanity? What does that look like? And that's a big question for all of us to consider as well. But it's only going to get—we're only moving more in that direction, not less in that direction. And I think the thing that I see is I still think the basics around understanding who your true consumer is: How do you build insight? How do you build strategy? How do you get to them in a very creative way that is contextual in the way that they live? And how do you build loyalty, repeat usage around a consumer? So the foundations and the goals and objectives don't change. But how and, in some cases, the algorithms you use to build that do. And so I think it's that whole humanity versus—or working with—technology. Something's going to be with us for a very long time.

Alan Hart: Well, last question for you. What do you see as the largest opportunity or threat to marketers today?

Anton Vincent: I think marketers are going to always be valuable. But I do think that if you're not constantly learning and you're not constantly improving, you can lose it, because it goes back to what we said: The world is moving faster, not slower. And so I think your pace of learning, your pace of observation, your pace of being really locked into the zeitgeist and still having a point of view with all your brands is going to be critical. There's not a piece of information I can't integrate today that doesn't allow me to have a better understanding of how my brand can grow. Not a piece. From any discipline, from any industry, from any country. That whole idea around just we live in a highly integrated world, and as a marketer—as a marketer who is marketing to the masses—you've got to be able to integrate that information in a way that's going to be able to help your brand. So I just think our level of consciousness around what's out there has to stay very high. At the same time, we've got to build a brand or a portfolio of brands that are true to who they are, that we understand who we're talking to, and that authenticity can transcend what's happening in society. That's really, really important. In brand building, that's really, really important. Because even in the midst of all that, someone wants to know who you are, am I down with you, and will you deliver what I think you should deliver over time? Because that's how we build audiences, that's how we build consumers, that's how we build loyalty over time as well. So even in the midst of the chaos and all the stuff that we talked about, someone wants to lock in to who you are and who your brand is all about. And I think we've got to make sure we understand how to stay true to that in the context of everything that's going on.

Alan Hart: That's awesome. Anton, thank you for coming on the show. It's been enlightening just to hear about your stories, what you've learned along the way, and what you guys are trying to do over at Mars. So thank you.

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Anton Vincent: No, thank you. It's been a great conversation, and I'm really looking forward to it.

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