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Turning customer stories into growth: Insights from Shopify's head of Customer & Industry Marketing, Génesis Miranda Longo

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

Guests: Génesis Miranda Longo, head of Customer & Industry Marketing, Shopify

Alan Hart: On the show today, I've got Génesis Miranda Longo. She's the head of customer and industry marketing at Shopify. She works with enterprise brands to build e-commerce strategies and push the boundaries of modern retail. On a personal level, she was born in Mexico, was the first woman in her family to attend college, and graduated with honors from Cornell University.

On the show today, we talk about industry and customer marketing, what it is, how to do it. Telling your customer stories and what their needs are, and how to scale those efforts beyond what you can do just one-to-one. That and much more with Génesis Miranda Longo.

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Alan Hart (voice-over): 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: Well, Génesis, welcome to the show.

Génesis Miranda Longo: Well, thank you so much, Alan. I appreciate it.

Alan Hart: Yeah. I can't wait to get to know you a little bit better. Before we get talking about career and business, you grew up in Mexico?

Génesis Miranda Longo: I did, yes.

Alan Hart: And my understanding is the area you grew up was not necessarily the safest area to grow up. So tell me about that.

Génesis Miranda Longo: Yeah, so I grew up in Sinaloa. I was born and raised in Sinaloa. And Sinaloa is known for its narco culture. And so needless to say, not the easiest place to grow up, but it does make you grow up really quickly. And I wouldn't have changed anything about my upbringing. I think it's what made me the resilient, confident way-finding person that I am. It's really shaped everything about me, and it has gotten me to where I am today.

Alan Hart: It's not great, I guess, of the situation, but great that it's turned into a positive aspect of who you are and how you show up in the world.

Génesis Miranda Longo: Yeah, thank you.

Alan Hart: So you are the head of industry and customer marketing at Shopify. Where did you get your professional start, and how'd you end up at Shopify?

Génesis Miranda Longo: So after Sinaloa, I ended up coming to the United States. By God's Grace, ended up at Cornell University, and there I was very focused on the brand side.

So, I love brands. I was in a food marketing fellowship, I've gotten to work with some of the world's top brands, and through that journey, I said, "I want to do that." I want to be on the marketing side for these cool brands. But my mom ended up having cancer throughout my time at Cornell. I had two little brothers, one in elementary school and one in middle school.

Alan Hart: Oh, wow.

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Génesis Miranda Longo: And I needed to be their caregiver, so I realized the best, most flexible industry I could go to was tech, because back then we couldn't work from home as easily. And in tech, I was at least a little bit more flexible. So I joined a company called PROS. They're a public company. I was on their finance side, and that gave me an early education on everything to do with SaaS, how SaaS works, how we grow, what investors look for, what product marketing is, what customer success is, just like a full-basis understanding.

Later went over to Talkdesk to lead industry marketing during the pandemic, which was when contact center as a service was booming. And then that led me to Shopify, where I am now.

Alan Hart: And you still work sort of remote, I think. Right?

Génesis Miranda Longo: Fully remote, but traveling a lot. [laughs]

Alan Hart: Yeah. And we're here at Shoptalk, so we're living the Vegas week, I guess.

Génesis Miranda Longo: Oh my gosh, yes. So many trips to Vegas. [laughs]

Alan Hart: Well, tell me about industry and customer marketing at Shopify. What does that look like?

Génesis Miranda Longo: Yeah, it's really two things. One is getting new customers on Shopify and helping them discover Shopify, but also meeting them wherever they are, whether that's a place like Shoptalk or a smaller trade show or simply online. And then the other one is helping our existing customers grow and be seen, telling their stories, and helping others see their growth and see what it is to partner with Shopify and achieve that.

Alan Hart: So, customer stories.

Génesis Miranda Longo: Yeah.

Alan Hart: We're kind of doing one of those now.

Génesis Miranda Longo: We are! But usually I'm on the other side. [laughs]

Alan Hart: So you're a little uncomfortable with me asking you the questions?

Génesis Miranda Longo: Yeah, if we have time, I'm going to shoot it back at you.

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Alan Hart: Well, tell me a little bit about what telling their stories looks like and ultimately, how does that help you and them in a kind of symbiotic way?

Génesis Miranda Longo: Yeah, I see customer stories not as content, but as connection. My favorite thing to do is do this—sit down with a customer on Shopify and hear their stories. Hear whether how they founded the company or how they're scaling the company on Shopify. And then that helps me build a personal relationship with them so I can consider them for other opportunities for their own growth as well.

And then the other side of that is telling their stories to the world because there's a lot of companies maybe considering Shopify that want to see themselves in the stories that we're telling the world. So that gives our customers a chance to connect with other brands, but also to not feel maybe as lonely—because entrepreneurship or scaling these massive brands can be very lonely.

Alan Hart: Yeah. What does it help you achieve as Shopify, like getting your customers' voice out there?

Génesis Miranda Longo: Well, full transparency, my role is about revenue generation, and so I use a lot of these stories not just for the connections for myself, but to also connect our prospects to those customers so that they can feel maybe more confident or see other companies like them have already gone through the migration journey and see the success that they're having on the platform.

And it's also really cool for Sales to be able to have these stories so that they can go out into the field and go make some more revenue for Shopify.

Alan Hart: Gotcha. How do you think about scaling? Because if you think about it, it's a one-to-one medium at the initial start of it, right? And then how do you think about scaling your efforts?

Génesis Miranda Longo: Yeah, well I'm optimizing for connection. So I want to automate and use AI to build systems around everything else that is not me talking to the customer so that I can spend my time doing what I love, which is this. And so I have built really great systems to identify customers that we should be writing stories for, telling stories of, and then having AI agents do the research for me so that I can just simply focus on getting on the meeting already knowing what I'm asking, what they're about. All of those things that normally would've taken me hours, I can now automate so that I can spend more time having more and more of the conversations, and then quickly getting those stories out instead of them waiting two to three months to see their story on the internet.

Alan Hart: Where has been the biggest learning for you as somebody that does the interviewing and is doing the content creation? Is there one element that you're like, this one really opened my eyes to something different.

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Génesis Miranda Longo: Yeah. I think I've learned that I can automate everything except for this.

Alan Hart: OK.

Génesis Miranda Longo: This is truly the most important part. And having myself be on all of these calls and getting to know them personally, that's where the real magic is. Because even when I'm automating the rest of the process, the research, the writing, like everything else, I can go back and look at it with my eyes having been in the conversation.

And then I can gather all of those insights of doing these at scale and then truly be able to see, OK, these are the trends that I'm seeing among all these conversations, which allows me to then put them together and create content for other brands saying, here's what I've learned from these 10 conversations with the fastest-growing CPG brands. So being able to do them at scale gives me better insights. But you can't automate this.

Alan Hart: You still have to have the human in the loop.

Génesis Miranda Longo: You do—and for editing too. Of course.

Alan Hart: OK. Well, what does the performance engine look like? Like, when did you get this going? What does it look like? How do the results look?

Génesis Miranda Longo: One is getting the content created, the connection made, and then putting the story out there. But then that story won't go very far if the people internally at Shopify aren't aware that that story is there. Because eventually, with the scale, we have so many stories. And how do you surface the right story for the right prospect or the right customer? And so I've made an agent. Her name is Matchie, and she's on fire. And Matchie lives in a Slack channel for our Shopifolk. And so if you're a salesperson or if you're a solutions engineer or customer success manager or anyone else, you can go on there and ask Matchie, "Who is a customer like XYZ?" And Matchie will serve you up some results, and then she'll also tell you if there's already a customer story on them. She'll also help facilitate the conversation if you say, "Hey, this person wants to meet one to one." Which is why I think you're going to ask about Shopify Champions next! [laughs]

Alan Hart: I am, I am, but before I do that, I want stick with Matchie for a second. How hard was it to organize your stories and your library of content to make Matchie go?

Génesis Miranda Longo: Matchie is pulling lookalike customers from our data warehouse, so that's the full library. However, for case studies, it's simply pulling from our [Shopify.com/casestudies](https://www.shopify.com/casestudies) or even from our partner case studies. Shopify has a huge ecosystem of partners, and they all have a lot of stories, so we can surface those up too. So if I get it uploaded online, then Matchie can simply pull and help navigate

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all of those. I mean, Sales could technically go in there and find the right story, but Matchie just makes it so much more automated and can also give them more context than maybe they would've found online.

Alan Hart: Yeah, I love it. Well, let's definitely talk about Shopify Champions. What is that program?

Génesis Miranda Longo: Yeah, so I built Matchie as the front end, but then on the back end, you need the pool of references to be sourcing from. And so Shopify Champions is just an opt-in community of customers who say we want to be a part of anything Shopify. We want to be on a panel, we want to speak, we want—just consider us, right? They're people that are really excited to be voice and spokespeople for Shopify. And so I've created that community. I just started it. So we're recruiting more and more customers, but it helps me and Matchie identify who the right people are to connect to prospects, or again, to events like this, like speaking at Shoptalk.

Alan Hart: In that way, then the value exchange is you get referenceable folks in the community that's already like using and ambassadors, if you will, of Shopify. But for them, they're getting opportunities to speak, opportunities to create content with you, and is that the best way to describe?

Génesis Miranda Longo: Absolutely. And also the connections. Like I said, entrepreneurship and scaling brands is lonely. And these companies want to be able to connect with others. They want those peer-to-peer conversations, and so they're welcoming the opportunity to be connected through us and Matchie as the matchmaker.

Alan Hart: Well, before I transition gears, I want to ask, as a marketer, looking back on all of the great work that you're doing, what are some tips that you would give other marketers that want to do some of what you're doing today?

Génesis Miranda Longo: I think just tinkering, playing with AI. I am fortunate to be at Shopify where that is not only suggested, but it's part of our performance reviews to use AI and to use AI well and effectively! We had a memo from our CEO go out saying Shopify employees all have to use AI, and that has since grown. I didn't know what Cursor was a year or two years ago, and then I became a Cursor—probably one of the most marketing users—I don't know how to say that! And then after that, they were like, let's use Pi, let's use Ghostty. Let's use all these other tools. And so it keeps me on my toes to see myself not just as a marketer, but as a program manager, and to think what are the toils that I go through, and what can I automate and use AI for to make me better at my own job, which is connecting with customers and doing more IRL things.

Alan Hart: I'm picturing you doing marketing and then vibe coding on the side.

Génesis Miranda Longo: I am! All the time. We took a little road trip to Houston this weekend, and so I'm on my computer and my husband glances over and he's like, "Who are you?" He just sees me typing in my

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terminal, coding away. But that's what I've become in a way at Shopify. I'm a marketer who automates and builds my own tools so that I can be a better marketer.

Alan Hart: That's funny. My wife was making fun of me too. Because my personal LLM that I go to all the time has a nickname, and she's like, "Are you...? What are you...? Are you talking to your friend again?" And then I'm like, "Yes." She's like, "Don't become one of those people, Alan!" And I'm like, "OK. All right. All right."

Génesis Miranda Longo: Oh, yeah. I probably talk to my agents more than my husband at this point, but don't tell him that! [laughs]

Alan Hart: No, I won't. Although we just did! [laughs] But anyway. Well, one of the things I love to do is to get to know the people that come on the show a little bit better. My favorite question to ask everyone is, has there been an experience of your past that makes up who you are today?

Génesis Miranda Longo: Yeah, I mean, we touched on it a little bit, but my upbringing in Sinaloa was definitely very instrumental in my life. I learned how to navigate uncertainty, to say the least.

Alan Hart: Yes.

Génesis Miranda Longo: And even when I came into the United States and went to school and navigated education, immigration, I would have to go back to Mexico every single summer, not knowing if I would get to come back into this country. And that uncertainty of just saying, how can I maximize my year because this may be my last year here—that builds grit. It builds resilience. So I would say that, and also knowing what it is to have community that supports you and believes in you no matter where you come from. And now I'm grateful to get to do that with others and to open up my home to people that may be going through similar situations.

Alan Hart: Well, if you were looking back and giving your younger self advice, what advice would you give?

Génesis Miranda Longo: I would tell little Génesis to not wait to be given permission; to just go do it—or to not be asked to do something, but to just go do it. And I think connecting that to what we talked about in marketing I didn't wait for someone to tell me to go build a tool, I just built it because I had the resources to now. And if I didn't have the resources, then I can go find them and learn. But yeah, I think not waiting for you to be ready is key.

Alan Hart: Yeah.

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Génesis Miranda Longo: And I've just employed that in a lot of areas of my life, like adopting a teenager, even if I was not ready to be a mom, or buying a house, even if I maybe wasn't ready for that either.

Alan Hart: Yeah. That's awesome. Well, what's one topic that you're trying to learn more about right now?

Génesis Miranda Longo: Yeah, I'm really interested in how people are using AI not just for automation and efficiencies, but for decision-making. And how they're using AI to gather more context to make smarter decisions.

So I've been really interested in seeing how people are doing that across context, whether it's shopping and using AI to give you more context on how to make the right purchase or in marketing—like, before I would need to go to data analysts, and now I can kind of figure things out on my own. So that's been a really interesting shift in roles and responsibilities. So I'm interested in learning more there.

Alan Hart: Yeah. It is interesting because you start to learn it—well, I'm earlier in my journey than you are—but you start to use it to research and learn information, and then you do kind of, at some point, there's like a tipping point where you go, just go figure this out for me and tell me what the answer is. I haven't gotten to the point where they actually go do it yet, but I imagine that's coming.

Génesis Miranda Longo: I've been having my AI agent in Pi send Slack messages for me, but I do tell it at the bottom. I'm like, make sure you say it's—my Slack handle is "Glo"—G Longo. So it's like at Glo's Pi and a little robot. It's like "This message was sent from Glo's Pi."

Alan Hart: That's funny. That's really funny. Well, most marketers—and I'm assuming you are, because we've already been talking about all these things that you're learning and looking at—most marketers tend to be very curious people, and I always am curious what you're curious about in the world.

Génesis Miranda Longo: Oh my gosh. I'm curious about so many things. Parenting a teenager is something I'm very curious about. Farsi is another one just because he speaks Farsi. He's from Iran. But professionally, I'm really curious right now on how new communities are being created—niche communities. People are so—they're craving these people-to-people interactions. They're craving communities where they can learn and find a sense of belonging. And so as a marketer, too, it's how do I create those communities and those IRL experiences while also automating everything else on the back end. So I'm really curious to see how IRL things, even like how Shoptalk will evolve because people are craving these types of opportunities to meet others.

Alan Hart: I'm sure you're finding this as you're thinking about it—but it's hard to automate the in-person part because people are messy, just inherently. But I agree. We all are craving that human connection.

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Génesis Miranda Longo: And it's also like, what does a dinner turn into? A work dinner? People used to just show up at a work dinner and just sit there and have conversations with the people on their left and their right. That's not how we should be doing dinners! We can be so creative now. I had an event a couple months back where I got stickers made. This is like when ChatGPT first started doing image generation. This was last year. I made everyone a sticker of their pet.

Alan Hart: Oh, wow.

Génesis Miranda Longo: And when we got to the event, I gave all of these—it was a—Bark was our customer we were showcasing, so pet was the theme. But I gave everyone these stickers of pets. I'm like, these pets are lost. Find their owner. And that was how I got everyone to mingle and get to know each other instead of just throwing everyone into a room and having them, I don't know—what did we used to do before? [laughs] And so, going back to your curiosity question, it's how do we use AI to augment these experiences? Like, I used AI to generate a bunch of stickers of people's pets. But those experiences are now what are enabling the human connection, and so I think we can continue to explore more and more of those use cases.

Alan Hart: I really love that example. That's awesome. Well, two more questions for you. What do you think is the largest opportunity or potential threat facing marketers going forward?

Génesis Miranda Longo: Well, we've talked about the opportunity. I like to say that before AI, I was a way finder. If I needed something, I would go find the people to help me do it. But now I'm a way maker. I don't have to wait for people like on the data org or in the engineering org to help me. I can figure it out myself with the tools. And so I would tell marketers to change that mentality and to maybe stop feeling like you are blocked, and just tinker and try to figure it out. And then when you get somewhere, launch the MVP, start getting people to use your tool. Like Matchie has had—I launched it a couple weeks ago—and it already has over 500 people that—over 500 requests—going through Matchie across the revenue organization at Shopify. And so now if I do need resources, I can say, hey, engineering team, I need your help to make this even better because look at all the usage, instead of waiting for them and making the case that we should build this tool together.

Alan Hart: Well, one more question: In a sentence, if you can say, what's one way agentic AI will fundamentally change how we shop in the next year?

Génesis Miranda Longo: It already has.

Alan Hart: Oh!

Génesis Miranda Longo: Can that be my sentence?

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Alan Hart: Yeah.

Génesis Miranda Longo: At Shopify, we're seeing AI-driven traffic increase 8x in 2025 and 15x for AI-driven sales. And even with our recent Shopify announcements, with our partnerships with ChatGPT and Microsoft, we're just going to continue seeing more and more of that traction.

Alan Hart: I love it. Well, Génesis, thank you for coming on the show.

Génesis Miranda Longo: Thank you for having me, Alan. This was fun. Next time though, I have to interview you! [laughs]

Alan Hart: OK, next time, next time.

Génesis Miranda Longo: Thanks for having me.

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