



EPISODE 56

Building a retail media network in reverse

Host: Alan Hart, Leader in Marketing and Customer Strategy, Deloitte Consulting LLP

Guests: Tony Rogers, Senior Vice President and CMO, Dollar General

Tony Rogers: Our retail media organization is almost, in a way, it's the exact opposite of the other retail media networks in our area... If you look at most of our competitors, they stood up their retail media business on their website, on their app... We, on the other hand...started our retail media business before we had an e-com business. And so, our team got very good at the offsite part of retail media... Where most retail media networks right now are starting onsite...and are now going offsite, we're doing the opposite.

Alan Hart: Today on the show, I have Tony Rogers, senior vice president and chief marketing officer at Dollar General. Tony has held CMO-level roles at some of the most recognizable retail brands in America, Walmart, Sam's Club, and Signet Jewelers, and joined Dollar General in 2024 to lead their full marketing and media operation, including the Dollar General Media Network. Today on the show, we talk about Dollar General's approach to purposeful value and affordability, how the modern Dollar General customer journey has evolved into true omnichannel, and how their retail media strategy has shifted from offsite first to an integrated ecosystem.

Marketing Beyond | Episode 56

That and much more with Tony Rogers.

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: Well, Tony, welcome to the show.

Tony Rogers: Thank you, sir.

Alan Hart: So, we have to start with this story that I heard. I always thought golf was an exceptionally safe and happy sport. What happened to you recently?

Tony Rogers: Yeah, I thought of golf as a non-contact sport also, but I was in a golf tournament recently with a friend of mine—a friend of mine all the way back from high school. And he had just hit a swing that he was especially proud of. And so, he was taking another victory lap of that same swing, and some combination of him not knowing where I was and me maybe being in the wrong place. And I realized how powerful a golf club is! Yeah, some broken bones. [laughs]

Alan Hart: Well, I'm happy that you're here today.

Tony Rogers: Yeah, appreciate it. Three weeks! That's modern medicine.

Alan Hart: That is crazy.

Tony Rogers: Yeah.

Alan Hart: That is crazy. Well, I'm never going to think of golf the same way anymore after that.

Tony Rogers: I know the next time I play, I'll be head on a swivel.

Alan Hart: Yeah. [laughs] Well, I don't even know how to transition from that! [laughs] But you are the chief marketing officer at Dollar General. Where did you get your start in your career, and how'd you end up at Dollar General?

Tony Rogers: Yeah. A really predictable and logical start to a marketing career: I got an accounting degree, and worked as an accountant for several years and as an auditor. I was auditing these companies, and I started noticing that the marketing department in these companies looked pretty interesting—kind of what they were doing, and it seemed like they enjoyed their jobs.

And so I thought, I think I'm going to be in marketing! So I started trying to make that move. But people were like, you're an accountant. What are you talking about?

So I ended up going back to business school, basically to rebrand myself. And so I went to business school in Austin and came out the other side a marketing guy. And so I started in CPG and then worked my way to retail.

Marketing Beyond | Episode 56

Alan Hart: OK. Well, you might be—I'm trying to think—you might be the first auditor turned marketer I've ever had on the show. [laughs]

Tony Rogers: Well, it's interesting—we'll talk about this, I'm sure—but like how quantitative marketing has become. It actually turned out to be pretty useful.

Alan Hart: No, absolutely.

Tony Rogers: But it's probably not how you would draw it up.

Alan Hart: No, no. It must help, too, with the ability to think about how marketing impacts the income statement or the balance sheet and all those kind of components, too.

Tony Rogers: Yes. I remember the very first job, my first day as a marketer, and the brand I worked on was Pillsbury—the Pillsbury Doughboy. And so you think, oh, you're going to go do the Pillsbury Doughboy, make commercials and stuff. No. The very first thing they handed me is a spreadsheet, and they said, you need to tell the plants how much to make based on the marketing that you're going to be doing.

And so actually, to your point about financial statements and financial acumen, it's actually proven to be a pretty good combo.

Alan Hart: Yeah. Using those forecasting muscles.

Tony Rogers: Yeah.

Alan Hart: Well, what is the scope of Dollar General today and in your organization in particular?

Tony Rogers: Well, Dollar General is just a fantastic company. It's been around for 85 years, 21,000 stores, 80% of them in communities of less than 20,000 people. And so two things I really find interesting about it: One is there's a real close connection with the customer, because you're in these little communities. A lot of times the customer will go in the store and they know the person working there and vice versa. So you have a real close relationship with the customer.

Then the other thing I like about Dollar General, and about discount retail in general, is there's a sense of purpose because you're helping a customer who needs your help to get to that next paycheck, to get to the end of the month. We have a saying around Dollar General that sometimes our customer has more month left at the end of the money.

And we really take pride in our role in her life of getting her to the end of the month. So that's kind of what our company's all about. And I mentioned the stores. We're now on this digital journey, so that's a lot of fun. And so in my team, we're at the center of that digital journey. So we have marketing, but we also have our digital team and our retail media team all in the same group. And there are some great benefits from being structured that way.

Alan Hart: What is, I mean, you talked about getting—I'm going to get it wrong, but "getting more month out of the check." How did you say it?

Marketing Beyond | Episode 56

Tony Rogers: Yeah. This came from a customer. She said, I feel like I have more month at the end of my money. My money runs out before the month runs out and my next paycheck comes.

Alan Hart: Yeah, I love that.

Tony Rogers: Yeah. And so, because of that, necessity is the mother of invention, and our customer is kind of the CFO of the household. She's very savvy. She uses all kinds of tools to maximize the ROI on what she has, including digital coupons and carefully planning her shopping list and things like that. And so we've built an ecosystem really around her behavior.

Alan Hart: And it seems like that notion of value and affordability is at the core of Dollar General.

Tony Rogers: It really is. It's based on that. And then once you've established that, then around that, you can weave in some surprise and delight, some treasure hunt, some inspiration, for those times when there is a little bit of discretionary spend available. And so it's a nice combination.

Alan Hart: Walk me through. What does the modern customer journey look like for a customer at Dollar General?

Tony Rogers: Yeah. I mean, to what we were just talking about, because she is on that journey and because she's having to be so resourceful, it's a journey that starts well before—let's just take a brick-and-mortar journey and we'll go to digital after that. But for a brick-and-mortar journey, it starts well before she ever goes to the store.

And it starts with our app, our website, our weekly ad. And what we see is our customer carefully planning out, OK, this is going to be my list. I see there's a coupon for this, I can stack it with this other coupon, and I can maximize my savings, which, by the way, that has spawned a whole cottage industry of influencers helping her do that.

And so all this work happens before she ever gets to the store. And then when she gets to the store she's really looking to capture that value and get in and out quickly. So there's a convenience element. That's why we say what we're trying to do is save her time and money, because there's a "save time" piece of this, too. Which now that's led into same-day delivery.

We just launched same-day delivery. We've had DoorDash, who's been a great partner. We've had them for several years. We just added Uber Eats this past year. And then, we just launched our 1P [first-party] delivery in November. And so just for the first time, in November, over 18,000 of our stores, we now have the ability to let the customer place an order on our app or website and have that order delivered to her front door.

And if you look at all of our deliveries, more often than not, they're getting there in less than an hour, because we're in these small communities. And so the driver is fairly close to the store, is fairly close to the customer, and so the proximity there works in our favor. We're pretty fast.

Alan Hart: That's amazing. And I love the notion, too, of you start, I'm sure, online, shopping, preparing, before you get to the physical store. Then you've got the—whether you buy online and get it delivered or

Marketing Beyond | Episode 56

whether you're in the store and you're taking it home—there's like an omnichannel component here in terms of all the various touchpoints.

Tony Rogers: Exactly. What we really say is up until recently, our digital app, website, were really meant to be the digital companion to a physical shopping trip. Now, it's all kind of coming together into an omnichannel customer experience. And so it's exciting. And as you can imagine, it also means a whole different body of work that we work on in our digital team and with our tech partners.

There's never a dull moment right now. We're moving fast.

Alan Hart: Well, I mean, with the addition of e-commerce, because that's relatively new as well, how are you thinking about your retail media strategy and approach? Because you've got a lot more things in the basket you can use now.

Tony Rogers: Yeah, that's exactly right. Our retail media organization is almost, in a way, it's the exact opposite of the other retail media networks in our area. So, what I mean by that is, if you look at most of our competitors, they stood up their retail media business on their website, on their app. The idea was, hey, I've got all this traffic on my digital platforms and I there's opportunity to monetize that and become an advertising platform.

We, on the other hand—and these were some smart people before me—we started our retail media business before we had an e-com business. And so, our team got very good at the offsite part of retail media, packaging up an audience for an advertiser and helping that advertiser reach that audience on ESPN or Facebook or somewhere out on the internet.

What we've found in that is that what has made that valuable is there's a component there of net new, of incremental reach.

So because we are in these communities that are a little bit further out, a little bit smaller, what we find is that customer isn't always included in the national media buys that people make. And so we've had success with our retail media network because it's proven—that Dollar General audience has proven—to be a nice addition to the national buy because of the incremental reach that you get.

So, that offsite is the roots. Where most retail media networks right now are starting onsite and have started onsite and are now going offsite, we're doing the opposite. We started offsite, but now that we have same-day delivery, all of a sudden we're rapidly accelerating our onsite business and so our advertisers can now invest in things like search and placements that are on our digital platforms.

Alan Hart: I like the juxtaposition of how others are doing it, how you started. Because the root of your approach was audience-driven, not inventory-driven, right?

Tony Rogers: Absolutely, yes!

Alan Hart: Which is interesting. It probably does, even as you go onsite now or in the e-commerce channel and other digital means, probably gives you a little bit of advantage because you already have an audience-driven approach.

Marketing Beyond | Episode 56

Tony Rogers: I like the way you put that. It's exactly right. It's a very valuable audience. And in a way, being good at the offsite stuff is harder than the onsite.

Alan Hart: Yeah, much harder I think.

Tony Rogers: So our team's done the heavy lifting there and gotten really good at that. And so now we're just applying that expertise to our own platforms.

Alan Hart: So one of the things I've heard you say in the past is you're breaking down silos within the organization. Tell me what that looks like. What does that do for you

Tony Rogers: Yeah, the org structure that we were talking about earlier where you have digital marketing and retail media all on the same team, what that really lets us do is operate without silos and operate a little bit differently than maybe some other people do.

So I'll give you a couple of examples. There will be times when Austin Leonard, who is the phenomenal new head of our—I say new, he's been here for about a year now—the head of our retail media function. He'll come in and say, hey, we've built a great program with this advertiser and they are ready to make this investment. I know it's a priority for you. Maybe it's back to school or a holiday or something. I know that's a priority for Dollar General, too. Can we match up and pair up their investment with some enterprise investment?

And so it's my dollars plus the advertiser dollars really trying to accomplish the same objective. And so, it's a win-win because I now have supplier dollars helping me grow and the supplier has my dollars helping them grow.

Alan Hart: Right.

Tony Rogers: So that's one example. And then the other example is since we have the digital team in our team as well, we will do a lot of listening. We'll go on listening tours. We'll go to Cincinnati or Purchase and visit our key advertisers and suppliers and listen to them say, hey, this is what I like about this other retailer's app or website. We like these types of placements or these types of programs. And so we'll say, you got it.

So we can come back and build that stuff on demand because it all sits in our team.

Alan Hart: Right.

Tony Rogers: We can move things up the tech priority list because we control that. Whereas at a lot of other companies that might be different fiefdoms, different political battles that you have to fight. We don't really have to do that.

Alan Hart: Yeah. No, I like the partnership model there. And the ability to move more agile and with speed.

Tony Rogers: We're lean and mean. We're small and mighty, yeah

Marketing Beyond | Episode 56

Alan Hart: Yeah, I love it. With a huge footprint—21,000 stores—is still resonating in my head right now. I did not know it was that many locations. That's amazing.

Tony Rogers: We just went to the 21,000th opening down near Atlanta. It was fantastic.

Alan Hart: That's amazing. Well, one of the things we like to do on the show is get to know you a little bit better. We know golf is a little testy. [laughs]

Tony Rogers: Yeah. It's not my strong suit.

Alan Hart: Yeah, but my favorite question to ask everyone who comes on is, has there been an experience of your past that makes up who you are today?

Tony Rogers: I love the question. A lot of times you do this podcast, and it's just business, business, business. And I love that you even asked the question.

Alan Hart: Thank you.

Tony Rogers: My answer here is a little personal and might even be a little macabre here, but I went to my dad's funeral in 2005.

And it was a really pivotal moment for me in my life because obviously grieving the loss of my dad. But what impacted me that day so dramatically was going to his funeral and seeing how many people had shown up for him. And it was in this chapel. The chapel was packed. There were so many people that there were just people outside that couldn't even get in. And it was just, it was a little overwhelming, but also heartwarming at the same time. And then afterwards, just talking to all the people, many of them I had never met, who just told me that, hey, I want to just take a minute and tell you the impact that your dad had on my life.

You know, your dad did this for me back in 1987, and it changed my life forever, you know, stuff like that. And so I thought, in a way, your funeral is sort of a report card on your life. [laughs] If you die and nobody shows up? Maybe you didn't do something exactly right.

But I just thought I want that to be my funeral. I want it to be packed, and I want there to be a whole bunch of people there who say, I knew that guy and he had enough of an impact on my life that I'm going to make the effort to show up at his funeral. You know?

Alan Hart: Yeah, yeah. Thanks for sharing.

Tony Rogers: Sorry if that's a little too sad or weird or something, but yeah.

Alan Hart: No, it's a great story! And I appreciate you sharing it. It does make you reflect on the thankfulness that everyone—and to show up when they're not there and because of what they meant to you. It's an interesting...

Tony Rogers: Yeah. And to want to tell his son, you know, to pass that on to his son.

Marketing Beyond | Episode 56

Alan Hart: How much he mattered. Yeah. That's amazing. Well, if you were looking back at little Tony many years ago, what advice would you give him?

Tony Rogers: So I would say less fear and less people pleasing. So, I don't know if you're a Myers-Briggs fan, but do you know it?

Alan Hart: I know it. Yeah.

Tony Rogers: So my Myers-Briggs personality type is called ENFP, OK? I'm like a nerd on this. I love it. And so, ENFP personality types tend to be more relationship-driven in the way they approach things. They look at things through the lens of relationships. And there's a lot of good things about that.

But one of the Achilles heels of that is they are prone to be people pleasers because they don't want to disappoint. And so I think if I could give advice to my younger self, it would be to be a little bit less worried about making everybody happy and about pleasing everybody and focus a little bit more on what you're driven to do. The goal you're trying to accomplish and go after it.

I once had a time in my career where I reported in to two bosses, two CEOs. Neither one of them was a dotted line. And, as you can imagine, with two CEOs, they didn't always agree.

Alan Hart: Especially if you have that predilection, I would imagine. Right? That's not a good situation!

Tony Rogers: Yeah, yeah! And they actually sat me down one time and they said, hey, you're spending so much time trying to broker peace between us and please us. We want to know what you think, you know? You might change our mind. And I thought that was some really good advice that I got. And that's the advice I would give my younger self.

Alan Hart: Well, is there anything you're trying to learn more about right now?

Tony Rogers: The thing I'm really consumed with right now, obviously everybody is consumed with AI. It's all the talk of Cannes. But what I'm really fascinated by is how AI can drive personalized marketing. And so I'm a big believer in this term called "next best action," where you figure out for each one of your customers, what's the next best thing that you can get them to do that will drive them to a deeper level of loyalty with your brand. And in our case, since we are on this mission to save them time or money, what's the next best thing that I can get them to do that's going to save them even more time and money?

And so we've identified, with our great analytics team, all of these next best actions. And it's things you might expect, like get them to download their first coupon, get them to buy an additional category. Get them to have a certain amount of purchases in their first 90 days with us, those kinds of things.

So that's just fascinating to know what those levers are. But then what happens is you now have a bottleneck because we have 100 million people in our database. And so I now need millions and millions of different kinds of pieces of creative. And I told you, we're lean and mean, small and mighty. And so there's just not a scenario where we're going to open up a whole floor of our building for a whole bunch of marketers making all this content for these millions of different next-best-action journeys. And so it depends on AI.

Marketing Beyond | Episode 56

That's really where a lot of our focus is right now, building the AI into our processes to deploy these next best actions, to segment the customer base and figure out who needs to see what, and then to make the creative to put in front of them—and to measure it.

Alan Hart: That's a great way to put it. And I hadn't thought about, I mean, coming back to your mission and your value equation, if you will, for customers, that's the mission and why AI is the right solve, not the other way around.

Tony Rogers: Yeah.

Alan Hart: Right? I feel like here at Cannes, AI is just in the lexicon. But we forget to think about what are we trying to achieve, and how does AI actually help us do that.

Tony Rogers: Yeah, absolutely. I heard somebody the other day, they said, the notion that just AI is your strategy, to your point, it doesn't make sense. And they said it would be like at the turn of the 20th century, somebody saying electricity is our strategy! Electricity is going to be our competitive advantage!

Alan Hart: That's a great example.

Tony Rogers: It's not! Everybody's going to have electricity. It's how are you organizing around that to leverage electricity back then, and to leverage AI now, to accomplish things like next best action and personalization.

Alan Hart: I love it, I love it. As you look out in the world today, what are you curious about?

Tony Rogers: Linking this all to the prior conversation about relationships and looking at the world through that lens, I'm a huge history guy. I love to read history. I love to read biographies and understand context for why things happen. And I'm interested in the relationships between groups of people.

Tony Rogers: And recently, I don't know. I'm sure you've seen this with the World Cup?

Alan Hart: Oh, yeah.

Tony Rogers: And the Scots come to Boston or the Dutch go down to Texas. There was one of the African countries with Kansas. And each of these places, they're having these amazing bonding experiences. And it's just got me wondering. You asked what I'm curious about. Sorry! This is a long answer about what I'm curious about!

Alan Hart: No, it's good!

Tony Rogers: It's got me wondering, are we at a place here where these commonalities that we have as humans, these dreams that we have for ourselves and our families, are we at a place where maybe those will connect to us and kind of overcome the divisiveness that it seems to kind of be baked in to maybe our media and some of those areas.

Are we maybe reaching, or could we reach, an end of that chapter of division and start to move on to something better?

Marketing Beyond | Episode 56

Alan Hart: Yeah. I am optimistic and hopeful that you're right. I love the connection that you're talking about. And sport as a uniting force. With soccer, it's just amazing. And a funny aside: I find it hilarious what the Scots did in Boston. The Scots out Irished the Irish! It was pretty funny.

Tony Rogers: The cones!

Alan Hart: Yeah. The cones on everything. But yeah, I think you're right. Like this notion of we're all people at the end of the day and we all have similar hopes and dreams. There may be nuanced differences, but most of it relates to how we want our family to be. We have to remember that somehow.

Tony Rogers: I think so, too.

Alan Hart: Well, as a marketing leader, what do you see as the largest opportunity or potential threat facing marketers today?

Tony Rogers: It's funny you ask that question because I was having a conversation last night with some of our creatives from our ad agency. And the conversation we were having is, we were all reminiscing about back in the day when we would make these anthemic commercials, the kind that would make you just fall in love with a brand, maybe even laugh or tear up a little bit.

And it seems like that's kind of becoming a lost art because we're so focused on performance—right now, this ad, this quarter. And we all sort of left that conversation resolved to do two things. One, to go fight for that kind of work. And two, to spend the time to come up with the creative idea that drives that kind of work.

And that's no small undertaking in the climate that we all work in now, where it's just like 24/7. We're always on, we're always answering emails, and busy, busy, busy. But I'm leaving Cannes saying, hey, I'm going to commit myself to more of that kind of work.

Alan Hart: I love that. Not to give you ideas, but I think that notion of what brings us together, what pulls us together, and those hopes and dreams? In there, those universal truths is probably where you need to pull the thread, right?

Tony Rogers: I think that's well said. And that's how you build brand love, you know. You stand for things.

Alan Hart: Right. Well, at Cannes, obviously we've talked about AI is everywhere. I'm curious. At Dollar General, what are you guys looking at that you're like, AI is not the solve here, and we need to preserve this thing, whatever it is.

Tony Rogers: I think that it's around this empathy that I see baked into our company's culture. This empathy that we have for our customer and this drive to help them accomplish what they need to monetarily, financially. And we can build all the personalization and be as efficient as we want to with AI, but I think what AI can't replace is a whole company, a whole organization, going to work every day and saying, the reason I'm at work today is to save that customer time and money. I don't think AI can replace that—that notion of purpose and empathy.

Alan Hart: I love that. Well, Tony, thank you for coming on the show.

Marketing Beyond | Episode 56

Tony Rogers: Thank you, sir, I really enjoyed that. We covered a lot of ground here.

Alan Hart: I know, it's awesome. Thank you.

Tony Rogers: I appreciate it.

Alan Hart: The views, thoughts, and opinions expressed are the speaker's own and do not represent the views, thoughts, and opinions of Deloitte. The material and information presented here is for general information purposes only and does not imply endorsement or opposition to any specific company, product, or service.

Hi, it's Alan again. Marketing Beyond is a Deloitte Digital podcast. It's created and hosted by me, Alan Hart, and produced by Sam Robertson. We have even more cutting-edge marketing insights headed your way. Be sure to subscribe to our channel to stay up to date on our latest episodes. I love hearing from listeners. Share your thoughts about the episode, the topic covered, or the show by commenting on this video or emailing me at marketingbeyond@deloitte.com. If you're interested in more conversations with industry visionaries, we invite you to explore other Deloitte Digital podcasts at deloitte.digital.com/us/podcasts and share the show with your friends and colleagues. There, you'll find the Marketing Beyond webpage with complete show notes and links to what was discussed in the episode today. I'm Alan Hart, and this is Marketing Beyond.

I'm Alan Hart and this is Marketing Beyond.

Learn more



Visit the Marketing Beyond library:

www.deloittedigital.com/us/marketingbeyond

This podcast contains general information only and Deloitte is not, by means of this podcast, rendering accounting, business, financial, investment, legal, tax, or other professional advice or services. This podcast is not a substitute for such professional advice or services, nor should it be used as a basis for any decision or action that may affect your business. Before making any decision or taking any action that may affect your business, you should consult a qualified professional advisor. Deloitte shall not be responsible for any loss sustained by any person who relies on this podcast.

About Deloitte

Deloitte refers to one or more of Deloitte Touche Tohmatsu Limited, a UK private company limited by guarantee (“DTTL”), its network of member firms, and their related entities. DTTL and each of its member firms are legally separate and independent entities. DTTL (also referred to as “Deloitte Global”) does not provide services to clients. In the United States, Deloitte refers to one or more of the US member firms of DTTL, their related entities that operate using the “Deloitte” name in the United States, and their respective affiliates. Certain services may not be available to attest clients under the rules and regulations of public accounting. Please see www.deloitte.com/about to learn more about our global network of member firms. Product names mentioned in this podcast are the trademarks or registered trademarks of their respective owners and are mentioned for identification purposes only. Inclusion does not constitute an endorsement of the company, product, and/or service.

Copyright © 2025 Deloitte Development LLC. All rights reserved.