

Mandy Dhaliwal:

I am not here to put our name on socks. I'm here to help move the needle in this business.

Jason Lopez:

Marketing is changing, but that's no news flash. In the 1960s, McKinsey published a report that could have been written last week talking about the shift to the customer, the value of renting over owning, and the importance of digital information. But in the case of Nutanix's Mandy Dhaliwal the change at hand is a historic opportunity. This is the Tech Barometer Podcast. In this episode, we look at marketing today through the profile of Nutanix CMO, Mandy Dhaliwal. Let's set up the context. Nutanix provides tools and apps that leverage the cloud. It's a cloud company. The cloud is perhaps the greatest growth market the world has ever known, according to industry analyst Bob Evans. Or from a technical angle, the cloud is the biggest infrastructure that humanity has ever built. Northwestern University professor and researcher, Mark Mills, cites that in his book *The Cloud Revolution*. So with that in mind, think about Mandy's statement. I'm not here to put our name on sox.

Mandy Dhaliwal:

I'm Chief Marketing Officer, which connotes tactical stuff. We're the party planners, we set up the booths, we deliver swag, et cetera, et cetera. I think that reputation of marketing is changing. When I started my career, we were the ad people, not quite mad men, but that was our world. And now you look at how data-driven we've become and all the tools and how much of an impact we have on revenue.

Jason Lopez:

Though the media itself, as far back as the Gutenberg press, was technically considered marketing. The discipline we know essentially started in the early 19 hundreds. Since the 1980s, a lot has happened to the marketing departments of businesses: the rise of information technologies, the emergence of the internet, the adoption of integrated marketing communications. Technologies like AI and new marketing approaches frame the data-driven practices. Mandy employs in her role at Nutanix, a company that itself is helping to reshape computing in terms of the cloud. Yet another new force affecting how marketers deliver the right message to the right people at the right time. There's a lot of attention, innovation and investment in this rapidly evolving world of information technology, which is helping businesses and governments digitally transform how they operate. It takes a big thinker and doer to raise global market awareness of Nutanix. The blueprint for it hasn't been written yet.

Mandy Dhaliwal:

This is our time as marketers. This next iteration of the business world really is heavily dependent on marketing. The winners and losers have to obviously have the right technology, but at the end of the day, it's how you get that message into market. How much dollar do you deploy to go drive that message into market in an efficient way to go get the outcome that you need. So being a problem solver, that's what I am looking to unravel for this business and get to a clear go to market motion in terms of who we go after, when and how do we get them a message that's compelling for them to give us a try and get them into our technology orbit.

Jason Lopez:

Mandy's goal is to establish a revenue marketing operation that effectively and efficiently feeds a pipeline of new business and existing customer opportunities for a subscription oriented model. Finding

new customers and keeping them coming back for more is essential to Nutanix delivering what it lays out for investors each quarter.

Mandy Dhaliwal:

I'm the eldest firstborn grandchild on both sides of the family. When I was born, my initials were deliberately set to be MD because my Indian born parents wanted me to be a doctor,

Jason Lopez:

But med school wasn't in her vision. She enrolled in business school at Simon Frazier University in British Columbia, signing up for an internship program that landed her at Nortel Networks.

Mandy Dhaliwal:

That was pivotal for me in my career. And, I was one of the, the only actually intern that was chosen to go ride along, if you will, on this customer event that they were hosting. I got to go be a fly on the wall and watch them interact with their top telco customers that were buying hundreds of millions of dollars of gear from them regularly. And that to me was a moment I knew that I wanted to be in B2B tech, working in marketing because I just loved everything about that event, the whole relationship building with the customer, the ability to educate them on what was coming from a roadmap perspective. Marketing put the event together, so really showcasing how marketing could be very strategic to drive the growth of the business.

Jason Lopez:

After graduating, Mandy worked in a couple of marketing positions and found her way on the B2B side at a British Columbia based telecom company. While working in tech, she realized she needed to be in Silicon Valley.

Mandy Dhaliwal:

Ended up joining a company called Legato Systems, which was known for disaster recovery and storage. Ran alliances. Marketing, knew nothing about alliances. But learned that entire business worked with seven different alliance VPs supporting their businesses. We had partnerships with the likes of Dell, Microsoft, Sun, Oracle, you know, you name it. Probably the best education I could have had in tech.

Jason Lopez:

Not only did she have to learn Legatos business, but also the partnerships with clients to drive joint value propositions into the market. But this is where the story takes a turn. Lagado was acquired by EMC where she stayed for a while, but then dropped out to raise a family,

Mandy Dhaliwal:

Took seven years off and did it right, did not want anybody raising my child and did not wanna pay a nanny to raise my kid. We did it ourselves. As he went into kindergarten, I decided I was going to do something for myself. Went to wine school.

Jason Lopez:

She earned a sommelier certificate, but she says that wasn't her motivation. She wanted to learn about wine in all its facets. Without becoming a snob.

Mandy Dhaliwal:

I'll go to a friend's place and they'll be like, I'll bring a bottle of wine, and they'll be like, well, let's open yours because ours is probably not good enough. And I'm like, no, no, no, stop right there. It's all good. If you like it, I'd love to try it. It's not about judging, it's more about what are you pairing it with, what climate, what time of year, et cetera, et cetera, and being able to enjoy the experience. So I think people have a lot of baggage. There's no wrong answer. If you like something, drink it.

Jason Lopez:

While a career in wine could be down the road. She says her wine interest is for fun and is separate from her role in the tech world.

Mandy Dhaliwal:

I relish the opportunity to step away from my phone and be in a tasting room or be walking through a vineyard to get away from my day-to-day.

Jason Lopez:

But wine and tech aren't mutually exclusive. As a marketer, she appreciates the unique challenges winemakers face. Many exemplary wineries have small marketing budgets. And having grown up on a farm, she recognizes the tech that goes into agriculture.

Mandy Dhaliwal:

When you walk into a, a winery that state-of-the-art drip irrigation sensors in the vineyards for temperature, zero gravity, no pump overs, like really keeping the authenticity of the wine and the integrity of the juice and not manipulating it, that gets me super excited. So how do you use tech to preserve what really should go into your glass in its most original form? I nerd out on stuff like that.

Jason Lopez:

Mandy Dhaliwal, the eldest of four kids, grew up in a small farming region in British Columbia on the US Canada border. Her family came from India, arriving in Canada in fits and starts. In the 1800s her great-grandfather journeyed to Vancouver only to arrive in the harbor, forbidden from stepping on land. The boat anchored in the harbor where he stayed for more than three months with little food or supplies before being sent back to India.

Mandy Dhaliwal:

So that was the first migration attempt into Canada. My grandfather on my mom's side, his older brother came across to work in the lumber mills. We were landowners in India in the Punjab, but the family had the means to be able to send their sons to a foreign land. So once my grandfather's brother arrived, he sent for his other relatives and my grandfather came across. My mother was two years old at that time, so her father left to go make a better life. And then about 10 years later my grandmother and my uncle came across.

Jason Lopez:

Her mother made the trip at 19 for an arranged marriage with her dad, who was a teacher and then became a realtor.

Mandy Dhaliwal:

We started buying up land and then one of my uncles decided that he wanted to get into farming, so he bought a strawberry farm, and then it was just this whole gravitational pull. Every family member all of a sudden got into land, so that's where the farming came in. And we were cheap labor as kids.

Jason Lopez:

But thanks to agriculture technologies, which were becoming more affordable. The family farm at this point, producing raspberries, was able to bring in automation.

Mandy Dhaliwal:

We had hundreds of workers come to our fields every summer. The harvest was six to eight weeks and they would be out there picking the raspberries and they're very delicate and you have to be very careful. Just in my childhood, we went from that to the harvester.

Jason Lopez:

The world of AgTech is quietly a vibrant area for investment. As technologists envision the connected farm with cloud, IOT, robotics, and AI making precision ag a reality. Berry farmers, for example, can better time harvests, manage responses to weather, make better environmental choices as far as applying fertilizer or keeping the weeds down and simply getting better fruit to market.

Mandy Dhaliwal:

We were on the precipice of getting to this watershed moment where you can now genetically engineer the plants. You can start to get regulation and predictability, your not getting the swings in the weather because you got irrigation. You can tent on the supply side for the farmers. There's the John Deeres of the world becoming tech companies. No longer are they a lawnmower and a tractor business. So I think there's innovation happening throughout the entire ecosystem, not just on the production side. So all of these things, it's the evolution of mankind, right? You think of the iPhone, you think of all the things that we take for granted. I still remember the days I started my career. I had a pager, I worked for the phone company.

Mandy Dhaliwal:

I've done every single functional role within marketing, and I understand what the people that work for me in the orgs are grappling with. So I can go very deep with them and be able to really be a business partner to them to help drive our business.

Jason Lopez:

One of the latest tools for marketers in the technology space has been subscriptions. Not necessarily a new invention, but scaling a subscription business is one of those practices which is wide open for innovation.

Mandy Dhaliwal:

I saw a lot of opportunity here to come in and make a difference, to get that narrative right to the market, really be more customer focused and really start to focus on the growth aspect of this business and really unlock the partner ecosystem.

Mandy Dhaliwal:

As I look at dashboards, as I look at data across my peer sets as well, I'm looking for patterns in terms of pipeline, for example. Where are we driving pipeline, which segments, which regions, what verticals, what's happening? What's the story that's resonating? If I can get to that level of specificity, I know what's working and I know what I need to improve.

Jason Lopez:

But she says data by itself is nothing without strategy. The question is how to harness data to get the right insights to move a business forward. Those patterns of data help companies create their formula.

Mandy Dhaliwal:

It's a highly complex algorithm that we have to codify ourselves and every business has to do this, and companies that are really good at it are the ones that are scaling quickly, that's the secret sauce.

Jason Lopez:

Mandy Dal is the Chief Marketing Officer of Nutanix. This is the Tech Barometer podcast. I'm Jason Lopez. Thank you for listening. Tech Barometer is produced by The Forecast. If you'd like more stories on tech and the people in technology, check out more stories at the forecastbynutanix.com.