

Comments By Julia Rickard
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Greetings,

My name is Julia Rickard. I am the daughter of Wesley Rickard. My father has worked with tribes for over 40 years, advocating with you for the rightful and best use of your land and helping you to build a future, through the sustainable use of the great resource we call trees.

I grew up watching and listening to my father as he worked with tribes. As a child I learned the meaning of board feet, market value, field study, assessment, litigation and expert witness - not to be confused with government witness.

When he was working on a case, I could call the office at midnight and my father would answer...always working. Over the years, my father taught me the lessons that he learned as he worked alongside you...I would synthesize these lessons down to 3 words: perseverance, patience, and vision.

When I was asked by Jim Petersen and ITC to participate in implementing this survey, I knew I would be looking at things with a different set of eyes. You see, I did not go "into the forest..." I studied music and became a music therapist. Initially, I worked in hospitals, nursing homes, group homes and other institutions.

I then switched gears a bit, and went on to work for 15 years as a family therapist and youth advocate for several small, local, nonprofit groups. Primarily I worked with and advocated for at risk teens and families in my own small rural community.

I actively put to use the lessons I learned from my father, from you...perseverance, patience and vision. And as you can imagine, I needed all of those wading through the minutiae of human services...the question I often asked was "where is the human?" When I could no longer find the "humanity" in what I was doing, I resigned.

I found that being a true voice for youth was part of my calling, and but was misplaced in a system that was not willing to put our children first.

I now work part-time for a small family winery. Primarily, I conduct marketing, distribution and sales activities and work with Public Relations. I am proud of the work we do to connect back to *our* community as a part of our business. It reminds me that there are many ways to serve.

When I was handed the survey and briefed on how to administer it, the first thing I was drawn to was the story. *Your story*. It made the survey "human." How nice, and how unusual, indeed it looked to me like one of the best mission statements or vision statements I had ever seen. To me, it made the rest of my job doable. It was my guide and it was determined thousands of years ago.

There are several questions that we asked in the survey that are directly taken from the Indian story:

The first I will refer to is on page.....

Would a tribal brand be an effective way to uniquely identify products made from materials harvested from tribal forests? The most compelling answer I heard was ..." It won't help sell the product if the product isn't consistent and the price isn't competitive and even then, it is a tough sell in the current economy." Perhaps it is a tough sell, but maybe not as difficult as it once was. If your business practices are sound, your product is dependable, competitive and high quality, your story can make all the difference.

The other was actually a rating scale which you can find on page.....: **Respondents were asked to rate the following attributes on a 5 point scale...5 being very important to 1 not important to the potential appeal to customers.**

Over the course of the survey, I was met with some very frank responses and comments, regarding tribal attributes and their appeal to potential customers:

Why it is important? Why would people care? What does helping youth/people within a community I don't live in have to do with selling/developing a brand? What does it have to do with me? How do these attributes sell timber?

How do *you* think *your* tribal attributes could influence the potential appeal to customers, to buy your brand of lumber?

That being said, times are changing...again, as to how small niche markets do business. And tribes have the resources to develop several niche markets- as individual tribes or in select groups.

Studies show that a "brand story" is right up there with a quality product. Our younger generations - your next buyers - want a connection to the product they buy. Yes, they want a good product, but they also want to know about *you*.

More buyers want to know what their money *does*. If buyers have two products, comparable in quality and price, to choose from – Studies show, the product that tells a story *will make the sale*. The story may include giving back to their community or a cause, family history and longevity of business, sustainability practices, etc.

But make no mistake; you are more likely to make the sale - *if you make a connection*.

We know that sales are about relationships. This is not new. But today, the relationships people are looking for when buying a product are in part, based in asking the seller to dig deeper, *relationally*. It is about relationship. Relationships drive sales and *customer loyalty*. Loyalty brings repeat sales, and develops a long time, core customer base.

Let's explore a few examples...

Coffee from "sustainable plantations" - Wood from "managed rainforests," - These are coops or groups that organize in indigenous communities to produce and market a product- profits return to the community and are used to not only continue to produce the product but to support community needs . Education, health care, economic hardship, programs for youth, domestic violence, etc.

Organic Produce – Often small local farms organized as a coop or selling as individual family run farms. Profits go to sustain organic practices, support small local business and a small group of employees and sometimes the small businesses employees' health care.

Family owned wineries- Small case production, profits go to sustain a family and operate a local business that offers jobs to local community members. Many of these wineries practice sustainable farming, biodynamic farming or organic farming practices. Certifications include LIVE and Salmon Safe...These wineries often contribute funds to their local community projects to support youth and education

Small family run sawmills- small family run businesses that have business relationships dating back to WW2. Who still survive today, due to a long time "story" of customer loyalty and relationships that have

survived the depression and two recessions. To quote one sawmill owner..."Our customers became our friends and our friends became our customers." Not a bad policy to consider.

All these groups have to compete with large production operations or cut out a specialty niche. Either way, their story becomes imperative to their survival. They have to sell an equally good or even superior product, that may have a slightly higher cost to the buyer...with less inventory and less staff than a large operation.

In addition, these businesses are likely functioning with less capital. Their story reminds us that given all these potentially limiting factors, their business still chooses to use a portion of their profit to actively support their community.

Each of their stories will include beliefs, how the business/family came to be, intention, and an acknowledgement that giving back to the community is important to the business.

As you know, stories also develop over time...so you may have several stories to develop...about a particular part of the farm, forest, winery, plantation... or about a key person - ancestors, founders, etc...or a specific type of tree, vegetable, coffee bean, grape...

Start to look around and you will quickly notice that many successful products are now the result of sustainable farming, community commitment, the identification of a community need and a very good marketing strategist.

Just for perspective, let's look at the upper hand that Indian tribes have in the opportunity to build and foster relationships. If we figure tribes have been here 10,000 years and whites 500 years, you have been here 20 times longer. Needless to say, tribes have existed for much longer than any business... about 400 generations longer.

Who else can say, "We have been in the timber industry for *400 generations?*"

There must be *something* we can do with this...

I believe there is an opportunity to actively serve your future (your young, your old, those in need) as a component of your branding project. To say to those who would buy your brand, "We give back...your purchase of this product goes to support (a need), in our community."

Please understand, that I speak here of intention. We all know that saying that "a portion of all sales"can help sell a product. (We see this with donations to cancer, diabetes, etc...when selling other products or purchasing groceries.)

However this runs deeper, it is about educating others to what tribes do and have always done...knowing the needs in your own community and serving those causes through your own resources ... tribes live the story of the sustainable model. This isn't a new concept, but it is time to start to talk about it as it relates to developing a tribal timber brand and the story behind it.

I believe that if you can say with your brand, that you take care of your children (your future) as well as you do your forests, you have a "human" marketing strategy based firmly in your traditions and intentions as a tribe.

Your story may be that your forest (and all of its living components) and your treatment of it, is truly an extension of your community...or if you will indulge my "therapist persona" for a moment...it is a microcosm – a small example - of how you function as a whole, on a much larger scale.

So maybe the question becomes...What level of transparency are you comfortable with? What do you want your buyers to see when they look at you, your children, your forests, your communities? What are the connections you want your buyers to make with you, your communities, and your forests?

This survey is impressive and quite compelling. It represents hours of listening and at times asks more questions than it answers. It brings forward new ideas and new ways of looking at things - something any good project should do.

A discussion that has been ongoing during this process is, "Is your brand your story, or is your story your brand?"

Wherever you land, the opportunity has been presented to make your story real to those who will buy your product, to invite them to participate in the next chapter.

The bottom line is this: We all live in communities that have needs. We are all connected through the experience of being alive and the joys and sorrows life brings.

You have an opportunity to remind those who would buy your product that *your product* is a living illustration of the connection we share and the universal needs we all seek to address.

Sometimes people don't care, simply because they don't know...I encourage you to tell them and just as importantly, show them.

Thank-you