



Session: **Daniel Caceres: Aligning values throughout the rigid packaging business**

With Shannon Curran, Daniel Caceres and Michael Ireland

Shannon Curran

I remember the first time I saw Daniel, a contact on LinkedIn had liked one of his videos. It was during COVID, near the beginning, and everything was shut down. People were holed up in their homes, scared, trying to figure out how to balance everything going on and around them. I started watching his video and tears started streaming down my face. Proof that I was having all the feels like everyone else. But during that time, it felt so hopeless, this complete stranger was sharing words of hope and positivity. He missed his team, he missed his customers. And that video was his way of saying, “This is hard. But I’m thinking of you and we’ve got this.” Now, this podcast is all about packaging and Daniel is a leader in rigid packaging—meaning primary packaging, like jars, bottles, containers, and the like. But we also recognize that there has to be strong values, processes, thoughtfulness, and heart behind the business. Behind the package. And that’s why he’s a leader in his industry.

Michael Ireland

Yes—and Daniel says, it’s important to be a good storyteller in sales. And he has so many good stories to tell. We could fill out two or three or four podcasts with all the things that he has to share.

Shannon Curran

Easily. There’s so much about Daniel’s journey that we couldn’t leave out. That’s why we’re going to break from our usual format to incorporate a few highlights here, starting with his first job working in his father’s restaurant in Columbia, South America.

Daniel Caceres

And I remember my first experience with him was, was just like playing. It was just pretty cool, you know, helping customers in his restaurant, you know, bringing food to the tables. And I remember those experiences helped me understand customer service. You know now that I’m 40, and some change, my father was more into the making people feel good business. He was not selling food. Now I understand that, because I remember seeing him behind the scenes dealing with the vendors—buying the food, dealing with the people working in the kitchen. It was a stressful environment. But then, whenever he had to talk to a customer, his face just changed. He was always smiling, and his tone was different. Just like he was concerned about making them feel good in his place. I think I learned that from him.

Michael Ireland

Daniel went on to University where he studied media production. His work creating films and documentaries caught the attention of a major electronics brand, and he was offered a sales and marketing position. He found a great deal of satisfaction getting out in front of people, introducing them to products.

Daniel Caceres

When I was working in that company, I was actually training in Panama. When I was coming back in an airplane I was sitting right next to a person—this guy was having issues with one of the cameras that I actually used to sell. But I just asked him, do you need help? I happen to work with that company and he said, “Please help me, I’m on my way to a family celebration.” And he just needed more space to take more pictures. If your memory inside

your camera was full, that was it. But if I bring the resolution down and I give you more space. He ended up having more room to take like 700 more pictures. He was hugging me in the airplane. I just wanted to share this story because the guy was so amazed. He was so happy. I didn't miss the opportunity to make someone feel good and he said something in that airplane like Daniel, I wish I have more people in my team with your attitude. It all started with a with a line. When I said, "no matter where you are, you're my customer".

Shannon Curran

There it is, no matter where you are, you are my customer.

Michael Ireland

It's one thing to be an ambassador, it's another to just be kind and help out where you can. Because at any given moment, you can give somebody a positive brand experience.

Shannon Curran

Absolutely. And the gentleman he assisted was so impressed he offered Daniel an opportunity to move into an industrial supply company. It helped further his experience, but it kept him on the road and away from his family.

Daniel Caceres

So, there I am, with a boy, with a wife, with a daughter living in Colombia. One day through a video call with my wife my daughter said something like "Papa." It broke my heart. It was hard and I started to think do I really want to be traveling 70% of my time? So that's when I said you know what, maybe we can start considering moving to the US, because this is where you can go and dream and make things happen.

Michael Ireland

Daniel took an opportunity to come to the United States leaving Columbia and coming to Miami, Florida. This is quite a move in itself. But then a position to be a branch manager opened up in Brooklyn. He packed up with his young family and moved to New York. Me personally, I've lived all over Ohio, but never outside of it. I can't even wrap my head around, moving from country to country. And then once in country, from state to state, and then climate to climate. He credits his wife for her strength and support during this time.

Daniel Caceres

So, I'm really blessed that I, I got married to the person that I'm married to, because I thought at that time, when I was younger, that you know full of adrenaline, and you play sports, you feel strong, I thought I was strong, and I was going to grab her hand and help her. But it was actually the opposite. You know, women, that's why you bring kids into the world and not us, because you are stronger. My wife proved to me how strong she could be. And I understood through her how strong my mom was, and my grandma. I mean, it's a lesson for all of us.

Shannon Curran

We're not going to mince words here. All that moving was tough and Daniel remain committed to making the branch better. Coaching his employees and improving culture, despite all the challenges he had encountered. His success at that location brought him back to Miami with another opportunity.

Daniel Caceres

Changes are never going to stop coming your way. I just opened myself for opportunities. And I found this weird concept at the time for me... packaging was just a box. But where it's going, it's exciting. Packaging—it's a great way to make an impact. It is a great way to give companies productive and business. And it's something that we need to consider. So, I did research. I ended up being hired as the regional sales manager for a packaging company in Florida. I had no idea about that business. This is the second time—remember, I moved from a technology company and digital imaging company to an industrial supplies environment. I had no idea about what to sell... they just hired me because of my attitude. They did the same thing in this packaging company that I worked at before Veritiv. And this is a message

for any leader out there. I think they were looking for someone to help them manage their talent from the coaching perspective, development perspective. You know, just give them support. They were not looking for a packaging expert. They weren't looking for someone expert in a software, in a CRM tool, or whatever. They were looking for someone that was passionate about helping people.

Michael Ireland Success continues to not go unnoticed. Daniel finally ended up with the rigid packaging business at Veritiv, All American Containers. And that's where we're going to pick up the full interview.

Shannon Curran Hey, everyone. Welcome to the Packaging Unwrapped podcast. This is Shannon Curran, and I'm joined today with my co-host, Michael Ireland. We're talking with Daniel Caceres, Sales Manager for Domestic and Exports at All American Containers in Miami. Hey, Daniel, thanks for joining us.

Daniel Caceres Hey, good morning, everyone. Thank you very much for having me today. This is really cool.

Michael Ireland Daniel, can you tell us a little more about what rigid packaging is and what makes it unique?

Daniel Caceres We are in the rigid packaging business which is bottles and caps. If you go to a pharmacy and you see all those vitamins, supplements, and powders, they come in plastic... we sell that. Go to a 7-Eleven and buy water, or a soda or whatever, we sell that. We don't participate much in the aluminum can business, even though we have the ability. We can sell it, but we are focused in for example the wine industry, beauty industry bottles for makeup and supplements and vitamins, etc.

What makes us unique? Well, Veritiv is what makes us unique. Let me explain. We have competitors that they can do the same things that we do. Our competitors can sell the same bottles they can offer supply chain programs they can offer competitive pricing and materials quality, whatever, because in the end we just rely on our vendors and we leverage our supply chain to make this happen, you know. What we have that they don't have, is Veritiv. Imagine going to a customer and having the ability to tell them... yeah, we have the rigid packaging that you're looking for. We have that bottle. Let's explore a little bit more of what you need. So, I make sure I offer you what you actually need. I can also bring experts to help you on what happens after you use my products.

So, what do you mean Daniel? Well, I send you a bottle, you fill it... but then you have to ship it, right? And you ship it in the right size in a box. Are you using the right tape? Are you using marketing on that box? Are you putting a logo on that tape? All that stuff. I'm not the expert Mr. Customer, but I can bring Veritiv, my parent company, and they can help you with that. So together we can help you on all the packaging process. We even have a design agency called [Vine](#). They can actually design anything for you. And that's how you start asking questions and you can sell the value of cross selling. I think what makes us unique is our cross-selling ability through Veritiv, and vice versa.

But, we need our people to execute on that. That's the second thing that makes us unique. I think we have the best talent out there. And they have the knowledge, of course, they have the attitude. And if they don't have the attitude, we're working on inspiring them to move to the positive attitude side, because we must do it. That's what the market is telling us to do.

Shannon Curran I love it. I love it. Yeah, people are so important in building that empathy not only within but

to share with your customers. And I loved what you said earlier to, “no matter where you are, you’re my customer.” So, can you tell us a little bit more about your customers?

Daniel Caceres Neutra pharma, personal care and cosmetics, food and beverage. We have a lot of customers doing for example, olives, pickles, or peanut butter. In the west coast, we have the wine and spirits experts. In Florida, where I am, we sell a lot of bottles for distilleries like rum and beers. And there’s also another segment called industrial chemicals. You know, the big pails and big gallon jars and stuff like that. But those are the segments, most of them. And in all of them Veritiv participates.

Shannon Curran So, it spans the gamut. Yeah, no, thank you. What are they looking for when they come to you? What are some key challenges that they’re facing that you’re helping them out with?

Daniel Caceres Sometimes customers think it is price, but in reality, it is being cost effective. That is a combination of different efforts, not only price of the product, and that’s my job or my people’s job to educate them a little bit... Even if you’re paying cheap that could be expensive. So, it’s being productive from the cost perspective. Then a few years ago, something started through the online environment, which is the frustration free packaging. Your customers giving you reviews, and telling the other customers or potential customers, that the product is amazing or not amazing, sometimes based on how the packaging arrives to the houses. So, we need to take care about that, you know, using the right size and the right materials. So, the product arrives in good shape. And the box represents part of the experience. Right?

Shannon Curran Testing it, making sure it gets there in one piece. Yeah, that’s important.

Daniel Caceres Yeah, for example, I use these on my trainings all the time, the customer experience used to be exclusively on the retail side, like you go, you see the products or the lights are important. The shelves are important, the marketing, the product presence, that is important. And it’s still important, we go to a supermarket, we want to see it. We go to a mall, we get influenced, by the environment, right. But also, the trend of ecommerce is the experience starts in a website, then that the experience ends up being the box in your house, that when you receive the box. So that’s how important it is. That’s one challenge for the customer. That’s when we leverage our design team to help them understand that and how we can help. And also, a good problem to have is, I’m growing so fast. And this comes from many customers, that I need to add speed. So that’s when automation comes into play that when we need to discuss automation, we need to do you know, surveys and assessments to understand if they need equipment or not. And, and that’s another thing that it’s important. And Veritiv can help with that. Also, the new challenges that are coming based on, not only COVID, but weather. Then there’s no containers available. Right now, there’s a lot of containers in the ocean waiting to get into a port today in California, and that that brings a supply chain challenge, right. So, it is important that we have supply chain conversations with our customers, we can help them.

Shannon Curran Something that I’ve noticed in the packaging industry that it was really at the forefront before everything hit was sustainability. And are you seeing that as well?

Daniel Caceres Yes, correct. And that that’s a hot topic for us. Because everyone is talking about sustainability. The conversation moved to the cold side for a few months because of COVID. But it’s coming back. That’s important because we need to understand sustainability from all the aspects that are affected. For example, a quick sample, a primal reasoning, analysis of sustainability could be, I am a customer, I call them Daniel, I don’t want to buy your bottles

because they are plastic. I want to buy a sustainable material from you. If you don't have it and go somewhere else. Okay, that's one approach. That's just a primary approach.

My responsibility is to go there and show them okay, these are the options. These are the prices, but with what you're doing right now we can actually reduce the size, reduce the amount of plastic you're using, then maybe you can ship more on a truck so you'll save on gas emission. If you move to glass, for example, you're going to have a lot more damage. So, you're going to have more trucks coming back and forth. So, sustainability needs to be approached not only from the materials perspective, but also the logistics perspective. And to be honest, a challenge that I've seen in the market is sometimes you just give them the quote, for the sustainable material... it's too expensive. My customers are not willing to pay for that, then they go back to the other material. So, it's a combination of things. It's easy to just point fingers of sustainability. But what about the whole process?

Shannon Curran

Right? Think differently, think bigger.

Daniel Caceres

Sales professionals out there, they have their own agenda, right? So, they freak out when a customer asks about sustainability, they say, "Oh, he's going to go somewhere else. Because I don't I don't know how to sell that. I don't sell that we don't have access to that." It's my job to make them feel comfortable, that just care about your customer's agenda, and remove yourself from the top of the equation. And just give them insights, give them the trends, bring the experts... if you don't know, maybe in that topic it's me. Maybe it's Franco on my design team. Or maybe it's a different sales rep that they has some successful stories on sustainability. So don't freak out. I mean, it's not about you. Understand that it's all about them, prioritize them on your agenda before yourself.

Michael Ireland

Going all the way back to your first family restaurant job, and your entire journey, you have built this philosophy of yours. Could you tell us more about your sales philosophy?

Daniel Caceres

I am part of a summit training in the company. And we were having that conversation the other day about, what is the sales approach? What is this? What is the sales process? And I raised my hand, and I was completely honest. I said, "You know what, I don't know the Veritiv sales process, can you share with me?" They send me a file, and actually, the Veritiv sales process is amazing. Because if you analyze it, it starts with verify. And then it goes to develop a solution, then visualize, which is when you present the proposal, and then hopefully you close it, and then you implement, right? When you think about verify, verify means, do your homework, do the research. And that means ask the questions and listen. And that's when most of us in sales fail. We come in with our speech already prepared. We come in to have this business conversations with our printed materials, with our computers with presentations. And we, we just want to throw content in front of them. I would say like in martial arts, just wait to make you move based on the energy of the opponent, right? Just think about it, ask the questions, analyze the arena, understand before you throw the punch, or you do throw the information, that is my sales approach. I focus a lot on verify, which is the first stage. Because if you verify, if you research, that's going to help you value visualize and validate much better. If you present a proposal or try to develop a solution, but you didn't ask the right questions, which means you didn't verify, then everything is wrong after that. So that's how I try to have my sales approach. And again, it goes back to our conversation on this podcast, which is how do you align values to your sales process? Right?

The question, Michael, I think is what does aligning values to business mean to you? Right?

That's one question we discussed in the past. And I think when I was reading that question, I read it during the weekend... It is not what it means, it is why. I think the question is, is why? Because it is not even negotiable. Successful companies need to align their values to the business to get better results, right? To get long term relationships to be someone that customers can trust. So why? I mean to avoid toxic behaviors in the market. To avoid people having their own agendas. to avoid being perceived as a company that only cares about hitting goals. We need to be perceived as a competent company. A warm and friendly company.

And then I went further and instead of thinking about why, I also started thinking about how? And it's simple, you go online, you do the research, just put values in business and you're going to see hundreds of books and a lot of people do research, but when I did my own summary is just started with you. Your simple steps, little steps every day. Say thank you to everyone, say good morning to everyone or good afternoon. Smile. Listen to them, instead of just waiting for your opportunity to talk. That goes against our values, I think. We need to care about others have more empathy, right? Lift others up... just lift others up. They will do the same for you.

I found this person, that I'm going to recommend to everyone. She's amazing. Her name is Frances Frei, I think, and she gave me like a trick, like a tip of how to build trust. And that should be a natural thing, but it's not in general, and it can be learned. She has this cool theory. She created a triangle, and in the middle there's the trust. And how you how do you build trust? Being authentic. Don't fake anything. If you're mad, just be mad. There's nothing wrong with that. If you don't feel comfortable, if you didn't like something, don't fake it. As well, if you're happy, just be happy. Be authentic. To say also, she mentioned empathy. And the way she defined empathy is give them the chance to share their perspective. So, those two are pretty cool. Being authentic and having empathy.

The last one is one of the most important one and is where companies fail, or leaders in companies fail, which is logic. Let me explain logic. Verify and qualify your logic or the logic of the things that you are trying to share, right? Which is the why behind the what or process of something, but also your ability to communicate your logic. So, communication comes back as one of the pillars of building trust in any organization. Why do we need to align our values to our business? To be successful, period. Non-negotiable. Then how? Building trust. That's the message that I got from that Ted Talk.

Michael Ireland

Daniel, when we talk to you, the one word that keeps coming back to me is joy. And your attitude is intoxicating. How in the world, with all the challenges, not just in the last month or last few months, last year, just everything that you've been through... how do you stay so positive?

Daniel Caceres

When I think about the people that needs me the most, right, and in this period of my life, it's my kids... and on my career my sales reps. When I think about them, I think they deserve someone positive, grabbing their hands and helping them and supporting them. And being that valuable partner. I cannot afford to be negative, even if I have the right to have some moments in which I just need to vent to be angry sometimes and be emotional. We all have the right to do that. But we cannot afford to be negative leaders, because that'll be setting ourselves up for failure.

One of the strategies that I do is trying to disconnect as much as possible. So, I try to go through my responsibilities. I try like any normal, decent employee of this company, I try to walk the extra mile for others. Do the things, I'm not gonna lie, sometimes I answer emails at 8pm. But if it's something that I can just do and save someone, some time... if they are in a different country, or in a different state, I'll do it. Oh, just call this person... or this is the link,

whatever, right? But just go, it's not fair for you to go home, and sit and say, hey, I have a lot of things to do. Don't bother me today, play with your mom. I need to fix this. I have to make a presentation for my boss... is not fair. Wake up earlier than them. Change your own process. Do better time management, because you need to disconnect. When you disconnect then you're going to be available for them. And then the things that are going to happen in your environment, with your kids, with your wife, with your mom, with your brother with your friends. Those things, like Shannon said, that's the life, are going to be magical. And that magic is going to give you energy to come back to the company and give the best. If you don't do that, it's not fair with your organization and with your family. If you can have the mental power and the discipline and structure to disconnect... that's what we need. Try to disconnect, invest quality time in the people that you know. And that's going to give you the energy to come back ready. Focused on the people that you love, and they are going to give you the energy back.

Shannon Curran

They fill your cup. You have to take care of yourself. It's just like when you're in an airplane and they tell you, should the oxygen come down, put the mask on yourself first and then on others second. You have to take care of yourself so that you can take care of them. Because if you don't, nobody gets anything out of that. Right? So, earlier you said your father inspired you to be the person that you are in business today. Your kids inspire you to be the person you are going forward. It's just such a beautiful story and beautiful statement. Thank you for sharing that. Just to kind of wrap us up here. What do you have going on right now that you would like other folks to know?

Daniel Caceres

One of the things that we need to leverage is cross-selling. Cross-selling is I think what the market is telling us to do. It needs to become one of our pillars. So, what I did was the perfect opportunity for me to explore the cross-selling opportunity, I created a video of the whole process. It's a really cool video I can share with you, and it shares how easy it is for you to cross sell in this company. So, it was me selling printed packaging to our customer but also bringing in the Veritiv experts. And guess what, two weeks ago they actually closed the business on stretch film and they are moving and attacking corrugated. We've been selling them rigid packaging for I think it's 15 years now. But they finally ended up buying corrugated and stretch film, and the video is a testimony of that. So that's one of the projects that I'm working on. And I already did the video, it's been used. But now my next step is to go to Veritiv sales meetings, show it to them and discuss cross-selling opportunities. And I'm going to come with opportunities for them, instead of just asking them, hey, bring me to your account. No, I'm going to bring the list of my accounts, I want to bring each of you to this account. That's one of the projects I am working on.

Shannon Curran

Congratulations on that. That's great. Not only are you teaching, but you know, you're changing culture. That's awesome.

Daniel Caceres

Yeah, well us, my boss, my reps and even you guys communicating these type of things. We are all together trying to change culture.

Michael Ireland

Where are we headed? What's exciting you about the future of packaging?

Daniel Caceres

It is extremely exciting, because there's different layers. We all want the big whales, right? We want the big companies, we want to have any Fortune 500 organization, we want to have them. But also, the second and third layer of that, you know, midsize organizations and smaller organizations, are really exciting because they are the ones that are looking for organizations like Veritiv and AAC for help.

Help on what? Design and supply chain. And just being able to go in and educate a customer on those things, or bring in experts, because I'm not an expert on everything. But, just being on those meetings gives me like a lot of adrenaline because if you think about it, you are helping America. You are actually helping America. You are helping companies be better. Packaging has the power to make organizations better. Actually impact the bottom line and impact the customer experience. The ecofriendly topic that is also exciting, because will help the planet. There is there's many topics inside packaging. Innovation is endless in packaging. You can be a cool brand with two things: A great website, and great packaging. For me that's a revolution. That's a good positive, healthy revolution.

Shannon Curran

Just so folks know how to reach out to you what's the best way? Because I stalk you on LinkedIn, because I'm just waiting for the next video to come out with you talking about what's going on. Is LinkedIn the best way to reach out to you or how would you like folks to talk to you?

Daniel Caceres

I wanted to provide some insights and advice to people on LinkedIn via video, I did only one video in which I was sharing my advice. But after that, I felt like oh my god, I'm not going to be like the guy that says what needs to be done. I'm going to actually interview people, the experts that I know that I admire that actually influenced by behaviors, I'm going to interview them. So, it's not me saying anything. It's just me asking questions, right? So, you have four interviews on LinkedIn in a year is not that much. Just put in Daniel Caceres. You'll find me.

Shannon Curran

Thank you, you're such an inspiration. That's why I say I stalked you on LinkedIn because I, like your boss, am waiting for that next video because honestly, you brought me to tears with a few of them. I mean, you hit it at the right time and you're speaking your truth and I can't tell you how much I appreciate that.

Michael Ireland

You definitely have big fans here.

Daniel Caceres

My final message, if I can share one for people out there. Don't feel discouraged. Sometimes when you're positive and when you try to make people feel important. Some people are going to come back at you and do the opposite. And you're going to feel like oh my god, in this society, I'll be weird. No, that's not true. You keep going. You will feel that you are making a mistake, it is not a mistake. Don't let that confuse you.

Also control your ego in sales. Just control your ego. Don't let your ego make the decisions for you. Win the right way. Don't be that hard on you. I mean when you make mistakes, you are just evolving, you are just getting better. We need people to be brave and feel comfortable making mistakes. It is just you, that's what matters. No one is perfect. Don't try to be perfect because that's when you make the biggest mistakes in your life. Stay strong. Stay strong. We need each other. Let's keep helping each other trying to be a better version of ourselves.

Shannon Curran

That's beautiful. Thank you, Daniel. Thank you so much for taking the time to talk to us today and sharing your values and your passion behind packaging at All American Containers, with Vertiv and with your customers, and us. So, thank you.

Daniel Caceres

Thank you, Shannon and Michael. I think just giving me this opportunity says a lot about this organization. I admire this effort and I respect it. Thank you.

