



Channel Mastery Podcast, Episode #60: Kristin Carpenter-Ogden Interviews
Ashley and Jeremy Dakan, Owners of Pine Needle Mountaineering, in Durango, Colorado

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- Kristin: [02:49](#) Alright, welcome everybody to episode 62 of the Channel Mastery podcast, I am so excited to do a special, local Durango, Colorado episode today featuring two of my favorite independent specialty retailers at Pine Needle Mountaineering. Will you two please introduce yourselves for my awesome audience?
- Ashley Dakan: [03:06](#) Hi, I'm Ashley Dakan, this is my husband Jeremy Dakan.
- Kristin: [03:10](#) And we also have one of their beautiful children in the background in case you hear a few noises, they're running a family business, small business owners, charging hard, so I thought that would be kind of fun local color for this, but the reason that we are together with Ashley and Jeremy today is because we're talking about a bold new business expansion that they're doing in Q3 of 2018, so we're gonna find out all about that today here. Would one of you please talk about the launch of your new store here in Durango, Colorado?
- Ashley Dakan: [03:44](#) Sure, well we're partnering with Patagonia to do kind of a shop-in-shop store right across the street from our main location that's been in Durango in the same spot for over 40 years. We are partnering with Patagonia to just bring a broader selection of their products to the community and also to bring in some other cool brands and products that wouldn't necessarily fit in with our original store, but that would be a good compliment to the Patagonia product and also brands that kind of give back in some way or another or we like to say products with a purpose.

- Kristin: [04:19](#) That's awesome. Well number one, I applaud you guys for doing that, obviously Durango's not a huge metropolitan city but you have proven, I think, with your young and innovative approach to retail here in this town that you kind of know exactly how to target people and nurture them through physical store environments and Ashley has a fantastic background at Horny Toad where she just killed it in merchandising and a number of other areas and she also was a Verdean for a little bit of time when she first moved to Durango, so I definitely can see some of your experience from Horny Toad in your beautiful merchandising at your main store Pine Needle Mountaineering.
- Kristin: [04:58](#) What I love most about what you are doing ... first of all my daughter and I were walking down the street the other day and we saw the announcement written on the butcher paper blocking the windows and she's like "Mom, they're opening a Patagonia store here", because my kids love Patagonia, and they're 12 and 16 respectively which I think is interesting in and of itself but right away I was like "Okay, I've got to do a story on this."
- Kristin: [05:18](#) So what can you tell us about Patagonia's partnership here and how it might have influenced your selection and what you're doing in terms of the cause and the give back and the regionalization of your assortment?
- Jeremy Dakan: [05:35](#) Well we ... [crosstalk 00:05:39]
- Kristin: [05:40](#) Take that one from the top because you just froze, just start talking again, I don't need to re ask the question.
- Jeremy Dakan: [05:48](#) Pine Needle and Patagonia have had a strong relationship pretty much from the get-go, but over the years we've strengthened that more and more. In the environment especially after the '08 collapse there were a lot of distribution issues, certain brands took different approaches to drawing their businesses. Patagonia really stepped up and said "Here's what we wanna do for you, here's how we wanna partner with you guys to keep this going in the right direction." To me that's old school specialty retail, it's partnerships, they're not the only ones but at least with Pine Needle one of the key guys on the partnership side where they're not twisting our arm to open up other avenues, they're trying to grow their partnership with their key guys, that's one key part of it and they're helping us open up this new door.
- Ashley Dakan: [07:05](#) Okay, I was gonna say, you asked a question about product distribution and one good thing about Patagonia is they have everything from super casual beach wear to really technical

outer wear and it's great to be able to cover that whole spectrum with one brand, so whether you're hitting the beach with a cute little sundress or you're climbing Fitz Roy for a three day ascent, they've got everything for you, we appreciate that.

Kristin: [07:36](#) And I have a question. Number one, Jeremy, I love what you said about how they partner with you like old school retailers, and, just so the audience knows, Pine Needle is older than both of you guys which is really awesome that you guys dove in and you bought this heirloom store that is just such an amazing independent specialty legacy store in our space, right? But you're bring such cool energy to it I think, and this storefront is an extension of that. Has Patagonia helped you at all, in terms of how you're merchandising that? Or have they given you any tips on maximizing channel reach or anything like that? Or are they just really like "How can we support you with this vision?" Which is equally great.

Jeremy Dakan: [08:16](#) Kinda all the above, they'll definitely come in and fixture us, they already, as far as a merchandising side of things, they already come in a couple of times a year and spruce things up, of course Ashley and Esther sometimes take that apart and do it their own way and it always looks great too, but on the merchandising side of things they've been a big help, fixturing in this store they're taking care of.

Ashley Dakan: [08:47](#) Yeah as far as ... they kinda let us just run our own ideas as far as what product we feel like we wanna bring in, we have a fantastic rep who we've both known for many, many years and he helps us so much but they trust us to know what our customers want and we build our orders off what we think we can sell and what Durango can support.

Kristin: [09:10](#) Well, and the other thing I love about this is you obviously picked the perfect vendor partner to go into a store, brand profiling this new store which obviously has the give back, the local, the regionalization and that's really what you guys have, I think, really hung your hat on, in terms of how you serve your specialty avatar consumer.

Kristin: [09:33](#) I believe if my memory serves me correctly you have a very special place in the local's heart, we know exactly what we can go to you for here and you offer great ways to give back to the community through your clinics, through your support of the avalanche education, and all the things you do throughout the year, but then you also have a special following with people who love Durango who may not live here, maybe they visited here, maybe they have a second home here, and it seems to me you're really doing a great job expanding on how you can appeal to both of your avatars with this new market, with this new

store front which I think is super cool. So along with that can you talk a little bit about how you were inspired to bring in Colorado made, or Durango, or regionally manufactured product and what you're planning on doing in terms of really making this a specialized curated assortment for people who love South-West Colorado and Durango especially?

Jeremy Dakan: [10:28](#)

Sure, yeah, so obviously Patagonia first and foremost, they're doing the right things right now and that's not going to change as far as standing up, putting their foot down, they have their policies and they hold to them and that's not for everybody, there's people that disrespect the company for that reason but those ... for the most part we appreciate how those guys kinda stick to their morals and stick to their principles and run their company and they're obviously super successful.

Jeremy Dakan: [11:05](#)

We just want to expand on that both on the giving back side of things and supporting our local vendors whoever that may be, it's a work in progress, we're scrounging everyday, finding new stuff, looking outside the box, but this community, certainly as you mentioned, supported Pine Needle for 43 years running and on a side note that really shined during the 416 fire this summer. We were preparing for a pretty horrendous summer and it shook out to be okay and I think that was just a big local push to step up, so ... be it environment, taking care of the environment and taking care of your local community that's just always been important to Ashley and I, and we're just trying to expand on that.

Kristin: [11:54](#)

I love that you brought up the 416 fire, thank you for doing that, and I'm also just heartened to hear that you guys ended up finishing the summer in a strong way because that was a devastating blow to our economy and obviously we've gone through a couple of those in the last five or six years, so I'm so happy to hear that.

Kristin: [12:13](#)

Let's talk a little bit, obviously you guys are still building this out, but you are offering some things that I think are really cool, it's almost like a bit of an Evo-esque gathering place with a small specialty field build for Durango right? So tell us about art, and anything you're doing with local artists, in terms of installations, or if it's product, that's something that I'm super interested in because it sounds like you're really making this an experiential format.

Ashley Dakan: [12:40](#)

Yeah, absolutely, we really want it to be an experience, and that's how we can make ourselves stand out a little bit different from all the competition out there via online shopping, or the other great shops that are in downtown Durango. We want it to be a place that people can come and shop of course, but also

learn about different initiatives around town, whether it's non-profits or local companies who are doing other things to give back to the community, and then yeah, we're gonna have some local art.

- Ashley Dakan: [13:11](#) Right now we've got Grady James who is kind of a Jack of all trades, but he takes really amazing photography and he is putting some of his prints on a metal format, which I've never really seen before, but, it looks really cool, so we're gonna feature him out of the gate as our local feature, and then we hope to kind of rotate that through other artists, or photographers in the community. We have this designated space, it's gonna be our local artist feature spot, and right now we're kinda just experimenting on whether we sell this stuff, whether it's just kind of a gallery type thing, or we just don't know yet how that's gonna play out, so it'll be a little bit of an experiment, but we're excited to kind of work with these guys and ...
- Jeremy Dakan: [13:58](#) We've already talked to a couple of other local photographers as well that are excited to chip in on it, so ...
- Ashley Dakan: [14:04](#) Yep, Grady's just the first one.
- Jeremy Dakan: [14:05](#) Jeff Cricco and of course Scott Smith we all know here in town.
- Kristin: [14:08](#) Yeah, the legendary Scott Smith.
- Ashley Dakan: [14:10](#) Yeah.
- Jeremy Dakan: [14:10](#) Yeah, Jeff Cricco does some great stuff too and he's more than happy to help out and excited about it.
- Kristin: [14:16](#) That's awesome.
- Jeremy Dakan: [14:18](#) Yeah, working with a couple of jewelers ...
- Ashley Dakan: [14:21](#) Some soap makers.
- Jeremy Dakan: [14:24](#) Yep, some soap makers.
- Ashley Dakan: [14:25](#) So, yeah we're ...
- Jeremy Dakan: [14:27](#) Sunscreens, yeah ...
- Ashley Dakan: [14:29](#) Going into this we really wanted to find brands that like we mentioned do other things besides just sell things, and we found a bunch of really cool brands, a lot of them unfortunately sell just direct to consumer, and the more I thought about it the

more I'm like this makes sense because they're trying to just maximize their profits so they can give back more, so they're at this point not open to selling to a wholesale channel because you know, they lose a little bit of the profit in doing that, so we totally get that and we still applaud them for what they're doing but we have been able to find some really cool brands that we can sell.

- Ashley Dakan: [15:03](#) One's called Hands Up and all the products are made by refugees from Uganda, and it's really cool jewelry both men's and women's styles, so a lot of macrame and crocheted things, I'm excited to see that, we haven't got the product in yet, but we're excited to see how that turns out, and it's just kind of a cool way to support people who need a steady line of work, and this organization's helping those guys do that.
- Kristin: [15:34](#) So Ashley, I have a question, you kinda opened a little bit of a Pandora's box in my head, so if we need to close it, we can, but talking about brands that are direct first, one of the things I loved so much last fall was when you had a small assortment of Stio [00:15:49] in your store, and I of course came in and just nailed that thing, I was like "Oh my god, this is awesome."
- Ashley Dakan: [15:55](#) Yeah you did.
- Kristin: [15:56](#) I loved being able to see that in person, and I thought it was such a great idea, because you are perfect for that brand, and it seems to me like, you could almost have revolving assortments from direct-first brands or perhaps become one of the points of entry regionally for a brand that makes sense for the Durango community, and it's interesting to me ... I guess you said it's the jewelry makers that aren't quite ready to have a wholesale arm to their company, but it seems like this is a cool opportunity for some gear brands or accessory brands that are actually direct first, that really have no way of romancing the Durango consumer or tourist.
- Ashley Dakan: [16:33](#) Yeah, absolutely, we actually have a relationship with Stio, the owner of it, Sully, he used to work at Pine Needle.
- Kristin: [16:41](#) I know that's so funny.
- Ashley Dakan: [16:42](#) I know, isn't that great? So I think and then ...
- Jeremy Dakan: [16:44](#) And also worked for Ashley's dad in Jackson in the restaurant, so ...
- Ashley Dakan: [16:47](#) And also worked with my dad in Jackson as a waiter, so that was probably before Pine Needle, or who knows? But ... yeah it was

so cool that they reached out to us, and we're one of 10 dealers in the country that are gonna have it in their stores, so we feel really honored to be part of that distribution channel and [inaudible 00:17:06] and really great stuff, and we're excited for people to come in and check it out and get their hands on it versus just seeing it online and then guessing what it looks like and feels like because all that stuff is really a great hand and a great fit.

- Jeremy Dakan: [17:20](#) And to answer your question, yeah we're all for kind of opening the door for some of these littler brands that are doing the stuff that makes sense for either one, or both of our stores, for sure.
- Kristin: [17:31](#) Right, I think that's so smart you guys, and obviously I think the most recent statistic I saw, that I put in my newsletter this week is that 90% of all purchases are still made in a physical retail store and within 24 hours 74% of consumers go to a physical store to actually acquire the product after they're done researching it, so I think the more interesting brands you hand select to put it in here, and I'm imagining you can do a lot of try, and change course, and not be on such a set course, as maybe the big Pine Needle has been for 43 years, I love that, and I think that it's gonna keep it fun for people like me who window shop every week in their home, you guys see me in there every weekend I'm home basically.
- Ashley Dakan: [18:16](#) Yeah absolutely, we want to make this new store really like a place where you can come and get inspired by some new stuff, and you're right Pine Needle Mountaineering is pretty set in it's ways ...
- Kristin: [18:35](#) That's okay.
- Ashley Dakan: [18:35](#) Pine Needle Mountaineering is pretty set in it's ways, which is a good thing, we found what works and our customers know what they can come in and expect to find, but this new store will give us an opportunity to really experiment with some other cool stuff that wouldn't necessarily fit in here.
- Jeremy Dakan: [18:48](#) Or it may?
- Ashley Dakan: [18:49](#) Or it may.
- Jeremy Dakan: [18:50](#) We'll test the waters over there and ...
- Kristin: [18:53](#) That's awesome.
- Jeremy Dakan: [18:53](#) We've got a couple of brands that I think we are already planning on moving over here as well, but yeah otherwise we'll

keep it fresh and we'll look for all the new cool, fun little things that we can slip in there.

- Ashley Dakan: [19:07](#) Yeah, we found this ...
- Kristin: [19:09](#) Sorry, go ahead.
- Ashley Dakan: [19:09](#) We found this cool distributor basically, it's called Bear, it's just called Bear, it's basically a distributor for Etsy products and you can try out all these really cool ... whether they're handmade or locally sourced, just very unique and handmade really stuff and you can try it out for 60 days and if you didn't sell it or you didn't like it you can send it back, so it's a pretty cool way to try something new like that and give these little small artists chance to have a bigger audience.
- Kristin: [19:45](#) And, give to people who are ...
- Ashley Dakan: [19:45](#) Without having to take a lot of risk.
- Kristin: [19:47](#) Right, we are able to see new stuff every time we come in, which I know is a challenge for our markets because both of you know having been in so many roles in the industry, Jeremy you were at The North Face, and I know as I've said Ashley you were at Horny Toad and you guys have such an interesting background together, and you know how we have this habitual product, development, sourcing supply, 6-18 month window, and what you're doing is still being able to showcase those but you're creating this regionalized revolving merchandising selling opportunity around that and I think that's super smart.
- Ashley Dakan: [20:23](#) Yeah, it's cool that I can order something yesterday and it's gonna be here tomorrow and I don't have to wait nine months to find out that it was the right choice.
- Kristin: [20:33](#) Aah, let's take a collective sigh of relief shall we? I can't not ask this because you both know my heart is in brand and marketing, but how are you planning on doing a 'show me' around this for people around the country who love Durango and kinda want to get a line of sight on this? Are you going to be doing any cool video stuff? Or anything you want to share with us on that front so we can actually see what is going on if a person doesn't live here?
- Jeremy Dakan: [20:57](#) Well, right now, we're still putting it together, so we've just been taking pictures of the development of the store from the day we gained access to it to today, it looks a lot different, so that's kind of our first thing is just showing that the development of the store coming along as we're working on it.

Kristin: [21:23](#) Cool.

Jeremy Dakan: [21:25](#) We're definitely working with a friend of ours, a marketing person and doing some videos.

Kristin: [21:31](#) Good.

Jeremy Dakan: [21:32](#) I don't know how far along we've gotten with that but certainly some gear stuff across the street at Pine Needle and we'll tie the same type of thing in across the street too.

Kristin: [21:42](#) Well I'm definitely going to come down and do a little quick shoot when it opens as well, so my audience can see what's going on because I just have to applaud you guys, for people who don't know Jeremy and Ashley, they're awesome people, but they also have two little kids, and as I said they went in on the big Pine Needle, and now they're spinning off a second store with a very cool opportunity that's super different than I think what we're used to seeing in this space and I just first want to applaud you guys for going big ...

Jeremy Dakan: [22:11](#) Thank you for the kind words.

Ashley Dakan: [22:11](#) Yeah thanks for ... it's a fun move, it's making us nervous a little bit but we're excited to get the doors open and show off some of the cool stuff that we've been able to find in our quest for unique items.

Kristin: [22:28](#) That's awesome, and I have to ask this because its such like a ... And this is my last question I promise, I mean, I could talk to you guys all day, but I'll come down and do that in person. Are you gonna have like a coffee or beer or anything like that, like a little thing that people can do? Or like, I don't know, it's a Main Street location, everybody, just so you know, and it would make sense but I'm just curious about that.

Jeremy Dakan: [22:49](#) So that was certainly in our original plans, the coffee shop thing, I think at this point there's definitely gonna be a tequila cart in the back, that'll be a little underground, but it'll be chock full of really good tequila.

Kristin: [23:03](#) Awesome. I love that.

Jeremy Dakan: [23:06](#) Available to folks, that ...

Ashley Dakan: [23:07](#) That know ...

Jeremy Dakan: [23:08](#) That are aware of that, and then yeah, coffee so ... Tequila for sure, coffee is on the radar.

Ashley Dakan: [23:14](#) We really want to do a coffee shop but the hours of operation are kinda hindering, obviously we don't wanna open up at 6:00 a.m. and that's when they need to be opened up, so we kinda have to take a step back from that unfortunately because we had some cool ideas, but it's not to say that it's not an idea were still toying with, we just need to find the right combination of space and access I guess.

Kristin: [23:38](#) Cool.

Jeremy Dakan: [23:39](#) I have to say, realistically, hopefully we'll have an espresso machine in there sooner than later.

Kristin: [23:44](#) Awesome.

Ashley Dakan: [23:44](#) And beer. Definitely beer.

Jeremy Dakan: [23:45](#) There's always beer.

Ashley Dakan: [23:45](#) There's always beer.

Kristin: [23:47](#) We are in Colorado after all. Awesome, well you guys I thank you so much for jumping on the line here and doing this podcast here with me, where we're doing this show right about middle of October. When is this awesome new storefront opening?

Ashley Dakan: [24:02](#) All things go to plan we hope to open November 12th.

Kristin: [24:07](#) Awesome, so right in time for holiday?

Ashley Dakan: [24:09](#) Yeah exactly, we're pushing it right to the edge but we've got to be open by Noel Night (editor's note: Noel Night is a holiday shopping event in Durango, Colo.) [00:24:14].

Kristin: [24:14](#) Okay, and that's awesome, well best of luck to both of you, I'm sending you high fives, and thank you again for being on my show, this was a perfect topic for Channel Mastery right now, so thanks.

Ashley Dakan: [24:23](#) Thank you, Kristin.

Jeremy Dakan: [24:25](#) Thanks for the opportunity, and the kind words, we appreciate it.