



Lulu Raghavan is a brand transformation specialist who is currently a Managing Director Of Landor & Fitch India and a President for Asia Pacific. Drawing from more than twenty years of experience in international studios within San Francisco, New York, London, and Mumbai, Lulu had the opportunity to implement brand strategy and design solutions for some of the leading companies such as Tata, Mahindra, Aditya Birla among others. She is considered to be an influencer and speaker that has received many prestigious awards including Campaign India's Mentor of the Year as well as one of the top 50 women in Media, Marketing and Advertising by IMPACT. Recognized for her design work, strategic design thinking, and for the advocacy of women in leadership, Lulu has positioned herself as a visionary in branding as well as social evolution.

Her work "Go Further Faster" examines the practices of creating and transforming the brand and explains why businesses nowadays are able to evolve themselves and be visible in the market. Given that I will be working in the media and communications industry, I would like to interview Lulu to find out exactly how her knowledge of branding can fit modern-day media practices. The way she approaches storytelling and brand positioning in the market, and emotional influences is exactly how I imagine using communications and how it should create an effect.

After reading Lulu Raghavan's book *Further Faster*, I found myself really curious about her thoughts on how to build emotional connections with customers to help brands grow. So, I decided to interview her and dive deeper into these ideas. We talked about how understanding customers on a deeper level can really help brands stand out and succeed, which ties directly into what I'm learning in my media and communications studies. It was a great way to connect her practical insights with what I want to explore in my future career.

1. How did you conceive the idea for this book, and what challenges did you face?

"I enjoyed being a mentor to young women but given the demands on my time running Landor in India, I could not mentor as many women as I would have liked to. The next best thing to do was to distill all my learnings by writing it all down. This is how the book was conceived. I had a lot of practice over two decades in writing as I used to write thought leadership articles for work, wrote a food blog for more years and also wrote a newsletter so this wasn't the main challenge as people expect it to have been. The most difficult part for me is carving out time in my busy schedule to finish the draft on time and also have the time and energy to go back and make edits."

2. On page 164, you mention the idea of 'swim in your own lane,' encouraging brands to focus on their strengths instead of copying others. But on page 174, 'Frudenfrudle' suggests a balance between staying unique and learning from competitors. How can brands find the right balance between these two ideas?

“Absolutely right, brands have to focus on relevance and differentiation to stand out. Relevance is about meeting and exceeding customer needs in the best way possible. Differentiation is about offering sources of value that your competitors don’t. Often, brands are so obsessed with the competition that they forget customers. It’s a far more effective strategy to focus on meeting unique customer needs that others are not meeting for which you do need to know what the others are doing so you can do something different or better!”

3. In 'The Art of Sitting Silent' on pages 9 and 10, you talk about how listening without rushing to respond is important. How can this 'sitting silent' approach help brands understand their customers better, especially in today's fast-paced world?

“In a fast-paced world, brands have to be always-on and continuously delivering for customers. In this frenzy, it’s easy to always be in reactive mode. That’s when the strategy becomes important. This part of the brand building process shouldn’t be skipped or sacrificed in the name of execution and speed to market. Often, brands make this mistake. Campaigns are conceptualised with clarity on what the brand stands for or the unique value it offers to its customers. During the strategy planning process, it’s time to listen deeply to all stakeholders and rdefine the value proposition that becomes the NorthStar for the brand.”

4. On page 196, you talk about how brands can overcome limiting beliefs and break free from old ways of thinking. What steps can companies take to shift these beliefs, especially when they're tied to long-standing traditions?

“Brand should be finely tuned to the changing environments - changing needs of customers and shifting brand capes. The organisation should embrace change and adopt a mindset to keep trying new things that power growth. Growth mindset vs a fixed mindset. A lot of inspiration from the outside in terms of benchmark brands can guide the way. Sometimes a burning platform for change has to be developed to catalyse it.”

5. On page 78, you focus on emotional intelligence and how it can help brands connect better with customers. How can companies build emotional intelligence within their teams, and how does it lead to stronger relationships with customers?

“Everyone in the organisation should be mandated to spend X hours with consumers every year. This would dramatically change the way decisions are taken and the basis on which they are taken. Companies should also map their customer journeys and have a clear understanding of stated and unstated needs at every stage in the journey. Customer research brings a much needed outside perspective to the process. When companies are more in tune with customer needs, it shows up in how the experience is designed for consumers. For example, in five star hotels the swimming pool and gym used to have fixed timings. A few hotel brands realised that this was actually not a friendly policy for business

customers who never had the time to use the facilities during working hours. This insight led to gyms and pools being open 24/7 in many hotels which increased those brands' affinity with their guests."

The significant learnings that can be derived from the interview with Lulu Raghavan have to do with the aspects of brand management which are tactical in nature. She states that the greatest obstacle she faced in finishing her book *Further Faster* was juggling her other responsibilities with all the writing, not the writing itself. To provide correct differentiation, it requires that brands should know their: 'Strengths (keep swimming in your own lane)' and the competitors. She further highlights the necessity of listening, in fact 'standing and sitting silent' for the purpose of determining what is required during strategy formulation, 'what is the problem to be solved for the customers'. In addition, she proposes that it is important for organizations to have a strategic orientation that is responsive to changes and innovation advancement. Lastly, she observes emotional intelligence as critical, advising teams to be with customers to appreciate their journeys improving the relationships and experience for the customers.