Launching a New B2B Enterprise Product

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Meet Our Experts

We interviewed product marketing experts with decades of experience under their collective belts. These experts have graciously shared a treasure trove of insights from the process of picking out the right personnel to the art of keeping personas and positioning fresh post-launch.

We hope you enjoy their insights!

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Mentor | 2019-2021
Top 100 Product Marketing
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Director of
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Becky Trevino

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Axel Kirstetter

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Marcus Varner

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Introduction

For a B2B product marketing leader, few undertakings are as daunting as a new product launch.

Whether it's your first product or a new product joining an existing portfolio or carving out a brand new category, a lot is riding on you. Often with limited data and resources, you must identify the right audiences, personas, messaging, and positioning for your product. Then you must unify and rally your organization around your go-to-market strategy.

Naturally, questions abound. Do you have the right people in the right places? How do you know if a market really exists for the product? How can you be sure you are focusing on the right people and challenges? How do you know if the product is aligned to solve those challenges?

How can you prepare the product to compete against other solutions in the marketplace? How can you prepare your business to effectively market, sell, and deliver the product? How do you stay ahead of the competition as the landscape shifts and evolves?

In search of answers to these questions, we decided to interview tried and true product marketing experts on the topic.

CHOOSE THE RIGHT KIND OF PRODUCT MARKETER

The most important first step to launching a new B2B enterprise product is to choose the right person to head it up. According to Rekha Srivatsan, Salesforce's vice-president of product marketing, the right candidate must have a certain amount of experience in the company—enough to be familiar with and have solid relationships with critical teams throughout the company.

"Whether it's a small company or a big company, launching a product is an extremely cross-functional effort," she stresses. "The product marketer has to know the ins and outs, and the people and the teams. If they don't know who has the answers or how to bring a team in, they're going to miss out on the launch."

Marcus Varner, director of product marketing at Finch, agrees, "Whether they're prepping for a launch or updating key documentation, product marketers are at their best when they are hubs for receiving and synthesizing critical information from the different groups and then distributing those new insights out to the different groups. So relationships are inherently crucial here. It doesn't happen in a silo."

To a great extent, the internal and external success of the launch will depend on the quality of your

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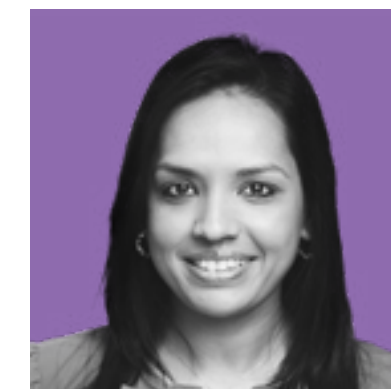
Rekha Srivatsan

VP, Product Marketing, Salesforce

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relationships with your internal stakeholders. Because relationships and trust take time to build, this is a job that must start on Day One of your time as a product marketer.

Nicole Culver, director of product marketing at Pindrop, says, "The biggest thing you can do as a product marketer, for any kind of product launch, is to sell yourself internally, not by promoting yourself, but by listening to—and actually hearing—everyone else. When a strong relationship already exists, your input matters so much more. Other teams learn that you can understand their perspective, and they see the value of product marketing. This gives your feedback more weight when it really counts.

The most it lets you better influence what the product launch looks like and how early you are brought into the conversation."

According to Nicole, the sooner you get involved in the launch conversation, the sooner you are empowered to help the organization spot pitfalls they would otherwise overlook and resolve issues early enough to keep the launch on track.

To be a rockstar product marketer, thought leader, and author, Div Manickam recommends nurturing three key qualities empathy, curiosity and openness. "When you have a curious mind, empathy, and openness to new perspectives, you will work toward building

that one team mentality, creating a unified narrative across the company, and winning together," she says.

According to Becky Trevino, executive vice-president of product at Snow Software, certain types of product marketers lend themselves better to certain types of launches.

"I believe there are four types of product marketers," she says. "Product evangelists are experts at understanding the technical details of the product. Data nerds are masters at Excel and love to drill into product usage and sales data and regularly perform A/B testing to uncover patterns and insights.

Marketing-centric PMMs are highly skilled in messaging and communication and form strong partnerships with Demand Generation in building integrated marketing programs. Finally, the fourth type of product marketer is the storyteller, who specializes in building stories and driving that narrative throughout the business."

"If you pick the wrong person with the wrong skill set, it's really hard to get that launch right," Becky continues, "There are very few product marketers who have mastered these four aspects of the craft, so you have to choose the right type of PMM based on the launch you're attempting. For example, when it comes to category creation, you want someone who is both a storyteller and a product evangelist, because they will need to educate the market. If they are a storyteller who doesn't understand the product, it won't work."

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Key Takeaway

Choosing the right person with the right skill set to lead your launch could be the most important decision you make.

START WITH RESEARCH

Axel Kirstetter, EIS' vice-president of product marketing and sales enablement, says, "Before we draw up personas or positioning, when we draw up a new product, there is an innate responsibility from Product Marketing to provide a sense of what the market needs."

If your product launch is to succeed, you, your team members, Product, Marketing, Sales, Customer Success, customers, and prospects must be sold on the validity of the product and its chances of success in the market. This starts with knowing and validating a common set of market problems and how your product can address those problems. However, the experts we interviewed agree that a proper approach to research can do

more than just validate personas and positioning around your launch. It can keep your product decisions and go-to-market (GTM) strategy tightly and powerfully aligned with customer needs into the foreseeable future.

This starts with you first exploring your own organization's assumptions.

Exploring internal assumptions
According to Div, a good starting point is with the organization's leadership. "I start by holding conversations with leaders in Product, Marketing, Customer Success, and Sales," she says. "I ask them what they think our vision, messaging, and positioning are. I often find that everybody has different answers, which

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tells me that we need to work on our alignment around who we think we are."

At this stage, however, product marketers can be encouraged to default inadvertently to existing mindshare. Div recalls, "In my first job as a product marketer, I was handed a persona that was two or three years old and told to just build my positioning and messaging around it. I was too naive to even ask why, so I just did what I was told. Similarly, you'll hear of product marketers who just go to Sales to understand personas and take their word as the law."

To get the best, most accurate understanding possible, Thomas Dong, VP of marketing at Netspring, invites product marketers to make better use of the persona template. "On validating personas, a persona template should include a section in which to list specific individuals in your customer accounts who map to your personas," he says. "There is no better way to get a common understanding of each persona than when you go through this collaborative exercise with your leadership in sales, product, and marketing.

While these resources can certainly be taken as a starting point, Div encourages product marketers to question, ask *why* at least five times, and validate their feedback. "Product marketers should question everything they receive. When was the persona created? Who was involved in building it?

How did they come to these conclusions?"

"Even if the founder is saying he knows exactly who his customer is, validate it," she recommends. "You will either prove him wrong or you will prove him right, but it's always good to start with a hypothesis and confirm."

Rekha agrees, "I don't accept 'This is how it's always been done.' If someone tells me that, I'll challenge them by replying, 'Okay, that's good to know. But how are you going to do this differently from now on?' For me, having that power as an ethical contributor to change things, to break things, and to learn from them is such an important one."

She encourages new product marketers, "Don't stop yourself. If you have a better idea, if you have a different idea, ask. That's why you're here."

At the same time, Rekha cautions product marketers to not run roughshod over past products or messaging. "Take the time to learn from past participants, to acknowledge previous work and products, and to understand what was done and why," she says. "You may find learnings that are directly applicable to your launch, things to avoid, or things to build on."

Validating current assumptions
From this point, Div recommends circling back to validate the assumption. "If this is what we think our story is, let's bring in some outside resources to see if it resonates."

Of course, to get answers to those questions, you must find an external audience, but finding them can be a major challenge where new product launches are concerned and no

direct customers yet exist. Here, networking is essential. You can start with existing customers who are adjacent to those who would be interested in your new product. They are often willing to be interviewed directly or at least point you to another colleague who may be a better fit.

If dealing with an adjacent product, Div digs into win-loss reports to understand why the deal was lost and to talk to the prospect. "I do it not so much to get them to reveal what feature area we could've provided, but to get them to express what exactly they're looking for and how we can help them get there."

In early stage situations when a company is still ramping up customer acquisition, Thomas recommends that you get creative. "Leverage the networks of your executives, founders, and senior leaders," he says. "Hire salespeople who have a Rolodex, who have built relationships in related areas."

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I started by considering what my product should do. Salesforce, I thought, should help customers reach more audiences. So I would ask, 'How do you currently get new customers? How do you collect the customers' information? If you had a magic wand to change this, what would you like your tools to do?"

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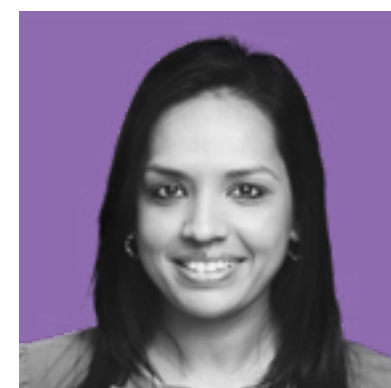
LinkedIn connections and groups, co-workers' contact lists, thought leaders addressing similar problems— don't be afraid to explore all of these avenues and more. To businesses seeking external validation, services like Wynter.com or Sagetap have begun providing groups of qualified professionals to evaluate and provide honest, unbiased feedback on personas, positioning, and messaging. Thomas says, "This can be a powerful way to quickly test your value proposition with your evolving Ideal Customer Profile, which can be somewhat theoretical in early stages."

Once an audience has been found, Div recommends that product marketers put their organization's assumptions to the test via interviews, polls, and questionnaires with that audience.

Stepping back from the product

During her first launch as a product marketer at Salesforce, Rekha recalls her research effort. "The initial 30 to 60 days, I went to Sunnyvale downtown to all these boutique shops." She hung out in they and observed how these shops did business—for instance, how many customers they served daily, how many of them were repeat customers, whether the sales team knew the names of their customers and their family members, and how they managed that process.

Then, she began asking business owners the right questions. "I started by considering what my product should do," she says. "Salesforce, I thought, should help customers reach more audiences. So I would ask, 'How do you currently get new customers? How do you collect the customers' information? If you had a magic wand to change this, what would you like your tools to do?' Asking them those questions taught me so much more than asking them jargon-filled, product-based questions."

In these conversations, product marketers should resist the urge to directly engage their audience about the product and, instead, take several steps back to understand their roles, lifestyles, routines, and most pressing challenges and pain

points. The Jobs to Be Done framework is an excellent resource for this. According to Div, understanding gathered from these conversations should answer the following questions

- What is a typical day in the life of your customer?
- What activities take up most of their day?
- How do challenges affect them personally, professionally, etc.?
- What motivates them and gets them excited to come to work every day?
- What would make their life easier?

As you take this approach, your research will yield a stronger sense of empathy for the customer, a more intimate understanding of their problems and the benefits that solutions can deliver, and more resonant messaging later in the process.

As a result of her research with small business owners, Rekha says,

"Inadvertently, I started falling in love with that community, because of their hard work and heart. That gave me the passion to build a product that would actually help them."

This approach also positions you as a "problem solver"—instead of a "salesperson"—and makes interested parties much more likely to collaborate with you in finding and validating solutions.

"As you do your market research, let people know that you're trying to address this problem area," Axel recommends. "People will validate it for you, saying, 'Yes, it's such a big deal. Please let me know what you're thinking. I really want to know where this is heading.' So, as you engage with people, you will identify who is passionate, who really is deeply into the issue. And they'll want to keep in touch with you."

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> *Based on the feedback you're seeing, how much of the same feedback are you getting? What is the role of the people this feedback is coming from? What is the buying power of that person? And how much money is that person's pain point costing the business? The answers to these questions determine how you weigh the input you're receiving.*❞

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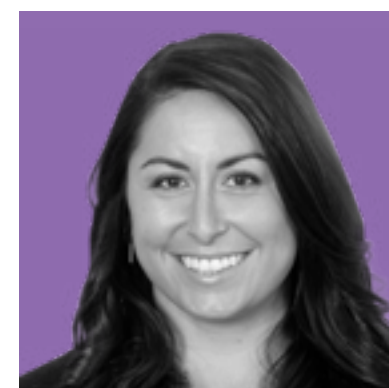
This approach does more than give you an active audience to validate your personas, positioning, and messaging in the near term. Axel adds, "Once you have a product that you can show and tell, you will have a huge pool of early adopters invested in its success and waiting to provide even more feedback."

Axel has seen similar benefits from organizing communities around related topics or interests and then reaching out to them for their feedback and validation on common problems and solutions. With member counts upwards of 3,000, this has proven to be an efficient way to gather feedback from interested colleagues in bulk. Once a product has launched, Kirstetter continues to tap into the community for feedback on the new features.

Before product marketers accept audience feedback wholesale, however,

Nicole cautions that it must be tempered with responses to some penetrating questions. "Based on the feedback you're seeing, how much of the same feedback are you getting?" she asks. "What is the role of the people this feedback is coming from? What is the buying power of that person? And how much money is that person's pain point costing the business? The answers to these questions determine how you weigh the input you're receiving."

As you complete these initial conversations, validate (or invalidate) your company's market assumptions, and establish a common set of problems in a specific niche that your product can solve, you are primed to build your personas, positioning, and messaging.

Key Takeaway

Question everything— validate (or invalidate) your organization's assumptions, understand previous decisions, and carefully weigh the inputs that you're receiving.

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Chapter 3

FORMULATE PERSONAS, POSITIONING, AND MESSAGING

It's time to put to paper who you are selling to, what makes your product unique in the marketplace, and how each team in your company should speak to customers. Your answers to these questions become the founding document and uniting force for your new product launch. So where do you start such a critical endeavor?

Putting personas first

"When you're trying to put together that story arc, start with understanding your persona," Div advises. "If you can figure that part out, the rest of your positioning and messaging can be added like layers on a cake." The converse is also

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Often, teams focus on creating messaging first, only to then have to reverse-engineer personas to make the messaging work. Targeting has to happen first. Personas have to precede messaging."

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true, she adds. "If your personas do not resonate or ring true, then it doesn't matter what fluff you put into positioning or messaging. You will end up trying to make it for everyone, and it won't really connect with anyone."

Thomas agrees, "Often, teams focus on creating messaging first, only to then have to reverse-engineer personas to make the messaging work. Targeting has to happen first. Personas have to precede messaging."

"Sometimes this means starting with an assumption of your persona and messaging, based on minimal intel and trusting your gut," Nicole adds. "Then you move forward with the assumption that you might prove yourself wrong and that the persona will continually evolve as the market—and your understanding of the market—evolve."

Of course, an essential aspect of personas is the concept of the buying

committee—the idea that no single persona dominates the buying process. Rather, the buying process is a dance between the champion (who really wants and will benefit most from the purchase), the buyer (who holds approval power and accountability for the purchase), and the influencer (who can strongly influence the purchase decision).

Says Thomas, "When I build up my personas, it's all about building out and understanding those three general classes. Each is looking for something different, and you need to align your messaging with what they need to hear. In general, economic buyers focus on value, champions focus on solving a specific pain, and influencers want to see the least disruption to the status quo."

A natural starting place is champions. Thomas recommends, "If you're resource-constrained and you don't have the bandwidth to create all the possible personas, messaging for your champions

should be your core and the starting point from which you would adapt messaging for buyers and influencers. You can build those up over time as you learn more."

Unfortunately, he says, influencers are often completely ignored, bringing devastating consequences. "Let's say you're selling a very technical product, and the champion wants it and the buyer has budget for it, and everything is set," Thomas says. "But then there's one architect on the engineering side who just says, 'No, I use other technology for this, and I don't want this new solution,' and kills the sale. You might not like this individual, but you must figure that person out and learn how to win them over

or they will creep up at the last minute and kill your deal, again and again."

Every effort you make at this stage to flesh out and understand your personas will pay significant dividends as you move into positioning and messaging.

Positioning and messaging for differentiation

With your carefully crafted personas in hand, you are ready to combine them with your validated research on the common sets of problems in the market to ask some critical questions.

"Why would this person even care?" asks Div. "Do we have something that is differentiated enough for these audiences

or personas to care?" These questions, she says, are at the heart of positioning.

Mandy Schafer, group enterprise product marketing manager at Miro, agrees. "We should be considering what problems we can solve that our competitors have been unable to solve. If customers just think of us as a different flavor of the same thing, then that's a problem." As product marketers confront these questions with Sales, Product Management, and other teams, the conversation soon becomes an internal exercise to reach consensus on the ideal customer profile, value proposition, and unique differentiators.

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This process, in turn, equips the product marketer to craft messaging that conveys features and solutions and tailors them to each target persona.

Mandy stresses that the differentiated approach is one that many product marketers struggle to navigate successfully. "As younger product marketers do messaging, they will say, 'This is my product. This is what it does, and it saves you money, and some other high-level value statements.' Now, to be clear, they can talk about being low-priced or feature-rich, but it should be framed as what's unique or different about the price or those features."

Once you have figured out those key points of

differentiation, messaging becomes the art of framing those points for each of your personas or audiences. For example, how will you convey the uniqueness of Feature X in a way that is relevant and resonant for Customer X versus Prospect Y versus Partner Z?

Validating personas, positioning, and messaging

Your work on personas, positioning, and messaging is not complete until you take it back to your external audiences for another round of validation. Why? Because even after so much work and research, these foundational pieces can still be a few degrees away from field-ready—especially where new, category-creating products are concerned.

"When I've been in the position of coming out with something that no one's ever seen in the market before, we would get on calls with customers, they would listen to one of the narratives that we put together based on our positioning, and they would react as if our claims were completely wild or magical," says Mandy.

At this point, social proof would become critical. She continues, "We would go back and add more evidence to it, more examples, more customer case studies to show the value that we claimed to have and how we were unique and differentiated. We would continue to improve and test that until the customers had that aha moment and saw plainly."

Once this level of validation is received from external audiences, you're ready to present it to internal leadership to obtain their buy-in. Here, Marcus warns, "Expect leaders—who are usually no shrinking violets and have often given your business' issues a good deal of thought—to push back. Don't expect them to accept your findings, personas, positioning, or messaging at face value. Instead, come prepared to present your data, lay out your arguments in a logical fashion, and make a convincing, irrefutable case. Anticipate their objections and prepare well-reasoned responses to put their fears to rest."

He continues, "Having a champion or two in the room never hurts your chances. Vetting your presentation with a few or all of the leaders and implementing their feedback beforehand gives you allies who are personally invested in that conversation."

The experts agree—personas, positioning, and messaging are critical supporting pillars to your new product launch and worth taking the time to get right. With these three pieces fine-tuned, other important pieces, like your GTM strategy and buyer's journeys, will fall into place more easily.

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Director of Product Marketing, Finch

Key Takeaway

The sequence matters— start with creating your personas, identify what makes your product uniquely appealing to those personas, and only then figure out your unique messaging based on what actually resonates with target customers.

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Chapter 4

DRIVE THE PRODUCT LAUNCH

In the course of so much research and validation, you become a significant resource to internal teams as a voice for the customer and a market expert. You may also find yourself playing a central role to help the rest of the business translate those personas, positioning, and messaging into the strategies and tactics that will make up the product launch. According to our experts, you will want to pay special attention to the following aspects as the launch looms closer.

Partnering with Product

Product teams have their own window into the needs of customers from a technical standpoint. Combined with the expertise and insights of Product Marketing, these two parties can form a powerhouse for driving a customer-centric product and keeping product strategy and the strategies of the rest of the organization aligned. But what arrangement optimizes collaboration between Product and Product Marketing?

"The product marketing manager should be involved early on," Thomas recommends, "at the point features are being considered for launch, the point at which product teams should be developing a business case for each of the features being proposed. This allows engineering, product and sales leadership to effectively prioritize multiple proposals, while also providing the basis upon which

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product marketing managers build messaging for the new features.”

“I think it depends on the complexity of the product, based on the amount of education required to get the customer to purchase,” says Becky. “When launching a complex product, you want your product marketer to be embedded with product management, engineering, and user experience teams from the start, where they can really acquire a deep understanding and appreciation for the many facets of the product and be prepared to educate internal and external audiences on them. This also gives the product marketer the opportunity to share their persona and market knowledge

with the broader product organization, so learning and alignment is happening all around.”

She continues, “For a simple product, though, where less education is required, the product marketer can be aware of the product for most of the time and then be brought in at the tail end to learn how the product works.”

Obviously, so much rides on Product Marketing to convert research, personas, positioning, and messaging into the actual concerted effort that must take place around a new product launch. As product marketers are present and take ownership of that process, the launch is much more likely to succeed.

However, there is another reason why Product and Product Marketing should be closely partnered.

Nicole says, “Too often, Product thinks they have something great. They want to get the word out, but not a ton of market fit, market validation, or research has been done, so they struggle to get traction. Now, I think product people are very smart and wonderful, but too often they get only minimal or blinded feedback, and they think that's it. They don't see the bigger picture or understand the strategies happening in the market. They're not well-connected with analysts or tapped into what competitors are doing.”

"Also, it's common for Product to assume that a product made for one target customer could also be easily sold to another," she continues. "The reality is, the product or feature might solve a pain point for just a handful of businesses and not actually be as sellable as Product thinks."

This, she says, is where product marketers can be a powerful asset for Product, lending their research, strategic perspective, and inter-team relationships to refine the product itself and the process of bringing it to market. "In reality, product marketers should be brought in as early as the validation stage of the product to establish product market fit, define the business plan, and so on."

Marcus adds, "I always tell product leadership to think of me as their PR agent. Product marketers, who tend to be a bit more skilled at messaging and communication, can provide a critical translation layer between Product and the rest of the organization. If they have maintained a tight partnership with Product, product marketers are uniquely positioned to interpret product priorities, functionality, and benefits in a way that resonates with a lay audience."

Mapping the buyer's journey

The buyer's journey is one critical place where the persona starts to be turned into actionable information for your business' teams.

Thomas says, "The way you institutionalize your personas is through journey mapping—a shared understanding of where your champion, buyer, and influencers are involved at each stage of the buyer's journey, from awareness to learning to consideration and evaluation, through purchasing and advocacy. For example, at the awareness stage, Product Marketing

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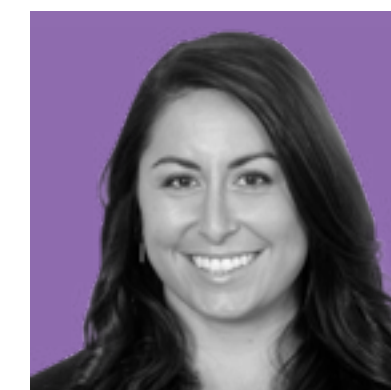
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and Marketing should collaborate on advertising and messaging to your champion. Product Marketing, Customer Education, Developer Advocacy, and Sales Engineering should align on content for the learn stage, while building off Marketing's tactics for building awareness. Then during the consideration stage, Engineering, Product, Growth, and Sales should be strategizing how to ensure a frictionless product evaluation experience for your champions, buyers, and influencers alike."

He continues, "Once everyone agrees that this is the journey that we're trying to move people through, it can be a very effective tool for aligning around the personas and mobilizing your company in a very rational way."

To be effective, however, the product marketer must take ownership to bring and keep all of these pieces together. "I've found that journey mapping really elevates the role of Product Marketing strategically in an organization," says Thomas, "because otherwise teams tend to fixate on their OKRs and start forgetting about what they are trying to accomplish, both from a go-to-market perspective, and most importantly, what a customer experiences at every touchpoint."

Of course, ownership of the buyer's journey also means ownership of the measurements of success involved at each stage and during the launch. For instance, is success measured just by getting a general announcement out by a specified date or is it defined by alignment to key marketing events—ahead of a major partner conference, for example? After the launch, success should be measured by audience growth, new feature adoption, and retention, as well as how those new features are driving upgrades and renewals.

Owning the message

Inevitably, a few teams within your organization may lay claim to ownership of company messaging and positioning.

"Sometimes, it's between Product Marketing and Product

Management," Div says. "Sometimes, Marketing thinks they should own it. I always urge product marketers to take ownership, be the steward of that single voice of the market and the customer, to keep messaging and positioning consistent across the business. We are the voice of the market and understand and empathize with the customer's pain points."

"This is because, if product marketers are doing their job right, no one else has the depth of insights into the customer and the market than they do," she continues. "Of course, they will often have to fight and make a strong case to get that ownership. And they will have to continue their research and work with their audiences to remain qualified for that role."

However, owning this role also puts the onus on product marketers to adapt and sell positioning and messaging to fit the priorities of their different internal teams, which can be a struggle initially.

"The biggest challenge is, you must get the whole company to buy into and get excited about the product positioning and messaging," Div says. "But not everybody is going to be excited about it. Nobody likes change. And so you must be the champion who convinces them that this is the right thing to do and this is how we want to tell the story. And that this story resonates with our customers. The best

opportunity is when you are the change agent, rallying all the teams to make magic happen."

This can mean addressing real concerns. For example, salespeople might be afraid of the impacts the new product could have on their sales commissions. Axel cautions, "Sales will always be wondering, 'How do I make money out of this new offering?' And that's quite often where I've seen both product marketers and product managers severely mess up. Just because the product provides a lot of value for clients, just because it's novel and new, just because it's testing well, if it doesn't yield anything for Sales, the product is not going to fly."

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> *Sales will always be wondering, 'How do I make money out of this new offering?' And that's quite often where I've seen both product marketers and product managers severely mess up."*

Axel Kirstetter
VP for Product Marketing and Sales Enablement, EIS

Key Takeaway

Get involved as early as possible, utilize your journey map to create a more strategic dialog with your team, and help sales understand why they should get behind the new product.

Mighty Guides

KEEP PERSONAS, POSITIONING, AND MESSAGING FRESH

After so much work has been put into personas, positioning, messaging, maps, and strategies and your launch has been executed successfully, you might be tempted to rest for a year or two. Unfortunately, your work as a product marketer is never really done.

"I'd love for positioning to be something that I do once, and then it's done forever," laughs Div. "But the reality is, your audience is changing. Technology is changing. The industry is changing. So many shifts are happening that you must keep your positioning up to date or you will fall behind much faster than changes are actually occurring in your market."

Product marketers will often receive telltale signs that their personas, positioning, and messaging are getting stale. "Your message doesn't resonate anymore," Mandy says. "People are just not understanding or buying into what you're talking about. You're not winning as many deals as you used to. Or your competitor comes out with something that

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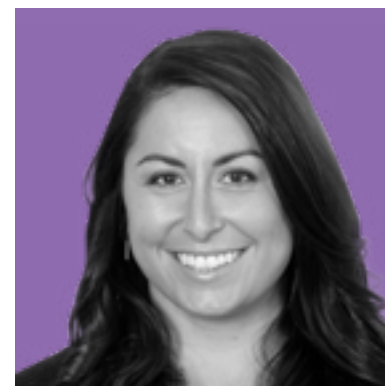
Div Manickam

Mentor | 2019-2021
Top 100 Product Marketing Influencer

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I constantly tell people that my documents on positioning/ personas, etc., are all living documents. They change, grow, adapt to fit the market, and the market is never stagnant."

Nicole Culver

Director of Product Marketing, Pindrop

effectively devalues your message. That's when you know it's time to refresh your messaging, and maybe your personas and positioning, too."

Sometimes this shift only means that your original personas or positioning were a little off and real data from the field is now helping you course-correct. "The process is iterative," says Div. "In the beginning, you may have been certain that this persona was your decision-maker. But now, after a quarter of sales data or product usage data, you recognize that your decision-maker is actually this other persona and you adapt accordingly. That is what a

product marketer should be doing." Nicole agrees, "I constantly tell people that my documents on positioning/personas, etc., are all living documents. They change, grow, adapt to fit the market and the market is never stagnant."

Also, if you've properly nurtured relationships with your external audiences during your research, you are not starting back at square one. You already have sources you can consult to understand what has changed, many of whom will still be passionate about and invested in helping you solve those common problems as conditions shift.

Rekha echoes this sentiment, encouraging product marketers to view a launch as one step in a process of constant improvement. "Launching a product takes a lot of experience, but also a lot of guts to do it, and it's okay to fail," she says. "If your first product launch is not a massive success, if you feel it didn't go the way you thought it would, don't get bogged down. Learn from that and take that learning into your next launch, so you can do better."

Key Takeaway

As the market evolves and competitors change their tactics, you'll find that you'll need to constantly adjust your personas, positioning, and messaging so that it continues to resonate.

Mighty Guides

Learn More About Our Experts

Div Manickam

Mentor | 2019-2021
Top 100 Product Marketing
Influencer

A mentor, author and product marketing influencer with 10+ years of B2B SaaS product marketing at Fortune 500 companies and startups.

Div is exploring a portfolio life one day at a time. She recently embarked on a journey with stress and anxiety, mindfulness and essentialism, diversity and belonging. She is committed to break the stigma and be a voice for the unspoken. Taking a leap into the unknown, she has self-published books on her journey.

Nicole Culver

Director of
Product Marketing,
Pindrop

Nicole Culver is a product marketing leader with over a decade of experience at companies across all stages. Nicole is extremely familiar with the unique challenges faced by high-growth organizations, including acquisition, after the successful acquisition of TransLoc by Ford. Throughout her marketing career, she discovered her passion lies in B2B Product Marketing, supporting advanced technology solutions globally.

Thomas Dong

VP of Marketing,
NetSpring

Thomas Dong is a Product Marketing executive with extensive experience in GTM strategy, persona-based marketing, and customer journey mapping. Tom shares his expertise as a startup and scale-up advisor and was recognized as a Sharebird Top 100 Product Marketing Mentor in 2022. He is currently VP of Marketing at NetSpring (Redwood City, CA).

Tom earned a masters in Operations Research from Princeton University and a bachelors in Industrial Engineering from the University of Manitoba.

Becky Trevino

Executive
Vice President of Product,
Snow Software

Becky Trevino is the Executive Vice President of Product at Snow Software. She is a former Engineer turned Marketer with experience leading Customer Success and Product teams. This broad perspective enables Becky to understand how to build the cross-functional relationships required to elevate and scale Product Marketing successfully.

Becky earned her MBA from Northwestern's Kellogg School of Management and holds an M.S. Engineering from The University of Michigan.

Learn More About Our Experts

Axel Kirstetter
VP for Product Marketing and Sales Enablement, EIS

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Axel Kirstetter is a seasoned B2B SaaS marketing and monetization executive for companies achieving double digit growth and double digit margins. Currently he is the VP for Product Marketing and Sales Enablement at EIS, the leading software company for the insurance industry. He has won numerous awards, including from Forrester, the Product Marketing Alliance, and Product Marketing Hive and is a regular public speaker and podcaster.

Marcus Varner
Director of Product Marketing, Finch

in

Marcus Varner is a content and product marketing leader with over 15 years of experience throughout the marketing organization at a host of SaaS startups and Internet marketing firms. He relishes the challenge of learning customers inside and out and then crafting winning messaging, positioning, branding, and strategies that connect with them, especially for fledgling products in new categories.

Rekha Srivatsan
VP, Product Marketing, Salesforce

in

As a proven product marketer with experience in both large and small tech organizations, Rekha Srivatsan is driven by a winner's mentality, an entrepreneurial spirit, and being a team player. With over 11 years under her belt as a product marketing leader, Rekha also enjoys mentoring and sharing her career learnings with up-and-coming product marketing professionals.

Mandy Schafer
Group Product Marketing Manager - Enterprise, Miro

in

With over 15 years of product marketing leadership experience in the software industry, Mandy Schafer's breadth of experience ranges from high-growth, early-stage startups brands to large, multinational corporations. Mandy has been recognized as a PMA Top PMM Influencer (2020) for her efforts to educate audiences on the top opportunities and issues facing product marketers today.

Thank you.