One Knight in Product - E134 - Martina Lauchengco

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SPEAKERS

Jason Knight, Martina Lauchengco

Jason Knight 00:00

Hello, and welcome to the show. I'm your host, Jason Knight. And on each episode of this podcast, I'll be having inspiring conversations with passionate product people. If you love the sound of that, hopefully you'll love this episode and love all my other episodes too. If you do, you can head over to https://www.oneknightinproduct.com, where you can find interviews with some of the finest minds in and around product management pins the back catalogue, subscribe on your favourite podcast app or share with your friends. If you want to throw some spare change in my cup to help with hosting fees. You can see a handy donate link right at the top. On tonight's episode we talk about product marketing. You know, the team that should be product managers' best friends and partners but so often just get stuff thrown at them at the last minute and told to release it. We talk about why a good product marketing mindset is so essential to companies trying to make a splash with their products. Some of the characteristics of a good product marketing team and some of the ways product managers might work more effectively with them. We also ponder what happens when you don't do it right and why you can't just use traditional marketing techniques and all this and much more please join us on One Knight in Product.

Jason Knight 01:12

So my guest tonight is Martina Lauchengco. Martina is a sports obsessed product marketing guru, venture partner, board member, lecturer, speaker and now author who started at Microsoft before moving through Netscape and glittering array of tech companies in and around Silicon Valley, where she has been named Silicon Valley Business Journal woman of influence. Martina once appeared under price is right and she's now come on down to tell us all about the importance of Product Marketing and get us all thinking about our go to market plans and how our products get adopted. She's doing this as partner at Costanoa Ventures, product marketing partner at the renowned Silicon Valley Product Group and is now hoping to inspire us with a new book "Loved" - how to rethink marketing for tech products, which given she used to be the PM for Microsoft Office. I'm hoping she wrote in Word. Hi Martina, how are you tonight?

Martina Lauchengco 01:53

I am great, Jason.

Jason Knight 01:55

So first things first. "Loved" has been out for a couple of months now.. came out in April, I think middle of April.

Martina Lauchengco 02:01

That's right. Yeah.

Jason Knight 02:03

How has that been going? And how's the reception for the book been so far?

Martina Lauchengco 02:07

It's been amazing. I had hoped when I wrote it, that it could be an approachable, easy way for people to understand the discipline of Product Marketing. And I every week, I get notes from people saying that I've never had something that has described it. So clearly, this is shaping the way that I'm thinking about how I build my products. So it is in terms of your aspiration as an author to have an impact on your craft. I'm overwhelmed and thrilled at the reception.

Jason Knight 02:35

That sounds really good. But the accessibility thing is very interesting as a concept because of course, with a book like this, you could go super deep, you could really go into the depths of marketing and pull it all apart and go into some really heavy concepts and get really theoretical about it. But was it your ambition from the after video to make something that was accessible like that, and something that could maybe have a bit of a broad audience and resonate with more people?

Martina Lauchengco 03:00

Yeah, it absolutely was, I made a point of reading the nonfiction bestsellers, not other business books that were randomly talking about product marketing, because I wanted to know what makes a book readable because consuming a book takes time. Yeah. And I wanted to make sure that this was worth people's time. So I wanted to design it like a product. And I put it through the product paces. So I had readers and reviewers that I had an MVP. And where I

started and where I finished were totally different. But I really wanted it to make it a pleasurable reading experience. And so I focused on that from a product perspective, I product managed my book, in the hopes that it would be a great book. A great read.

Jason Knight 03:39

Yeah, a great read. And, you know, just to spoiler alert is obviously a good read. And I recommend it. But has there been any specific early feedback, maybe from some reviews or people that have caught you in event? I know, You've spoken event in San Francisco recently, like any early feedback that's really sort of stuck in your mind, or really resonated or made you feel that this was all worthwhile.

Martina Lauchengco 04:00

Let's say the two that come to mind are very early on, someone wrote me saying this felt to me like the missing link and helping me under this as a product manager. So this is helping me understand what I didn't before and how to bring the product actually to market. And I hope it has a major impact on our industry. That one was just like, oh my gosh, exactly what I was hoping to do. So that was amazing. And the other more surprising feedback have been people who are not even close to technology who have found themselves reading it. I've had a controller I've had a head of school. I've had someone that runs a nonprofit, say that they are getting a tremendous lessons out of this for their organisations just because it breaks, what marketing is down at such a fundamental level that everyone's finding lessons that they can apply. So that's been thrilling.

Jason Knight 04:43

Sounds really good. And it's obviously really great to have that kind of feedback and seeing it resonate with people but Writing a book is in no way a simple endeavour. I've spoken to a bunch of authors on the podcast, they all have their own war stories to tell and you've kind of touched on it a little bit some of the process that you had to go through In the fact that you had to put up manage it, come up with the MVP version of the book and so forth. But I guess we kind of touched on it a little bit in intro, you're a very busy person, like you've got lots of stuff on the go, you're a partner in at least two places I saw on your LinkedIn, obviously, including SPG, you've got all the other stuff that you've got going on. And you decided to write a book, which must have taken a chunk of time. So I guess I have to ask, what was your motivation to write a book in the first place? And why was now the time to write it?

Martina Lauchengco 05:29

I have been asked for the last dozen years that I've been teaching product marketing, if any, if I had a book to recommend in product marketing, and I met, I thought, surely someone's going to write one. But no one ever. So it's kind of like, well, I guess it has to be me. But the now really became, I feel like there's this resurgent need for the understanding and application of product marketing as a discipline, not product marketers just practising product market team. But everyone that is building products to understand the function of Product Marketing, like

Costanoa ventures, I work with early stage startups, and 100% of the early product marketing is done by the founders, and the product teams, they don't have someone that carries that title.. And so they needed to understand it at this much more foundational level, what is it that I'm trying to do? Why does this matter? And what I'm building really won't matter at all, if I'm not able to create a space for it in the market and help people understand why it matters. So the motivation for the book really was for the builder and founder community that has to do a lot of this early work, they will ultimately, ideally work with great product marketers that help them do it. But if they aren't doing that early foundational work, that all this incredible product creation that we have happening in our world right now. It won't matter. So that became the why do we need to do this now.

Jason Knight 06:50

Now that makes sense. And I think it's really interesting, it's this kind of idea that, if no one else is gonna do it, then you're gonna have to roll your sleeves up and do it yourself, which is obviously really admirable. But it also feels like, how long do you keep waiting? Like, when do you have to jump? Because you know, maybe someone would have it and one just after you, but now you've earned it for them. But you can't wait too long, right?

Martina Lauchengco 07:11

Yeah, and I'll say, this was genuinely the hardest thing I've done professionally in 20 years, it was I knew it was going to be hard. But just again, just making crafting a book versus writing a bunch of blog posts, totally different books or reading experience. And I wanted to do that. So it was hard.

Jason Knight 07:31

And now I can imagine, but did you have any kind of, as you say about blogs, but like, Have you always been like a natural writer? Or is this? Is it something that you have to really work out to get that into a shape that you accept yourself, let alone other people?

Martina Lauchengco 07:45

For me, I really had to work at it. I mean, I can certainly write well enough to produce blogs and do stuff on social. But again, to kind of put it in print, where there's a reading experience where someone's reading from chapter to chapter and how do you insert story? And how do you insert tension in a story. So people want to rest read the rest of the content and signpost to something that might come later? These are all things that you don't do unless you're writing a book. And then you also have to treat it as an experience from beginning to end. Like what did I deliver against a reading experience? As opposed to here's a compilation of 30 blog posts, which this is not. So yeah, I did not have this skill before. And I had to learn it as I was writing. So that took a while.

Jason Knight 08:24

Yeah, I certainly know some books that may as well have been just 30 blog post, by the way. So it's good that you put the effort in. But you're the marketeer, you've presumably been pretty good at selling value propositions in your time and making things as vivid as possible and painting pictures of your words. So with that marketing hat on, how would you define the core value proposition of loved if you had to sell it in a couple of sentences?

M Martina Lauchengco 08:51

For anyone who is building a product, if they want it to be seen and adopted in the market, then "Loved' is for you.

Jason Knight 09:00

There you go ... get it on a billboard. So you touched on that there. And that makes a lot of sense. It sounds very much then. And you've you've mentioned it a couple of times, this isn't necessarily a book that's solely aimed at product marketers being better at product marketing and teaching people how to do that. But it's also aimed at just anyone that's working in the product space, building products and taking products to market. Yeah, you touched yourself as well with founders entrepreneurs. So is it fair to say then that all of those your ideal persona or do you think that there's one of those that gets the most out of it?

M Martina Lauchengco 09:35

I would say ... 'cause I had to prioritise my job prior as a product manager. So how could I not do that? My top priority audience was product managers because there are so many of them and because to do product marketing effectively, they are the most foundational partner to product marketers. So Product Marketing can be done well. So again, I work at early stage startups at Costanoa... and many of the founders are those early product people whether or not they carry that title. So, so it's very natural in my world that it winds up being extremely relevant for a lot of founders. And I had founders read those early MVPs, to give me feedback on what else do you need to know and understand, like I just this morning was on a call with a new company called sink, had the call initiated with them saying, Well, I think we need a marketing agency. And we're like, what kind of marketing agency and then they started describing what they were looking for. And I was like, that's marketing strategy. That's basic product, go to market plan. And no agency can do that really, effectively. You guys are the ones that have to do it. I'm going to teach you how. And so we spent 90 minutes where I took them through the product, go to market canvas that's inside the book and said, Here's how to think about it. So that you have a roadmap, because these people are builders, and technologists are not used to thinking about it through the go to market lens. And it just gave them a simple framework through which to understand like they're going to a show and an event next week. And we distinguished What are you trying to do from the talk where you're on stage, versus what are you trying to do with your booth presents, and they have different objectives. And therefore, it gives them clarity about why they're doing things, and then that helps shape the web.

Jason Knight 11:13

Now, that makes a lot of sense. But I was also going to point out that you've got big shoes to fill with this book coming as it has from the same stable as "Inspired", as "Empowered", obviously, by your partners, SVG, Marty Cagan, Chris Jones. Those books were really foundational for product managers and product leaders and kind of a desk reference for both of those things. So like the desk reference for product managers, the desk reference for product leadership, and building empower teams, all that good stuff. And of course, the vast majority of my audience would have read at least one probably both of those books. So I guess a question from that is, I mean, you've already talked about how this is a bit broader than just a book for product marketers, and in fact, is not necessarily aimed at product marketers at all. I mean, I'm sure that they can get something out of it, but at the same time...

Martina Lauchengco 12:01

They'll get a lot out of it! But to your point, that was my great Oh, my goodness leap when the book went out. And to your question earlier about early feedback. A lot of people told me there I ordered it right away, because it was the next in the SVPG series. And so my expectations were very high. Yeah. And it was thrilling to hear from those early readers who were looking at it very much through that lens, how they felt that this was as foundational and important as those other books that preceded it. So that was certainly how I intended to write it. And it's, it's a huge component of building a product is how do you actually get it to market and any builder who hasn't thinking about that aspect of it is missing a huge portion, ultimately, what makes a product successful. So this is giving people those foundational framings, from which they can understand and do a better job of applying this thinking as they build.

Jason Knight 13:00

Again, make sense. And hopefully, we'll find that next to the other two books on everyone's bookshelf, like you're saying,

Martina Lauchengco 13:06

Right? That's certainly that was its intention that is, is a worthy addition to the SVPG library.

Jason Knight 13:13

But in the book, you say that most tech companies get marketing wrong. That's one of the first things you say in the book, in fact, but I have to admit that I was worried about that, because tech companies have been around for quite a while now. And obviously, SVG have been working with some of them, crossed a nerve in working with some of them, and loads of other coaches and marketers and other types of venture capitalists, never. They're all working with these companies all the time. So I have to ask, what are some of the ways that these tech companies are still getting it wrong, because you'd imagine that they've had a bit of a run at it now. And they could have maybe tried to get a little bit better already. But...

Martina Lauchengco 13:49

yeah, and the great ones are still great. And they stand out from the rest and what happened. So you've got like, 10% of the companies are doing exceptional marketing and product marketing, because they have a really strong foundation. And the ones that aren't quite getting it, right are ones that are very much stuck in the mindset, a couple of things, either, we've built this in our throwing it over to the marketing team to go and promote. And I'd say that is a huge The second thing is people are oriented around, I have this thing. I want to promote it to the world. And now I'm going to just talk about my thing. And nobody cares. And nobody has the capacity for that there are five and a half million apps in the market category. Well, and there are almost 10,000 solutions in one software category. So just the overwhelm that every single human being is dealing with, with so much technology coming at them. And too many companies say well, if they haven't heard me, I just need to turn it up to an 11 or I need to hire a PR agency that like this literally happened. An entrepreneur that I worked with before he and I met it was just like well, I really, really want is Michael Bay bang and I just want that thing. How do I get that thing. And I was like, Oh my gosh, you don't know. And so it's not easy to understand what the foundation should be from which you can do strong marketing. And that's the part that most people don't understand. They think I just turn on SEO, I start running campaigns, and then I get pipeline, or then I get users. But it actually takes an incredible amount of intentionality, for people to understand why they should pay attention to you, versus a tonne of other players that are saying things that are similar or overlapping, and why they should lean in. And that's what product marketing is for tech, let me understand why choose this product over that other one, and most people under invest in it.

Jason Knight 15:41

Yeah, and I think another interesting thing that you see, and I guess it really varies depending on the type of company, but you can get a lot of companies that almost just you kind of touched on it just then they just get what you might call traditional marketing functions in like, maybe they'll bring in some people from previous lives that have marketing experience that maybe don't have any real Tech experience at all, but they have marketing experience. So they bring them into a product company or a company that's trying to be a product company. They say, Well, that's the marketing person, go off and market and don't necessarily think about anything a different way. Do you think that's a big problem that you see a lot of?

Martina Lauchengco 16:16

It's a huge challenge for a lot of people to understand that if you bring in and I see this all the time, we hired this agency, and they're doing our SEO, and they're reading digital campaigns, and they immediately start spending money that does yield, inbound people, they're not well qualified, the messaging might be bringing it like positioning the product in completely the wrong place. And I've seen this happen at numerous companies where the marketing team is optimising for clicks, and what helps them hit their numbers. But it doesn't position the company or the product for where it needs to be perceived to achieve its long term goals. So short term numbers or metrics are met. But where it needs to be positioned, relative to another competitor is under invested in and it turns, it will always bite you in the butt at some point in time as a company. So that's the part that most people don't quite understand until they hit a wall. And then they go, wait, what's wrong? How can this isn't working anymore? And that's

when they start to do the examination? were we saying the right thing? To the right people? Were we helping them understand why they should lean in and pay attention. And that's what those are what the product marketing fundamentals really helped ground everyone in.

Jason Knight 17:29

But what does that wall look like as in on the ground when they're there? Is it literally that they just stopped getting people moving through the funnel? Or is it that they've run out of money? Like what what is it like you say they hit a wall, but like, what, practically speaking does it look like when they hit that wall in the company?

Martina Lauchengco 17:45

What the walls tend to look like is they are doing a lot of for B2B company, they're doing a lot of sales activity, but it's not creating any yield. It's like, okay, we're doing or marketing activity that's also not creating yield either one of those things, that's you're hitting a wall. And for a direct to customer, it might just be that your acquisition is starting to go down. And that can be any number of things. But those are when people exam and go hmm, is there something else I should be paying attention to? So it's when numbers go down, or they flatline or there's no growth that people start to reexamine? What do we need to be doing differently or better. And I just did this with a another company Cyro, where they just weren't getting people through pipeline. And we examined their pitch and how they were positioning themselves. And discovered, oh, they're talking about this huge button data stack where there are a million players in there. And they needed to focus in much more on what they were doing, which was database security. And by diagnosing that, it changed the roadmap. It changed their pitch, it changed everything that they were doing. And they didn't realise it until they didn't see what they were using working.

Jason Knight 18:53

And now I'm hoping that what you're going to say is that your book, or at least the concept of Product Marketing, in general, is going to solve all of that, like that's gonna give people a playbook to go and become successful and help that 90% of companies that you've alluded to get a little bit better at this stuff. But I guess one question I would have with regards to any of these types of books, which obviously gives you a way to do things is it's not necessarily true that all of those 90% are going to make it because of whatever reasons do you think there are any barriers that you tend to see in companies, maybe companies that you've consulted with or just ones that you've come across on your travels that are almost actively pushing against correcting their actions, and that they'll just doesn't matter how many books you throw at them, they'll just always just try and do things in a certain way. Like, is it an industry problem? Is it a mindset problem, like, does that happen?

Martina Lauchengco 19:45

Yeah, for sure. And I would say the thing that I noticed is people that tend to look at the range of activities that must be done as a checklist. I have I've done my SEO I'm doing all this I'm doing these campaigns, and so they build leaves, they've done the work. And it's those

doing these campaigns, and so they build leaves, they've done the work. And it's those companies that don't have the capacity to examine, what's the quality of that execution? Is it actually achieving its intended purpose, those are the ones that are never able to overcome this, because they just can't see it's insufficient to just check the box, you actually need to make sure you're saying the right things to the right people at the right time, or in the right situation, or preparing the market for why your message should matter. And that all that must be done simultaneously. It's companies that can't see that that wind up, never able to overcome or succeed up to their potential.

Jason Knight   20:35

And that is always a sad, sad situation to watch, hopefully, from afar.

M   Martina Lauchengco   20:39

And yeah, but I hate to say that I see it more often than I see it often, unfortunately,

Jason Knight   20:45

Well, start sending around or get like a book cannon or something like that. I just found your book for the Windows or something and see if that helps them out. So it's a hardback, so at least it'll get through the window.

M   Martina Lauchengco   20:55

Yeah, well, I'll say that. So part of what I tried to do in the book was help people understand how to distinguish between what's the average that they see out there versus what makes something actually good, because it's not obvious really good things. It's not clear what makes them good. And so this is trying to help people understand what makes this messaging good for this audience. Because it's not just a simple rule of like, the this kind of messaging is always good. It's very contextual, to stage, an audience and your product category. And you have to be extremely thoughtful about that. So that's a huge part of what I tried to bring into the book. So people could understand, oh, I can't just follow a formula. You have to think about where I am and who I'm trying to message you and my stage company absolutely matters.

Jason Knight   21:41

But one thing that occurs to me from what you've just said, and it's something I think that Marty talked about with me, when we talked about Empowered, when that came out was this concept that there's kind of the best and the best. And obviously, he's talking about that very much from a product management perspective. But this idea that you kind of have to almost as he put it, find religion, and you've got to go drink the Kool Aid, and you've got to just throw yourself into the, in that case product, but in your case, Product Marketing swimming pool and just accept it and let it consume you. Do you think that that's the same thing with you that you

kind of just have to accept these principles and convert to them? Or do you think that you can take it step by step and maybe just take it very iteratively as you go along? How all in do you have to go?

M Martina Lauchengco 22:21

Well, I'm ultimately a pragmatist. And so I believe, I believe there's room for all there is a best and rest. But realistically, it's not always easy or possible for someone to say a wholesale, you know, what we're just going to, we're going to chase down the best in class model, it just doesn't work in some organisations. And so I give very pragmatic advices, okay, if you are the first product marketer, instead of trying to spread yourself peanut butter, thin, attach yourself to one product of extremely strategic importance, and show how the model works there, then the company has a reference point for how it is better, and then they will invest properly, there's motivation to invest, because they've seen it work, as opposed to trying to say like, well, this is what is supposed to be and everyone should understand it and have it, they don't have a reference point for understanding. So that's the one model of how people can start to stand it up. But at a minimum, the reason why I broke it down into just four fundamentals, the ambassador, connecting customer and market insights, the strategist directing the products, go to market, a storyteller, shaping the market's perception of your product, and the Evangelists, enabling others to tell that story. If all you do is get better at applying those four, in everything that you do, your product marketing will be better.

Jason Knight 23:37

There you go. That's a bold claim. And hopefully people can start to act upon that after this interview. But let's talk about the people that are doing the product marketing, then which we would suppose would be product marketers that's put out marketing managers and heads of Product Marketing and VPs of Product Marketing all of those people. In your opinion, what are some of the key attributes of a good product marketer?

M Martina Lauchengco 23:59

great product marketers, and great product managers have all the same qualities. And it's really just where and how they apply them. So a great product manager applies those skills toward building the product and a great product marketer applies those skills into how they prepare and shape the market and those that are trying to bring a product to market. So the entire go to market machinery, the marketing teams, the sales teams, or even sometimes the growth teams depending on what the configuration is. But they have that same curiosity and really communication superpowers. And also just that capacity for simultaneously for strategy and for execution. So those are some of the key qualities that the great product marketers always have.

Jason Knight 24:41

Absolutely. And I've worked with some fine product marketers and continue to this day. So give them a shout out on the side in case they're listening to this. But one of the things that we spoke about before the interview, and you talk about it in the book, as well as that how product

spoke about before the interview, and you talk about it in the book, as well as that how product marketing isn't necessarily just about product marketers and product marketing managers and so forth. But it's more of a mindset as well. And it's actually not necessarily something that you even have to have a product market to for as long as you've got the general principles and ideals and the do the things that you obviously recommend in the book. So does that mean then that we don't really need product marketers at all? And we can just train up other people in the business? Or do you think that it's generally better to have some specialists in pocket?

M **Martina Lauchengco** 25:22

I would, of course, always advocate having someone that knows the craft, because they can just get there much faster. And because they can direct things when they've done laps, I mean, it's like anything, if you're making it up as you go along, then then you're gonna get it done. But is it gonna be best in class, it's gonna be really hard. Yeah. So you want a specialist that actually knows and understands what best in class looks like. And it can help drive to a best in class result. And this is, again, that distinction between like, I'm checking the boxes, I'm doing it, versus being able to do it at a really high level. And it will be extremely difficult to do product marketing at a really great level without someone that's done it before. So that's why you want someone that specialises in it. But very real, like I did a keynote to a group of 800 people, two thirds of what they're all the product organisation to build internal tools. Will they ever have product marketers? No, they won't? Do they need to do product marketing so that their products internally will be adopted and understood? Yes, they do. Yeah. And so that might mean that they have to think through? What does my beta adoption process look like? And should I find 25 internal evangelists that we built into our build process as our design partner equivalents, so that they can exit as evangelists throughout the organisation showing others how to use the product. So it's not just incumbent on this product team that's watching this internal tool to do a tour and say, and this is why you should use it. Having that mindset, regardless of where you sit, can be of great service no matter what kind of product you're building.

Jason Knight 26:55

Yeah, I think that's super interesting, actually. And something that I advocate for with internal products, in general is the idea. And the internal product managers is trying to make sure that they treat the rest of the people within their organisation as effectively their users, their customers, because ultimately, you don't want internal products to be seen as like the place where good people go to die, right? Like, that's the way it turns out in some companies, like you see, these people just working really hard, slaving away, just trying to get stuff done, and just churning stuff through and just to kind of been hidden in the back and just people are just made to use the software. So it feels really important, both from a product management and product marketing perspective. And I think that thing you say, and evangelism, I think is really key as well, just being able to be that evangelist and that top Thumper for the product internally and help to just to keep people excited in it, because otherwise, that's not a fun thing to work on. And it's also not fun for the user to Well, of course, but I was gonna say, though, actually, an interesting question about that is obviously with your experience with Microsoft Office, is there have been times in its life where Microsoft Office has maybe been accused of being a little bit, you know, not fun to use, for example, like, was that something that you were very conscious of in your time there? Or? Yeah, like, because it must be really difficult product

marketing. I mean, you were product manager at the time at Microsoft. But I understand that product managers at that time, were more product marketers anyway. So was it pretty tough? Product Marketing Microsoft Office?

Martina Lauchengco 28:22

Well, that was I mean, I've learned such incredible lessons there. But that was very much where I understood, how do you establish the guideposts for a category and move your product toward it? Yep. And when we would watch people in usability studies, I watched this one user who had the document that we had him build, we would look at and he said, like, yeah, that's, that's really easy. We take any of us 1520 minutes to do. He self identified as advanced. And we watched him do this, he a could not successfully do what we consider to be an easy document. Menu served the entire time for things like bullets or changing the colour. And there are buttons right in front of him that do these things. But he was surfing the menus. And it was this great lesson early in my career to realise this person believes they're an advanced user. And by our standards, they would not even have qualified as a beginner because they menu served to find and do the things that they were doing. So what we believe people have the capacity for what they actually do. And even how they think of themselves tends to be very different. Anyone that building the product has infinitely more knowledge than the people who are using it. Yeah. And this is one of the wonderful ways in which the product instrumentation that lives today is so fantastic, because we can basically compare what we believe versus how people are actually using the product. I think that's such a critical and amazing tool available to product managers today. So for sure, I saw that firsthand and many times

Jason Knight 29:50

Absolutely, knowledge is power. And I agree that there are some fantastic tools out there but we won't name them because we don't want to get accused of shilling for anyone

Martina Lauchengco 29:59

But they're there! Take advantage.

Jason Knight 30:01

But the book talks a lot about how different functions can work effectively together with product marketing teams as well. Now, obviously, it covers a whole different range of types of person that could work with product marketing. But let's keep our focus for now on product management. What are some of your top tips for effectively working with product marketing as a product management team?

Martina Lauchengco 30:24

Well, the number one is that your product marketer should be embedded with the product squad, not every product squad is going to have a product marketer, but for anything that is customer facing, or so for example, you might have 200 product squads, but 40 of them roll up

customer facing, or so for example, you might have 200 product squads, but 40 of them roll up to something that is considered a product experience. And there's one team that is most in charge of the user's primary experience of you interface that they have with that product, that would be the place for that product marketer be embedded, because that's where they are connected to the experience that the customer is having an opportunity to engage with. And that person should be embedded and helping make decisions about I talked about in the strategy section, what things make something go to market strategy forward is starting with the when than the why, than the what and the how. And so if that product marketer is injecting into with that product team, the conversations, alright, the 50 things we're looking at our backlog in the five we're going to prioritise this this next sprint, instead of them just saying what can be done. The question gets asked, Where might we have market wind at our back? Yeah, or what upcoming conference do we have where we should be trying to your group couple of Sprint's so that we have some really great things for good and market teams to talk about at that conference? That's what that collaboration looks like. So that product teams are making decisions that are informed by the market reality or another one that I have seen happen often is the urgency around a competitive response that might need to be seated in product that needs to come in, via the product marketer, because sales might be complaining, or like, oh, maybe sales is just complaining, because they want this feature. That product marketer needs to be the truth, they are saying no, this is legitimate, our win rates are going down. Here's where people perceive the category to be going, how do we not just respond, but actually exceed where the market is going so that we're redefining that standard. And that then becomes a collaboration. So embed, and then collaborate. And that collaboration has to do with how you build and how you what you build. And when you release certain things. It's how you talk about it. So no product marketer can do a good job of messaging without collaborating mightily with their product management partners. And that there's just regular give and take cadence where product management teams don't feel like they can make great smart, successful market forward decisions without that product marketer. And the product marketer doesn't feel like they can be good at their job without deeply understanding the product.

Jason Knight 32:53

No, absolutely. And it kind of reminds me a little bit of the classic whole product concept, which I think I first read about in Crossing the Chasm by Geoffrey Moore, this idea that product teams should go beyond just considering, like the features that they deliver and the technicalities of stuff that they're shovelling through their feature factory, but actually working on the entire experience from the acquisition upfront all the way through the life cycles or acquisition, retention. Yeah, obviously growth but you know, potentially off boarding and the aftercare that they might need to have and all of that stuff. And this idea that that whole thing is really what you're supposed to be looking after not just the thing in the middle. But it isn't uncommon. And you touched on it yourself earlier, this idea that there's quite a lot of product managers out there that just seemed to throw stuff over the fence last minute, as you say, hey, Product Marketing Manager, we've done now this thing that you've never heard of before. Off you go, and can you like, make us a slide or a blog post or something about that? I guess we've kind of touched on it already. But it seems that the answer to that is literally for these people to know about that stuff, weeks or months in advance. And I remember I spoke to one guy a handful of episodes ago. And he kind of said that product marketing, generally like go to market is very necessarily a waterfall type approach, because you've got kind of external dependencies that you have to hit and sort of trade publication deadlines, and you've got conferences, as you say. So I guess that what you're saying is that getting them way upstream is yes, by far the biggest sort of force multiplier you can get out of this relationship.

Martina Lauchengco 34:26

Sure. And that's why I talked about embedding and making them part of the planning process. So one of the things I recommend in the book is at a minimum, and this is the absolute min, or whatever your product planning process is if it's monthly, if it's every two weeks, if it's quarterly, make sure that the big conversations are happening, where you are understanding what are some mega trends or major things we need to take into consideration on the market front. And how should that influence what we're deciding to do on the product roadmap, and I have never ever been in a meeting where those things come together and it hasn't been changed what gets built when, because people realise, like, oh, we were gonna get this done whenever it was going to be done. And all of a sudden, there's a forcing function on the marketing side or let go to market side, there's a reason to pull it in two sprints versus doing it the the original timeframe that was envisioned, and it's just a more market forward way to think about how you build what you build.

Jason Knight 35:24

Yeah, absolutely. But we touched on it before. Not all companies have put up marketers, you yourself said that we want to kind of get those experts in to make sure that we get to best in class and and start doing things properly and have the best chance of success. But you're working with a lot of early companies at the moment. Yeah, as part of your day job. I guess the question is, how early in the process or how early in the lifecycle of a company? Do you think that getting those specialists in? Makes sense? You don't want too early, I presume? But how early? Do you want them?

Martina Lauchengco 35:57

Well, I've worked with companies as early as Okay, we just incorporated and now we're thinking of announcing that we are an accompany. How do we talk about ourselves? Yeah. And so even even just the basics of how do I talk about what we're building so that it is valued and considered important so that we can recruit people to work for us, that's not just within our direct network, that becomes a messaging exercise. So there if someone if you don't have the tools, finding someone to do that work with either, like Kosta, no other way we do it is we have a builder ops team, and I'm the Marketing Expert. And so I get to work with all these companies in an embedded way. So I get to be that person to them. But if you don't have a me, then you want to bring in a marketing advisor or just somebody that you're bouncing this stuff off of so that you're not doing it without any external guidance. And that's how you would do it. But it actually winds up being important, really, really early.

Jason Knight 36:53

Yeah, I guess the question there is whether the recommended path is, again, as you say, getting that kind of fractional role in to start with, to get things moving, and make sure that people don't make any major missteps. But then, as part of the handover, or the stepping back of that fractional role that they would then recommend the sort of team that you would need to carry that on. Is that the way that you do it?

Martina Lauchengco 37:14

Yeah, I'd say yes, you start off making do with what seems reasonable what you have access to. And again, this is at the very earliest stages, like we just signed some paperwork, we're now a company. But there are some that can get out of the starting gate with wish more. And there's absolutely an argument in some, in some cases, where there's a lot of market to be built even in advance of the product. And this is true for one company in particular that were for a year pre product, they just did an incredible amount of content generation where they were preparing the market for their point of view and why their product would be meaningful. Yep. And they have just clobbered everyone else in the space that had product out in advance of them. Such a great job of dominating the conversation, even before the product was out. And so that was a company that realised we need to own the conversation. Yep. And then our product can be more successful. And that has translated massively in the marketplace. It's been extraordinary to watch.

Jason Knight 38:11

That's really interesting. It kind of brings to mind the idea of the type of work you have to do when you're creating a new category, for example, where you have to persuade people, this is a real thing and do so much advocacy around it before anything even happens before you can even try and sell into that category. Because no one else even even knows that that's a thing yet so really speaks to the idea that you can do a lot of pre work to just warm people up, and then all of a sudden, you're the natural fit for them. Which is really interesting, actually.

Martina Lauchengco 38:37

Absolutely. Yeah, another company that I'm working with, Signal, they do authorization for modern enterprise authorization. And authentication is super glamorous. But the distinction that most people can draw between authentication and authorization, like you don't know the difference, like 95% are like, Oh, don't I get authorizations for authentication? L is different. Like if you actually Googled authorization, like it brought up this a University of Iowa page where this IT team was talking about things were like, wow, this is crazy. So they went out to the market, just talking about what they did without this broader understanding of the lack of understanding and the confusion in the marketplace, they wouldn't have succeeded. But already they've switched to it's just in time access management, instead of focusing on the technical terms. Yeah. And they're finding everyone can understand that they're like, Oh, well, I need that. Instead of saying what you need is modern enterprise authorization. They're saying, hey, just in time access management, for anyone that's trying to access customer data. Oh, yeah, I need that. So now let's talk. Yeah, these seem like small things. This is a brand new company, but it's made a huge difference and who's leaning in? And the kinds of conversations they're able to have?

Jason Knight 39:47

Well, as we said before, painting pictures with your words. Where can people find you after this if they want to speak to you about the book about product marketing in general, or if they even

want to try and find out if there's a YouTube link for your Price is Right appearance?

Martina Lauchengco 40:01

I need to find that VHS tape and put§ it out there? So I've just even I haven't showed it to my kids.

Jason Knight 40:08

Did you win, by the way?

Martina Lauchengco 40:09

No, because I was a college student. And I didn't know the price of anything. So they're like showing a TV and like, I don't know, bicycles and like, I have no idea watches. So I would turn to my friends, I was that person that would always turn to the audience hoping someone would give me the answer. And I, I got consolation prizes, I got a rain jacket, a boombox and $25 worth of Little Debbie snack cakes.

Jason Knight 40:33

From small acorns do great marketing gurus grow!

Martina Lauchengco 40:36

But where to find me, anyone that buys the book, if they turn in a receipt to info@svpg.com, I am holding office hours for people who want to have a conversation about what they're learning or have questions. So it's basically on an as needed basis. So if you buy the book, that's where you can have a direct conversation with me. I am definitely on my my personal website, Martina levchenko.com, or loved the book.com. I'm trying to keep a list of places where I might be in show up. I'm speaking at the product camp conference in South America, the largest one down there, super exciting in Brazil, the end of this year and speaking at another conference, a business conference in Wisconsin, in September, but I'll keep putting things up if people are interested in trying to see me in person. But Zoom works. Thank goodness for Zoom, right?

Jason Knight 41:22

I'm sure they'll be very interested. What I'll do is I'll obviously make sure to link all of those different places into the show notes. And hopefully you're going to legion of Product Marketing curious fans heading in your direction. Well, that's been a fantastic chat. So obviously really

glad we could find a time and talk about some really important issues around how we can get product managers and Product Marketing working together. Hopefully we can stay in touch. But yeah, that's for now. Thanks for taking the time.

Martina Lauchengco 41:46

Oh, Jason, thank you so much. I really enjoyed our conversation.

Jason Knight 41:52

As always, thanks for listening. I hope you found the episode inspiring and insightful. If you did again, I can only encourage you to hop over to https://oneknightinproduct.com, check out some of my other fantastic guests. Sign up for the mailing list or subscribe on your favourite podcast app and make sure you share your friends so you and they can never miss another episode again. I'll be back soon with another inspiring guest but as for now, thanks and good night.