

# One Knight in Product - E124 - Tessa Kriesel + Wesley Faulkn...

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## SUMMARY KEYWORDS

developer relations, product managers, developer, people, product, community, developer advocate, wesley, programme, company, role, technical, build, tessa, understanding, job, podcast, part, feedback loop, spoke

## SPEAKERS

Wesley Faulkner, Tessa Kriesel, Jason Knight

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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 people in and around product management. This episode is sponsored by skip level. Now ask yourself this Do you struggle with communicating with dev teams and understanding technical terminology and concepts? On episode 98 of this podcast I hosted Irene Yu, founder of Skiplevel, an on demand training programme that helps professionals and teams become more technical in just five weeks, or without learning to code. You can learn the knowledge and skills you need to better communicate with devs and become more confident in your day to day role with the Skiplevel programme. You can go to <https://skiplevel.co> to find out more and use code OKIP75 to get \$75 off the programme in the next 30 days. That's <https://skiplevel.co>, code OKIP75. Check the show notes for more details. On tonight's episode, we talk about developer relations or DevRel to its friends and try to find out all these people on Twitter with avocado emojis are doing in their day to day jobs. We talk about what DevRel, is the types of companies that need DevRel teams and some of the key challenges of the job. We also most importantly, we talk about how DevRel and product management intersect, how our teams can work together effectively whether we even need them well when all these product managers seem to have technical chops anyway. For all this and much more please join us on One Knight in Product.



Jason Knight 01:27

So tonight my two guests are Tessa Kriesel and Wesley Faulkner. Tessa's a dog loving former car mechanic and keen archer who grew up in a town of only 250 people (although I did hear it was 300 before she got her first bow and arrow set). She's currently head of platform Developer Relations at Snap. Wes is a SXSW board member who wants to run for public office, and one of his manifesto pledges was apparently to close down every Arby's in the country. He's currently Head of Community at SingleStore. They're both here tonight to talk about

developer relations... No, not that weird uncle that used to write Fortran, but the community of developer advocates and community leaders who are all over Twitter with their avocado emojis, trying to set up developers for success. Tessa! Wesley! How's it going?

 Wesley Faulkner 02:06  
It's going well!

 Tessa Kriesel 02:08  
Amazing. Best introduction ever!

 Jason Knight 02:12  
There you go, that's... the podcast is gonna be complete nonsense., but it's always good to get in a strong start., right? So first things first, I usually ask a question like this towards the end of the interview. But this is going to be new ground for a lot of people listening. So I'm gonna ask it upfront. And because it's a factual question, I'm gonna ask you both to indulge me in a quick game of rock paper scissors. So we can see who gets to explain to me like a five year old, what developer relations or DevRel really means. So on 3... 1, 2, 3... go!

 Jason Knight 02:41  
That looked like a cheat. But Wesley won anyway, even though he was way before so, Wesley, what is developer relations?

 Wesley Faulkner 02:49  
First of all, I would like to say Developer Relations is a department. So it is almost... like people that you see out front are usually developer advocates. But there's so much more to developer relations. There is community. Of course, there is also the advocates that go out and do a lot of public speaking, there are some factors of developer relations and developer advocates that only do web streaming and don't even do public speaking outside of their own domiciles. But there's code snippets, there are podcasts like this, there are blog posts, and basically any way in the place where people gather around your technology, the developer advocate is charged with going out and finding them, communicating with them, hearing them. And Developer Relations is kind of like the whole vacuum cleaner to suck all of that feedback up, bring it into the company, have it be processed. And then hopefully, that feedback, makes better products, better demos, better documentation, and then you start the cycle all over again.

 Jason Knight 03:52  
Right. So Tessa was nodding away there. So I'm assuming that you agree with all of that. But Tessa, in your words, what do you love about developer relations as a career choice as a team,

as a department?

 Tessa Kriesel 04:03

Yeah, I mean, there are so many things to love. Admittedly, I will share that I although this has changed over time, I used to be like 99% extroverted on the Myers Briggs scale. I'm down to about 75% now, so I think with old age, I'm getting a little bitter. But I think what I really love about developer relations is being able to support and help my peers so I started in a in a technical career, and really enjoy being able to, you know, support those folks and still knowledge and just like guide them along the way. And I think that I've been building communities like my entire life. And so when it's like, Hey, I get to do this cool tech stuff. I get to build communities and lift people up and share with them what I know and kind of bring them into that kind of circle. For me. It's just like the absolute dream career path. So that's what I love about it.

 Jason Knight 04:50

Sounds amazing. I'm sold! But Wesley, you need to tell me what you love about it as well now because obviously, it's important to get various different angles on this.

 Wesley Faulkner 04:59

There's... personally, I would, I feel as if I am in a kinship with a lot of my peers, which is a really good part of it. I most of us come from multi discipline backgrounds, and various experiences, which means that we've lived interesting lives. And so I don't think I've met one boring person in developer relations, everyone has their own little journey and their own, like, way of seeing the world and experiencing the world. And I love that part of it. In terms of doing my job, I am extroverted as well, I love talking to people. But I love seeing the Aha! moments, both virtually or in person, when you're explaining a concept when you're able to break things down, or when someone runs into something that is just unclear. And you're able to, like, unpack that, and doing a lot of like learning how to fish type of work, and not just explaining something away and have them go away. But just really enhancing someone's life, removing a roadblock, and making it so that they can become more productive, and understand and grasp some of the fundamentals that really helped put all the pieces together.

 Jason Knight 06:14

Right. So there's a strong training and knowledge sharing and kind of upskilling element there. But you're not just training people in just any old stuff, right? You're training people in how to use a technical product that someone is selling to these developers, is that fair to say? Or is there some kind of general education around general development issues as well,

 Wesley Faulkner 06:34

That's part of it, some of it is just a general encouragement, like, yes, you... that is a bug, that is an error that you'll get if you put that in the wrong location or something like that or like just

is an error that you'll get if you put that in the wrong location or something like that, or like just "I see you", and you can do this, some of it's just that simple. Some of it is just like, hey, talk to this person, or look at the form here. And it unlocks a whole fountain of inspiration and possibilities. And sometimes it's like I said, it's not just training, it's not showing someone how to do something, there's parts of that, and I like that as well. But it's just making sure that they are, if they go off the path a little bit that you just redirect them back into the direction that will help them be more successful.

 Tessa Kriesel 07:13

I love that you added the encouragement side of it, because I do really feel like that is that's a huge part of it. I think that thought leaders, which when you're in that DevRel space being out there externally, which again, Wesley really spoke well to that you're not always in that capacity. But when you are in that capacity, being that kind of thought leader, folks look to you as that type of a person. And so your level of impact for that community can be extremely high. And so you know, encouragement, building people up. And sometimes we are actually teaching best practices. Maybe it's a technology that's new, right? You're bringing out a product that is something that hasn't been seen before. And so you're like, hey, I get it. You've never seen this before. But like, here's how we see it. And here's how you can implement this and how you're thinking about whatever it is that you're building or doing. So that's all I would add. There's I just love the encouragement side that the Wesley mentioned.



Jason Knight 08:01

Yeah, I think encouragement. And to some extent, I mean, one of my pet projects or causes at the moment is like mentorship as well as like, the ability to take people on a journey and let them know what's right and wrong. In a work context, at least, you know, like, what's normal, what's not normal? What's their problem, what's not their problem and stuff like that? Sounds like he's got a lot of elements of that in it. But at the same time, you're employed by companies, this isn't a charitable thing, right now you're doing a job for companies. So what types of companies are actually employing, say, developer advocates or DevRel people in general, like, what types of companies? What types of product would those companies be selling? Or getting into these developers hands? And why would they need to get that team in place in the first place?

 Wesley Faulkner 08:44

I have to say that Tessa has, like, consulted with a lot of industries and companies. And I think that she is an excellent person to answer this question.



Jason Knight 08:52

Let's do it.

 Tessa Kriesel 08:53

Thank you, Wesley. So I will mention that I mentioned this almost every time I talk about DevRel, there's a really great book out there. It's called "Developer Relations: How to Build and Grow a Successful Developer Program". It's literally on my desk actually ...



Jason Knight 09:05

Prove it!



Tessa Kriesel 09:06

... by Caroline Lugo and James Parton. Literally, like right there. So inside of this book, they actually break down the concept of developer first versus developer plus. And I use that a lot when when I've spoken to my clients. And so when you think about developer first, those are products that are truly targeted at developers or technically minded people, right? And so when you think about DevRel, that's usually when dobro can come in a little bit earlier in that business inception. And is almost feels like a necessary department very early on, right? Developer plus is this idea of having multiple audiences, right developers might be one of them, but you also might have marketers or designers or you know, whatever that might look like. For example, I think I'm trying to think of like two really great companies to like compare and my brain is just..



Wesley Faulkner 09:54

PayPal is a good developer plus one



Tessa Kriesel 09:56

absolutely PayPal is a great developer plus one that they're obviously not their own. Li and first audience, definitely an additional audience to go to where if you think about, say, like JetBrains, right, they build a lot of like code IDE platforms, they are definitely a developer first. They're really building a tool that is like for developers. And so you think about those kind of two different audiences. I like to actually talk about this third audience that I think is not mentioned a lot. But I think that it's, it can be something like thinking of like a notion, right? So like, notion can be used by developers 100%. And maybe it widely is, I love notion myself. So it definitely has a developer adoption. But thinking about something like Notion, right, is this idea of bringing developers in to help you expand your product? And so a lot of, you know, airtable, I think, can fall into that bucket, too, of like, how do you bring in dev so that they can start to build add ons, they can build integrations, and they can really expand what your product offering is, from that technical side. And so they can be considered developer plus, right? They are maybe a part of a vast audience that you could target to. But I think in that capacity, I really look at it as like, how do you bring devs in to like, truly drive scale and impact for your business to really be able to drive all those additional innovations.



Wesley Faulkner 11:09

It's nice when you can just open that stuff together. Right?

It's nice when you can just snap that stuff together. Right?

 Tessa Kriesel 11:12  
Yeah. 100%.

 Jason Knight 11:13  
Good. So I'm now thinking of an example. So for example, in my current company, we've got like a web product that we can put in the hands of people that work in banks. We've also got an API product that developers in those banks can integrate with, to drive automation with their systems as well. So just to play that through, are we basically saying that the recommendation would be to have I mean, I guess we'd call that developer plus type approach, because you've got form factors for different types of people. But you would be putting a dev rel team in there to work with those developers in the banks to help them be successful with the API product is that the long and short of it, if I put it into basic, simple product management terms?

 Tessa Kriesel 11:52  
Yep, absolutely.

 Jason Knight 11:53  
Because we're pretty dumb, right?

 Tessa Kriesel 11:55  
Not at all. First off, but absolutely, like, you know, you've got those different audiences, right, you've got that web platform for your banks and the folks that engage with it from that side. But it's definitely incredibly important to leverage that API successfully, to really truly find the value in that product. So I would definitely consider that a developer plus platform.

 Jason Knight 12:13  
And one of the things that strikes me there, as well as the kind of potential crossover with things like technical pre sales as well, which is something that you see with people that are trying to get API's, for example, into, again, say, banks or other kinds of institutions that need to be kind of taken through and solution designed with all of that stuff. Like is that something that falls under your remit as well? Or is that a very different thing? Or is there kind of a crossover, or even maybe some clashes between those two types of teams?

 Wesley Faulkner 12:38  
I think that goes into where does DevRel fall in the organization, which is a classic argument

I think that goes into where does DevRel fall in the organisation, which is a classic argument that will forever be discussed and debated. I think the Romans were talking about it back in the day. So DevRel can touch all parts of the funnel. So pre sales, post sales, the org itself needs to be optimised to make sure that that is handled efficiently. And that is basically doled out in a way that won't cause burnout. Because if you are a person that has to do everything, and do everything equally, well, your scope is going to be really huge. Your workload will always be piling up. And that's where burnout happens. And so there could be some segmentation between some people handling some people that who are early in the process, or haven't heard about you and your more awareness, or they've made the conversion and you're wanting to do like a workshop or webinar just for them. There are ways to tackle this. But the answer is yes. And also, maybe not depending on the needs of the company. And the resources that you have, I think a lot of startups who are resource constrained kind of think of Dev Rel as a, you know, like a superhero position, they can just hop in and do anything and take care of everything. That is one that I see in terms of looking at roles that are currently popping up. And that is a fundamental misunderstanding of how to best utilise the person who's doing this type of work. And we're not all generalists, even though that we do have a breadth and like a spectrum of abilities and talents. I think if it's not geared in a way that's sustainable, then that is something that is not going to be supportive, and also there's going to be detrimental, because it could hurt the reputation of your company, it can hurt the reputation of your product, it can hurt a lot of different things. If developer relations is not treated in the way that it's supposed to. And it's not nurtured so that it's not like Get back in there and get me more sales. I mean, you can't just, you can't just like lock someone in the box and just unleash them when they're needed. You need to make sure that there is a strategy in place. There is a structure and a process in place for any interactions to make sure things aren't lost, and things don't get like overwhelming.



Jason Knight 14:57

Sounds fair enough. I think I can certainly relate to that Swiss Army Knife type approach that you get with some product managers as well just, you know, just kind of just cover all the bits that no one else can do for speaking of product managers, and I guess I should probably do that given that this is primarily a product management podcast. I ran a poll on Twitter today. So far, it's got 300 or so votes, that says basically, more or less 90% of PMs are at least somewhat technical, certainly enough to talk to developers, even if they're not necessarily building the platform themselves. But they've got like a technical capability of some sort. So I guess the question is, let's turn the heat up a little bit. Why do we need developer relations people talking to our developer customers, when we could just be getting those technical minded product managers to talk to them instead?



Jason Knight 15:41

A deathly silence fills the room!



Tessa Kriesel 15:43

That's a deep question. I think there's many answers to this, right. And I think Wesley spoke to the dynamics of different companies. And I think if there's one thing that we can really drill home with anyone who's listening is that no one DevRel programme is the same, because no

single company is exactly the same, right? We do pull some methodologies from other companies. OKRs is a great example. Google stapled them now lots of companies use them, right?



Jason Knight 16:09

Well, misuse them...



Tessa Kriesel 16:11

Or misuse them, agreed. But it doesn't mean that they're all the same, right? And so, yeah, I think that when you think about when you think about that engagement from from product managers, I do feel like there is there are a lot of product managers who do go out and do these things, right? They speak to their developer customers, they have those conversations, and they find a lot of impact there. I think that when you think about, again, back to Wesley's answer, like how do you actually define a job description? How do you say that this is what you do, and this is what you don't do. And so I think that's where DevRel can come along, and say, "Hey, as a product manager, you have a big job to do already". And so maybe getting that product feedback is incredibly important. But can you bring in an ally that can support you in that regard, because the amount of effort it takes to build up that community, especially if you're really early on, right, to build up that community of users to actually have those conversations with them, and especially those technical folks? Yes, as a product manager, if you're technically savvy, then it's easier to build that relationship. But you still have to put work into it. Like, I like to tell people, it takes five to six touch points for anywhere, I guess from four to six, really, I feel like to truly like grab onto that relationship and feel like you've built that trust. And so bringing in dev rel just really helps you to kind of take some of that pressure off so that they can go out there, start to build those relationships, start to get a brand knowledge for the company, and help with that. And I think that the more that product managers get involved in having those conversations, and being a part of that feedback loop only helps the dev rel be more successful. I think when you think about it, you know, and this is a complete bias. But I think there's still a lot of this bias in tech is that some product managers and some technical folks don't want to do that, right? Like they want to stick to what they're doing in their product. And they don't want to have those extroverted, as you can say, sometimes conversations, right, they would rather kind of stick to their lane of what they're doing. And so I think that it very much can be something they can do. But I think DevRel is just a good ally to those product managers to be able to help with that feedback cycle and do some of the even like putting together those beta programmes hosting hackathons, there's just a lot that goes into that. And so taking that pressure off of their plate, to me feels really impactful.



Wesley Faulkner 18:17

I can add to that, just what Tessa saying is is 100% right on. And I think a lot of roles and developer relations is what you're talking about touch points and building relationships, I feel that a lot of people who do advocacy in developer relations almost embed themselves in those communities. And that is something that is time intensive, and to kind of like participate and be part of the community, which is an investment. And sometimes you might not have that as a product manager, and also not the product managers. But sometimes, when you're a hammer,

everything looks like a nail, right? So you are honing your thought process, you're honing your approach to your work in a certain way that makes you really precise and makes you really good at your job. I think some of that same discipline is needed for developer relations, to the point where you're seeing it understanding like the gut and the soul of the community, and being driven by helping to move or produce a product that is really tailor made to that community. And then taking all of that and actually putting it in a briefing or a doc or something to actually inform the product manager so that they can do their job easier. And so that portion of it's not just being technical. It's all of the stuff around it. That is what makes DevRel DevRel. So every... Hopefully everyone who's working in a technically minded field is considered technical. But that doesn't mean you can do every single job in a company.



Jason Knight 19:46

Makes a lot of sense. I'll get back in my box. But let's put the focus back on you both for a second. So I love to ask you individually. Like how did you get into DevRel in the first place like Tessa touched on it slightly a bit earlier like working in technical teams, I guess, potentially some kind of developer developing something for someone, Wesley, I don't know if that was the same for you. But like, there's got to have been a point for each of you, where you kind of just sat down and thought, hey, I want to do this thing, or was it just like a gradual sort of segue in some kind of responsibilities that you took on as part of your day job, and you eventually kind of morphed into what you became.



Wesley Faulkner 20:22

Oh, I gotta say that I've been, I guess, addicted to jobs that didn't exist when I was starting. And I had my own technical track that I did for a while. And then social media came along, and I was like, "Oh, this is pretty cool". And then I switched careers, from being a product development engineer at a microprocessor company called AMD, to doing social media marketing, and really understanding how people are communicating out on the web and in different types of communities. And because that didn't exist back then. And so it became a thing. And then I loved it, because I was able to use my left brain and my right brain and do the analysts charts and breaking things down about like, how many clicks we got, how many links that people decided they liked, and polls and feedbacks, and AMA's, and all this stuff, with social and the engagement and figuring out, like, who let's connect the network connecting people and just, you know, just really being amongst people, because that's something I didn't have before as a product film engineer. And so I really kind of like gravitated to that. And then I loved it. And then someone approached me and says, "Hi, we're spinning up a developer relations position here at IBM. And because of your social background, and your technical background, I think you would be great for it". And then that's what got me over to doing developer relations as an advocate. But that is not something I planned for this was not something I said, "Oh, that's the trajectory that I want to be on". Luckily, I would say these positions caught up to me. This is the kind of stuff I love to do.



Jason Knight 22:00

You're a pioneer!

W**Wesley Faulkner** 22:01

Yeah. Yeah. I didn't choose it. It chose me. And that's kind of like how I got here. It's just because someone tapped me on the shoulder and says, This looks like you, is this you? And I said, "Oh, yeah, that does look like me". And that's how I got here.

T**Tessa Kriesel** 22:14

I love that my story is actually very similar. So really quick story first on when I taught myself how to code. So I have no official computer science degree, I actually have no degree, which I say proudly...

**Jason Knight** 22:25

Yeah me too!

T**Tessa Kriesel** 22:26

The college dropout! Is that my the first time that I wanted to build something cool was like Guitar Hero community, actually. And at the time, I didn't realise I was building a community, I wanted to bring Guitar Hero players together so that we could have tournaments and play with one another in kind of an organised way. And of course, you can play with your friends, but it wasn't like, hey, there's 2000 of us that are all joining forces to play against each other. And so I taught myself how to code to kind of build up this guitar hero, community and tournament site, essentially. And that's how I got into my tech career. So years later, I'm in my tech career. And because I taught myself how to code, I was very passionate about teaching other people how to code like, Hey, I pick this up, like, you can do it too. Again, where Wesley mentioned earlier, like really encouragement, right, encouraging folks to be able to do something that I felt I can do, like you can do it. And so I ended up getting involved with an organisation called Girl Develop It. And I started teaching kind of the gamut of front end development. So did you know HTML 101, all the way until like early JavaScript. And so I taught over 300 women to code loved it absolutely loved. It really was passionate about public speaking, educating and kind of all those capacities. And that led me into a role similar to Wesley that I ended up applying for called an agency and community engineer, no clue what that meant, right when I got into the role, but I was looking at the bullet points, and I'm like, ooh, training and teaching and public speaking and helping people. Yes, like, that. Sounds amazing. I got into that role. Very, you know, once I learned about developer relations, realised that I was like, Oh, hey, I'm a developer advocate. There's an industry term for what I'm doing. And so I actually just fell into it as well, based on finding a very technical job that did all the things that a developer advocate does in a traditional role today.

**Jason Knight** 24:14

Well, let's talk about that day in the life then of a dev rel developer advocate or anyone else in the wider DevRel team. So top level, we don't want to go into every single 15 minute window that you work, but how are you roughly spending an average day in DevRel, doing what you do

for your companies?

W

Wesley Faulkner 24:33

My role is I'm Head of Community at SingleStore, in the way that I work may be different from other people, but I usually try to go through the headlines understand what's going on in the world so I can put what I do on context. So if there is something about an explosion, or like a company imploding, there's things that help put things in context, in terms of the community because context is king and it Really understanding why something might be all of a sudden more important than the other is kind of how I reset myself for the day. Then I go to Slack, go to email, I check to see what if there's any urgent things, and then I check on the community. We have a lovely community manager named Maria, she's done just amazing work. And she's there day to day. And so I see if there's like issues that need to be handled, escalated. Then I look at my meetings for the day, which are full of meetings, and making sure people are looked in. And then because of my role, I'm mainly strategic. And so understanding budget, understanding roadmap, understanding all those things that are changing constantly. And so I'll reset myself do any adjustments to strategy or tactics depending on that information. And that's a lot of it's just making some documentation so that we're processes don't exist, I have to create them where roadblocks exist, I need to remove them. So that's generally speaking, what I do walking through my day.

T

Tessa Kriesel 26:00

Yeah, Wesley spoke to, you know, definitely a lot of parts of it, right? The the generalised, you know, where click monitoring community, things like that, like all incredibly important things. In my current role, I'm five weeks in. So I'm like firehose of information, right, trying to learn all the things. But I'm also kind of diving into that strategy. And I think, you know, Wesley spoke to that, too. But strategy is incredibly important with DevRel, especially prioritisation of work, because we spoke to this already. There's so much that can be done. And I think DevRel is also somewhat misunderstood. And like, where is that actual narrow path? Just like we talked about product managers? Where do you kind of cut those lines of like, do you go out and talk to your community? Or do you let DevRel do that? And so really starting to prioritise, what does that look like? And so I think, really, what is falling into my bucket, at least right now is thinking about that feedback loop, like, how does that loop happen within product within engineering within that outward developer ecosystem, and doing that cohesively within all of those stakeholders, there's just so much stakeholder collaboration, and I think that speaks to like that heavy meeting world. And then, you know, looking at that community, like Wesley spoke to that really well, today, we the role that I'm at, we don't actually have a community launched yet. So we're like in that strategy and inception phase, which is exciting, but a lot of work. And so another piece of that, really, when you think more of that developer advocacy side is kind of that outreach. And so that's another piece that I'm thinking about, too, is that, you know, we've got folks who are actually working on documentation from a developer experience angle. And so it's really, really great that I have that supporting team where sometimes that falls under dev role. And so you are writing docs, you are thinking about the product experience alongside product managers, you are, you know, really diving into some of that overall developer experience. So I'm just partnering with those folks, right. And so allowing me to be able to focus on more of that advocacy. So on the advocacy side, it's more about that enablement, content and kind of getting yourself out there spending time in those communities that Wesley

mentioned earlier, really being those key investors in there. And a lot of events strategy, right. And I know that events is something that folks are like, Oh, Deborah is going to a bunch of conferences. Of course, that hasn't been the case the last two years. And I will say that's never the case in the DevRel programmes that I care about. Sure, there are a time and a place for events. But you know, right now, I think everyone's like, Yes, let's go back to events. Let's bring all these conferences back. And so it's a key thing that I'm currently thinking about is like, what is that event schedule and strategy look like? But also, what does that virtual strategy look like? Like? How are we bringing folks together on a virtual level? And what does that kind of content look like in terms of getting started guides, code samples, product showcases? And so I feel like that kind of speaks to what you know, on a strategy side you think about but also on an advocate side, like what are you actually delivering on as well?



Jason Knight 28:41

This makes DevRel sound very similar to more like marketing than development. Is that a controversial take?



Tessa Kriesel 28:49

I think several people hate to hear that, like hate people say their market or



Jason Knight 28:53

Wesley's face is not looking too happy right now.



Tessa Kriesel 28:57

You got the good big eyes



Jason Knight 28:58

That was 1000 yard stare right there.



Tessa Kriesel 29:00

Yeah. Honestly, like, I feel like it does, right. In some capacities. We are not marketers by a traditional sense, right. But developers are not your traditional end users either. Like, you know, there are our marketing techniques that can work on, you know, the average human, as you say, where when you think about developers, they want that relationship they want that trust. So I think where, again, we're DevRel, can kind of really just fall across so many different areas, is that we are a little bit of marketing. We're also a little bit of product management, at least working really closely with those product managers. We are a little bit of engineering, we're also a little bit of customer success. Sometimes we're a little bit of recruiting, right, we're already out there. And so yeah, HR recruiting can come to us and say,

Hey, can you put out these roles at this event? And I think that, you know, you're really kind of sometimes a lot of company functions for a very specific audience. And so yeah, there's, there's definitely a little bit of marketing in it.

W

Wesley Faulkner 29:57

I think from that perspective, it's almost like when someone says As a CEO gives an all hands speech, it's like we're all in sales, you know, like we all, like invested in the success of the company. But yes, I think part of the difference are the things that cause people in the space to have pause about that, by the way, I'm in marketing is that. So I can say this is sometimes it's the cadence, and the measurement, that's part of it. So okay, it's in the quarter that we make our numbers part of it kind of marketing, or it's, Hey, how many leads did we bring in? That's part of marketing, but sometimes the actions and the things that we do to participate and doing the practice of DevRel, does it fall neatly in those buckets. And in that department, where those are the places where friction can happen. And if the person who's at the top of these orgs, like marketing, and have Developer Relations reporting to them, if they don't understand what DevOps is, if they don't embody the way that it's practice, and the optimal way to roll it out, or to see it happening in the world or from their company. That's when you also can understand where friction might happen internally, where there's a power struggle between best practices, and then expected results.



Jason Knight 31:21

Makes a lot of sense. But we talked just now about working with product managers. And again, trying to swing it back onto the product management focus. What are some ways that product managers can really help Dev Rel teams obviously get helped back in return? Like what are some of the ways that they can work really effectively with Dev Rel teams to help make successful products and have happy customers?

T

Tessa Kriesel 31:41

I mean, I think there are many ways, right, I think that, you know, we spoke to earlier like how to kind of not how do you necessarily but product managers, right? And when they're technically minded, or or, you know, previous engineers themselves, or whatever role, they're kind of fitting into, like, how can they decide whether or not they dive out into that community. And so I think that, you know, thinking about what kind of information you would like, if you're working with an ally, that's going to go out and actually talk to your customers. And so a lot of things that I like to think about when it comes to this relationship is like that feedback loop. Right? So coming back to huge thing that I advocate for is that feedback loop. And so working with product managers, it's really great when I've got a product manager who's like, "Yep, I'm all on board, like, how do we facilitate this feedback loop? How do we take these ideas and actually respond to them?" Like, often I've built feedback programmes, where the product manager, you know, there's kind of a filter, right of all the ideas that come in. And when product managers can grab those ideas and say, hey, you know what, that's in the roadmap, that's going to happen in 60 days, then I can say, Great, I'm gonna go tell the community that I'll check in with them, I'll maintain that relationship. But you just keep me in the loop. So we know what's going on. I think another piece of it, too, is the product roadmap, like being really

clear about what that roadmap looks like, for at least especially for the developer audience? And how can I get that in the hands of the right people? Does that mean that we build product ambassadors together that can help kind of shape and guide that product roadmap? Or is it something that's very kind of clear cut, but like, give me the space to be able to kind of share that, you know, change logs and kind of release notes, I think those are really super important for developers, sometimes things are hugely different when a release is put out there. And I think being on the forefront of that, so that we can tell folks with enough notice, hey, this is going to be an instrumental change. Or hey, you know what, this is going to be a small incremental change. And you're going to be able to just keep using things as usual, especially like API's, right, there can be huge major releases diversions. Versus like, okay, it's just a little bit of updates. And so I think anything where you're kind of thinking about that product to that end, technical user, your developer audience, that whole loop of like, how do we do that best. And I think one thing that I also like love to do, and I think, you know, usually kind of follows a product is like giving back that actual kind of Thank you, right? So if someone gives a product idea that ends up in the product, let's put them in the release notes. Like that's, let's give them some credibility. Because at the end of the day, when you're working with developers, it's really about building trust. And so any form of relationships and collaboration that can happen that kind of touches any of those touch points, I think, for me, it can be really impactful from a product manager.



Jason Knight 34:14

And what's the what's one thing that product managers do that really grinds your gears?



Wesley Faulkner 34:18

I gotta say that I love most product managers.



Jason Knight 34:22

You know the audience!



Wesley Faulkner 34:23

So that's all I can say that is seriously though, they they think about everything, or they try to and then they do some testing, and then they stay on top of things to make sure it gets done. And I have nothing but love for product managers.



Jason Knight 34:37

I'll take the gun away in a second. Don't worry.



Wesley Faulkner 34:39

Yeah. I don't know if there's anything that I dislike. Seriously. I'm no joking that they're amazing. Everyone that I met I'm like I wish I could do what you do. And I just can't like managing the three constructs or the three constraints or sorry, is just something that has like always befuddled most people and that they can't think of but then so I would say the only thing I hear, but one of the only things is because of the unrelenting job of balancing corporate initiatives with community feedback, where they are pushed, and doing the thing that they're told to do. And having to balance that with the thing that they know that they should be doing based on the research and having to put forward that's something I don't admire about them. But that's more of a circumstance of their their jobs rather than them themselves.



Jason Knight 35:31

I can guarantee you by the way that most product managers don't admire themselves in that situation, either. It's a constant tension between being told what to do by well meaning but potentially misguided stakeholders and actual user feedback and actual big picture thinking. So you're not alone in being concerned about that? What about your tests, you've been working with a bunch of people, you must have some pet peeve that product managers have inflicted upon you in the past?



Tessa Kriesel 35:58

I will say like Wesley I do, I have so much respect for product managers, they have a really hard job to do, especially with managing those stakeholders, I feel like in DevRel we can be a little pushier, or at least maybe that's just me feel like I can be a little push here back to stakeholders and say, No, this is not what how my audience wants it, or this is not how we should do it. But I think the one kind of pain point that I've had with product managers, and this has only happened on very rare occasions, is where they haven't had either a good understanding of DevRel. And they haven't dove into trying to understand it, or kind of be they just have point blank decided that like I am their enemy, and they don't want to work with me. And so I think it's just been a matter of, you know, a little bit of understanding of sharing what DevRel is, and I think just maybe just happened to be a not so great human being that I worked with, that just was like incredibly difficult to work with and didn't allow me to really dive into soliciting that feedback and improving that developer experience from that kind of documentation standpoint. And feeling like they needed to retain all ownership and like, Hey, we've all got a job to do, right. But I'm all about collaboration, and how can we work together? And then a rare occasion but happened to me my my poor experience with the product manager.



Jason Knight 37:09

Well, when it comes to product managers finding out a little bit more about DevRel, or what you do in general, or maybe know how we can partner more effectively, where can people find both of you after this if they want to chat more about DevRel or DeRel versus product or dev well with product or any of the stuff we talked about tonight?



Wesley Faulkner 37:27

Well, you can listen to my dulcet tones on the podcast that I co host called Community Pulse.



Jason Knight 37:33

There are no other podcasts!



Wesley Faulkner 37:35

<https://communitypulse.io/> I'm also a frequent user of Twitter. So if you go to <https://twitter.com/wesley83>, you can find me there. And if you want to see all the work that I produce, and want to collaborate, there's a nice collaborate button on PolyWor.. So if you go to <https://polywork.com/wesley83>, you can find me there.



Tessa Kriesel 37:54

I love that I'm a big fan of Polywork as well. So I have been lucky enough sounds like Wesley in the same boat to have the user handle TessaK22 pretty much across all the socials. I'm also...



Jason Knight 38:07

You were born in 1922?



Tessa Kriesel 38:09

Oh, yeah. 100%. That's actually my wedding anniversary. So they say to me, yeah, never forget that day. Well, I mean, plus, hello, reminder. Now I won't forget. But I very much on Twitter, also on Polywork. I also do a lot of blogging under <https://TessaKriesel.com> also founded <https://devocate.com> and blog a lot over there as well. So yeah.



Jason Knight 38:37

Excellent. Well, I'll make sure to link both of your details or both of your sets of details in the show notes. And hopefully you get a few curious product managers heading in your direction, or maybe even a few people trying to make the switch into DevRel from product management and kind of controversial transformation there. That's been a fantastic chat. So obviously really grateful that you both took some of your valuable time to come to this side of the house and help PMs understand a little bit more about the space. Hopefully we can stay in touch. But yeah, that's for now. Thanks for taking the time.



Wesley Faulkner 39:04

Thanks for having us. Really appreciate it.



Tessa Kriesel 39:06

Yes, thank you.



Jason Knight 39:10

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://oneknightiprodukt.com>, check out some of my other fantastic guests sign up to the mailing list or subscribe on your favourite podcast app and make sure you share your friends so if you and they can never miss another episode again. I'll be back soon with another inspiring guests but as for now, thanks and good night.