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Sophie: Think about the way that your customers are looking for the solution that your product solves. If you can think in the shoes of a customer, you're going to roll out world-class marketing campaigns, because it really is a point of differentiation and not many people can do that. Well, it doesn't come naturally to a lot of people.

Daren: That's Sophie Pank, the marketing director of Deputy, APAC. Find out more tips and tricks about marketing for your small business on this episode of Forward Thinking.

Hey everyone, I'm Daren Lake, the audio content manager here at Metigy. Welcome to Forward Thinking, a podcast by Metigy. In this series, we speak with inspirational business owners, brands, and marketing experts to learn from their experiences on the frontline and uncover what it takes to build a world-class business.

If you go on Sophie's LinkedIn you'll see a glowing recommendation from David Parsons that says "She's smart, works hard, is tenacious and does it all with a smile. She's a pleasure to work with and I'd hire her again given the opportunity".

So you know Sophie is the real deal marketing expert. Over the last 20 years, she's worked in multiple marketing capacities at Morgan Stanley, Carlson Marketing, Commonwealth Bank, American Express, and Xero.

In this episode you'll find out Sophie's first exposure to marketing and how a family member influenced her, how she built business relationships and experience to overcome her lack of university degree in marketing, the power of testimonials for your business, getting customer/client feedback to inform your next steps, think from the perspective of your customers to create an amazing product or service experience, and much more

Let's get into the convo with Sophie and Brendan Hill our head of content at Metigy.

Brendan: Sophie. Welcome to the show.

Sophie: Thank you for having me. I'm excited to be here.

Brendan: It's going to be good. You've got a long and successful career in marketing. Well successful career in marketing with Xero and now at Deputy. But let's, let's wind back the clock. Can you tell me. Your first exposure to marketing.

Sophie: Yeah, of course. My first exposure to marketing was probably through my sister. She's around six years older than me. And as I was leaving school, I was making a decision on what I am doing and like any younger sister, I followed in her footsteps. So that's how I first started to hear and learn about marketing, but I didn't go straight into it.

It took me a few years to kind of get my foot in the door.

Brendan: What attracted you to marketing eventually?

Sophie: It was actually the leader that had hired me into the team. So I was working at AMIA, which is loyalty marketing. And I started out there in the HR department doing contract work.

And in the HR department, you get a lot of exposure for different areas of the business. And my leader there, Liezel Shore at the time. She was amazing. So I wanted to go and work in her team and she made that happen for me.

Brendan: So, I mean, that sort of goes to a point that I wanted to touch on further down, but we might as well get to it straight now, building strong business relationships.

So I checked out your LinkedIn profile before this, and it says, you know, you're a massive advocate of building these strong relationships. I mean, how do new people starting off in business begin to build these relationships and why are they so.

Sophie: Look, I'll, I'll speak from personal experience. You would have noticed on my LinkedIn that I actually have no degree in marketing.

And so for me, it was, if I wanted to get into marketing, I had to use my network and that is applicable in all areas of business, whether you're starting out a business and you need to build a community around you, or if you're trying to get a new job in the industry you're in, or a new, a new discipline that you want to enter into.

You've got to have those strong business relationships and it takes time. But the most important thing about building a strong business relationship is building the trust. And what that does is help you in the future for your success. But if you come across sticky situations with that, And within that relationship, then you've got that trust already built.

And it means that, you know, you can have some really challenging conversations without tarnishing that relationship as well.

Brendan: Are there any stories where the strength of your business relationships have really helped you?

Sophie: What's really important, especially from a marketing perspective and as you're starting to develop new products and do you want to take those products to market?

It's having really strong relationships with your customers. And so customers that you know, are advocates of your brand building case studies with those businesses. To get your message out there and show advocacy of, of what your vision is and where you want to take your product as well. And you can't build those case studies unless you've got those strong business relationships with your customers.

So I think for whether you're in a large organization, you're in a scaling business or you're in a small business, it's really important to have those strong business relationships with your customers because there's payback. If you can deliver for them.

Brendan: I think you've touched on testimonials.

So obviously in the early days you have a new product, those testimonials are so valuable. I know a lot of people that recommend even giving the product away for free at the beginning to get testimonials. I mean, what are some of the tips. You can give people listening at home on how to get these testimonials.

Sophie: You've just got to reach out and it may, you may be a really small really small business and only have 10 customers. But if you're talking to those customers everyday and you understand what their pain points are and the problems that you're trying to solve. And you can get them talking about your product.

You need to get those testimonials up on your website. You need to get them recommending to friends. It's so powerful. It's really, really important.

Brendan: So we've talked about product marketing, so it's an interesting definition for product marketing, depending on who you talk to. I always hear a different definition.

So what is your definition, Sophie, of product marketing?

Sophie: Absolutely. This is very topical because I'm about five weeks into my new job at Deputy and as part of my interview process with our CEO and co-founder of Deputy, Ashik. His biggest challenge to me in the interview was defining what product marketing is.

And we probably went around in circles, debating this for about 15 minutes. I thought I'm never going to get this job because I can't articulate what product marketing is, but I think you ask any marketer who works in product marketing, how to define product marketing. It's very challenging and it's different for every single business, depending on how established they are.

So I did take the challenge away after speaking to Ashik. And I think where I landed was product marketing is all around promoting the voice of the customer inside your company. So you're feeding the voice of the customer back into your sales channels, to your product teams who are developing the product and to your marketing teams as well, who are out there talking to your customers.

And then your job as a product marketer also is to promote the benefits of your business, to your target audience. So it's really, it is cyclical. Thank you. It is really cyclical in that you're taking the voice of the customer into the business and you're taking the business out to the customer.

Brendan: So gathering this customer feedback, obviously important to have that continuous loop of customer feedback and iterating on the product and something that a lot of businesses you know, either a don't have time to do or B they don't know where to start or how to do it. Is it as simple as picking up the phone to some of your prospects or current customers, how do you recommend going about getting this customer feedback and then using those learnings in the next iteration?

Sophie: Look, it is as easy as picking up the phone or we actually have just started a new initiative Deputy where it's called dating a Deputy. And for three hours yesterday, we paved the road, the pavements of down around Barangaroo where we knew we had a bunch of

Deputy customers, and we just walked into the cafes and shops and said, Hey, we know you're a Deputy customer.

Can you give us some feedback on how the product is and they love it. And we, you know, for five minutes of their time, we gave them a little swag bag of goodies with our Deputy branding on it. You know, people are really receptive to that. And especially if they're using your product and they love it as well.

Brendan: That's an amazing tactic.

Sophie: Then all we do is bring that back into the business. We've got a slack channel where we put all of our customer feedback and to be honest, as a business scales, it becomes more and more difficult to grab all the different feedback channels and feed them back into the business and make them really tangible so that you can actually work on what to do with that feedback. But that, I think that's the challenge that lots of businesses as they scale will come across, then it's something that we're tackling at Deputy.

Brendan: How often do you reach out to customers? Is this something that you guys do weekly?

Is it ad hoc? Isn't it something that you guys plan out in advance?

Sophie: Numerous ways that you can be talking to customers. So reaching out to them is one but also inbound. So you may have customers that are phoning into your sales team and they're trying to close deals and they'll be able to tell you, this is the reason that we couldn't close this deal, or this is the reason that this was successful.

And this is what the customer looks like. So you can start to profile your customers and you can start to understand your product market fit. The other thing is. You'll have support. You may have a support channel, whether that be through social or inbound calls. And that's another way of collecting customer insights about your product.

So there's numerous ways of doing that and it shouldn't be, I mean, I know it's difficult if you're, if you're a small business, but every day you'll be stuck. If you're talking to customers, whether it's inbound or outbound, you'll start to understand the themes of what you could be doing.

Brendan: So I guess you touch on an important point of customer experience and everything we've talked about is funneling through to that customer experience. Yep. Can you tell me why you are so passionate about customer experience and any stories that you can recall of, you know, how you, how you guys are going about improving the customer experience at Deputy?

Sophie: Yeah, absolutely. Customer experience for me is really listening to the customer and understanding the problems that they're facing every single day and relating what you can deliver back to those problems. So from a marketing perspective, for example, it's not about going out there and telling customers about your product and pushing your product. But it's really understanding your customers and saying to them, I have empathy with what you're

telling me and I understand your pain points, your problems, the regulation, the environment that you're working in.

This is how I want to work with you to solve those issues. And that is a very different conversation and very different experience for a customer. If, if you can show empathy rather than just telling them buy, buy, buy. Yeah. And we've seen a lot of success with that in my previous role at Xero.

And when we really turn those conversations around and we're starting to implement those changes into the way that we work at at Deputy.

Brendan: Amazing. One last thing that I will mention from your LinkedIn profile is that you to deliver world-class marketing campaigns. So how can people listening in a home?

I mean, they might be rolling out their first marketing campaign. They might've had a few campaigns that have failed. How can we give those guys some advice, maybe not. World-class maybe country class campaigns or city class campaigns, best in class. How can these guys get started today?

Sophie: Look, the, the main thing for me and I evangelize this to anyone who will listen to me is put yourself in the shoes of the customer.

So if you're building a new landing page, talk about your product in the way that your customers will understand if you're building out new digital content or search content. Think about the way that your customers are looking for the solution that your product solves. If you can think in the shoes of a customer, you're going to roll out world-class marketing campaigns, because it really is a point of differentiation and not many people can do that.

Well, it doesn't come naturally to a lot of people.

Brendan: I thought Xero did that really well with some of the early campaigns.

Sophie: Yeah, absolutely. One of the values at Xero is #human. And what that means is you just put yourself in the shoes of your customer and you empathize in a really human way in everything that you execute and what they did really well was every single internal Xero employee was able to go out and speak to customers and write blogs and you know, Everyone because they were passionate.

The reason people came to Xero was because they were, and still are passionate about solving problems for small businesses and accountants and bookkeepers. And so that passion resonated through the brand because it was the employees that were out there being the advocates for their customers. It's a really strong proposition.

Brendan: Sophie, we've talked about a lot of the campaigns that you ran at the Xero and now Deputy. So going down to a more personal level now what's in your current business black box. What problems are you trying to solve?

Sophie: So a couple of the big things that I'm working on with my team at the moment is really turning around the opportunity to be strategic in our marketing rather than reactive to either the industry or what our competitors are doing.

So really owning our own strategy. And that's scary because it's not the way that we've done marketing necessarily in the past. So it's a big change for our team. The second thing is we're trying to break into new segments as a business, right? So we're looking and we have started and are on the journey of cracking the mid market and enterprise segments in new geographies.

So in the US, in Australia, which is where the companies from, and also in the UK, but SMB is our bread and butter. So it's a very different strategy for us to be supporting these larger businesses. So there's quite a journey for us to go on there.

Brendan: So I know that you use a customer centric approach. So how do you go and talk to these enterprise customers? How do you get in front of them?.

Sophie: Look, we have as I said, we, we have started on the journey. So the people that we have onboard we've got a couple of big clients in the U S where regulation is really starting to come into play. And that regulation is really forcing innovation, which is awesome. But Literally had one of my team members go over and go around to each of these customers that about five or six of them across the states, sit down with them, understand their business end to end, not just how they use our product, understand where we fit into him and the reasons that they've taken out our product and what we can do better.

Brendan: Great approach. Yeah, it's effective. Yeah. So I want us to circle back. So you mentioned that you didn't have any formal education around marketing. So how did you learn marketing? I mean, we've got a lot of listeners who have to pair up marketing with all their other tasks, you know, so many things that you have to do in your own business.

What is the best way that you found?

Sophie: I just don't learn through books. So for me, it's about experience getting in there, making mistakes, failing fast, learning quickly and pivoting. And just being curious about if I did this or I changed this how would that impact the way that I'm doing my job at the moment? So it's, it's also going and speaking and aligning yourself to some really, really awesome marketers.

And for me, I was lucky enough, as I said, I've done a lot of networking in my time. And that's how I got into quite established organizations like the Commonwealth Bank and American Express. And that's probably where I grew up from a marketing perspective because they had a lot of processes in place, but you don't have to go through big organizations to learn marketing.

You just got to get your hands dirty and have fun doing it, just evolve.

Brendan: A lot of experimentation, that's some good advice. So in terms of marketing tools, are there any tools that you use everyday that make your life easier as a marketer?

Sophie: Yeah. Look, my team, I am so lucky that my team loves investigating new marketing tech stacks.

Some of the products that we're using on a day-to-day basis are Hubspot... Some of the tools that we're using on a day-to-day basis- Intercom. We're working closely obviously with agencies, such as Google. And then we have in previous jobs have worked with Salesforce and Marketo as well for distribution of campaigns.

Brendan: And what about tools under a hundred dollars? So do you have any?

Sophie: Ah, absolutely. The best investment I've made under a hundred dollars was the Strategizer value prop canvas book. I love that book because what it does is once you've gone and spoken to your customers, it really helps you distill down the jobs that your customers need to do.

The problems that you're trying to solve, or, you know, the benefits of no, sorry. Restate that. Okay. Absolutely. So, the best investment I have made under a hundred dollars from a marketing perspective was buying the Strategyzer value proposition, canvas book. And I have bought this for numerous teams that I've worked in now, but essentially when you, once you've run your customer research, it really helps you distill down.

The way that you can align your product and your brand to the customer pain points and allows you to create really compelling value propositions.

Brendan: Awesome. We'll put all of these resources in the show notes that you guys can find at Metigy.com/podcast. So Sophie just wanted to thank you so much for coming in today.

Dropping so much value to the audience. Got a couple of more abstract questions before we wrap up. So you're ready to launch. If you could give your 20 year old self one piece of advice, what would that be?

Sophie: Don't worry about money. Okay. It will come with the jobs, go for the jobs that you really want to learn in, and that will have the best mentor for you.

Brendan: So Sophie, thank you so much for coming in today and sharing all your knowledge from your marketing. Before we go. Is there anything else you'd like to say and how can people get in touch?

Sophie: Thank you so much for having me. It's been lots of fun and I hope it's, I hope it's helpful.

Brendan: It definitely has been.

We're going to input all of your resources in our show notes that you can find at Metigy.com/podcast. So once again, Sophie thanks for coming in. It's been fun.

Sophie: Wonderful. Thank you. And I can be contacted on LinkedIn. Just look for Sophie Pank.

Brendan: Awesome. Thanks again.

Daren: From Metigy, you've just listened to Forward Thinking. Again, I'm Daren and Metigy hopes we helped you find more insights and tips into your business. To find out more about Metigy and get a listener exclusive three month free trial, visit us at [Metigy.com/podcast](https://metigy.com/podcast). And while you're there, go and check out some more episodes.

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