

- David Abrams: [00:00](#) Hello, hello and welcome to episode number 13 of this SaaS Breakthrough show brought to you by Demio. The SaaS breakthrough show will be an inside look at what is working in marketing for SaaS companies today by the marketers who are in the trenches experimenting on a daily basis to grow their MRR and build amazing businesses. My Name is David Abrams and I'll be your host as we bring on Claire Berge, who is the director of marketing at Brandpoint. As the director of marketing Claire's primary focus is planning revenue, generating marketing programs and finding innovative ways to showcase the exceptional work of her team. Claire's bachelor's degree in an esoteric subject from Macalester College led her to a similarly esoteric master's degree from Johns Hopkins University, but at heart she is a big thinking pragmatist focused on results. Claire's part problem solver, party innovator and 100 percent Minnesota. Nice. Now Brandpoint is an end to end Content Marketing Agency that puts up 20 years of content marketing experience in your brand back pocket. They provide comprehensive content, solutions and create design and deliver custom high quality content in your voice for your audience, and they also have the Brandpoint hub, which is specifically what we talk about today on this call. Now, Claire will talk about how she started as the first marketer in the team with the agency already running for a couple of years, but the SaaS platform was just starting so they had no active users yet and again in episode 13 here, we talked about how they discovered the brand position, the customer profile, and then looking to find a segment that would work for growth. How do we find a segment for both the agency and the SaaS platform? We discussed her winning strategy with networking and strategic partnerships that have been their number one source or number one winner for growth.
- David Abrams: [01:58](#) We talked about specific marketing experiments that failed for them and why not all channels are alike, why one win in one channel may not mean a win in another similar channel. And we also talked about what she believes is changing with brand and how brand works and the wins for content marketers. You guys are absolutely going to love this episode and what Claire talks about. We hope you enjoy everything. Please don't forget to rate us and leave comments and questions. Every single one of your ratings, every single one of your comments are super appreciative. Help us to get this podcast out to more marketers like yourself. We truly appreciate you taking the time to listen. If you're not a part of our Facebook group, join us in the Facebook SaaS breakthrough community group. It's a free group to join all about SaaS Marketing and education. Can't wait to see you guys inside that group. Let's go ahead. Let's start this podcast.
- Narrator: [02:57](#) This is the SaaS Breakthrough podcast, uncovering what's working today in SaaS marketing by the actual SaaS marketers who are building companies day in and day out. Let's get started.
- David Abrams: [03:12](#) Hey Claire. Thanks so much for joining me today. How are you doing?

Claire Berge: [03:15](#) I'm great. How are you?

David Abrams: [03:17](#) I'm doing wonderful. Doing wonderful. A Wonderful day out here in Florida, but I'm really appreciate you taking some time to meet with me. I want to just jump right into these conversations. We always have so much to talk about. And you guys are a really interesting company. So I kind of want to start off with some, you know, brief overview of what you guys are doing over at brand points and what you're doing in the marketplace.

Claire Berge: [03:41](#) So Brandpoint is a content marketing agency located in Minneapolis, Minnesota, with expertise in content creation and content strategy and content distribution. And so we also have a content marketing platform through which we deliver all of those services that I just mentioned. But it's also available independently of any of our services

David Abrams: [04:02](#) Explain to me a little bit about what that platform does.

Claire Berge: [04:03](#) Yeah. Yeah. So Brandpoint hub is our content marketing platform, secure cloud based content marketing platform, that teams use to collaborate with, with us as their, as their content provider and also independently with their own teams, but really streamlined content production is one place to go so you can avoid using, Word documents and revision tracking so you can create and edit and publish your content all from one location in.

David Abrams: [04:35](#) That's awesome. That sounds super valuable, especially for agencies. When did you, when did you join the team? What was the software looking like at that time when you were joining? Maybe also give me a brief overview of the company size or customer size maybe at that point.

Claire Berge: [04:50](#) So I joined Brandpoint in 2015 and we had an existing customer base. We've been an agency since 1996, but really we're just dipping our toes in the water at that point. So, Brandpoint hub had been launched but we had really no active users at that point in 2015.

David Abrams: [05:11](#) OK, Gotcha. And when you were coming in, were you coming in as the director of marketing at that point for brand point hub? We're looking more for just, uh, the agency side of things. What did that look like?

Claire Berge: [05:21](#) Yeah. So I was really, a marketing team of one. I'm tasked with doing it all. So I came in as the marketing manager, and I at that point didn't have a team really to work with. So I had, the agency side of the business, the product managers and creative services team members there and then Brandpoint hub had a product manager and of course the Dev team that I worked directly with. So yeah, I was a little bit spread a little thin if you, might say.

- David Abrams: [05:58](#) And there's just so much to learn about the platform and you guys are starting to get traction. What does that look like for you as far as like, you know, not overwhelming yourself with a ton of different marketing things. What, what was the first initiative you're going after? How did you even discover that was the right one to go after?
- Claire Berge: [06:16](#) So I think I first started as, you know, as a marketer and content creator myself, I saw this tool as super useful. It was really invaluable, you know, to, to do what I was tasked to do, but I think we had a long way in gotten to understand what that tool could do to our clients. And we had to do a lot of branding exercises to get to a place where we were able to talk about the tool in the language that our, that our clients and perspective clients were using. It would make sense. So I really dug deep into our target market research and really understanding who our agency clients were, but also who were, um, perspective clients for the hub and how, um, they, they crossed over from being a marketing team of one I wanted to, you know, make the most impact with, with as little resources as I had. So I tried to kind of really find the sweet spot of who I'm the perfect hub user was and then who the perfect agency client was.
- David Abrams: [07:23](#) Who was that? That sounds like a really interesting question.
- Claire Berge: [07:28](#) Um, it's ever changing, but we are located in Minneapolis as I mentioned, and we have a wealth of businesses here like 3M and Target. So obviously we have a lot of agency clients here, so that was really, that really emerged as um, someone who could use both of our client or our content marketing services as well as the content marketing platform to manage their own client work.
- David Abrams: [07:57](#) Gotcha. So almost white labeling your services and then putting it into the system.
- Claire Berge: [08:01](#) Absolutely.
- David Abrams: [08:02](#) Awesome. That's fantastic. So you kind of are starting to build up this customer's persona. You're find out what's on both a place, they're a little bit what's in the hub and what's in the agency as sounds like a great target market. So now what do you do? What's the first things you do in marketing? What's your, your first initiative to go after them or to market to them?
- Claire Berge: [08:20](#) We have, as I mentioned, to do a lot of brand research. I think especially as I'm having two pretty disparate brands as an agency and a SaaS platform, we had to figure out how to, how to unite those. And create a coherent website experience and brand value statement. So that was really the first project we had to tackle and how to figure out how to carry that brand into the platform itself in the UX there. As I mentioned, that

was our first foray into, into the SaaS product. So, we had a lot of there to kind of, work on the UX within the platform and then how we talked about it on our website and in conjunction with our services.

- David Abrams: [09:05](#) Gotcha. That's the toughest part is the research phase and it's creating the messaging. And so what does traffic and um, you know, the inbound marketing look like now that, OK, once you have that mission statement, once you have that target market, where are you, where do you go next? And I keep asking questions. So I think this is such a pivotal moment where a lot of people are just starting or they're coming into a company, right? And they're trying to figure out like, where do I go and this, these are critical pieces.
- Claire Berge: [09:34](#) Well, obviously we needed to fill the pipeline pretty quickly and so the best way to do that from my perspective was to turn to ad-words to generate the free trials to get our customer support team. I'm really talking to people learning more about what their pain points are so that we could not only get people in our pipeline, but also get people using the tool and figuring out what needs to happen next in terms of product development perspective. We're in a really competitive space. I'm in content marketing general and then with a content marketing platform, there's a lot, there was a lot of um, established bigger players in that space. So we had to find a way to talk about ourselves and to generate free trials efficiently, um, that made sense for us as a business but also didn't cost an arm and a leg on ad words.
- David Abrams: [10:28](#) What was that like?
- Claire Berge: [10:30](#) There's a lot of learning going on there at this point. I did have an additional team member which was lifesaving really. And what we did is to make our spend more efficient. We looked at creating micro tools this time related keywords that were less expensive, but because our platform Brandpoint hub has an editorial calendar and that's really, that's what we were learning to be one of the most beneficial tools within, within Brandpoint hub. We saw an opportunity to create a lead, a lead gen piece, like an editorial calendar spreadsheet that people could give us their email and download. And then we would market to them like you don't want an editorial calendar on a spreadsheet, you need Brandpoint hub within a marketing automation campaign.
- David Abrams: [11:23](#) That is great as a huge, huge win it sounds like, so really would it go back to just like learning from them as you were getting those leads in, like looking at what they were using in the software, what they liked most about the software or how did you find that? That one piece of the software was kind of like a key lead gen piece. I think that was, that was great way to kind of cut through the clutter there and figure out like where the interest point is for your target market.

- Claire Berge: [11:47](#) Um, yeah. So I often use myself as a proxy for our clients and someone I'm creating content managing a team, working with internal stakeholders. So I really tried to think about what I as a marketer found the most valuable and that continued to be that editorial calendar and to be able to um, route changes to my stakeholders and not have to find a word document, a in my inbox that was also the most valuable. And then I also had the opportunity to work with a lot of the local professional organizations here in the twin cities and really understand what their pain points were and use a these marketers from all across the twin cities as proxies for our clients. Um, and again, I heard that editorial calendar or something that people just couldn't figure out how to manage in a word document or a spreadsheet and how changes consistently happened and then they will lose track of their most recent editorial calendar. So that's really how I figured it out. We needed to to emphasize this, this benefit within Brandpoint hub and take advantage of it.
- David Abrams: [12:57](#) Oh, I love that. So much research education and just learning and really trying to be a student of the prospects. And so moving from ad words, as you guys got that going and you started seeing some great results from the lead Gen campaign, do you go through any other marketing experiments at that point? Were you, were you starting to go into other channels or did you guys just really want to just scale up and keep your focus in one and if you were going into others, were there any fun experiments or anything that you saw working? Well,
- Claire Berge: [13:25](#) Yeah, we, we learned a lot as I mentioned with our Adwords campaign and really tried to just keep that, keep that campaign running and filling the pipeline while we dabbled in other channels. And I mentioned working with professional organizations here in the twin cities and I think that was really the game changer for us. We are in a really great community here in the twin cities with access to agencies of all kinds and large corporations. What I, what I found was that a lot of these people are volunteers are on the board of organizations like the American Marketing Association or the Minnesota Interactive Marketing Association. So I would approach them and ask for an in kind sponsorship so they would have access to use the tool. I'm immersed in response. I would get feedback about what they liked about the tool, what they did and what didn't make sense. Um, and really just tried to create those brand advocates that would go forth and talk about the tool with their own companies and their own agencies and potentially, um, get more users that way while getting that market research.
- David Abrams: [14:32](#) That was awesome idea. So really more a brand awareness, getting it out there into your network, where you sitting up strategic partnerships with them or you were really just looking for a referral basis. And then my second question that would be how do you track that as a marketing channel and, um, like the ROI of doing those things.

- Claire Berge: [14:51](#) Yeah, we would set up, really strategic partnerships that would provide us not only access to their volunteer base and their board members, um, but we would also, uh, be able to present at an event or um, provide information in a sponsored blog posts all in exchange for just giving them access to the tools. So it was a really cost-efficient way for us to um, to get out there to get our name out there and to get, um, you know, to tap into that network effect in a cost effective way. So really the ROI is difficult to track. But um, to me it was, it was free free marketing for us because we already had the dual, we're already investing in it and so it was just a no brainer for me to give these people access so that they would become brand advocates and, and, and talk about Brandpoint how could also tell us what we need to do better for product and marketing perspective.
- David Abrams: [15:52](#) No, I love that. And were you mostly going to events doing this in like in-person meeting with them, talking with them, or are you doing some type of cold email reach out campaign? Like how are you actually attracting these people to start that conversation is such a vital part to, you know, these, these relationships are so critical to, to growth and stuff like that. Sometimes people don't know how to get in the door.
- Claire Berge: [16:11](#) Yeah. Yeah. No, I went to the events. I made sure that my, you know, my face looked familiar. I, I did, you know, networking at the events and um, I look for volunteer opportunities when I could just did anything to really become familiar with the organization. Made sure I was present at the events and major I would was understanding how I bet that could provide the best value to the volunteers. And I heard again and again that um, board members had trouble with retention and keeping volunteers on and if they had a volunteer, um, communications person one month, that person would leave the next and they would have no idea where the status of, of that marketing material wise or that blog post. And so, really it was, it made sense for both organizations to partner and it was an association so they really didn't have a large budget for this. So, we both leveraged what made sense in terms of our individual assets to, to provide a mutual beneficial partnership there.
- David Abrams: [17:17](#) I love that. And some of the key things I'm hearing is that you went into it to see how you could add value to them, volunteer with them, work with them. And then when, uh, those pain points came up. That was like the prime opportunity to talk about Brandpoint.
- Claire Berge: [17:29](#) Yeah, absolutely. I found myself kind of, frequently in the right place at the right time, but also it was such a huge pain point for them that it honestly came up pretty organically that that was an issue they kept. They kept encountering again and again and here I was with this, with this platform that solved a lot of their issues.
- David Abrams: [17:49](#) That's awesome. Any advice you would give to people who are looking to do this type of outreach? Especially at events and stuff like that? Good

questions that you've asked or like how you can approach conversations in a strong way. I think networking is a huge win, but a lot of people I think are sometimes a little bit intimidated by it.

- Claire Berge: [18:05](#) Yeah, absolutely. I think you hit the nail on the head when it was all about them, what, what issues they were experiencing, how they would benefit from using a tool like this. Because so often I think in the SaaS space people just want to talk about all the features and the cool add ons and things that their tool does or their platform, and kind of lose sight of the user and that is what they wanted to hear, is that what, you know, what can I do to help you, what's going on with your, with your membership base or you know, what pain points are you experiencing on a, on a regular basis and what can I do to solve it.
- David Abrams: [18:44](#) Yeah, that's fantastic advice. That's really helpful. And so those are some really amazing marketing experiments that clearly have worked well for you guys. What about some that you guys tried that, that didn't go the way you expected? Or were there any that you said, um, I didn't expect that to fail or something like that.
- Claire Berge: [19:00](#) I think we, we saw some initial success with Adwords and so we were looking for places to scale and leverage additional opportunity than in the paid space. So we tried Facebook and LinkedIn and that did not work for us and we tried the display network and that was, that didn't work for us. So was important I think to, to try those platforms. It's just important to understand that just because it works in one network doesn't mean it's going to work on every, on every channel and you have to do a lot of research for each individual channel to figure out what works. And with a small team like I have, it just wasn't worth the investment there.
- David Abrams: [19:46](#) Totally. And what's your team size?
- Claire Berge: [19:46](#) Four.
- David Abrams: [19:50](#) Oh that's great. That's really helpful for you. And what about right now, what are you guys doing today for [inaudible]? Like what are you bringing to the table as far as a channel? So was the same channels you were doing before?
- Claire Berge: [20:00](#) Yes, same channels were also really um, leveraging our, our service client base. Um, we are in the fortunate position to be able to cross market across our different audiences are. And then we've done a lot of work from an organic perspective on our website with our, with the technical SEO side, but also figuring out, I mean, we are a content marketing agency, so what can we do, um, with content and design to bring people in organically. And so we've been seeing a lot of, a lot of success in that realm just by updating our content, keeping that fresh and then making



sure, any imagery we use, to kind of help us depict what, what our Brandpoint hub tool does and has that clean, concise a UX focused design that Google really liked a lot of work from a visual perspective on our, on our overview page, talking about Brandpoint hub and are seeing pretty significant growth and organic just from, from the visual elements that we've updated recently.

- David Abrams: [21:08](#) How are you testing that? You're just doing split test when the website was updated? The lead generation was based on the images that change?
- Claire Berge: [21:20](#) We were relying a little too heavily on screenshots. Just because we didn't have the bandwidth from a design perspective. So that I think really, really hindered us, um, from an organic perspective, and obviously as, as marketers know, there's something that's always changed with the platform, so it became increasingly difficult to keep up with those pages so they, they quickly became out of date, so then we turned to a more clean, concise, a more designed graphic representation of the tool, that made a lot more sense to people coming to the site and are seeing a lot of growth there.
- David Abrams: [21:59](#) Gotcha. And looking back since 2015, since you joined, what would you say has by far been your biggest way or maybe something you're most proud of that you've done?
- Claire Berge: [22:08](#) I think going back to those strategic partnerships with some of these professional development organizations has just been a huge win for us. They continue to be advocates for us. We continue to be, um, used, um, by their or their volunteer and board teams, um, and that's just something that's going to continue to grow and develop as we figure out additional ways to help support them. So I think that's, that's, that was a huge win for us as a, as a company.
- David Abrams: [22:35](#) I love it and that's something we're really focused on right now too. I think it's a, a long-term, amazing way to grow together. And so where'd you guys go to since 2015? Where have you gone in, in terms of maybe customer size as you joined and there was really no one knows no users in yet.
- Claire Berge: [22:52](#) Well starting from zero, we have a client base of uh, we have about 600 users, active users now. We have been growing leaps and bounds in this space and are really excited about what else we can do from just a straight up brand point hub user and then what else we can do with a tool to continue to support our content marketing service clients.
- David Abrams: [23:19](#) That's fantastic. That's awesome. And where do you see looking forward here in 2018 and we're already past Q1, which is crazy. Where do you see



you guys looking to maybe improve or change some of the focus was how marketing is changing?

- Claire Berge: [23:33](#) I think we continue to, kind of hone our competitive positioning with all of the content marketing tools in, in the industry, what makes Brandpoint hub and Brandpoint different and I think that's something that's continuing to evolve as the other tools evolve, but that's something we're looking at really focusing on, um, from a brand perspective and then from, you know, our messaging and positioning as well,
- David Abrams: [24:03](#) Always constantly changing. And I totally, I love that. I love that focus on finding kind of a unique position there. So let's move on to the lightning round questions. This is just basically where I go through some quick questions. You can just answer a first answer that you think about. So, just a powerful way to get some good responses. You ready to go?
- Claire Berge: [24:20](#) Yup. I'm ready.
- David Abrams: [24:21](#) Awesome. Let's do it. What advice would you give for early stage SaaS companies starting marketing today?
- Claire Berge: [24:30](#) Make sure the product is easy to buy, the communication model and everything focuses on how the brand fits in with the user's life.
- David Abrams: [24:38](#) I love that. What about a marketing skill that you think is vital for teams to improve and build on today?
- Claire Berge: [24:46](#) I may be biased, but I think writing and design, especially with SaaS tools, you need all the, all the resources you can get to really make your product come alive and had a personality.
- David Abrams: [24:57](#) Totally. I think content is a huge thing, right? It's like the first thing you see when you come to a site is your content, your brand, your, your wording and stuff like that. So totally a critical, their best resources you'd recommend for marketing. Maybe an educational resource, something like that.
- Claire Berge: [25:11](#) Yeah. I'm, I'm currently reading a how brands grow, What marketers don't know by Byron Sharp and it's, it's, yeah, it's blowing my mind. So highly recommend
- David Abrams: [25:23](#) Anything in particular that you're taking from it?
- Claire Berge: [25:26](#) He suggests that branding is actually very simple, which I think a lot of people like to over-complicate it. I mean marketers especially, and just breaks it down into what your brand's distinct assets are. Um, including sensory and semantic cues on packaging and logo and design that that's

all really important. And that's what you should be focusing on and just making it as simple as possible.

- David Abrams: [25:51](#) What about a favorite marketing tool you can't live without?
- Claire Berge: [25:51](#) Search console.
- David Abrams: [25:57](#) It's a good one. Especially for SEO. If you're doing something like that with content marketing, it's a brand business or team that you admire today?
- Claire Berge: [26:07](#) Yeah. I'm really liking what Bumble is doing, um, with their marketing and product development and it's really cool.
- David Abrams: [26:15](#) I honestly have not even looked at that. I have to check that out. That sounds really interesting.
- Claire Berge: [26:20](#) Yeah. I think um, they have a really cool CEO and everything from, you know, the colors in the, in the app to the actual functionality. It's just really beautiful. And their marketing is, is really interesting and how they're leveraging brand advocates. Um, yeah. I would highly recommend checking what are, what they're doing.
- David Abrams: [26:41](#) That's awesome. Definitely will do. You guys should do the same. I just really want to thank you so much for your time, Claire. It's been incredible listening to you, seeing how you grown both the company and the SaaS as you know, the sole marketer to a team leader here. Doing all these different experiments, so, uh, you shared a wealth of knowledge. So I just want to thank you and appreciate your time. Well, that wraps up this week's episode. Claire did a wonderful job of really talking about some of the major wins that they found. I love her strategy for networking and strategic partnerships is one of the key things that Demio, here at Demio here we're going to be looking at in 2018. I think it's a vital thing that every SaaS marketing team can learn from so big, you know, big props to Claire for her, her growth with the team that she's built. And for coming on the podcast today and educating all of us, if you want to learn more about the Brandpoint hub and in the content marketing platform that they built, you guys can go to [hub.brandpoint.com/start](http://hub.brandpoint.com/start). And we'll have this on our show notes on the website. Again, you can find every single episode of the SaaS breakthrough show on Demio going to [Demio.com/blog](http://Demio.com/blog) We'll have every episode listed there with the details of each podcast guest and some great information about them. Go ahead and listen to other episodes if you haven't given us a rating. Really appreciate it and thanks so much for listening today. Yeah.