David Abrams:	00:00	Hello, hello and welcome to episode number 35 of the 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 today as we bring on Kira Mondrus, who is the chief marketing officer at QASymphony. Now Kira is a multi award winning recognized industry. thought leader. She joined the QASymphony team in the fall of 2017 as CMO. She leverages broad based global marketing leadership experience and deep knowledge of operations and best practices to craft product marketing and brand awareness strategies that drive global demand, exceed revenue targets, and deliver an exceptional customer experience. Prior to joining QASymphony, Kira was director of global marketing at Dell SecureWorks, a fast growing security solutions provider and the first technology IPO of 2016. Kira's nearly 20-year B2B marketing track record of success includes companies ranging from startups to multi-billion dollar enterprises, and we get to interview her on the strategies that are working at QASymphony today. In fact, we talk about the buyer centric demand generation machine that she was able to set up, how multitouch point marketing qualification is the most essential part for them to go through that process, how networking can be a powerful middle of the funnel relationship builder and something that they use in a way I've never heard before, I think it was really brilliant, why webinars are the most powerful content mechanism for marketing and why they're so powerful in that middle of the funnel area. We hope you enjoyed today's episode. We have a ton to talk about, so let's go ahead and let's jump on with Kira.
Narrator:	02:08	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:	02:25	Hi Kira. Thanks so much for joining me today,jumping on the SaaS breakthrough podcast with us. Truly excited for this interview today. Can't wait to speak with you. I would love to learn a little bit more about QASymphony, who the customers are there and what you guys are doing uniquely in the marketplace.
Kira Mondrus:	02:43	So at QASymphony we help our customers develop quality software faster with our testing platform. We work with companies of all sizes, but our technologies and enterprise grade suite, so we do a lot of business with larger technology companies, financial services companies, banks, insurance and so forth, and we provide actually now we have joined forces with Tricentis and we will have a continuous testing platform that is really going to be the most modern testing platform on the market.
David Abrams:	03:27	That is fantastic. What is the most modern testing platform on the market look like?

Kira Mondrus: 03:32 Well, it's definitely going to be a very competitive answer to some of the incumbents out there that have really been dominating the space and I think what makes us unique is that on the one side we are integrated into Jira, so we really work closely in enabling agile teams to be able to develop software quicker, we also have a lot of work that we're doing with DevOps as well as testing automation for a big application investment such as SAP or Oracle. So it really is a vast, vast suite of testing tools, so a full end to end platform.

David Abrams: 04:17 That is amazing. That's fantastic. Now first of all, I want to ask when did you actually join the team and what are the growth numbers look at that time because I want to know about some of the possible struggles or keys to actually getting the product there. So I'll start with this. When did you join the team and what are the growth numbers look like?

Kira Mondrus: 04:34 So I've been with the company for just under a year. It'll be a year in October. In 2017 we actually had you know, going into 18, we had over 100 percent year over year growth this past year we actually were named for the second year in a row on the INC 5,000 fastest growing companies list. I think we're the only software company to make it two years in a row and we're the fastest growing Atlanta based tech company. So that's very exciting. I was brought in at a time that the company was already in hyper growth mode, but we also had to go through a massive transformation in the way that we got here and the way that, you know, we grew so fast was by bringing on a lot of smaller size companies, but in reality, given just the product that we deliver, the solution that we deliver and the space that we play in, we need to focus on large enterprises. And so in the last year I've been focusing on building out a demand infrastructure and demand program that really targets selling into the upper segments rather than more transactional SMB.

David Abrams: 05:59 Yeah. That's really interesting. So you guys actually used almost M&As as an early growth strategy to attract SMBs with up and coming technology. And then you felt like you didn't have the demand gen engine in place to go to the higher end market and was that higher end market decision from market feedback, you just felt like the bigger companies that you wanted to go to, you couldn't serve correctly?

Kira Mondrus: 06:25 You mean from a product perspective?

David Abrams: 06:28 Yeah, from a product or from a marketing perspective?

Kira Mondrus: 06:31 Well, from a, from a product perspective, we really do have an enterprise grade solution. So while I'm certainly many smaller and midsize businesses benefit from what we do, you know, for our growth targets and to grow at the rate that we wanted to, it just made sense to focus on the large enterprise from a marketing perspective, we really had to change our approach up about a year ago we really targeted the testing community and you know, we're positioned as the champion of testers and over the last year we've really been revamping all of that messaging and positioning because

obviously in large enterprise we have a varying degrees of seniority within the structure that we have to talk to. It's not just testers, it's also their directors. It's(inaudible) going all the way up to CEOs because obviously digital transformation and being able to meet the business objectives associated with this digital transformation require, you know, really timely development of quality software and deliverables for, for businesses to be able to do what they need to do. And so we identified a number of new personas that we had to target. So that meant new messaging and new content and it also meant opening up our, you know, tactic repository if you will, and really looking at all of our different marketing activities and how we go to market to, to target these large enterprises.

David Abrams: 08:01   That's super interesting. I was actually going to ask you, coming in with that goal of creating that demand gen engine, like what are those initial steps, but it sounds like you're coming in and you're doing an audit of the actual marketing processes that are in place, how you're talking to them, who the customer avatar is, and then mapping out new ones. Is that pretty much the, the initial steps?

Kira Mondrus: 08:20   Yeah. We actually partnered with a local demand gen firm (inaudible) and they really focus on building out perpetual demand engines for companies and so we did this together with them, but it all started out with a lot of interviews of our prospects and companies to understand who are the key personas involved in the decision, you know, who are the influencers, what are their pain points, what does that buyer journey look like, what are the questions that they look to have addressed at every phase of that journey. And then that led to, you know, a lot of content that needed to be created in order to be able to provide answers to those questions. We also completely revamped our lead management process and infrastructure to support this demand transformation that we were going through you know, but a year ago, even though we did have some scoring in place, pretty much passing everything over into the SDR BDR role. So we had less than a 10 percent conversion from lead to opportunity and now we're at over 50 percent, you know, a lot more steps and checks and balances in and how we nurture, you know, using progressive profiling to get a lot of different questions answered, so that way when that lead comes over, there's a lot of information attached to it. We've created some friction so that way we get rid of the tire kicker's right off the bat, and that leads to a better quality lead. And then by way of tactics that we've been selecting and trying to, you know, make sure that we're going after the right person at the right time.

David Abrams: 10:11   That makes a ton of sense. So you said you looked at that entire journey and you said there was a lot of content to be made. A lot of times I hear the word content, I think of written content on a blog or something like that. What does that entail for you guys? Looking at the challenge of how do we move them through this very long organic funnel, this long journey, and move the right customers to the end? Are you guys utilizing different mediums and different channels at different times, that got a webinar here, a video here,

you know, one on one call here. What does that actually look like when you say content pieces?

Kira Mondrus: 10:49 That is a great question because I often when I talk about my program, I always have to caveat that. When I say content, I don't mean just written content, you know, it could be a white paper, it could be an infographic, it could be a blog, it could be, you know, a third party article or analysts report that somebody publishes on us. It could absolutely be a webcast or webinar or video. But very often it is the content that we deliver at face to face events and the messaging that we deliver at those events.

David Abrams: 11:20 So you guys are actually utilizing live events as part of that customer journey to move them from lead to customer?

Kira Mondrus: 11:28 Because obviously selling to large enterprises and the higher up in the organization you go, you know, the chances that a VP of IT or CIO or you know is sitting there Googling us and finding our white papers are kind of slim to none I would say, but being able to get them to a higher end networking event and making sure that we're delivering the right message to them at the right time, you know that that's, that's absolutely key. And because we gather a lot of data insights by way of interactions with different people in the different accounts, we have a pretty good sense of where they are in their buyer journey. So that way when we invite them to an event, it's not just about the geography and it's not just about the title, but it's also about making sure that we're getting the right message in front of them.

David Abrams: 12:17 Wow, that's incredible. So are you guys looking at it as almost like an account based marketing? So ABM marketer where you're like, these are the 10, 20 companies that we really want to get, we need to invite the unique people from these companies, the gatekeepers to a networking event. We should go to this city, set this mastermind or networking event. Like what is the actual process? Like it was so interesting to me that you guys are using these networking events as gate opening devices, which is fantastic. It's so smart.

Kira Mondrus: 12:45 So we, we absolutely layer in Account Based Marketing for the top tier accounts. I would say that we kind of have two motions in play. There's the broader digital marketing approach where we say, okay, we only want companies of this size or greater and that's where we're going to focus and we're going to make sure that content is relevant to them and this is where we're going to drive our leads and so forth. And then from a field marketing perspective, we then come up with a finite set of accounts and that's where we partner really closely with sales as well as with the BDR team. And, we layer in outbound calling and direct mail and events and those types of tactics so then we can really get much more laser focused on, on, on the key accounts and put in different types of tactics then a lot of the inbound and digital that we're doing on a, on a broader scale.

David Abrams: 13:46 That makes a ton of sense. And when you look at something like those events, how are you measuring, I guess you see this over time, but how are you measuring ROI? Are there KPIs, quotas that you guys are trying to hit directly from those events?

Kira Mondrus: 14:00 Well, so I look at multitouch attribution. So there's very little that I say, okay, I'm expecting this much revenue from one event because typically by, by that point they would have done numerous things. We have very specific KPIs that we, that we focus on monthly from the, you know, quantity of top of funnel, how many of those need to convert to opportunities. So, you know, quantity of opportunities, the conversion rate, we also want to make sure that when they convert that the size is within line of, of what it is that we want to see. And then, ultimately when I go back and look at which programs are which tactics work or not, we're able to identify which marketing touched each of those opportunities and, and figure out what was the ROI for that investment. And then because we do have quite a bit of coding that we've put on all of our content, we can also see what the contents' role in that pipeline or revenue contribution was to understand what, you know, what do we need to invest more in and what should we do less of.

David Abrams: 15:17 That makes a lot of sense. I'm a little confused I guess when you're using multitouch marketing is there and you're looking through analytics, are you just looking for like qualitative data to say, hey, these three points got us a customer in three months that had account size of x amount and then in a different account we had these other three touch points. Like where are you finding like the circular similarities that can link them together?

Kira Mondrus: 15:44 Unfortunately, neither Salesforce nor (inaudible) which is our automation system on their own, can deliver any of this reporting. What our partnership with, with the newest delivers for us is that they help us by taking the data from both of those systems and then running some algorithms on those within Tablo and then being able to show us multitouch attribution. So essentially, we track every single touchpoint or interaction. The caveat for that is that that individual, that, that was interacting does need to be attached to the opportunity in Salesforce as a contact role. So we're (inaudible) conservative, I'm not looking at it as an (inaudible) APM perspective and saying, Oh yeah, I'm working those companies, we've got revenue from those companies there for those activities were good. We really are looking very specifically at individuals on the opportunity and the various touch points. So if, let's say we closed a million dollar deal and there were three different activities that they interacted with, we would attribute, you know, a third of that deal to each of those activities.

David Abrams: 16:58 That makes a ton of sense. Yeah, I can totally understand that. And when you look back and you see these different channels and experiments and the marketing initiatives that you took to get them through that multitouch point, have you seen anything that stood out to you? Obviously I think the

networking events is fantastic. Super Smart. Any other digital based channels that you've seen really standing out working well right now?

Kira Mondrus: 17:22 I think it depends on what your objective is, right? There are certain tactics that are great for top of funnel because you do need to constantly get those net new names in and then there's others that are better for nurturing and pushing individuals through to opportunity conversion. So I'm a huge, huge fan of webinars and webinars really contribute really well to getting those leads further down the funnel, but that could never be the only tactic that I employ because I'd never get net new names into my funnel to keep nurturing. So I think it's important to have a mix and you'd have to measure the effectiveness of that makes based on what the objective is. So we do a lot of top of funnel thought leadership, you know, third party webinars, contents indication, trade shows to get names in. Then we nurture them with email marketing. We also have a personalization engine on our website where we use the web to nurture people forward once we know who they are and what stage of the buyer journey they're in, we can serve up content to get them to that next level. So there's a lot of nurture that takes place. And then we also at that point use maybe more topical webinars or events that we invite them to, to keep moving them along. And it's obvious that when I look at ROI of my, you know, hosted webinars or my hosted events, whether it's networking or lunch or whatever, the ROI is fantastic on those, but that's because they've already come in and they'd been nurtured, right? And they're ready to move on.

David Abrams: 18:59 That's your middle of the funnel Webinar. So those middle of the funnel things that are the critical pieces. What are some examples of topical based Webinars that you've seen work really well? I think this is, a lot of people think of webinars either as a top of funnel, lead generation type of Webinar or oftentimes bottom of the funnel webinars where they're just using them for upsells the higher ticket items. What's a good middle of the funnel Webinar?

Kira Mondrus: 19:24 We actually recently started doing some work with Brighttalk and we have a channel in the feedback that we had from them is that our content is performing significantly better than a lot of our competition. And they believe that the reason for that is that we are giving a lot of really practical how to advice. So it's not so much about educating on, on, on the problem and maybe high level ways that you can solve it. There we do a lot of like tips and tricks and really practical information, you know, if you want to migrate from this incumbent testing platform, what are the key steps into considerations and how should you go go about doing that to be successful.

David Abrams: 20:14 Are you talking to that middle of the funnel group to try to figure out what those topics should be? Or are you just looking from the feedback from the community?

Kira Mondrus:	20:21	We definitely want to make sure that the voice of the customer is heard and understood. So there's a lot of interaction that we have with our prospects and customers to be able to learn, what is needed right now. We're also working on an intra pipeline nurture program and the way that we're creating content for that is by spending a lot of time with our sales team to understand what are the key objections that they typically have to overcome. So we're proactively creating content and in answers to those questions that they often get so that we can help nurture them along and help speed up the sales cycle.
David Abrams:	21:02	I love that. I think during the middle of the funnel webinars that basically answer objections. It's just a key thing because you can just in real time answer those objections before even moving them forward to a sales call or anything like that, a demo or something like that. But that's, that's amazing. And looking back, I guess almost a year now again, congratulations. What do you think the biggest win has been in QASymphony since the start? Looking back to the whole marketing process?
Kira Mondrus:	21:28	Well, I think we've had a number of great accomplishments over the last year. You know, first we, we doubled the size of our team, so, you know, we're still pretty lean and mean, but we are definitely twice as big as we were when I first started. So having a team full of a plus players has been terrific, for the company. We have a new lead management process in place that everyone follows as well as this perpetual engine running. I think ultimately the outcomes have been really what's important. So we are delivering for the most part on the targets that we've set. I think there's still ramp and we can always do better, but I think the biggest one has been that we really do have very granular visibility into results at all level and are able to pivot really quickly to optimize and, so if we see something is not working, we can hone in on exactly what their problem is and go and fix it really quickly. So whether it's something not working in process or in the message or in the tactic, we don't have to like guess and try to figure out what that is. The data tells us.
David Abrams:	22:42	Does that mean you guys have data meetings daily, is that weekly and are you trying to set data goals before doing any initiatives, so you know exactly a positive negative result.
Kira Mondrus:	22:55	Does that mean we do meet weekly? I look at data daily, but we do meet weekly. We have a monthly optimization sessions and read out of our results to the broader executive team. We have very in depth quarterly optimization sessions, so we're constantly tweaking and improving, but looking at data every week we have to report to our, our board. So we're, we're looking at data constantly.
David Abrams:	23:25	That's fantastic. That's exactly what I was asking. You know, I just want to, you know, it's a big question that we always look at is what are the, what are the goals that we're trying to hit? What are the KPIs and numbers for each initiative experiment? How often should we be looking at those numbers and

when do you make the call that something's lower or you know, a positive sign of an experiment. So I guess my question to you would be like how long are you typically giving an initiative or experiment? Maybe initially it starts slow and then it gets, you know, it ramps up. When do you know something's got to change?

Kira Mondrus: 23:55 Good question. I don't know that I, that I know the right answer for that. And I'll give you an example. So right now my top of funnel stuff, it's been a couple of quarters, I'm spending a fair bit of money on it and what I mean by that is like Pay per Click campaigns and content syndication and I don't have ROI for closed one yet. So, you know, I definitely would say that my CFO is running out of patience, right, for seeing this expense (naudible) dollars. But if you think about the length of our sales cycle, once an opportunity's created and the amount of time it takes to get to an opportunity, you have to take your sales cycles into consideration to then be able to measure how effective something is you, you, you do need to give it time to run.

David Abrams: 24:41 Yeah, exactly. So that's a really great answer. So it's really dependent on the sales cycle itself and then making the proper (inaudible) assessments of when you're going to earn that money back for the customer acquisition cost. That's fantastic. Where do you see looking forward in 2018 for the rest of the year, almost Q4, where do you see marketing headed with you guys? Are you guys going to do anything different or is it just more dialing down on this demand gen engine?

Kira Mondrus: 25:05 Well, you know, as I mentioned, we are in the process of going through a merger so we are very busy, you know, parallel path. Doing everything we need to do right to grow our business, but also working on integrating the two companies and getting aligned on process and systems and programs. So, you know, I, I just see no, no shortage of opportunities for us to get things done.

David Abrams: 25:30 That's awesome. Well congratulations on the merger. That's so fantastic. It's exciting to hear companies doing that in such a positive way coming together and really looking to just create a better product and a better part of the market. So let's jump over to the lightning round questions. It's just five quick questions that I'll ask you and if you can answer with the first thought that comes to your mind, it's a really fun part of this interview. Are you ready to get started?

Kira Mondrus: 25:56 Sure.

David Abrams: 25:56 Alright, let's do it. Alright. What advice would you give for early stage SaaS companies starting marketing today?

Kira Mondrus: 26:03 Well I, I definitely think that it, it starts with people, you want to make sure that you hire the right individual for the right, for the stage of the company

that you're in. And I guess if you're just getting started, you want to have someone that has a good combination of strategic capability but can also get pretty hands on and, and get into the details. So I think that's very important. Just as a starting point.

| David Abrams: | 26:28 | Such great advice. Such great advice. What marketing skill do you think is vital for marketing teams to improve and build on today? |

| Kira Mondrus: | 26:37 | I think marketers at this point have to be completely comfortable with, with data and analytics and technology. I think the days of being kind of your traditional, marko individual that really just focuses on brand and creative are gone. |

| David Abrams: | 26:54 | Data driven approach to everything now. What about the best resource you would recommend for marketing? Educational Resource? |

| Kira Mondrus: | 27:01 | You know, I've been working with Sirius Decisions for many, many, many years and I still go to them whenever I, I'm trying to hung up on what's the next thing that's coming out there? I really enjoy what they do. Last (inaudible) went to a conference put on by I think is the demand Gen report and I thought that their content was fantastic. So there, there are a lot of great resources out there, that, you know, depending on what you need, you just need to go find it. |

| David Abrams: | 27:34 | That's a great answer. What about a favorite marketing tool you can't live without? |

| Kira Mondrus: | 27:38 | Well, I think without a marketing automation platform, there's really none of this magic can happen. So I don't kno, is that too big a tool? |

| David Abrams: | 27:48 | Yeah. Is that for you guys, is that Marketo for you guys, is what you said before? Yeah. No, that's a fantastic tool. I think it's essential for marketing and it's essential for teams today. So yeah, I'd definitely recommend, recommend one of those. And what about a brand business or team that you admire today? |

| Kira Mondrus: | 28:07 | Oh goodness. Brand, business or team... Well brand I think everybody aspires to the Apple brand, don't we all as marketers... |

| David Abrams: | 28:17 | Gorgeous brand. Amazing brand. |

| Kira Mondrus: | 28:20 | There you go. |

| David Abrams: | 28:20 | That's fantastic. Well, that's awesome. That's really all I have today in the lightning round questions. I think we went through a great amount of content around that buyer centric demand generation engine. I love to hear about how you guys look at that multipronged marketing approach, the different |

touch points in what you guys are looking at through that process, made a ton of sense. So I just want to say thank you again for jumping on with us today on the SaaS breakthrough podcast. I'm excited for the QASymphony team to hear how the merger goes over the next few months. Maybe get you guys back on beginning of next year to hear how everything goes, how the marketing systems have changed and developed into. But again, really thank you so much for your time.

Kira Mondrus: 28:58   Absolutely. It was a pleasure. Thanks for having me.

David Abrams: 29:00   Alrighty. Talk to you soon and have a great day.

David Abrams: 29:03   Oh man how fun was that episode? Kira was an absolute rockstar to jump on and a big thank you to her and the entire QASymphony team for allowing us to learn so much about what they're doing, an incredible product, an incredible time for them with this merger going on, so really exciting to see what kind of transpires here in the next six, 12 months over there. Big thank you to all of you for listening to today's episode. If you want to join these conversations, talk with these experts and these marketing leaders, feel free to jump into our free SaaS breakthrough community. It's on Facebook. You can do that by going to demio.com/fb and be redirected to a link to join us in that Facebook group. I'm in there talking about SaaS. We'd love to have you join that conversation. You can also find every single one of these episodes and all the show notes on our blog at **learn.demio.com** We have every single episode, resources, things that you can download. It's a lot of fun. Come check us out and I really hope you enjoyed today's episode. It was a ton of fun to make. Thank you again for listening. Do leave us any comments and questions on iTunes. It really does help us get this message in this podcast out to more amazing marketing and education teams like yourself. I wish you a wonderful rest of the week and we'll see you in the next episode.