

David Abrams: 00:00 Hello, hello and welcome to episode number 48 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 David Ly Khim, who is a senior growth marketing manager at Hubspot. Now, as I said, David is at Hubspot now but he's also a growth consultant at Compound 8. During his four years at Hubspot, he has contributed to growing the business 40 percent year over year. He helped build the Sales Bub business, created a new co-marketing program, developed a new virtual conference event and led new user acquisition initiatives through partnerships and virality, two subjects that we'll talk about deeply on today's episode.

David Abrams: 01:00 Now in this episode David took us on a journey of what it like to join an extremely fast moving company with 18,000 plus customers already. We also talked about what the strategic growth initiatives were to take the company to a reported 150 million in ARR, this is their newest numbers of Q3 of 2018, the strategic partner outreach strategy that David uses to find, promote and attract great partners for Hubspot, how he built virality into the product and how you need to think about it from growth and product perspectives and what you should double down on early, like Hubspot did to find great success. If you would like to understand more of the growth resources that David and the team at Hubspot did, David actually created a short survey that you can fill out to share feedback on the interview and also learn more about what they're doing, all you need to do is go to his website <https://davidlykhim.com/demio> and you'll have access to this great little survey he created, we will have the link on the show notes on our website so do check it out afterwards once you listen to the episode. I really think you will enjoy this episode, we go through a ton of great information and David brought a ton of great knowledge from his past 4 years. So let's go ahead and jump on with David.

Narrator: 02:04 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: 02:20 Hey David. Thanks so much for joining me here on the SaaS Breakthrough podcast. I'm incredibly excited to have you on today. How are you doing today?

David Ly Khim: 02:28 I'm doing extremely well and thanks for having me.

David Abrams: 02:31 I'm super pumped for this episode. I talked to you a little bit about it before about, you know Hubspot coming on the podcast and what that means to us, we're thrilled to have you guys and I'm sure a lot of our audience here already knows Hubspot. You guys are just so big and so awesome, but in case they haven't heard of you yet, which I don't understand how, maybe give us a little bit of background about Hubspot, who the customers are and what you guys are doing uniquely in your space.

David Ly Khim: 02:59 Yeah, so Hubspot was founded in 2006, so we're about 12 years old now, which is crazy and our customers are predominantly small to medium sized businesses. We help them by providing a platform of their front office suite of tools. So that includes CRM, marketing software, sales software, customer service software, and we created it because we believe that small, smaller, medium sized businesses deserve the same amount of advanced tools as the enterprise companies do. So we brought a lot of the features that many other enterprise software brings to the enterprise level customer to, to small business customers and we made it extremely easy for them to use and that's what made us extremely unique in the marketplace, from when we

were first founded to even now, We bring a lot of those features and make it easy to use so that these small shops that honestly they don't have time to learn new tools, can easily get onto our platform and learn how to use it and then start running their entire business on.

David Abrams: 04:04 It makes a lot of sense. And you're in a crowded marketplace. I mean it became more crowded as you guys grew. What would you say are still kind of your key selling propositions or differentiators like right now against the other CRM systems?

David Ly Khim: 04:17 Yeah. This is something that was embedded within the company culture since its founding, when Brian and Dharmesh started the company and that was education, we've found that through educating our customers, we build trust with them. It's not just trying to sell them software but how to do marketing better, how to do sales better, how to do customer service better and overall how to grow your business better versus just trying to grow it or just trying to sell software. So nowadays we're, we're still continuing to invest a lot in the content on our blogs and the content on our academy platform and trying to help our customers and other businesses grow, as best as they can.

David Abrams: 04:58 That is incredibly insightful. I really resonated with that. I love that answer. So I guess let's jump back into kind of your journey. When did you actually join the team, company's been around for awhile. When did you join and maybe what was the company ARR at that time?

David Ly Khim: 05:13 Yeah, I joined at it was May of 2015 and I remember it as a specific date because it's May the Fourth be with you in 2015. I honestly don't remember what the ARR of the company was at that time. That was a while ago and we've just grown so quickly, but customer size was, I believe we were about 18,000 customers, so we've multiplied that over the last couple of years and that was paying customers. Now since then, we've started adding a bunch of free products, so the way we consider customers versus users is also a very different definition nowadays as well.

David Abrams: 05:51 That's incredible. Well, first of all, insane to be joining a company with 18,000 paid customers already. That's, that's incredible. And so you're joining at that time in growth. You're gonna have your hands everywhere. Growth means that you're doing a million different things, but you're joining this big fast moving company with a great culture. What do you direct it to first? Where do you jump in first? How do you focus on that?

David Ly Khim: 06:17 Yeah. When I first started, I was fortunate we had a team and we were reporting directly to Brian Balfour at the time who was previously the VP of Growth and now founder of the Reforge program. And the team that I was on was strictly focused on content, in order to build out the business for this new product that we called sidekick at the time, which through many evolutions turned into our Sales Hub. And at that time we realized that the marketing software business that we started out with, grew through content. So we're trying to replicate that for sales product. And the interesting thing here was the sales product sidekick was a first freemium product that we had worked on. So we're trying to create this content conversion funnel into a free user into a paying customer. So that was the main focus of the team. And over the different years, my focus turned to, we did some social media for a couple months and then we decided, you know, let's, let's not build out an entirely new social media identity versus the Hubspot one. So then I moved onto co-marketing and partnerships to working with the product team on different user acquisition mechanisms we can build into the product and then moving on to building partnerships and doing some BD related, efforts. So you could say I've been around different parts of the company.

David Abrams: 07:40 You definitely have. That sounds awesome. And I guess, you know, when you were coming into that freemium change, what was that like? Was that a challenging kind of reset for you guys to figure out?

David Ly Khim: 07:51 Yeah. So it wasn't challenging to begin with. There, there was a moment when we decided to roll up that sidekick entity into the main Hubspot business and turn it into Sales Hub. And that was when we saw kind of two different modes of thinking evolve where there was, we had a business that was running for almost 10 years focusing predominantly on the sales and marketing based funnel and then we had this kind of new freemium type of product where it was focused on getting free users, into a free product versus having them fill out a bunch of forms to qualify. Right. So that that was the shift in thinking that we had to do as a business and I have to say it's been extremely impressive seeing how even the people who have been at the company for years, have been able to shift their mindset and adapt and for us to change essentially changed our business model to this lower touch, frictionless model of getting users into our product for free.

David Abrams: 08:52 It's interesting when you say that word frictionless with freemium, freemium brings in itself like so many new challenges, which is like now that you bring in free users, how do you convert them to paid users and all that kind of stuff. So you bring in new challenges and new things. Was there ever a time where it just took a while to get there or was it pretty seamless because you kind of rolled it into the brand and it feel, you know, you had that kind of brand power behind it?

David Ly Khim: 09:17 I wouldn't say it took a while to get to. I mean with any sort of changes, it's all about learning and I think, and I've spoken to leadership about this and I think we all seem to be on the same page that myself as someone working on the front lines, we've been moving extremely fast to leadership. They also are impressed by how quickly we've been able to adapt to this new model and I think the thing that was most challenging about this freemium model was understanding different persona that we're going out there essentially. So before we had this marketing Mary Persona who was at a business that was about 50 to 200 employees and focus running the marketing campaigns and now with this new sales product and this new touchless funnel, we have to figure out what that new persona looked like and what their challenges were and how we can position this free product to them. So it was more of understanding the positioning and the messaging that that was challenging

David Abrams: 10:13 For you and the growth team, is that setting up calls with this new persona, trying to remap it all out. Like how do you actually set that up when, when this initiative comes in?

David Ly Khim: 10:22 Yeah, exactly. So there are a lot of different touchpoints here. The growth team is doing their own user research. The product marketing team was doing their interviews, so there was a lot of fragmentation and I think the funny thing is at the end we ended up at the same conclusion, that this marketing Mary Persona had graduated into this marketing Michelle Persona that we called her and she was a bit more tech savvy than the previous persona that we're going out there and we also find that there was this, this new persona that started developing within our customer base and we call them kind of the growth Gary, the more hacky toward sort of marketer where they were focused on how do we connect all these different APIs instead of all these marketing automation with these free products or cheaper products versus going for the higher tier products that we have at Hubspot. So we started seeing these different personas evolve over time.

David Abrams: 11:17 That's amazing and I love the names of them. What was it? Growth Gary and Marketing Michelle?

David Ly Khim: 11:22 Yeah.

David Abrams: 11:22 That's amazing. That's awesome and that's a really good lesson for our listeners to actually name your personas and have real faces to them, know who they are, that's great. So you guys get through that, you understand the new persona, you go through the freemium challenge, now you're moved inside of your position into the social media and then you go into some other channels. Looking at kind of some of the marketing initiatives that you've taken on from strategic partnerships or other things. What has been some major wins in acquisition marketing for you guys?

David Ly Khim: 11:55 Yeah, you know it's, it's a really boring answer and I hate to say this, but SEO has been an amazing growth channel for us. I mean Hubspot grew on the back of content marketing and inbound and you know, there's a certain point when we're saying, okay, we're getting millions of views on our website every month, how much more can we actually grow? Right? And there, there are all these different tactics coming up and all these algorithm changes and our head of SEO, his name is Victor, he was onto this thing, we decided to call it the pillar and cluster model. You know, other people like Rand Fishkin call it 10x content, Brian Dean calls it the skyscraper technique, but all in all, it's a very similar strategy where we try to own a topic versus trying to write one blog post for one keyword. So instead of doing that, we own a topic and all the different subtopics that fall underneath it. And that will help us rank even higher for multiple keywords that we may not directly be targeting. So by, by using that approach and we teach this all on our own blog and through the academy. But by the...

David Abrams: 13:01 By the way, I've definitely read this on the blog recently. It's awesome content.

David Ly Khim: 13:06 Yeah, it's been amazing and it's honestly, it's tough to do. When we first started implementing it, we, I remember we had a couple of late night hacks and our blog editors, one of them is Leslie Ye. She was the one that drove this and Aja Frost also, but they manually went through all our blog posts. That's hundreds of blog posts and change the linking architecture across our blog and over the course of a couple months, and we're still doing this to this day. We saw organic traffic continued to increase in the double digit percentages every month.

David Abrams: 13:41 I love to hear these winds, which that's an incredible, incredible wind there, especially because here at Demio, we're about to start working on a big SEO initiative. Thus why I was reading SEO articles on your blog, which are incredible and talked about that skyscraper method that link building method, but that's insane and it's just incredible. Like you guys are known for your inbound marketing and what you've been able to do with inbound, which I think could be an entire podcast episode on its own. Bring on Victor and just get all his secrets out about SEO, but I want to talk about some of the things that you've been directly involved in outside of just the blog and the SEO and all the content marketing you guys have done, which speaks for itself. I would love to get some of your insights on your approach to strategic partnerships. I know that's been a big thing of what you've been focusing on over there. I guess talk to me a little bit about, you know, how it initially got started and then I guess how the process has grown over time.

David Ly Khim: 14:40 Yeah. So the way I think of strategic partnerships is, and whether you, whether you're a small company or a large one like Hubspot, there's going to be a certain point when you're, you're thinking, how else do we grow, right? I mean organic, organic traffic is great. What if the algorithm changes and our traffic tanks and our paid campaigns are going really well what if something changes again and we can't rely on that anymore. And by, by thinking about partnerships, we're thinking, well, instead of trying to build out an entirely new channel from

scratch based on our own audience, what if we find partners or other tech companies where there is some overlap in customers? We have similar values and we have similar goals. And our products just work extremely well together and they're already potentially people using our products together. What does it look like to work with those partners and say we promote their products, they promote our products.

David Ly Khim: 15:33 It might be that simple, it might be an integration that we ended up doing, but these are different channels where you're just tapping into a channel and an audience that's already existing versus trying to build them from scratch. And I think, I think this would resonate very well with startup founders where, you know, it takes time to build an audience as I'm sure you would know, David. so how do you, how do you tap into those audiences that are already there while you're building up your own audience? So that's how we think about these partnerships where it's a, there's a mutual benefit to both parties.

David Abrams: 16:09 So let's take a look. We have marketing Michelle as our persona and we want to find companies that have an overlap of marketing Michelle, what's the steps you go through? How do you find those companies? Like how do you do the research to find that exact persona or know that that company has that persona?

David Ly Khim: 16:26 Yeah, we talked to them. We'll get on the phone with our existing customers and our agency partners. Then we'll ask them, hey, what other companies do you go to to learn from? What other tools do you use in your day to day? And we'll begin to see patterns of different companies that continue to pop up through these different conversations. And that's, that's kind of a signal to us that we should start conversations with these other companies and more likely than not the other company will have also been hearing feedback that, hey, our customers are asking for integration with Hubspot as well. And that just further validates that there's something there. So it's really just diving into that rabbit hole and doing that research, having a conversations, and then kind of taking a lead and just being open to having conversations that honestly sometimes don't amount to much because there might not be good alignment. But in those few cases where you do find really good alignment, all that research is worth it.

David Abrams: 17:25 Yeah, that makes total sense. So you're getting that data and then you're what just sending a cold email reach out to that company? Obviously for you guys when you're doing it, you have a lot of leverage behind it. It can get people excited about the promotion. How do you approach it to get them excited, to get them interested, and then how do you continue that relationship once that promotion or that one time event is done?

David Ly Khim: 17:49 Yeah, I think so. There were, there were two questions there. It's one, how do we get them interested and how we continue doing it. Right.

David Abrams: 17:55 Yeah, exactly.

David Ly Khim: 17:56 Usually when you cold email someone, or at least when I receive a cold email, I think it's just the other person trying to get something from me and more likely than not that's the case. Right. And it's very unlikely that they're trying to provide value or anything. When we reach out to these partners, sometimes it's cold, sometimes they might be a customer that we just want to build a partnership with but in either case, it's always talking, speaking to the customer, and why it's beneficial for our customers and potentially their customers. So, and in our case, we might have done that research and said that, let's say it's Demio and we say, hey, we found that x percent of our customers already use Demio and they're asking for, you know, for us to do some integration or something. I think we already have one actually. But by speaking to that use case, you might feel more open to speaking to us because we're not just trying to get something

from you were saying, we have mutual customers, how can we provide them with a better experience and at the same time help us each grow our businesses. Right? So when we start with that as the main reason for connecting, we found that that's a much stronger reason to work together versus just trying to get value or extract value from a partner.

David Ly Khim: 19:11 In order to keep it going. It's really dependent on the partner. Some will like a low touch partnership where we might just casually write some blog posts or linked to each other on our websites, it might be a quarterly campaign that we worked on together, so it's really dependent on how much bandwidth each partner has and whether the current setup is something that you want to continue building on top of, or if it's something you're already happy with.

David Abrams: 19:36 I love that. Both great solid answers and really helpful. When you go and approach these, do you set, I guess, goals of what you're trying to accomplish? Like our outcome is to attract a thousand new paying customers, to do that we need five strategic partners or do you just kind of approach it more open ended and just kind of see how each one turns out because otherwise you'd kind of be in this position I guess maybe where you're pushing for something more than the partner can give?

David Ly Khim: 20:05 Yeah, I actually hate the (inaudible) because that is, that's one of the toughest parts of these partnerships. We have our content marketing team and they had this strict goal of any partner that we do a co-marketing campaign with and we create a content offer with, they want to see a minimum of 2000 registrations from the partner. Right. And that's not something that a lot of partners can commit to, so it really filters out which companies that they can work with. In the case of the type of partnerships that I've been working on, yes, we like to see big numbers, but in full transparency there just some cases where it's hard to really set a baseline. Right. The content marketing team has been running this program for a couple of years now so they can say with certainty which partners they believe can meet that 2000 minimum registration goal for us, if we're working on new types of partnerships with a new type of company that we hadn't previously worked with before, it's hard to have that baseline. So while there is some cases where it makes sense to have these specific numbers, from my, from my experience, if you and a partner on the same page that yes, this is a bit experimental, we're not sure what the results will be, but let's do something for one quarter and see what numbers we can get and if there is some traction let's continue investing. So it's, it's this value of validate before committing. And before committing to putting in, you know, a huge budget into a partnership, we always want to validate it with some data.

David Abrams: 21:40 I love that. And I'm sorry to ask such a tough question, but I think you just gave an amazing answer that provided a great deal of understanding behind it. But that makes a lot of sense. And I think, you know, for us strategic partnerships have been such a big piece of our growth and I think for a lot of startups that can be, I think for a lot of people there's the fear of lack of leverage, but if you're finding a partner where you're both adding value to that same user base, I think that's really where those partnerships shine. Let's talk a little. Oh, go ahead. Sorry.

David Ly Khim: 22:09 Turning tables on you, I mean you, you mentioned that you grew mostly through partnerships and in the beginning, how did you, how did you get that off the ground? I mean, with Hubspot we had this huge brand, so it's easier to build that trust. How did you as a small company build up that trust and get that ability to build partnerships?

David Abrams: 22:26 Yeah, I would say that this was one of three major growth channels for us to, to kind of get going and for us really it was relationship building and I, and we've talked about this in some prior episodes, but doing things like going to events, networking, masterminds,

those were really our early gateways to building relationships with companies that had similar demographics or personas. We also understood each other's businesses a little bit more. There was more trust and transparency there. So that was a big win for us. And another one was like, once the brand, like you said, got a little bit more recognition, there was a better understanding that hey, this is going to be a long term partnership. Even if we don't have that much power now, in the future we will and we want to continue to provide value to your customers and to them and so it was that co op relationship, which is always really great.

David Ly Khim: 23:17 Yeah, that's awesome. That seems to make sense with what we've been learning as well with these new types of partnerships.

David Abrams: 23:24 Yeah, exactly. I mean more than anything, you know, I think people just want to know that they're in a partnership and it's not just a one off promotion and that's where really people get excited when they can work with partners. They can learn about each other, how to do things better, but kind of flipping it back down to some marketing initiatives, some channels, I know you do a lot with virality over at Hubspot. Give us a little bit of a background or introduction to what that actually means.

David Ly Khim: 23:50 Yeah, so in the simplest way to describe it, virality, the way we define it is getting our current users and customers to refer new users and customers to our product. And the simplest way that this manifests is you might've seen these sort of live chat modules on websites and it might say powered by Hubspot, or powered by Drift, or Powered by Intercom, and those are all links that will take you to a page to sign up for that specific product. So we started experimenting with basic things like that with our product and we view in two different buckets. There are certain features of our product that are exposed to nonusers. So if it's a tool to help you book meetings with people or a tool that you put on your website to put pop up forms or anything like that, those are things that people who are not our current users could end up being exposed to and see a link that will take them to our website to learn more about our products.

David Ly Khim: 24:52 And then there are other features in our suite that are not externally facing like that. So we looked at those features where it could potentially be exposed to nonusers and thought about, well what's the user experience that would get them to end up learning more about our product? And one example I can speak to is if, if you're on a Hubspot website and you get a pop up that says subscribe to our newsletter and that pop up, will have something like powered by Hubspot. You Click on that link and you go to our landing page and you sign up or you fill out the form, you subscribe and you say the message that you're shown afterward, it says, Hey, would you like to create a pop up form on your website too? And there's going to be some segment of people who see that and say, yeah, I want to put some popups on my website and then no, continue to learn more. So it's thinking about these different experiences where they see the value in their product and they also want to use it.

David Abrams: 25:51 Makes a lot of sense making those viral loops through the product. When you're doing those, you said, you said something, you said they click on the link, they go to a landing page. What is that landing page? I think that is a critical thing. Two things can happen. You can have someone that's not a good prospect. Click on it. Go through, do something different. I've seen that before where like those Proof notifications, people click on them thinking that it does something else and you sign up for everywhere, right? They signed up for a free trial and they're not actually a real user, so like inflates numbers and does all this crazy stuff. So how do you guys deal with that in messaging on your landing page to actually filter the right people in?

David Ly Khim: 26:28 Yeah, I mean there, there are some tests that we've run our landing pages and overall there's, there's this understanding that some of these viral loops are more volume

plays than conversion plays, if that makes sense. So we, we understand that not that clicks on it will be a good fit user and won't ever signed up. And we also know that there might be a small segment that do click and then go on to sign up for our product and those are the ones that we want to focus on, if they get in, we want to make sure that they immediately get dropped into a piece for the product where they can start seeing value and it doesn't really make sense for us to try to maximize the conversion rate on that landing page just because there's only going to be so many people that we we can get to convert into a signup.

David Ly Khim: 27:14 And we've actually found that there are different ways to optimize that conversion. So one example is instead of sending them to a landing page, we'll just send them directly into the signup flow and that signup flow will have some context on a sidebar that will explain what they're signing up for and what they'll get. And in this case it will be that pop up performance feature. And we found that by sending people directly to the signup flow, yes, the conversion rate is lower, but the volume of people signing up as higher. And that's something that we're comfortable with, so it's being able to say this is what we're comfortable with or this is not something we're comfortable comfortable with, so let's revert it back and it's just having very clear communication on what we're willing to do there.

David Abrams: 27:57 That makes a lot of sense. Yeah. I love that. And I love the fact that you're willing to make, you gotta make sacrifices in some area, so bringing more people, but you probably know that you have, you know, this trial conversion rate or you know, how to onboard them in the right way in the back end and filter out the filter them out the correct way. So I truly love that. When you guys are doing this stuff, do you have unique like UTMs are tracking through everything, so you also know that they come through these viral loops?

David Ly Khim: 28:27 Yep, exactly. So a lot of our tracking has been set up to be custom and we do have a custom set up for some of these loops, through Google analytics, but they function the same way as UTM parameters.

David Abrams: 28:41 Got It. Makes Sense. Yeah. Super important to know like what flow they came through so you guys can look back at some point. That's really awesome. And what about, you know, kind of looking back crazily enough, almost four years now for you at Hubspot, what are maybe some roadblocks that you've, you've hit in marketing or lessons learned through failed experiments? Anything that comes to mind thinking back?

David Ly Khim: 29:04 Yeah, I think, and it's kind of a cliché answer, but I think it's harder in practice which is just just ship it, you know, it's not about trying to create the perfect experiment. We're thinking about all the different variants you can use or all the different edge cases. Just agree that some things with running as an experiment and that there is a minimum viable test that you willing to run and if that test show some traction, then you're willing to put more resources into making it an even better test or exposing it to more users. I think in the beginning that was something that, I spent a lot of time on because we have this thing where we write an experiment document for every experiment that we want to run and that involves pulling data and making a case for an experiment worth running and doing all the mockups and everything. And I used to spend a ton of time on those writeups, which isn't necessarily a bad thing unless, if you're trying to run experiments. So while it was helpful and really proven the case of why something was worth running, in some cases we didn't really need all that documentation. It was just, yes, we all agree this is worth running, let's do it. So I think in the beginning we could have ran, we could have ran a tighter cadence with experimentation if we didn't focus so much on trying to flesh out all the details upfront.

David Abrams: 30:24 I think that's a really good lesson learned. I think. Well you guys are

obviously a bigger company too, so you had more systems in place and more layers to go through, which makes a lot sense. But even I go through some of that stuff, let's write out with these experiments are, and sometimes you just gotta do it and just ship fast. And when you're doing those and you guys are either writing those experiments, things you're just going and shipping fast, are you launching with, you know, your experiment results as your hypothesis and how do you come up with those, result ideas like, we think we're going to get a thousand new signups from this experiment. How do you even come up with the ideas or the outcomes that you want to shoot for?

David Ly Khim: 31:05 Yeah, I mean that's, that's a whole process that we have at Hubspot and the way we're able to come up with these sorts of predictions on expected outcomes is just based off all the data that we have. So just to use some fake numbers, we might say, we think that this experiment will bring in five percent more users every week, and that means we'll get 200 new signups per week and a conversion rate of 10 percent, my math is going to be off because I'm just, I'm just feeling this out. So at a conversion rate of 10 percent into paying customers, 200 new users per week would result in, I don't know, 50,000 new MRR per month. So with all those conversion rate numbers, we're able to model out what the expected outcome would be if the experiment was a success. And one of one of the things that I make it clear is when we're predicting what we think the results of the experiment are, say we expected conversion rate to increase from five to seven percent. Honestly, sometimes it's based on gut, because just based off intuition, we might go to say testing an image probably won't result in a 10 percent increase, but it might result in a one percent or two percent max increase. So we use some intuition in our predictions. It's not always accurate, sometimes it's completely off, it might be a higher result, but by having those sort of intuitive guesses as we do more experiments in the future, that intuition gets even better. So instead of trying to model everything out upfront with and pulling all that data, we can just say this probably isn't a high impact experiment upfront.

David Abrams: 32:46 Makes sense that the more you do it, the better your intuition becomes and the more you can really understand where those experiments will do. And I liked the fact that you just said that you have to go with intuition. I struggle all the time thinking, you know, is there a way to know this like scientifically beforehand, but if you don't have the data, you do have to make an intuitive kind of guess there. So that's really helpful.

David Ly Khim: 33:07 That is. I was just talking to my teammate, his name is Alex Birkett and doing a lot of name drops because I didn't, I didn't do all of this on my own, you know, it's all a process of learning from other people and working with the team. But Alex and I were talking, we were saying, you know, there's, there's this tension of being data driven versus data informed and I think you're speaking to something interesting here where you're not just relying on data to make decisions. Data is just kind of one point, one piece of information that'll help us make a decision, but it shouldn't be the only thing forcing us to make a decision. There might be cases where it just makes sense to do something and deep in our gut we know that this is the right decision even if we don't have all the data to prove it right. And there's just cases where you'll just have to take that risk or make that bet and, and make a decision without all the contexts.

David Abrams: 33:55 Yeah, absolutely. A lot of this stuff is just making a bet sometimes and you, you have to take the risk with it and the experiment can fail. and I think business decisions, even from a leadership level, a lot of times are like that too. Even when you know the data points, one way, your instincts and your gut tell you to go a different way and you have to do that. It's very, it's very hard. But there's risk associated. This is part of the business game. And speaking of that, speaking about business, where are you guys now? What are the numbers in 2018 after I guess almost four years there now?

David Ly Khim: 34:24 Yeah, so the most recent public numbers that I can disclose is Q3

2018 revenue we were at about 131 million, so that's about 35% year over year growth, which at a company of our size, that's really difficult to believe, you know, that's, that's probably the rate of growth you'd expect at a smaller company. So for me it's been an honor to go to work at such a high growth company.

David Abrams: 34:53 That's absolutely insane. Unheard of growth at that level and the fact that you guys just keep doing it and you know, congratulations to all of you. I know everyone there works so hard. You have a great culture, great education center, so you know, what you guys are doing internally really shows by how much you give out in your content, everything else that you guys do and looking forward into 2019, two weeks till 2019 crazy. What are some new challenges or opportunities that you see, especially from your growth initiatives?

David Ly Khim: 35:24 Yeah, some, some thinking there is. I mean Hubspot is transforming into this platform you know, we're not just all in one, we're all on one, so we want to open up our platform so that other tech companies and other businesses can build on top of us in order to grow their business and help our customers by providing all the data in one center and being able to see a full view of their customers, which gets a little bit Meta. But the challenges that I'm seeing right now and the opportunities are, well honestly it's, it's something I already spoke to earlier, but SEO is just huge. You know, it's always changing and despite it being saturated, we found that even working with our customers and myself we're consulting on some clients on the side, there's still a huge opportunity for small businesses and startups to really make a dent in SEO and that's something that at Huspot we're continuing to invest heavily on.

David Ly Khim: 36:24 As for new challenges I'm seeing is, you know, Hubspot is growing extremely quickly and now it's about, you know, how do we build more of our own channels? So virality is one of those things where it's starting to see a lot of traction and these new strategic partnerships with, these different types of companies are a new challenge where it's new partnerships that we're kind of getting more comfortable with and being able to say, yes, this is something we're willing to invest in and we're not sure what the baseline is, but we're open to learning and experimenting.

David Abrams: 36:55 Makes a lot of sense. I'm excited to say that in 2019 Demio will have our Hubspot integration. So be happy to be building on top of you guys, have more data being sent to Hubspot. So I love that direction. Love where you guys are going. And I love to hear that you're still investing in SEO, you know, you back SEO so much since that's going to be like our number one traffic driver, our big initiative here in 2019. So, you've made me happy to hear that. But cool. What I want to do now is I want to transition into our lightning round questions. Just five quick questions you can answer with the first best thought that comes to mind. It's a ton of fun. You ready to get started?

David Ly Khim: 37:33 Let's do it.

David Abrams: 37:33 Alright, let's do this thing. All right. What advice would you give for early stage SaaS companies starting marketing today?

David Ly Khim: 37:42 This is not going to be a simple answer, but here, I'll say it in two ways. So when you're focused on growing your company at such an early stage. You got to focus on the 20 percent of the things that will generate 80 percent of results, right? It's, it's been overplayed cliché, but I think with all the different things you could be doing to grow, it's easy to get lost in things that are easy to do but don't really generate results. One of the things that I recommend starting off early as content. You don't need to be publishing 10 blog posts a week, start with one a week or one every two weeks and just getting that engine going and then while you're doing that,

making sure that your other marketing activities are actually generating immediate results that you're kind of building for on a short term while building for the long term so that you're starting to build a sustainable engine in the longterm.

David Abrams: 38:33 Such a good answer and it's hard to do because I remember just a few years ago, Demio was at that size where we're just starting and it's really hard to stay consistent, but I think you're absolutely spot on if you can be you're generating a longterm strategy and also looking at short term results which you have to do. So I love that answer. What skill do you think is vital for marketing teams to improve and build on today?

David Ly Khim: 38:56 It depends on the size of business. For larger companies, marketers there should feel much more comfortable with data, so whether that be pulling data without pulling, without asking a data analyst to do it or analyzing it and then asking a data analyst to kind of review what your findings were. I think if you aren't comfortable looking at data as a marketer, it's going to be tough to prove out that what you're doing is working so by understanding data, by being able to pull it and use it to report on it, things that you're doing, is going to be able to help a marketer at a startup or a big company just show their value.

David Abrams: 39:31 Love it. What are the best educational resources you'd recommend for learning about marketing or growth and this is a very easy one for you.

David Ly Khim: 39:37 Well, of course I have to say that Hubspot academy and our blog is, definitely ranks up there, but I also recommend Growth Marketing conference. I was just there last week and some of the speakers there were just spewing out tons of wisdom. There's some of the really big name growth practitioners out there and just by going to these events and meeting people there, you just learn more about what people are doing outside your industry and outside of your company. And I think that's the best way to learn.

David Abrams: 40:07 We'll definitely link to both in our show notes, both great resources that people should absolutely check out if they haven't. What about a favorite tool you can't live without?

David Ly Khim: 40:16 Yeah, I, I cannot live without Evernote. I have an Evernote file for everything and everyone including you every, every meeting or call we've had, I have notes on it. I have your LinkedIn profile on there. It's just how you keep track of all the things going on in life. You know, I have to do lists. I have grocery lists. it's been something that I've used over the last couple of years and I've continued to build out this Rolodex of things that I need to think about, whether it be five years from now or things that I need to review to prepare for a call like this one.

David Abrams: 40:49 I think you need to put out a post on how you manage Evernote with 10,000 notes in there and how you have your system set up because I would read that for sure.

David Ly Khim: 40:58 Can't say I have a system.

David Abrams: 41:01 Organized chaos always. What about a brand, business or a team that you admire today?

David Ly Khim: 41:06 Yeah, one company that I've just continued to be impressed by is Spotify. Spotify, is just everywhere. I recently learned about this campaign that they did about, you know, when Obama was no longer going to be president and he was looking for a job at Spotify. So they put out this job listing, looking for someone with his experience to join their team and he just got all this press and that's just one of those things where kind of what we were speaking about

earlier, you don't really sit down and say what's the ROI of creating a job listing for Barack Obama? Right. You just, you just do it because it's something that's real, that's culturally relevant, that you think will have some sort of emotional response to your audience, to, the news outlets and you do it and you get all this press and people see your brand and they trust it more. So. And I mean their, their annual wrap up is also something that I look forward to every year, just seeing what I listened to. So I open every single email they send me and it's just impressive how they've been able to build this trust and this brand with their users.

David Abrams: 42:15 I love that. What a great answer. And it's so true. I got to check out that Barack Obama thing. I'd never heard of that before, but that sounds hilarious and amazing. Yeah, please do. But I just want to wrap up. I want to say thank you so much, David, for all your time. You were incredible today. You give so much great information. I think very helpful information for people of, you know, running marketing in all different size companies, so really appreciate the transparency. Appreciate your time and thanks so much for joining us today.

David Ly Khim: 42:41 Thanks for having me. I appreciate it.

David Abrams: 42:43 All right, we'll talk to you soon and have a great day.

David Ly Khim: 42:45 Take care. You too.

David Abrams: 42:47 Today's episode was truly incredible. It was such an honor to be able to chat with David to learn a bit more about the internals of Hubspot, the growth marketing initiatives and a few things that he said that I think really stood out was his desire to talk about his teammates and how they all work as a team. There's a really great culture that goes on at Hubspot and you could really feel it through the initiatives they talked about, but more so the teamwork and the camaraderie that is built there that they know that it comes from everyone working together to build a great mission and they also talk about a very unique specific marketing persona and I love that. I think even as a big company, they're very dialed in on who they want to bring in and they're very attentive to how they attract those people. So those things led to the growth initiatives that they created. Now David talked about some of the specifics that he's worked on. Obviously there's a ton of things that happened at Hubspot, a lot of different marketing initiatives and SEO of course that content marketing is a really big one. One that he says definitely double down on early and you know here at Demio we definitely want to do as well. So again, just a big thank you to David to the entire team there. Everyone, there working so hard and making a huge push in SaaS for all of us. They've done a great job in SaaS. If you enjoyed today's episode, I would love for you to head over to itunes, give us a rating, subscribe, leave a comment, questions, these type of feedback, these things actually help us get this podcast out to more SaaS marketing teams, education teams and founders like yourself, and we would love to just add more value to our amazing SaaS community and speaking about SaaS community, we do have a free Facebook group if you'd like to join, come contribute, talk about SaaS. It's called SaaS breakthrough community and that's on Facebook. Just go to demio.com/fb and we'll get you sync up and linked into that free group. A lot of the past speakers and guests are in there as well, and on our blog on demio.com we have all of our show notes, all the episodes of resources from every single guest that we've had on, so definitely go there to check out, see episodes more in depth. Just a quick shout out to you, thank you so much for listening as well. It's our listeners like you that make this podcast work, that make this podcast worth doing every week, so thank you very much. I hope you enjoyed today's episode and we'll talk to you soon.