

David Abrams: 00:00 Hello, hello and welcome to episode number 45 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 Len Markidan who is the CMO of Podia, a platform for creators to sell online courses, membership sites in digital downloads. Previously he was head of marketing for five years at groove in amazing platform and a product we've had here on the podcast. Len's work has been featured in Forbes and Entrepreneur and he's consulted for clients like Prudential, Chegg, Jet.com, Groupon, Healthline, and more.

David Abrams: 00:50 And in today's episode we talked about the journey Podia went through from their early name Coach to the amazing online platform they are today. We talk about the importance of early customer research, the reminder of why these foundational principles are so critical in marketing. We talked about the three primary channels that have been extremely effective for growth, how to create content with a perfect balance of art and science, and finally talked about partnerships, influencers and events. We hope you enjoy today's episode. Len was extremely transparent. He was really great at providing actionable content that you guys can learn from and take away from. I took notes throughout this entire episode, one of my favorite ones so far. Think you're going to absolutely love it. Don't forget to leave us ratings, comments, questions on itunes. This does help us get our podcast out to more people. We truly appreciate you taking the time to listen. So let's go ahead and let's jump on with Len.

Narrator: 01:53 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: 02:09 Hey Len. What's going on man, thanks so much for joining me. How are you doing today?

Len Markidan: 02:14 I'm doing well. David. Thanks so much for, for having me. I'm excited to be on.

David Abrams: 02:17 Yeah, it's a real pleasure. I know about your background. I know what you're doing right now and I'm just excited to have you here. There's a ton we're going to learn and talk about today, but for those who don't know about Podia yet, why don't you just jump right in and give us a bit of a background on the platform when it was founded, who the customers are and what you guys are doing uniquely in the market place.

Len Markidan: 02:37 Sure. So Podia is a digital storefront. Now what that means is, it's a place where you can sell any digital products. That means online courses. It means memberships, subscriptions, digital downloads like ebooks and templates and videos and things like that. And traditionally people would use three or four or five or six different apps to do something like that. Use a course platform and a membership platform and an email marketing platform and a payment processing platform and all that kind of stuff. And we eliminated all of that. So we're all that one pool sells through Podia. We, we were founded in 2014. And originally actually the company was called Coach. so a lot of folks that, a lot of folks knew us that way, but last year I changed the name to Podia, turned out hard to compete in search rankings with the biggest handbag brand in the world, so now Podia and just doing, doing our best to support creators. So customers are everyone from bloggers to vloggers to consultants who create courses or have memberships and music teachers and really everyone in between. I'm always really, really amazed by the breadth and scope

of, who sells stuff online.

David Abrams: 03:50 When you have that wide of an audience, do you guys find it difficult to segment your messaging to them or is that more of a use case base for you guys?

Len Markidan: 04:00 That's a good question. So it's something that we do a bit of segmentation. We do try and, you know, if you have a music teacher, how do we get other music teachers on the platform? Well you probably have to create some content for, for music teachers, music teachers are using it. But overall, I think the universal message that hits with nearly everyone is, hey, whatever your passion is, whatever you're good at, you can earn money from it online. And so we haven't had to go that granular with, with our messaging quite yet. But I imagine that there, there comes a point where you start to, you start to have to, have to have to dig through the, through the cracks to keep growing. But right now we're doing pretty well with the, with the universally beloved dream of making money with your passion.

David Abrams: 04:50 No, I love that completely. And I only ask because, you know, we ourselves here at Demio are thinking about that as well. Like, you know, we serve a wide audience who do we segment to if we need to and stuff like that. But that's really awesome. You know, it's an amazing platform. You guys have a great website, great UI, great UX. So if you haven't heard about them yet, definitely go check them out. And when did you specifically joined the team? Maybe give us a reference, company size of that time and then to follow up with that, when you're joining a company that's been running for a certain amount of time, what are the first steps that you have to jump into?

Len Markidan: 05:23 Sure. So I joined in November of 2017, so right about a year before we were recording this conversation. And when I joined I was the sixth employee. We're about to be 11. the company has grown quite a bit since, since then and as far as the first things that you do. So when I came on I was the first marketer at Podia and there wasn't really a structured marketing effort of any sort. The company had grown primarily through, through word of mouth, through people just picking up the product, using it, telling their friends about it.

Len Markidan: 05:59 And so the very first thing that I did to try and build something from, from the ground up as far as the marketing program is talk to as many customers as I can. We really did very little for the first four to six weeks. And maybe even the first two months other than talk to customers and try to understand how do you think about the problem that we solve for you? How do you think about those dreams and aspirations that you have for how you want to make money from, you know, from, from your work. How do you think about the challenges that you have, the technical challenges, the mental challenges, the tactical challenges for building a digital business. How do you, what do you read? What do you listen to, what do you think about that maybe isn't even related to this business at all, but what do you think about, like, what, what, what types of things do you read online? What types of tools do you use to run your business? And over a couple of months of about six to six to eight weeks, I started to build a profile of who is our customer, who, you know, talk about developing personas and building a building out marketing avatars and things like that. And this was a pretty thorough efforts to try to do something more than just come up with a blogger Bob and, we tried to understand everything we possibly could about our customers, what, what channels they hung out in, what blogs they read, what podcasts they listen to, and then we got to a point where we knew enough about our customers, knew enough about the messaging that might resonate with them, that we could start throwing a bunch of stuff at the wall to see what would stick.

David Abrams: 07:32 Did you have trouble concerning the fact that you had such a wide range of user base? Where did you find similarities to create these? Basically we were creating a

persona not like dialed in one, but you were just understanding who those customers were. How did you find overlap in a wide range of people or where the pain points the same no matter the industry?

Len Markidan: 07:54 The pain points tended to be the same across these industries. I mean, there, there are certain things that, whether you're a music teacher or a yoga teacher or a consultant or an ad agency or a no matter what you, are there certain things that you struggled with, right? If you've never sold anything online before, if you've never sold a digital product before, no matter what the topic is, you might be overwhelmed by the tech, you might be overwhelmed by the marketing, you might be overwhelmed by just building the content for the thing. If you sold before, then you might be overwhelmed by scaling that you might be overwhelmed by, you know, going from having a successful first product to how do you follow that up with a successful second product or turn that success into a diff, a different kind of product entirely, or maybe you sell services to those people. So no matter what niche you're operating in a, we tended to find that a lot of people had very, very similar challenges and goals for their business, no matter what they did.

David Abrams: 08:52 That's fantastic. Yeah, that's really helpful. It makes a lot of sense. And for those listeners, I just want to say every time I talked to a super successful and smart marketer or team on here, the first thing that I hear every time is we took our time to talk to our customers. There's no rush, not jumping into initiatives is learning first and then being strategic. So I just wanted to say that real quick, but you know, tell me a little bit about what it took or what happened I guess after you started creating these profiles and these, the research phase was done. What's the marketing initiative that you then jumped into? How do you find the right channel after you spend the time putting together the right parts of the research process?

Len Markidan: 09:34 Well, what we did at that point was trying to understand, just put kind of a classic scenario, what are all the different things we can do, what are all the different things that we possibly could do to grow this company that we possibly could do to make marketing work? And then which ones were actually things that we should pursue. Which ones were things that we've heard in our customer interviews that. I'll give you, I'll give you some specific examples, but we had, questions on our customer interviews around what events do you attend. So we learned that a lot of our customers actually attend some of the same events. They go to the same conferences and so events actually ended up being something that if you asked me in November if that was going to be a big channel for us, I probably would said, I don't think so I think we'll probably stick to digital channels. But it actually turned out that from that research, a lot of our creators go to events and so events have become a really, really productive channel for us. And so from that research we understood where people spend their time online, what kind of channels might work for them. And then we just started trying things with those channels. We tried events. We started building partnerships with some of the blogs and Youtube channels that people told us that they listened to or that they watched. We started building content to solve some of the problems that people had. And so essentially evolved out of that research that you are a, you know, it's not really a coincidence that using that research to build our marketing plan has resulted in our most effective channels being events, content marketing partnerships and Seo.

David Abrams: 11:07 That's actually fantastic to hear. I mean, so many people do just throw things against the wall to see what's gonna stick. But I won't use that research. I know we're guilty of that here ourselves, you know, it's like what's going to work? Let's try all these things without actually getting the feedback that validates that. So you mentioned content marketing and I think I want to talk about all the different channels that you just mentioned. I'd love to go into them, but content marketing specifically, when you guys start that and you're coming from scratch, like what is the strategy that you do to connect with the right audiences? Because it's one thing just to create a blog post with content for that market. It's another thing to put out there and attract the

people the right way. What are you doing there?

Len Markidan: 11:45 Totally. So there are two ways that we connect with audiences. The one, the first one is be easy to find and that's the an SEO element of it is before you build a piece of content, do you know what people are searching for? Do you know what problems they have? Do you know what the landscape of content that solves this problem looks like? Because if your goal with every piece of content that you write is not to have this be the single best resource of this kind on the Internet, you probably won't have as much success as you'd like. And so making sure that you do that research up front and making sure that you understand the kind of the, the, the, the technical side of what makes what people are searching for and what makes it a piece of content. Good to search engines is gonna give you a big leg up in being easy to find. Making sure that you get organic visitors.

Len Markidan: 12:32 And then the second part of it is finding out where your audience hangs out and making sure that you are there, wherever they possibly are. And so what we did was we built a list of tour all of the influencers that are audience trusts that our audience looks to for advice, making sure that while we're building content, I mean, before we even have this piece of content, our first piece of content built, we had a list of 150 people that we wanted to email and share our content with. And I mean this is a strategy that it'd be for Podia, I ran marketing group for six years and this was something that we developed there, that we're now doing a doing at Podia, which was the concept of the inner circle. And the idea there is, while you're building a piece of content, before you even launch your content operation, you're reaching out to influencers. You're building relationships with influencers, not just asking them to share your content, but getting feedback on your content while you're building it. So saying, Hey, I love to get a love to get your thoughts on, on this, this piece of content I'd love to. I'd love to know where you think we can make it better. I'd love to know what you think it does well, what you think it does or doesn't do so well. and what happens is first of all, people who care about the space that they work in, people who care about their mission, they're happy to help create better content in that space. I'm always surprised at the number of people who are more than happy to offer feedback on content, especially when you're not coming with an ask like, Hey, I want you to share this content. It's no, help me make this a little bit better. Help me get better at my craft. And so we got a lot of great feedback from it and turned our, the content that we were building into something better. And then when we went up to launch the content, we have this army of people who are not only have not only a given feedback on the content, now they're invested in the content success, right? Because they've, they've, they've been part of building it. Of course they want to succeed. It's something that they contributed to. And so now we can go back to all these people and say, hey, we please share this with your audience. I think. And they love it. I really appreciate your contribution. I do think it made it better. And so it was really a grind of authentic relationship building and, and collaboration with people that helped us. You'll get exposure to many, many, many people want our content actually launched.

David Abrams: 14:51 It's such an amazing system. It's something that I know my co-founder and I had both read on the Groove blog and tried ourselves when we first did it our ass kind of failed. We didn't get that many positive responses back. What tips or suggestions would you have to launch a campaign like that? I think it's such a great strategy, but where do you see like a winning thing that you can task or, or play with in that campaign?

Len Markidan: 15:15 Sure. So I think every email that you send is an opportunity to try something new. And we've probably just, in running this many, many different times, I've probably sent five to 600 variations of the same email and every single time, every single time you send something, you might get a data point that, oh no, that particular ask worked or that particular subject line work and overtime you build and have a quiver of, of different tools that you can use. And so the, the, the biggest tip that I can give for making something like this work, especially if

you've tried it and haven't gotten the results that you want, is the change up your variables, right and your variables are your subject line the way that you ask your, your, you know, your entire email. I think a lot of people will send the same email 50 times and then it doesn't work. And so they say, Hey, this strategy doesn't work for me. Um, and, and I'm not saying at all that you did that, I'm just saying that a lot of people do that. Um, but the opportunity that you have is if you're sending 50 emails, it's an opportunity to test it even two or three or four different approaches. And then the other piece of it is don't be afraid to follow up. Don't be afraid to make sure that if you don't hear back from somebody, you know, a gentle kind, empathetic followup is not a bad thing. there's how many times do you get an email as you're getting in the back of a lyft or a walking into a building where you look at it and say, Oh, okay, I'm, I'm gonna. Come back to that later. And then the next day it's on page three of your inbox and you're never going to get to it when that happens, especially often to people who get a ton of email because they are so influential because they have these big audiences. And so you're not going to annoy a lot of people if you just send a gentle nudge followup. It's just, hey, you know, I just saw that, yeah, we just, finished the next version of this draft. Would love to, we'd love to have you take a look at it if you don't mind. No worries. If you're busy, um, or you know, hey, just floating this back to your inbox for a lot of people. If it's something that they would have wanted to be involved in but didn't because the email just slipped, you're actually doing them a favor.

David Abrams: 17:32 I love that. That was such a great answer. And shout out to Reply.io who we've had on here. We use their system to do this. It was a great system to have those automated followups in the split testing, all that kind of stuff. So I'm highly recommend that system. I love that you guys did that for, for Podia and you took that experience and kind of blasted it. So then once you have the traction from the influencers and you have the content written, well, what about the Seo perspective? Any major lessons you learned, over at Groove or here now in Podia, anything positive or negative that you took away?

Len Markidan: 18:06 I think the biggest lesson there is how important it is to balance that technical aspect of it with writing great content and sending great emails, a Seo and content and seo driven content is, it's art and science and the science is understanding how to search for the keywords that people use, how, you know, how a search engine sees a website, getting all of those technical aspects right? And there are a lot of great rate resources that you can use to, to learn about that. You can check out a traffic think tank, which is a great online community for, for, with some very, very smart Seo folks in it. There are great blogs on Seo. The Moz blog is excellent. We actually hired an SEO expert to help us with this, but that science piece is really, really important to get right. And so was the art piece, right? Creating that extraordinary content, content that is clear and that is rich and that is enjoyable to read and you can veer too far in either direction or you can focus far too much on the science and you'll end up capturing search traffic. You'll have an inability to get prospects to fall in love with your brand. If your content isn't great, if your content isn't extraordinary or you can focus far too much on the art and end up with a library of wonderfully written content that nobody is reading and so most people will play to their strengths and they'll focus on one side of the equation, which is fine in the beginning, right? You will either create great content or you'll just focus on the, the, the keyword research and the Seo, the technical seo aspect of things. But eventually you're going to have to do both really well and I don't think there's a better investment in content marketing. Then too, get an expert who's really good at the side of content marketing that you're not good at and have them help you.

David Abrams: 19:58 Great Advice. I absolutely love that. And I have been on one of those sites before and not done the other side. So it's easy to do and I absolutely love that. I'm a big takeaway for people. And you mentioned live events being another big channel and avenue. I know we've done some sponsoring and some, you know, events and it sometimes works, sometimes doesn't. Great. I'd love to know what you guys are doing, whether you're sponsoring or whether

you're just making, you know, a marketing funnel out of it. Like what are you guys doing to make events work so well as a SaaS company?

Len Markidan: 20:32 Sure. So events are quite a big part of our marketing funnel actually. And, you know, I mentioned talking about finding out where your customers hang out. And so for us, what we've learned in a lot of that research was that our customers do hang out at events a lot. So we look for those events where our customers are. For example, we partnered with, with BeingBoss on a recent event that's an entrepreneurship community, that we partner with at a recent event in New Orleans. And they basically put 100 people in the room who either have already sold digital products or who were so deeply involved in a world where everyone else was creating digital products that they just too by their nature, we're really interested in getting started and so it was a really perfect fit for us, but the key with events that we found, at least the Internet's a noisy place and people say that all the time when they talk about SEO or content marketing, but events are a really, really noisy places that you're meeting new People. You're attending sessions, you're getting handed all kinds of cheap swag and so there are always a few key things that we look for when we partner with event organizers in order to help us rise above that noise. Because you're right, it's very easy to go to an event and sponsored event and sit in a booth and not really get a lot of ROI. And I think that that happens more often than not. But the things that we found that worked really well for us is number one, we always want to get onstage. We always want to teach the audience something which, you know, unlike say, putting your logo on the coffee cups, that's a great way to virtually guarantee that everyone there will actually know who you are by the end of the day and they'll know that you're for real. You can actually deliver some value. And the other thing is that we always want the event organizer to be a Podia customer. It makes it so much more authentic. It's much more powerful when the organizer can introduce us and say, you know, rather than, hey, here's Podia, they're paying for breakfast so give them your attention. it's, you know, hey, here's Podia and here are all the reasons I actually love this product and this company, the impact is just so much greater. So events can be a really, really terrific channel. You just have to rise above the noise, just like any other marketing effort.

David Abrams: 22:47 Sounds like you use them a lot in the same way that people can use partnerships. Really strategic partnerships. It's a win win for the audience, they have needs, you're going to be speaking to them about education and often times in partnerships they are customers of yours. Would you say that's kind of like the way you view it?

Len Markidan: 23:04 Yeah, you nailed it. I mean you mentioned, you mentioned partnerships and we do a lot of partnerships. We do a lot of affiliate marketing and we think of that in a very similar way to how we do events. Right. There are people out there who already have the ear of our prospects and you know, if we can incentivize them financially to shout about Podia from the rooftops that we'd be thrilled to do that. But again, the common theme that applies is that that authenticity matters and our highest performing affiliates by far are paying Podia customers who are authentic and are the ones where we can come in and do a Webinar for their audience and teach them something. So there are a lot of parallels.

David Abrams: 23:41 Okay, that's amazing. And how do you actually find these partnerships or how do you get on board with those relationships? We talked a little bit before about your email outreach to like content influencers. What about these direct, he's direct, I guess partnerships are strategic partners that you find.

Len Markidan: 23:58 Yeah, so a lot of it is for say, an overwhelming majority of it is from people who use Podia and we see them on the platform and we see that, you know, there are people coming in from their, from their Podia page that are clicking on clicking on our site and they're, they're checking this out and so that, that's a good indication that that's a person with a community

that we might have a good fit with it. And so we'll reach out and we'll try and build a relationship. And the other piece of it is, you know, that that customer research that I know I sound like a broken record, but I keep coming back to it, but talking to our customers and learning, what do they read? What do they listen to? Where do they, where do they, where do they spend their time online. That's where we get a lot of the people that we look at look at for, for potential partnerships because we know that they already have the ear of our current customers, so certainly they would have the ear of many of our potential customers. And so that's really where we build our lists rather than, you know, just looking for any and everybody who will slap our, our affiliate link on their, on their sidebar.

David Abrams: 25:00 Totally. And you said you sound like a broken record. I don't think so. I think you reminding us of the importance of the foundational principles of marketing. Who are they like know your audience is like less than number one, right? Know your audience. Where are they? How can you talk to them? What are their pains, what are their aspirations by their desires? And you guys have really fine tune that to create a great marketing machine. And it sounds like you've used three very great channels to start bringing in the right people. And when you're using these different channels, what type of KPI is, are you looking at when you're, when you're attacking them, are they similar, are they different for each channel? What does that look like?

Len Markidan: 25:37 Yeah, I think so. We have kind of overarching KPs that we look at and then we have channel specific KPIs and they do tend to change as the channel mature. So we have whenever, whenever we're testing a new channel, one of the things that we'll try to understand is you know, what are the, we call them green light metrics that will tell us that in the early stages this channel is looking promising for us, because if you're talking about content marketing will ultimately the metric you want content marketing to drive, it's going to be new paid subscribers from content marketing, but it's going to take a while to get there or even organic search traffic. So it's going to take a while to get there. That doesn't happen on day one. And so we think in the early days about, you know, what are the green light metrics that tell us that in the first couple of weeks, in the first month that this channel is showing promise for us.

Len Markidan: 26:27 So I'll give you some examples of content marketing. The green light metrics for us would be things like social shares or a referral links. Those are the kinds of things that you don't ultimately pay the bills, but they tell us in the early days that, yeah, if we might be onto something here, our content is, it's hitting the mark with people and if we keep at it and eventually will start hitting the metrics that really, really matter. And so, the metrics do change as the channel matures. But I would say that on the channel specific level, certainly on, content, we look at paid subscribers that come in from content. We look at search traffic, we look at, on partnerships, we look at paid subscribers that come in from partnerships. and then we, we're always looking at customer success across these channels. So when we look at metrics like the number of sales that our creators are making and the time it takes a creator to make their first sale, when we look at metrics like tell us about the success of our customers, we can also look at where our best customers are coming from, so what channels they're coming from and we can focus on those channels, on those partners, on those sources and that just makes all of our marketing a little bit more efficient and more effective.

David Abrams: 27:36 Definitely just wrote that down that you're looking at your best customer and where those channels are to dial in more. And I appreciate you talking about the green light zone. I think so many of us are looking for like, here are the KPIs and if we don't hit those KPIs, this channel won't work. And I think content specifically takes time. My followup question to that would simply be do you guys make timelines and say if we can't get those green light KPIs at a certain time, we abandoned this channel and go on. If things take time to warm up or didn't do and maybe you're not getting that direct ROI for awhile, how long can you roll with that? Until you

have to say, all right, we have to move to something else.

Len Markidan: 28:16 Totally. We do. We do. We do have timelines. I mean, whether they're written or in our heads. I mean, we, you definitely have to have a timeline for this because everybody will say, oh, we're going to experiment with this channel, we're going to test this channel. If you don't have an end date, it's not a real experiment. You're just kind of throwing stuff at the wall to see what sticks and, and you know, if you're honest about that, maybe that's fine. And maybe that's the way, you know, you want to run your marketing and you can be successful that way certainly. But, I think for us, if we're, if we're interested in actually rigorously testing a channel, we do have end dates. We have certain benchmarks that we want to hit in those, in those, in those time periods. So that, you know, if it's not working for us we can move on.

David Abrams: 28:56 I love that. Very helpful and very insightful. I appreciate that. And since you've joined last November, where have you taken growth with these channels?

Len Markidan: 29:04 So we are about triple the size from a, from a customer standpoint. We're in November, so it's been a, it's been good, but you know, this industry is going to be massive and, and, and the best days are ahead.

David Abrams: 29:19 Absolutely. But that's still amazing to come in and be able to massively overhaul marketing like that and see those results. That's amazing and crazy for me to say this, but this is the coming into the last month here in 2019 or 2018. I'm sorry, getting into 2019, what new opportunities do you see? You said, you know, you see this, this industry growing. What's changing in marketing for you guys and what are you excited about most?

Len Markidan: 29:45 Oh man. There's, there's, there's quite a lot. So we just released the results of a survey that we did. We asked creators, content creators about how they make money. And I think the most interesting finding to me is that roughly half of the creators that we talked to had a full time job, so they typically do their creative work on nights and weekends and of those creators, 73 percent of them plan to leave their jobs to go full time as a creator and of that 73 percent, about 40 percent of them plan to do it in the next 12 months. So the creator economy is absolutely booming. So our biggest challenge is just going to be how do we make sure that, as part time creators become full time creators and as new creators are forged, how can we support them, how can we make sure that they know that Podia exists to make their lives easier and to empower their work and so that's just gonna come from doing what we're doing, that's working and then doing more customer research to figure out what we can do next.

David Abrams: 30:47 Great answer. I love that. It sounds like you're very customer centric focus and you're excited to see their path unfold in their journey unfold. Well, that's amazing and really insightful stuff here through this interview so far. And what I want to do now is switch over to the lightning round questions. Just five quick questions you can answer with the best advice that comes to mind. you ready to get started?

Len Markidan: 31:07 Let's do it. Love lightning rounds.

David Abrams: 31:09 Yeah, let's do this thing. Okay. What advice would you give for early stage SaaS companies starting marketing today?

Len Markidan: 31:18 For every hour that you spend reading blog posts or trying to find the answer for how to do marketing, spend an hour talking to a customer and understand what their problems are, how they think about those problems where they spend time online and just know that that process never ends.



David Abrams: 31:31 I love that. It's such a parallel to what you mentioned all episode about just having that data and knowing that stuff. That's fantastic. What skill do you think is vital for marketing teams to improve and build on today?

Len Markidan: 31:44 I love this question at this time. I think the answer is thoughtfulness and authenticity and businesses are being fed a ton of advice around growth hacking or growth experimentation with, with a big focus on what are all the things that we can do to grow. Let's try as many as we can and, and see what works best. But I think very little attention is paid to should we grow this way and what does this growth tactic say about us to our core customers and to our community. I think an extreme example of this would be the very public way that Facebook has been struggling lately in the press is some of the kind of growth focus decisions they've made have come back to bite them. But I'll give you, I'll give you an example. So one growth hack that I keep hearing repeated over and over and over again is a scrape all of your competitors customers and then email them. I will, sure you'll probably get some new customers that way. but should you right? There's, I guess one, one example I've been thinking about is there's a, there's a restaurant here in my neighborhood. I live in Baltimore. There's restaurant in my neighborhood. It's five minutes from my house. I absolutely love it. The food is great. The service is great. I eat there every week. I'm a big fan and I recommend it to others. What if I saw the employees of that restaurant walking into the other restaurants in the neighborhood where people are eating and trying to convince those people to leave and come to their restaurant? Listen, maybe they'd get a few customers that way. Maybe they just happened to ask at a time when somebody was having a bad meal. But if I saw that happening as like, as a customer, I wouldn't feel very good about going back to this restaurant about recommending it to others. I don't think that we would value the same things. And so I wish more marketing teams would spend more time thinking about how they can grow in ways that are true to themselves, true to their values and the way they want their customers to view them.

David Abrams: 33:29 That was such an amazing answer. Thank you. I think you know, a lot of times the best things come from understanding your values, understanding who you want to be, what that company wants to be known as, the value systems that are ingrained in it. And it's easy to just focus on growth for growth's sake. I think that's a, a cultural norm that's happening in the soft space. We got to grow and grow and I think this great book by Jason Fried and David Heinemeier Hansson "It doesn't have to be crazy at work", talk about this idea of why do you have to grow for growth's sake? And I get it. If you're funded, that's one thing, but you know, there is a lot of shady things that you can do or a lot of things that aren't matching to your value system. So really well said. And I appreciate that as a really insightful answer. What about a best educational resource you'd recommend for learning about marketing or growth?

Len Markidan: 34:23 Best educational resource. I will, I'll give you a few. So there is, whenever a marketer joins our team there are a few books that I always, I'm always wanting to read. So number one, everything Seth Godin has written particularly, particularly Permission Marketing and Purple Cow. I mean, especially if you want to talk about it, if you want, if you want to think about your marketing with values and marketing that makes people fall in love with your brand because it's great not because you've interrupted them. Ogilvy on Advertising is an excellent book. It's, I think about 30 years old at this point, 35 years old at this point and everything. And it still holds true today, Tested Advertising Methods, which is another kind of textbooky like book on copywriting that will teach you so much about empathy and writing, writing for people. and then the last one is called Breakthrough Advertising, which is actually a textbook and it's out of print. So if you look at it on Amazon right now, depending on the day, it'll be somewhere between two and \$800, but don't pay that much. I've seen her on Ebay at times for around 40 or 50 bucks, but when you see it at that price, definitely worth scooping up.

David Abrams: 35:34 I think I found a pdf online with it as well. Just like a download, so I'll have to see if I can find that. But that's an insanely good resource. I think that's David Ogilvy as well, right?

Len Markidan: 35:45 Breakthrough Advertising is by Eugene Schwartz, but yeah, they're, they're the same, the same rat pack of, of, of brilliant copywriters.

David Abrams: 35:57 Yeah, those are, those are all great resources and I'm going to have to circle back and go back through some of those are all great names, great books. I highly recommend. How about a favorite tool you can't live without?

Len Markidan: 36:08 I have been head over heels in love with Heap lately.

David Abrams: 36:13 Oh my God. So good.

Len Markidan: 36:14 It's so good as a, as a, as a marketer who's used to Google Analytics and then just other really, really clunky analytics tools in the past. Heap is incredible. It is by far the best marketing analytics tool I've ever used. Highly, highly recommended it.

David Abrams: 36:31 And for you SaaS teams out there, they have a SaaS program if you are still growing and young, so definitely highly recommend that as well. What about a brand business or team that you admire today?

Len Markidan: 36:43 Well we talked about marketing. We talked about thoughtful companies. I really, really respect. I really respect my friends on the Buffer marketing team a lot. They create a ton of value for people through their marketing, with their various blogs and they're always really thoughtful and deliberate about what they will and won't do to grow their company. So I think they're just phenomenal.

David Abrams: 37:03 They're rock stars and we were lucky enough to have them on an earlier episode and they're just, they're brilliant and hardworking, great team. So that's a really great brand to pick and you know, then I just want to thank you again for coming on the show for being a part of this or being so transparent and honest and providing so much information. So thank you so much for your time today.

Len Markidan: 37:23 Thanks so much for having me. This was awesome.

David Abrams: 37:24 It was awesome. Really appreciate it and we'll talk to you again soon and thanks so much.

Len Markidan: 37:29 Take care. Have a great day.

David Abrams: 37:30 You too. Bye. Bye now.

David Abrams: 37:33 Oh Man. I told you this was going to be a great episode. I truly hope you enjoyed having Len on today. It was our pleasure to host the Podia team. Thank you so much guys, for being so transparent, providing so much great content today on the SaaS Breakthrough show. Now, if you haven't joined our SaaS break through community, it's a free SaaS group on Facebook. You can go to [demio.com/fb](https://demio.com/fb) to join this free group to continue the conversation, to speak to many of our amazing guests and have more SaaS content provided to you totally for free. And if you want to see more of these episodes, you can come to our blog that's [learn.demio.com](https://learn.demio.com). We have

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