

00:00 David Abrams: Hello, hello and welcome to a special episode, number 50, 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 that are in the trenches experimenting on a daily basis to grow their MRR and build amazing businesses. My name is David Abrams and I'm one of the co-founders of Demio and we're the ones who run this podcast, the SaaS breakthrough podcast, so we truly appreciate you taking the time to listen today. So like I mentioned before, this is a special episode number 50, and on this episode I'd like to create a pretty unique structure. I would love to talk about what are the big things that happened in Demio in our retrospective of 2018. We're here in the first week of January 2019. There's a lot of great stuff that happened. I love to talk about some of the great events and lessons learned from them. Talk about what the big opportunities will be in 2019 by the past guests amazing SaaS marketers that we've had on the podcast. I want to review what the top five skills our guests have said you need to keep developing, especially in 2019. Then of course end with all the exciting things coming in 2019 for Demio. So let's go ahead and let's jump on today's episode.

01:26 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.

01:43 2018 was a pretty crazy year here at Demio. We look at the end of 2017 and we had totally revamped our entire streaming engine. We had revamped everything from the core up and it took us about six months, so when we kind of came into 2018, we're really excited to get the new engine out there and moving. Our growth was great in 2017 and when we approach 2018 we really wanted to continue to improve on the core parts of Demio. Now engineering honestly went slower than we expected and we have focused so much on the core aspects that often times some of the features or new items that we're excited about, had to get pushed back. We had to focus on core stability, reliability, scale items. Our company was growing. We wanted to focus on user interface. How do we make our experience better, easier. How do we learn about our customers more? How can we make onboarding better, innovate on the lessons we want to learn from our customers. Those are the things that we really dialed on early in 2018.

02:45 Now we have a smaller engineering team, so a lot of times these things take time for us to knock out along with all the other things that we have going on on a day to day basis, but even in 2018, our product still evolved like crazy and then we found our focus SaaS companies, the SaaS marketing teams that we wanted to support, things really started to make sense on our roadmap. We were able to revamp and innovate a brand new webinar room, a completely new design for our backstage, for how to chat in our engagement features and functions work. We totally changed the attendee and the presenter point of view, making it easier, simpler and faster than ever before.

03:25 We added a brand new registration. Thank you page and replay editors, preparing this whole process to be one seamless integrated process for any future webinar. We started the foundational steps to completely overhaul how webinars are created, the process for that, and we're actually working on a brand new update to that to make it even simpler and easier. We actually did brand new code updates on the inside of Demio, clear through tech debt. A lot of stuff that customers never see, but on our end it takes weeks and months worth of work to make Demio a better platform. We changed our onboarding processes, asked more questions from surveys. We added a simulated Webinar to showcase how Demio works when you run live Webinars, this has been a huge win for us and of course our biggest update of the year was our brand new automated webinar functions that we call automated.

04:19 The best part is that these items, what was released in 2018, was just the start of what's

changing at Demio. Honestly, we can't wait to execute the rest of the items on our roadmap. It is chocked full of amazing new user experience updates, foundational items that will allow our new engagement features, our new functions and analytics to really shine. In fact, we'll even have an update, a huge update out before this podcast even releases later this week, so we're really excited for that as well. Some other major crazy wins in 2018. I look back on and I'm just so proud of. We had one of our very first team members, one of our very first interns go from a support role to marketing role to discover that they wanted to get into engineering, put himself through engineering, brought him back on as an intern and engineering and now is a full time junior engineer at the company and just doing an amazing job. It was an incredible transformation for him and, and kind of watching him thrive and grow and he's doing great things with a very unique perspective on the product, going through all of those different roles. He's able to bring some of the really cool to our team.

05:31 We saw our support team transform into customer success. I spent a solid three months in 2018 just refining this department kind of optimizing what we're going after, the KPIs we want to have in that department, what our team should do and look like and work with. You know this team grew from one person, before that it was just me in customer success desk, to one person that we brought on to now we have five great people in there. One of our team members from that role has also evolved into a growth role. So some really cool evolution inside of our team.

06:07 But the biggest thing is my co-founder Wyatt and I really were able to fine tune what our focus and our vision is for Demio, find Demio real value through these conversations with customers. To seeing people use Demio, hear what the feature requests were, hear what the problems were, things that we could fix and create better along the way and we finally have this great roadmap to differentiation to something powerful and palpable with a platform like Demio and more than anything, we made some amazing connections. We grew an awesome audience from listeners like you, made friends in the industry and built great relationships and partnerships along the way. Something that we're forever grateful for.

06:50 We also were able to participate in and went to a couple of great events in 2018. SaaStr 2018 in San Francisco is a huge event. We had gone a few years prior before we even had a product out, so it was really cool to go last year, talk to people, talk about strategies, meet people that we knew in the SaaS community and see them there. SaaStr always has incredible speakers, so we were in and out of sessions and the networking part was awesome, but of course just seeing, you know, the friends and connections there was just an incredible experience. It was a little overwhelming with that many people there and it was sometimes you felt like you were being kind of corralled around because there's just so many SaaS people, but it was an incredible experience and highly recommend that event to anyone that is interested and the other one that we did, we actually sponsored was the SaaStock 2018 event in Dublin. This was a really interesting event. This was our first time sponsoring a SaaS conference, we sponsored conferences in the past, but never SaaS conferences. We did an entire episode, episode 40, where I recapped our lessons learned from just going out to Dublin, the wins, the losses, everything that we learned. So if you're interested in what it's like to sponsor a SaaS events and being early stage like we still are and you want to hear those lessons, absolutely do that. Go back to episode 40. We'll link that in our show notes and we actually brought on some great guests after that episode, straight from that conference. You know, SaaS teams and companies that I talked to, we brought them on the podcast and talked to them. That's a lot of the episodes after episode 40 there's some amazing speakers, but a lot of the sponsorships there were just great SaaS companies, great examples of what our industry is doing.

08:32 The greatest part about this podcast and the interesting part is that I get to speak to so many brilliant, intelligent marketers out there, people that are doing great things in their companies, but everyone is doing obviously something different. Every company has their own problems.

Every company has their own audience and solutions and niche and market and all that great stuff, but there are some common questions I asked across the board in these podcasts and the reasons that I do that is because I want to see if there's any common lessons or common opportunities or things that we can all from our SaaS community see folks on, work on. So one of the things that I want to hop into is some of the big opportunities that people saw coming up in 2019, where their focus was going to be.

09:18 Now the interesting part is a lot of people really started to talk about the idea of personalization, this hyper personalization that's going to be coming up online in the next few years. Really it starts with understanding and refining who your customer is, refining that message and getting hyper personalized. In fact, Matt Stone at Gainsight had a really good quote on hyper personalization: "But a lot of it is just like more and more personalization as we as we go along. I mean, it can't be stated enough that it's like people respond well to things that are relevant to them, right. It's like you get you know, tons and tons of cold emails every day and it just becomes more and more natural just to immediately delete them and get rid of them in the inbox and stuff and it's, it's the cold emails and things that have something in their subject line that is relevant to you. It talks about, like for me, I'm from. I went to school at Arizona state, so maybe it's talking about the ASU football team or something like that that catches my attention. You know, it's something that takes people a lot of time to do this research just to send an email, so it doesn't scale very well. And so it's all about like how do you get this hyper personalization but at scale, because you know, you still need to cast a wide net in order to kind of get to a number and things like that, but you can't spend 15 minutes just drafting everything and then how do you do it through kind of a one amendment tool like a marketing automation platform where, you know, if we're going to send out an email to 40,000 people, how are we going to tailor the message to get them to respond to it? So, you know, lots of different tools are coming out every day for this, like different ABM tools, web personalization tools so that when you're hitting our sites, a relevant message fixed for you and your industry or your persona or different things like that. So there's just so much going on that, I mean, we're going to constantly be trying to figure out how we can do that better. And what new technologies are out there that can help us do that kind of stuff".

11:24 Rod Austin from Pagely had a really great idea of this value based outreach, optimizing for people again around the personalization of these people: "I've always been pretty heavy on the SEO side of marketing lands. I think as search evolves to incorporate voice, user intense and you know, whatever trickery the search engines use behind the scenes. It's important to keep a tab on that. But really focus more on value, you know, not as value for your prospects or how, how the world perceives you or your company, but value for your team. You know, I haven't dove deep on how different Pagely is, but we have our own core of values. We try to let that bleed through on everything we do from sales to support to marketing. So yeah, I went off on a tangent there, but, but really using that value in all parts of your business, but especially marketing. I think that's why the value based outreach concept is so successful as in that scenario we're kicking the ball to the other side of the fence, you know, we want to give these folks value so we can establish a relationship with them and then at a later point, have a conversation about where they host Wordpress. So in terms of the big picture, I would say, you know, getting more personalized because you can't really give them value unless you know what's important to them. And, and really optimizing for people and not necessarily a search term, a Buzzword, that kind of thing".

12:58 Another major opportunity that people talked about was transparency. This big transparency movement, this honesty with your customers. And I think Lucy from Reply.io had a really great kind of comment on that: "It means that to stay in this world, to stay like successful, to stay productive, you need to change with the time. And though there are some things that would be different. Of course the SEO will change at least a bit. It changes everywhere because Google Algorithm, they keep going, keep getting more complicated. They keep getting stronger, they keep

tying up the search intent to the interest of the user and their behavior, but there are still some, you know, like pieces of general truth that will always stay the same. For example, it's like do a good product first or be honest with your customers, or make sure that you are marketing will always return not only in the, you know like good feedback but also in money because following the money trail might seem a bit, maybe harsh, but it's true because users can tell you that they're very excited with your product, but if they don't buy it doesn't mean anything. So I guess it's kind of balancing between something that will stay the same even 100 years from now and trying to keep up with the industry changes as much as we can do".

14:36 Miles DePaul from Mailjet talked about how this is shifting in the B2B world: "The biggest challenge that I constantly deal with is both from a marketer and the consumer is information overload. And I've read recently, I think it was a Neil Patel article, just that there's, like half a billion blogs online and if you include Medium and Tumbler that scales well above a billion different blogs on online. How are you being heard in that noise. So the, yeah, the challenge is being heard. I think the, everybody's jumping on all sorts of different platforms and you know, I'm a lover of podcasting, so I love that you're doing this and I think you've really, it is about kind of carving out that unique approach, that unique channel, those different platforms. But I'm just such a believer in the, I guess personalization of everything. So really moving away from just writing content and producing videos or webinars that are yeah, just kind of generic advice, the five steps you need for email marketing and really making it about either stories of your customers or stories of yourself and putting you as the marketer or you as a brand a bit more vulnerable out there.

15:50 Here's what we've dealt with, here's the challenges we're, we're currently dealing with. So for instance, I'm currently working on a blog that's, is basically about like the, all the different collaboration tools that we at Mailjet use and what's exciting about that is I can go hopefully a bit past the ideas of like, here is Slack and this is why Slack is great and here's a quote from the CEO about why Slack is great and I could actually go in and interview my team and I can have them tell their unique story and I can, you know, it's by the way, Slack is by far the most loved tool within our team. And I think it's really kind of giving a bit more of that exposure into brands I think goes so far. So I'm really intrigued to see how, you know, the trends in kind of consumer marketing of authenticity and really transparency. Yeah, exactly. All that's, I think gonna start and it already has absolutely moving into the B2B world. So I expect that to continue and I think it's just going to be a pretty big challenge to, that's a culture change they have to deal with. And I think it's kind of inevitably going to happen, so how do you navigate that and how do you deal with the competing opinions on our team that might not want to go in that direction".

17:06 It was also interesting to hear from some of the course creator companies that ecommerce is making a little bit of shift as well. Here's the Len from Podia and what he thinks is kind of changing in 2019: "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 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".

18:07 And Andrew from Teachable: "One thing that just sticks out to me though, is that if you look at all of our most successful instructors, like so many of them, they have all of these different formats that they're selling, all these different types of products that they're selling beyond online courses. And so I don't know how that's gonna change or what's going to be impacted, but I do think

we're (inaudible) Teachable at least we need to think about being there for them when they want to sell other other formats and I think there will be like a pretty big advantage and a pretty big moat around any company that can offer the ability to sell more than online courses and a lot of different types of information. And also like if you can help them make more money, if you can help them make a sale just by virtue of being on you, like I think that's, that's a real shift that's going to, that's going to eventually play out and become a thing that exists probably like five years out".

19:20 It seems like everybody is utilizing 2019 to focus on different things and it makes sense. Everyone trying to focus on their weaknesses, get better scale of the things that are working, from honing competitive advantages to look at easier onboarding and ways to make the product better, to team and positioning to amplify thought leadership and penetrating different markets across the board with localized webinars or translations, moving their company to a more international market. Getting deeper on understanding their personas and perfecting the messages to those personas. Really education, growth, social proof. All of these things are the major focuses for a lot of these teams.

20:04 So my question to you would be, what are you going to be working on in 2019 to scale or grow your marketing? For us, it's following in the shoes of David Kim, who was on our last episode from Hubspot and his feedback on the most powerful growth channel for Hubspot, which was SEO and content marketing. For us that's what we're going to focus on. We put together a really great plan for 2019 as far as our SEO and content marketing plan and we're beginning to execute right now and on the last episode with David Kim, he talked about how powerful it was for Hubspot to really take off and he left a really great note for anyone that wanted to go deeper into SEO: "Honestly, it's, it's something I really 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 Hubspot we're continuing to invest heavily on".

21:13 Another great question that we can look back on through the past 50 episodes and try to find some, some information on is the top five skills that you need to keep developing as a marketer. I thought this was a really interesting question and very interesting to hear the different overlaps from people. So in just a segment of these episodes, we heard writing as a marketer is a skill that you must, must focus on as a marketer in 2019. We had more than 15 different people say writing, copywriting or storytelling, a real commitment to understanding how to write, engage and capture interest with language. And I think John Bonini at Databox really said it best: "I'm going to say writing all the time. I come from a journalism background. So, and I think the most, terms sort of in demand skill for marketers is people that can write and tell stories, but I think it's also become increasingly more important to, to also be able to tell stories across different mediums now, audio, video. So I think, you're gonna, you're gonna see a lot of bloggers, content and the written words always going to work, but I think you're gonna see a lot of content writers trying to expand their skillset to also be able to feel comfortable on camera and be able to put together audio. So I think those three things, being able to write and tell stories and then being able to sort of, you know, write scripts, right, and being able to, to, to perform in those different mediums is gonna be huge".

22:45 Another high ranking skill that people talked about was the drive to become a better data driven marketer. Agata from SimScale had a really great quote on being data driven: "I will sound like a broken box, being data driven, I said it a lot of times already. I think it is just because great marketers nowadays, especially the ones leading an marketing department at a startup, actually matters the most at a startup, need to be growth hackers. And for that, you can follow your guts feelings, but you really need to be able to know your numbers and this will allow you to focus on the right things and will also allow you to make the most out of the marketing experiments and

the budget that you have, which is usually for the startups is very limited as well".

23:34 We heard a lot about education and the idea of where video and educational content is going to go. Andy Baldacci at Groove had a really great quote on what he thinks video expertise on content actually means: "So, depending on how to go at this is first, like if it's like a true like skill or tactic, I would say like it seems video is growing in importance and I can't imagine it's gonna slow down at all, something I don't have much experience with myself, but I'm gonna kind of start working on that. So I think that video does seem to be the future, but on a more fundamental level, one thing that's kind of like, I don't know if I call it a pet peeve of mine, but one thing I've always noticed is that like content marketing is not new at this point. Most startups are doing some form of content, obviously with varying levels of success. But I think there's very few marketers out there, very few startups that can really claim to be like actual experts in what they're writing about. And it's one of those things where it's easy to go through the motions and kind of write what you think you should be writing. But if you're trying to sell to, especially in B2B, if you're trying to sell to a business owner who lives this industry, who has been in for decades potentially, you're not gonna be able to have an entry level writer create content that actually educates so much. You'd need to have someone who has been in that space who lives and breathes it as well. And that's something I don't think enough startups are investing in, in just developing that true expertise. I think if you can do that, you'll stand out as a marketer and you'll definitely stand out, as a startup if you can keep executing on that".

25:16 There was a big push around creativity. I think it was absolutely amazing to have Adam from Webflow come on and talk about creativity and art and what that means in marketing. He had a really great understanding of what creativity meant for skill in 2019: Yeah. I mean I think it's creativity and art. Not to undercut them, but like people really hard skills are becoming table stakes, right? Like to be in marketing you need to have like SEO skills if you're doing that or like analytic skills to really understand campaigns. But like what people. I really believe people are, not that they're losing, they're not focusing enough on the creativity side and the artistic side because that's what can help you really stand out".

25:56 And finally, as mentioned before, as far as an opportunity, I think the idea of transparency is a critical thing that we can all learn from. Len Markidan from Podia had a really great comment on what he thought transparency and authenticity actually meant to 2019: "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 a, 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 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 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 growth focused 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'm sure you'll probably get some new customers that way, but should you? Right. There's, I guess 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 a restaurant in my neighborhood is 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. Well, what if I saw the employees of that restaurant and 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. So 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 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. So I wish there more marketing teams would spend

more time thinking about how they can grow in ways that are true to themselves through their values and the way they want their customers to view them".

27:59 Now obviously that's just a segment of the different podcast episodes and this is part of our lightning round so it doesn't talk about everything that's upcoming in 2019, everything that you need to know as a marketer, but it's definitely some of the top skills that some of the top, the best marketers in SaaS are talking about and looking forward again, we're excited about all of those different things.

28:22 Now for us, things coming up in 2019 at Demio, things for us to rally around and be excited about is our SEO push, our traffic generation drive, our big focus on increasing ARPU and bringing in the right customers and building the product market fit, the roadmap that we absolutely want to do for the SaaS companies, companies like yourselves coming into Demio. We'll be working on things like premium integrations, deeper integration at different higher end CRM, autoresponders, deeper engagement, analytics and insights, more of the functions and features that you need, and of course doubling down on this podcast, doubling down on great content that you absolutely love to digest, so we hope to hear from you in the future. I would love to hear your questions, your thoughts on what's happening in 2019 in the state of SaaS. Thanks so much for listening to this episode and we'll talk to you soon.