

Inspirational Marketers featuring ConnectWise

Piyush Saggi

Greetings, everyone. I'm Piyush Saggi. I'm the co-founder and CEO here at Parmonic in Atlanta.

I have a very special guest with me today, Jodi McFarlane from ConnectWise. Jodi, thanks so much for coming to our inspirational market as series and spending some time with me.

I really appreciate it.

Jodi McFarlane

Thank you. Happy to be here.

Piyush Saggi

I want to start with some fun questions. Let's start with your personal journey first. Tell us about where you grew up, some fond childhood memories, and then a little bit about your professional journey that brought you to where you are today.

Jodi McFarlane

Okay. Interestingly enough, I'm originally from Jamaica. And I came to the US for college and just never left because I found a great opportunity with ConnectWise.

I've had a couple different roles within a company that led me to my passion for content. And so, here we are today. And I will say my favorite snack is junk food.

I love to eat gummies. Yeah. And then my favorite movie, I watched a movie the other day that was pretty good called 12 Strong.

And it was a story on what happened after 911? There was a team of 12 people who went to Afghanistan and their story that we didn't hear or know about until now.

Piyush Saggi

Oh, wow. Thanks for sharing that. And so, where did you go to college and where do you live right now?

Jodi McFarlane

I went to the University of South Florida, which is located in Tampa, Florida. And that's where I live today.

Piyush Saggi

Okay. Very good. That is such a fun place to live. Tell me, Jodi, who's the most inspirational person who's had the biggest impact on your life professionally or personally?

Jodi McFarlane

I feel like this is a pretty cheesy one, but I am going to say it's my mom because she just really inspired me to go after anything.

A big thing she said to me growing up was just, "Life will find itself for you if you just go after the things that you find the most interesting." And so, that's what I've done.

And it really has just, everything's worked out because I've always been following what I think I'm most passionate about at the time.

And it's worked out pretty well so far.

Piyush Saggi

That's great. Moms are pretty inspirational and full of wisdom.

Jodi McFarlane

They are.

Piyush Saggi

Very good. Then let's segue into some questions related to your professional life. Maybe let's start, Jodi, with what do you think has become marketing's role these days?

We are in the middle of 2022. Almost exiting that pandemic that upended everybody's life, but still not quite fully back to normal.

What's marketing's role these days here in 2022? And then I also want to understand what are the big objectives for you and your team?

Jodi McFarlane

Right. I think marketing's role today is to be a storyteller. I think that's something a lot of people probably are leaning more towards.

With COVID, content became even more important and telling those stories in different ways because people consume content in different ways.

That's what my role is directly responsible for as the content strategy manager at ConnectWise. But I really think everything starts with content in marketing.

Piyush Saggi

It's true.

Jodi McFarlane

Some of the objectives, there is different stages of the funnel, different areas of the business we have to support.

It's a wide variety, but I think what we're finding now is that there's more of a push to show ROI. You have to prove how everything that you're doing is really turning into revenue or helping to create revenue.

Piyush Saggi

Absolutely. And are you indicating from a content perspective, it's about showing the ROI of the content? Is that what you were alluding to?

Jodi McFarlane

Yes. And that's something that I'm working on now as well. We're trying to build dashboards, talking about multitouch attribution versus just last touch.

That's really where my focus is.

Piyush Saggi

I see. Oh, that's fascinating. That's such an important area. Means every role of marketing has to show ROI, but content moreso. Do you feel, based on where we all are as marketers right now, the content marketing engines, how mature are they in terms of ROI?

Jodi McFarlane

From my perspective, most people are not very mature, including myself. It's a journey to get there. And I think we're collectively all trying to get to that point to prove the ROI of content.

Piyush Saggi

Right. Absolutely. That's great. Let's talk a little about from a content perspective, content format perspective, where do videos, webinars fit into your content marketing strategy?

Jodi McFarlane

I think videos and webinars are becoming even more important today than they were maybe five years ago. It's certainly something that we've placed more emphasis on lately.

I think everybody too, at the beginning of COVID if you weren't already doing webinars, it was a mad dash to make sure that you are including that because some people just enjoy listening more than reading something.

And so, it's really important to have that diversity in content formats.

Piyush Saggi

That's great. Now, as you look at your strategy for the year, Jodi, how do you think about webinars? Are they playing a role top of the funnel, bottom of the funnel?

Or how do you think about where to place video and webinar content in the overall buyer's journey?

Jodi McFarlane

I think it's both. Previous to this role, I was managing our webinar program and I would map the different webinars we were doing, both to top of funnel and bottom of funnel, to make sure that we had a mixture.

We would have different webinars that were more educational. But then also other webinars that were more like, okay, here's a deep dive into the product, or innovations that we have for products, or introducing people to a new product that we have.

Piyush Saggi

I see, that's fascinating. You are applying videos and webinars to different stages of the funnel at the bottom of the funnel, top of the funnel. And do you think of videos, webinars more from a brand marketing perspective.

Do you think about it from a demand gen, lead gen perspective? How do you think this particular content format?

Jodi McFarlane

Right. Again, I'm going to say both because we do have some webinars that the plan is to drive demand and to get people at the end of the webinar to raise their hands, to want to talk to sales.

But then we also have some that are more of our brand playing. For example, cybersecurity is an area that we're focusing on now as well.

And we did a webinar that was about the executive order for cybersecurity, and that really didn't have any tie to our products, but it was just more educational to make sure that the industry was aware of what was happening.

Piyush Saggi

I see. That's great. And so, as you talked a couple minutes earlier, Jodi, around ROI from a content strategy perspective, how are you thinking these days about ROI on webinars and videos?

That's been a question I've seen a lot of other marketers think about. As a marketer, you can go produce a very nice looking website, which could take a long time.

You can produce some written PDF contents. You can build interactives, you can do video. How are you thinking about videos, webinars from an ROI perspective?

Jodi McFarlane

Right. We are building a content performance dashboard as we speak. It's in development right now, but that dashboard is really to show that multitouch attribution.

Previously, we're only doing last touch, which we know, somebody doesn't just do one thing and then buy your product. You really have to look at is it influencing deals further in the funnel, further up in the stage of the funnel?

Piyush Saggi

Right. That sounds fabulous. I think as you build out this new tool, it'll be great to learn more about what you're doing there. Because a lot of marketers I've spoken with, I've interviewed, that's been a big gap for a lot of people.

How do you ascertain the value of good content? Let's segue into the next question, which is we welcomed you to the Parmonic family a couple months back.

We are grateful we get to work with you. How do you use Parmonic? What led you to harmonic as well, Jodi? What was the objective, the pain point that led you to Parmonic?

Jodi McFarlane

Right. We had a bigger emphasis on webinars at the beginning of COVID. And we have a very robust webinar program now with maybe eight or nine webinars a month.

And so, we've been doing that for the past two years. And then, realizing that we want to leverage that content beyond just the one webinar day that we have, or the webinar being on demand.

But also, how do we drive people to engage with the on- demand webinar? We stumbled upon Parmonic and really love the ease of use of the tool.

It's just an easy way to grab little snippets from the webinar that we can promote on social media or put on the landing page to entice somebody to want to watch the webinar on demand.

Yeah, that's pretty much what led us to the tool. And as a bonus, the transcription from Parmonic is so much better than what we were using before.

The team's very happy with it and we're looking forward to using the tool more. And as we mentioned, finding the ROI to prove that, it really has made a difference.

Piyush Saggi

That's great. I know it's been just a couple months since you started using Parmonic. What are your early thoughts on what you've seen so far in your adoption of Parmonic?

What impact has it already started having on you, the team, the brand overall?

Jodi McFarlane

Right. It has made it a lot easier to get those little snippets from the webinars, because previously, it would require somebody to have to listen to the entire webinar and jot down time codes of where we want to create those little snippets.

And then turn that around to a video person in order to produce that. With Parmonic, anybody can be a video editor, essentially, because you just go into the tool and click.

You can see the whole transcription and you click the sections that you want the snippet to create. And there it is, so easy. I think it is definitely useful, especially with smaller teams.

We only had one video person and, as I mentioned, eight or nine webinars each month. It was just too much to do so manually.

Piyush Saggi

Right. That's great. I can imagine. And hopefully, your video person also now can focus his or her time on more creative projects. That's great to hear.

Jodi, as we begin to wrap our conversation up, the last thing I want to ask you is what are three tips for other marketers? Both from a Parmonic perspective, others who are looking at Parmonic, thinking about Parmonic, as well as your lessons learned as a marketer, as an inspirational marketer that you want to tell other folks that they should look out for.

Jodi McFarlane

Well, first I would say always think about repurposing your content, which is what led us to Parmonic as well. Is you have a lot of good content already.

It's not always about creating something new, but leveraging what already exists. With Parmonic, we're able to do that with our webinars to get more out of what already exists.

And so my other tip would be make sure that you're staying in touch with your audience. That's something that I'm really passionate about is making sure that you are doing interviews with, we call them partners, but your customers.

In order to make sure that the content you're creating resonates with them, you understand their pain points. It can be a more relatable story.

I spoke earlier about the importance of storytelling. And when you really understand your audience, it just makes the marketing that you do more impactful.

Piyush Saggi

That is so valuable and powerful. Can you elaborate a little more on that? I think a lot of people watching this will get value out of it. Do you use any particular framework?

What kind of questions do you ask partners, customers to understand their experience with the content?

Jodi McFarlane

Right. It's a combination. We have our product marketing team that is always doing conversations with our partners or executive leadership team as well.

They have a cohort where they're in touch with our partners and hearing stories from them on a weekly basis and trickling that down. Any insightful tidbits they can refer us to that partner to get more information on those stories.

But we also use Gong to record a lot of the conversations that sales having. That's also super useful because you can search through the conversations that they're having to gain that insight without physically having to be on every single call.

Piyush Saggi

Right. That's a great tip there. Very good, Jodi. Thank you so much. I really appreciate you taking time out of your busy schedule and sharing some really inspirational insights with our audience.

Thank you again for being my guest today.

Jodi McFarlane

No problem.