How Marketers Stay Productive!

INTERVIEW SERIES

PART II

brightpod™

This series focuses on the tips & tricks that

startup marketers and

founders use to stay productive.

Sit back with a cup of coffee and enjoy :)

Jordan Skole of Ambassador

Aaron Beashel of Campaign Monitor

Jason Rodriguez of Litmus

Bogomil Shopov of Usersnap

Clément Delangue of Mention

Alexandra Tachalova of SEMrush

Ravi Parikh of Heap

Sofia Quintero of Geckoboard

Suzanne Louis of 1CRM

Lance Padgett of Formstack

Belle Beth Cooper of Exist

Jordan Skole
of Ambassador

💼 Minister of Marketing at Ambassador

📍 Location: Royal Oak, MI

📱 Your favorite gadget: I have a stainless steel Sharpie that brings me joy every time I use it.

☀ You start your day with: My dog and a latte.

⏱ Top 3 blogs you read daily: inbound.org, growthhackers.com, Martin Stellar.

"Bigger customers have bigger timelines,
so we know that the path to purchase might take some time."

Describe an average day at Ambassdor?

I wake up at around 6:30/7:00 am and take my dog out. It's helpful because it gets me out of bed and off to a fresh start. I'll typically make myself a poor-man's latte to cut the time and expense of stopping by Starbucks on the way into work.

Every morning I carpool to work with my fiancé. Not only do we save on gas but it gives us time that we can spend together that we wouldn't be able to otherwise. I usually get to work just before 9. I start my day by checking my email, Twitter, Growthhackers.com and Inbound.org. I participate in as many conversations as I can provide value to, and then add all the best posts to my Buffer for the day/week.

Next, I check my marketing kanban board. I use Zapier to create automated weekly tasks.

- These are the same every week:
- SEO Crawl errors for our blog & our main site.
- Queueing up social media posts for the week and participating in conversations/answering questions.
- Checking for upcoming conferences and running Twitter leadgen campaigns.
- Check our adwords/paid performance and make adjustments.
- Check our video retargeting and make adjustments.
- Rotate copy/assets on our display & retargeting ads.
- Run Google Analytics reports.
- Check out the health of our content board and add new topics based on identified SEO opportunities.

Once the chores are done I'll switch to content management, and will order content pieces based on which ones I think are the strongest. We work with a number of different freelancers, guest bloggers, and internal content pieces. I'll try and select the best posts and schedule them based on when they will get the most traction. The best post typically get published on Wed mornings.

Then I'll dive into editing content as a final draft. This includes drawing

custom images. I'll try and expand on topics that the author touched upon to make them more tactical and actionable. I'll gently optimize the posts for SEO, and making sure any citations fit in with our company objectives. I'll then throw those off to be QA-ed a final time before posting them.

After that I get into the fun part. I'll typically have 1-2 big projects that I am working on that are more technical. These vary, but are what I would call the "growth hacks". A recent project was using Drip's unreleased automation feature to move leads from our email crash course & resource downloads to a nurturing blog posts campaign.

As a marketer, what are some of your favorite productivity hacks?

My most important productivity hack is to turn my phone to airplane mode as soon as I get into the office. I'll typically leave it on airplane mode all day except for the commute home from work, unless I am driving.

I also turn email and Hipchat notifications off unless I am explicitly mentioned. This helps me stay focused on a single task at any given time.

I use Zapier for all kinds of automation. We send leads to a spreadsheet and to Hipchat for example. I'll use it to fire tracking events that never happen on our servers. For example we'll setup Chargify webhooks to ping a Zapier catch webhook attached to a post route to Segment.io when a customer makes a billing payment. Since we know the user's id we can tie CLTV directly to a channel, or a campaign even.

As a person who is well-versed with online marketing, I'm sure you rely on a few marketing tools to automate your efforts. What are the top 3-5 tools you use?

There are plenty of tools that I use.

As you can imagine, there are probably close to 100 different tools that I use on any given day, and need to really be a master of all of them. That being said, my favorite 5 tools all share a similar theme; they are all very modular.

Zapier – One of the best kept secrets of Zapier is it's extensibility. If you don't see a service you can just add it. You can take any service that utilizes a RESTful API and create both triggers and actions for it. Even if it isn't RESTful you can still add it with a little bit of pre scripting javascript magic.

Segment.io – Imagining life before Segment gives me mental breakdowns. Segment allows us to keep all of our internal tracking methods consistent across all of our different integrations.

Google Analytics – KISSmetrics and Mixpanel are great, but the truth is, Google Analytics continues to be the most robust analytics platform available. The problem is, most marketers don't really know how to use it. You can do event-based tracking, and after their new UserID update you can even do "people analytics" as well.

Evernote Web Clipper – There is no possible way that I could read every article that comes across my Twitter feed. Clickbait headlines have exacerbated the problem substantially. I use the Evernote web clipper to save every article that I think looks interesting. Later that day or week I'll go back through and read the ones that still sound interesting. Most of the article's I have clipped don't sound as interesting the second time around, when the opportunity cost of reading them is leisure instead of work. This helps me focus on only consuming the highest quality content.

Your company has a growing community of users. How do you use this treasure trove of customer insight to power your marketing efforts?

Case Studies! We love to see how our customers integrate our referral program and seeing their success. We'll put together case studies that we can share with the larger community to show off how our customers are integrating. For example we have this case study about how SendGrid increased their customers by 25% by using Ambassador to power their referral program.

Another great example we like to share is how lunatik.com realized that a lot of their word of mouth was taking place in real life. Instead of assuming there was nothing they could do, they built the Lunatik rewards iOS application.

What is your strategy for getting people to your site and then converting them to a customer?

One of our biggest problems is evangelizing on behalf of the industry itself. There are a lot of misconceptions when it comes to referral marketing programs, so we try and create as much content as possible that is;

- Entertaining
- Educational
- Inspiring

We also understand that even though startups can use our software to get a referral program running quickly, bigger customers will get the most value from us. Bigger customers have bigger timelines, so we know that the path to purchase might take some time.

That's why its important for us to create valuable content that educates marketers about the referral channel in general. We produce content that alleviates myths, highlights nuanced distinctions, and informs marketers how to leverage referrals for success.

Is there any advice you'd like to give to budding marketers to help them work smart and stay productive?

I know it's a bit cliche but learn to say "no" more.

Any modern person involved in startups knows that they should create an MVP, find their customers, and pivot the MVP into a product that will sell. This is helpful advice, but isn't the entirety. It's sometimes difficult for present-day customers to share your vision of the future.

If you say yes to everything, even if you sacrifice a vision you are passionate about, then you'll constantly end up chasing the next big thing instead of getting out in front of it.

Startups, like life, are all about balance. If you are confident that you are building something meaningful, then stay focused. Cut out the distractions, and don't over 'pivot.'

Aaron Beashel
of Campaign Monitor

Director of Content & Community at Campaign Monitor

Location: Sydney, Australia

Your favorite gadget: My iPad mini. The best content consumption device ever invented. I love it.

You start your day with: Reading my emails. I know this sounds bad, but I usually get up at like 5:30 so I can finish early and go surfing, so reading my emails helps me wake up. If I don't do it, I fall straight back asleep and suddenly it's 10am.

Your favorite time-saving trick: I'm definitely going to lock in Focus@Will. I am seriously like a different person when I start listening to that and couldn't recommend it enough.

"We're really lucky to have a lot of passionate users who are willing to take the time of day to speak with us and give us the feedback we need."

Describe an average day at Campaign Monitor.

Campaign Monitor is growing so quickly that every day is really different, which is super exciting. Lately though, I've been really focused on speaking with our customers and trying to understand as much as I can about them to guide our content strategy.

So if I had to break it down, an average day consists of a few interviews with customers, some time lining up interviews with others and then meeting with internal stakeholders to really pull it all together.

We also all eat lunch together cooked by Ollie and Chris, our in-house chefs. Those guys make incredible food so I always make sure to stop and enjoy it with the rest of the team. A bit of post-lunch ping pong also goes well to try and keep the waistline in check.

As a marketer, what is your favorite productivity hack?

Focus@Will – I'm a big music listener while I work, but research has shown that listening to commercial music actually distracts you as it's designed to get your attention and connect with you emotionally. So the premise behind Focus@Will is that it plays 'ambient' music that helps you focus, rather than distracting you. I absolutely love it and would encourage anybody to give it a try. It's free and getting started is basically a case of visiting their site and clicking the play button. Do it now and thank me later.

As a person who is well-versed with online marketing, I'm sure you rely on a few marketing tools to automate your efforts. What are the top 3 tools you use?

Google Docs – While we have amazing offices here in Sydney, Australia, about ⅓ of our team is remote so Google Docs is pretty big for us. From a content marketing perspective, we'll write most of our content in Google Docs and collaborate on it in there before moving it over to our CMS.

Feedly ? I am a firm believer that any good content marketer needs to be a very big reader, and a lot of the inspiration and ideas for our own content comes out of reading content about other aspects of marketing

(copywriting, conversion rate optimization, etc) and then re-purposing that information within the context of email. So in terms of automating content idea generation, Feedly is a critical tool.

Campaign Monitor ? Not surprisingly, we use Campaign Monitor to manage all our blog and content subscriber lists and deliver them blog updates, newsletters, etc. I would rant on about how much I love it, but I think your audience is smart enough to see through that.

Your company has a growing community of users. How do you use this treasure trove of customer insight to power your marketing efforts?

We're really lucky to have a lot of passionate users who are willing to take the time of day to speak with us and give us the feedback we need.

From a content marketing perspective, speaking with these people has been really valuable in helping us craft an effective content strategy. Asking them questions around what their pain points are and where they are hanging out online really helps us define the kind of content we create and the channels we use to get it in front of them.

What is your strategy for getting people to your site and then converting them to a customer?

I know it's one of those cliches that you always hear, but honestly one of the biggest things we do to attract and convert customers is just to focus on having a great product that people love to use. That has been Ben and Dave's (Campaign Monitor founders) philosophy from the beginning and it's still really ingrained in the culture today which is great.

The role of Marketing at Campaign Monitor is really just to amplify the number of people who experience the product. To do that, we focus a lot on producing really great content around email marketing & design and that

drives a good portion of our traffic.

There are lots of different growth hacks' out there that seem to be all the rage at the moment and we're certainly playing around with those kind of approaches, but in my opinion they are no substitute for a product that people want to use and content that people want to read.

Is there any advice you'd like to give to budding marketers to help them work smart and stay productive?

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Jason Rodriguez
of Litmus

💼 Community Manager at Litmus

📍 Location: Detroit, MI

📱 Your favorite gadget: My iPhone. It's awful how attached to it I am, but I use it for everything—photography, catching up on news, taking notes, Twitter, and, of course, email.

☀ You start your day with: My five year old yelling that she's ready to get out of bed.

⏱ Your favorite time-saving trick: Writing a to-do list for the day. Saves me a lot of time that would later be spent trying to figure out what I was supposed to get done at any given time.

"Our customers tend to love us and like to make that love known to the world"

Describe an average day at Litmus?

I know it's trite to say it at this point, but there really isn't an average day at Litmus. Since we're a small team, we all wear a lot of different hats and work on a variety of projects. As the Community Manager, I usually start most days catching up on discussions in the Litmus Community. I write a lot, so on any given day I could be working on a new blog post, some content for the Community, or helping out with email or marketing copy.

There's always another email to design and build. While our designer Kevin usually handles them, every once in a while I'll get my hands dirty and code something up. On occasion, I'll also do some illustrations for both the blog and the Community, work on slides for webinars or presentations, and troll fellow employees with Photoshop and embarrassing team pictures.

As a marketer, what are some of your favorite productivity hacks?

Honestly, I think the best hack is to just cut through some of the bullshit that goes along with pretty much anything and just get stuff done. I could spend all day writing emails, updating various people on statuses, posting to Basecamp and asking for permission, but that ultimately won't get me or the company anywhere. As much as possible, I try to cut through that and focus on getting tangible work done. Write, edit, post, share, get feedback, revise.

As a person who is well-versed with online marketing, I'm sure you rely on a few marketing tools to automate your efforts. What are the top 3-5 tools you use?

We recently started using Pardot, which has been amazing for automating a lot of things. Some of our other favorite tools include Help Scout for managing support tickets and helping out our awesome customers, and Sprout Social for keeping up on all things social. We typically don't automate social stuff, as we like to interact with our customers in real-time and on a personal level. Sprout Social makes that easy for the entire team.

How do you drive traffic to your site and what top 3 strategies you'll use to convert people trying the app into paying customers?

Litmus is all about creating great content not only for our customers, but the larger email design and marketing community as well. We've found that readers of our blog are amazing about sharing our content, so a lot of our traffic comes from social sharing on their end. Through talking with customers at conferences and events, we've also found out that word-of-mouth comes into play, too. We're in the fortunate position of having a lot of users that not only love us, but are very vocal about that fact.

Our Email Marketing Manager, Matt, has been testing out a lot of new strategies for converting trial users into paying customers, so a lot of those conversions are driven by email campaigns. Educating users about the product also helps. A lot of customers come to Litmus to use our Email Previews tool, without knowing that we offer a bunch of other QA tools, as well as an amazing Email Analytics service. Once they know about those, it's easier to make the case that Litmus is an invaluable part of the email marketing process.

Litmus has a growing community of users. How do you use this treasure trove of customer insight to power your marketing efforts?

Like I said before, we are in a very fortunate position. Our customers tend to love us and like to make that love known to the world—especially on Twitter. We interact with them a lot there and use it as an opportunity to see what approaches and types of content (we are content marketers, after all) resonate with our audience. From there, we can fine-tune a lot.

Is there any advice you'd like to give to budding marketers to help them work smart and stay productive?

Not really, other than make a list of what needs to get done and start doing it. I'm admittedly still new to this game and I'm learning a lot every day. I'll be the first to say that I occasionally screw up. Fortunately, I have an amazing team on my side that calls me out on any stupid ideas and catches all the things that I miss. If you can find a team like that, you'll naturally work smart and stay productive. There are a few more things we will be mentioning along with the post. Just a word or two for the following would be fine.

Finally, just talking to trial users that don't convert can be a great way to identify problems and refine our products. Even if they don't turn into paying customers, that knowledge is vital for making Litmus better and improving the experience for future trial users.

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Bogomil Shopov
of Usersnap

💼 VP Marketing of Usersnap

📍 Location: Prague, Czech Republic

📱 Your favorite gadget: A Firefox OS phone

☀ You start your day with: Going with my son to the kindergarten :)

⏱ Your favorite time-saving trick: I am using the Pomodoro Technique

"Our customers tend to love us and like to make that love known to the world"

Describe an average day at Usersnap?

Being at Usersnap is one of the most awesome things to do. We start every day with a standup sharp at 09:00. Because we have many offices and team members around the world we are doing it online using Fuze. We agree on the important things for the day and start working on them. We keep communicating via Slack for the rest of the day.

We are spending the day talking to clients, improving our product, fixing bugs (we have some, alright), but we mainly focus on the business values.

Being in separate offices all team members have their own way of living the Usersnap day.

As a marketer, what are some of your favorite productivity hacks?

My most favorite are the ones that work Currently you can find thousands of hacks, but let's be honest – most of them will not work for you. If I am stuck for example, I would rather stop working for the day and have a walk or just go home. On the next morning or even later in the same evening I am able to find the solution I need and it rocks!

The beer helps as well. No kidding.

As a person who is well-versed with online marketing, I'm sure you rely on a few marketing tools to automate your efforts. What are the top 3-5 tools you use?

I am big fan of Marketo, but marketing automation tools are too too too expensive for a startup on seed stage, so we are trying to build our own tools to automate somehow our daily amazingness.

Your company has a growing community of users. How do you use this treasure trove of customer insight to power your marketing efforts?

As I said before we are talking to clients every day and we ask them how they are using our service and how we can make it better. Also we monitor, anonymously the general usage of our services and when we see that

there is a problem somewhere, we fix it as quick as possible.

The important thing here is not to waste your clients' time to ask constantly for feedback and improvement ideas, but to be able to understand the problem on the basis of their behaviour and find a way to fix it. Also to give them an instrument for better, visual and annotated feedback, so that they can express themselves better and in the way they are used to do it.

What is your strategy for getting people to your site and then converting them to a customer?

In general we help developers, designers and other people involved in creating and maintaining a web project to understand each other very easily and this is our main "strategy". We are developers and designers and we are trying to find other guys (or gals) like us and to help them.

Is there any advice you'd like to give to budding marketers to help them work smart and stay productive?

Focus on the business value. Measure everything you make in dollars or your local currency. It's waste of time to follow trends without making sure they will work for you. Do not waste money for ads before you've got a strategy for that.

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Clément Delangue
of Mention

💼 Head of Marketing at Mention

📍 Location: Paris & New York

📱 Your favorite gadget: We have mention smartphone covers that stick your iPhone to any surface, like a wall, or a window.

☀ You start your day with: A walk

⏱ Your favorite time-saving trick: I forget what is not important – even if it seems urgent.

Describe an average day at Mention.

I usually wake up without an alarm clock. That's a clear sign for me that I enjoy what I'm working on, rather than just working for the paycheck. I walk to the office. It's an important time for me to think about the day that's beginning, what my priorities will be, and what I need to achieve. I'm ready to get as many things done as I can, before the office really gets going. Once the day starts, I'll often be brought in for questions and meetings with different teams, meaning I'll have less time for more long-term projects and ideas.

Each day is different from the next, especially as we've grown and my position has changed. I started as an inbound marketer, then moved to managing our marketing team, and I'm now in charge of our US expansion on top of that. This is why I haven't developed a completely fixed daily routine, and it's one of the reasons I really love startups, because otherwise, I get bored pretty fast if it's the same day in and day out. The only thing that doesn't change is my walk home – usually after having grabbed some beers with friends. The walk home is important for me as a way to create some distance from the day-to-day work and think of our long-term goals.

How is mention different than Google Alerts?

Mention is the best way for professionals to go beyond Google Alerts. It's a next step and can really improve your media monitoring ROI. In addition to detecting more accurate mentions – especially from social networks – we're also detecting them in real-time, providing advanced tools for brands, plus analytics and collaborative tools for teams. With the ability to react to mentions directly within the app, mention saves time and centralizes your community management. All this with sleek interfaces across multiple platforms, including email alerts, desktop, web, and mobile apps.

As a marketer/founder, what are some of your favorite productivity hacks? It may sound like a strange one, but my favorite productivity hack is to forget. As a startup guy, you won't be able to do everything. So you should focus on the things that will have the biggest impact. I've found that the

best way to do so is not to use a to-do list, because they'll make you regret failing to do everything. And you can never do everything. On the contrary, I only do what I remember or what someone makes me remember – which usually means it's important.

As a person who is well-versed with online marketing, I'm sure you rely on a few marketing tools to automate your efforts. What are the top 3-5 tools you use?

Intercom is probably the most important tool besides mention that we use. I've written an article about why: "How Mention Increased Activation Rate by 50%." In addition to Intercom, I use Mention (of course) specifically with our Buffer integration for managing my own online presence. I'm also a big fan of Zapier, GoToWebinar, and Unbounce for our high profile marketing campaigns.

How do you'll drive traffic to Mention? What are your top 3 sources and what is your strategy to convert visitors to paid customers?

Our top 3 sources for new users are referral, newsjacking, and content marketing. Referral is now pretty standard in our industry. I've written about Newsjacking here: "4 Easy Ways for Startups to Get Media Coverage." Content marketing is the fastest growing channel for us. It's also where we're still experimenting a lot, and trying out new things. To convert visitors, we have a mix of automated marketing processes in place (see my article about Intercom), as well as great 1-to-1 interactions with our fantastic customer success team.

Mention has a growing community of users. How do you use this treasure trove of customer insight to power your marketing efforts?

We're increasingly leveraging the enormous amount of data we deliver to share insights; to directly share what would normally be only internal numbers with our community. It really fosters great company and community culture, and this is something that Buffer has especially pioneered. A good example is our recent infographic, powered by the over 1 billion mentions that we've detected for our users over the past two years.

Is there any advice you'd like to give to budding startup marketers to help them work smart and stay productive?

Setting up your goals and measuring your progress is the best way to stay on the right track for continuous improvement. When we started doing stand up meetings at the end of each day to go over what we'd accomplished and what we were planning for the next day, our entire team found themselves seeing a bigger picture – how each project contributed to the whole. Ideas would cross-pollinate a lot better, as well, and progress was really easy to see.

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Alexandra Tachalova
of SEMrush

💼 Corporate Communication Manager at SEMrush

📍 Location: St. Petersburg

📱 Your favorite gadget: Anything Apple.

☀ You start your day with: Cup of coffee:)

⏱ Your favorite time-saving trick: Trying not to do more than 2 tasks in parallel.

"Mention is the best way for professionals to go beyond Google Alerts."

Describe an average day at SEMrush.

I think the most exciting and interesting part about life at SEMrush is that we have demos. It's the topic of public reporting on which any person from the company can come, and ask questions. Right now we have 6 developer teams who have demos twice a month, and 2 marketing teams that do it only once per month. This kind of public reporting helps us be more transparent in our business process. Also, it gives marketing teams a deeper understanding of the product and general development process. We love innovating at SEMrush, and we try to create a special environment where everyone is open minded and ready to try something new.

As a startup marketer, what are some of your favorite productivity hacks?

Honestly, I'm not a startup marketer because SEMrush is no longer a startup. We're too big and too old to be classified like that. But I used to be a startup marketer, and there are plenty of things we created without any budget. We invested in a relationship with bloggers and other opinion leaders and that has paid us dividends.

As a person who is well-versed with online marketing, I'm sure you rely on a few marketing tools to automate your efforts. What are the top 3-5 tools you use?

Sure. Here is the list of the tools without which I can't imagine the effective working process:
salesforce.com
mailchimp.com
gotomeeting.com

How do you drive traffic to your site, and what top 3 strategies do you use to convert the people trying the app into paying customers?

We have different conversion processes. I think I can highlight the following ones (besides the natural conversion process):
1. Product demos
2. Product trials
3. Email marketing and webinars

SEMrush has a growing community of users. How do you use this treasure trove of customer insight to power your marketing efforts?

We try to make our customers our partners. And we've already made a positive impact on the European market. On the other hand, our users do a lot for our company on a daily basis. For example, they show a high level of engagement on social media which helps us to enforce our coverage. Plenty of users are interested in adding additional features, and they provide a lot of ideas about the product feature. We have a huge number of users who are really advanced in digital marketing, and we try to give them an opportunity to share their experience by participation in our webinars and guest postings.

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Ravi Parikh
of Heap

💼 Co-founder at Heap

📍 Location: San Francisco, CA.

📱 Your favorite gadget: My slow cooker

☀️ You start your day with: Iced tea

⏱ Your favorite time-saving trick: If you waste too much time
on Twitter or Reddit or Hacker News, block the website
from your computer by editing the hosts file
so you don't get distracted.

"As an analytics company, we use data to power
marketing, sales, and product development."

Describe an average day at Heap.

A large part of my job is taking care of one-off tasks that would otherwise interrupt our engineering team. This means everything from customer support and sales calls to keeping the office clean and buying supplies. To someone whose full-time job is engineering, marketing, sales, or any other specialized position, having to deal with one-off tasks can be incredibly disruptive. I try to buffer as many of these as possible from the rest of the team.

About half my time goes into these one-off tasks. When I'm not dealing with these tasks, I spend time working on articles for our data blog or writing front-end code.

As a founder/ marketer, what are some of your favorite productivity hacks?

I love the "don't break the chain" approach. I think Jerry Seinfeld first popularized it. It works like this: pick a daily goal, for example, "write 500 words for our content marketing site." Then, every day you finish that goal, mark it off. After a few consecutive days of accomplishing your goal, you'll have a streak going, and you'll feel incentivized to keep the streak alive. I have one streak going right now of 121 consecutive days! The website chains.cc has a web app that helps you manage these "chains."

As a person who is well-versed with online marketing, I'm sure you rely on a few marketing tools to automate your efforts. What are the top 3-5 tools you use?

Mailchimp – The best email marketing software out there.
Rapportive – A large part of my job is managing relationships with others. Being able to see at a glance who people are in my email inbox is extremely valuable.
Join.me – This isn't quite in the category of marketing tools, but I'm a huge fan and want to point it out. It's screen sharing software that works in the browser, so the other person doesn't need to install anything to conference in.
And of course, Heap – Everything we do, we measure and evaluate.

Your company has a growing community of users. How do you use this treasure trove of customer insight to power your marketing efforts?

As an analytics company, we use data to power marketing, sales, and product development. One ongoing experiment has been to see which kinds of blog posts lead to actual customers. It's not as simple as "more traffic = more customers." There are some blog posts that may appeal to a wider audience, but it may end up being a lot of people who aren't necessarily in our target market. Whereas other blog topics may reach fewer people but lead to more customers. An example is our blog post on how we re-evaluated our pricing scheme. While it only reached a few thousand visitors, a lot of those people were startup founders or product designers who ended up signing up for Heap or subscribing to the blog.

Data doesn't always paint a complete picture though. A lot of great insights also come from speaking with our customers. We had a high churn rate in the early days of Heap, and it was only by following up with those customers that we were able to figure out the root cause and also win some of them back. It turned out we weren't doing a great job in communicating our feature set to people, and people didn't know about much of Heap's core functionality. The solution was multi-faceted (and something of an ongoing process for us). We now send more targeted customer lifecycle emails with specific advice / tips, and now have detailed feature pages aimed at prospective customers.

What is your strategy for getting people to your site and then converting them to a customer?

Heap first launched in March 2013, and at that point it was just two of us. We didn't have the bandwidth at that point to do much inbound marketing, so all of our users came in via word of mouth. Our early customers were instrumental in helping us grow from 10 to 100 to now over 1,000 businesses.

As we've grown the company, though, we've invested a lot more time into our marketing efforts. We've found in the past that well-written, interesting content is one of the best drivers of customers. A large part of the value is in building an audience over time, which we're beginning to

reap the benefits of. We get customers these days who first heard about us months ago from an article or guest post or interview we did, and when it came time to choose an analytics solution, Heap was top of mind.

Is there any advice you'd like to give to budding marketers to help them work smart and stay productive?

Focus. There are tons of strategies that you can use to grow your business: SEM, SEO, content, press, etc. As a startup you won't have enough time to invest in all of these. Figure out what one thing works best for your business and focus on that.

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Sofia Quintero
of Geckoboard

💼 Head of Growth at Geckoboard

📍 Location: London

📱 Your favorite gadget: My iPhone and my Pebble watch

☀️ You start your day with: Coffee and honey

⏱ Your favorite time-saving trick: Using my commute to get work done.

"We help individuals and businesses
to access the data they need when they need it."

Describe an average day at Geckoboard.

We don't really have any average days at Geckoboard. We're very focused on specific goals and metrics, but what we do in order to reach those goals changes every day. I'm currently doing a lot of content planning, scoping projects in different areas and finalising details for the launch of our new marketing site. Normally everything starts after our daily stand up.

As a marketer, what are some of your favourite productivity hacks?

There are a couple of things that have worked very well for me so far. The first one is that I'm lucky enough to be a morning person, and waking up around 5:30 am gives me a couple of quiet hours to plan the day before going to the office. The second thing is probably delegation. I found that using services like fancyhands.com helps a lot. I tend to delegate as many tasks as possible and concentrate on only a few things during the day. My final hack is definitely the way I try to distribute the day. I try to do most meetings and creative work in the morning and leave large blocks of time in the afternoon to finalise work that requires high levels of concentration. It's hard to keep this routine every week but that's what I'm aiming for most of the time.

As a person who is well-versed with online marketing, I'm sure you rely on a few marketing tools to automate your efforts. What are the top 3-5 tools you use?

At this point we are transitioning to Hubspot to run the majority of our marketing activity, it's early stage but for instance, we use a combination of Hubspot's email marketing capabilities for drip campaigns, and Intercom for in-app communications. From a data perspective we're trying to move to a single view of our customers data and that means working with tools like segment.io to integrate and consolidate the data we're gathering from customers at different touch points.

How does Geckoboard stand out amongst its competitors and how do you convey that in your marketing messages?

We help individuals and businesses to access the data they need when

they need it. Helping people to communicate data effectively is our core business and that requires a special focus on simplicity. The way we convey this in our marketing messaging is by using language that everybody can understand – we don't believe in jargon or over complicating things.

Data can be scary for many people so we try to empower anyone who's willing to learn and start the journey of making the most of it. We don't over promise anything, our communication is open and honest. Becoming data-driven is a journey, not an overnight transformation.

How do you drive traffic to your site and what top 3 strategies you'll use to convert people trying the app into paying customers?

Inbound marketing is at the core of what we do so content partnerships are a successful way of driving qualified traffic to the site. In terms of conversion, from a marketing point view we believe that using social proof is a powerful tactic. We talk to a lot of customers and showcase success stories across multiple verticals and company sizes. We help potential customers understand the value of data communication through personal stories from professionals just like them.

We have also put a lot of focus on customer support as a part of our marketing efforts. We believe that exceptional customer experience can fuel not only retention, but also word of mouth. Again, social proof and recommendations have been a source of growth for Geckoboard from the very beginning.

Geckoboard has a growing community of users. How do you use this treasure trove of customer insight to power your marketing efforts?

We have spent a lot of time trying to understand the multiple dimensions in which customers perceive value from Geckoboard. We have a number of very interesting use cases and we actively try to translate those insights into product improvements and the refinement of our core messaging. We fundamentally use customer language and try to convey what they perceive as benefits in the simplest way possible.

Is there any advice you'd like to give to budding marketers to help them work smart and stay productive?

My best advice would be to get to know yourself very well. Knowing what time of the day you have the biggest boost of energy, how long it takes you to immerse yourself in a task and knowing your core skills is very important. It's easier and more effective to concentrate on what you're good at instead of trying to make up for your flaws. Waking up at 5:30 am won't hurt you either.

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Suzanne Louis
of 1CRM
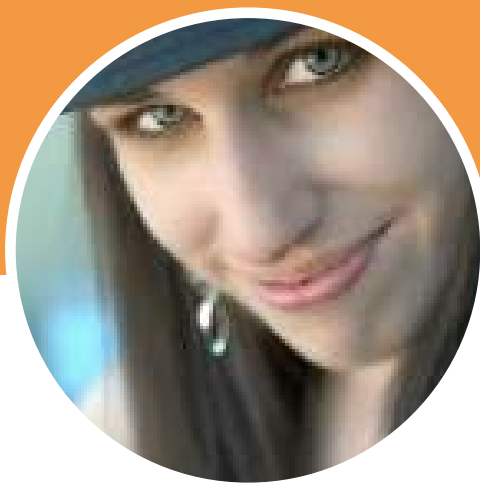
💼 Marketing Specialist at 1CRM

📍 Location: Toronto, Ontario

📱 Your favorite gadget: My iPhone

☀️ You start your day with: Green Tea

⏱️ Your favorite time-saving trick: Templates – If there's a template
out there that performs the exact action you need,
why reinvent the wheel? Spend the $5, buy the template,
and save yourself hours of work.

*"We help individuals and businesses
to access the data they need when they need it."*

Describe an average day at 1CRM.

Every person at 1CRM has a different day, every day. We're a largely remote team, and all have our own to-do lists, which change according to which projects we're working on and customer needs. So long as the tasks get accomplished on time, everyone is free to structure their days as they see fit, to achieve their optimal work/life balance. We all stay connected through email, Skype, and GoToMeeting.

While this doesn't happen every day, I like to begin my day by going to Starbucks to check my emails and update our social media profiles. I'll then check my to-do list, and head back home to get started on the tasks of the day. Mine often involve advertising & budgeting, analytics & SEO, creating artwork & content, following up with customers, web design, video production, and making new connections. At lunch time, I enjoy going for a jog outside to recharge my batteries. After I come home and complete my tasks for the day, I spend time with my loved ones.

As a founder/ marketer, what are some of your favorite productivity hacks?

1. Clean work space. Everything feels more focused and in order. A messy workspace is only a reminder of other jobs you should be doing.

2. Check your email only at certain times of the day. It's easy to check it every 5 minutes to see if a new message has come in, but then it's hard to stay focused on more important tasks.

As a person who is well-versed with online marketing, I'm sure you rely on a few marketing tools to automate your efforts. What are the top 3-5 tools you use?

MailChimp – Simple way to create newsletters from great templates.
1CRM – Drip-feed campaigns and target lists allow me to easily follow-up on new leads, and maintain contact with current customers.

Google Analytics – GA provides great insight into how visitors arrived at our website, the actions they perform, and which pages on the website could use improvement.

Survey Monkey – Surveys provide a wealth of knowledge about our customers, and SurveyMonkey makes it really easy to create and distribute surveys at a moment's notice. Their detailed analytics pages are also wonderfully put together.

Your company has a growing community of users. How do you use this treasure trove of customer insight to power your marketing efforts?

We listen to our customers as much as possible, and shape the product around their feedback. Whether it's comments on the community forum, in social media, or through surveys we send out, we keep track of who requested which features, so that we can notify them when that feature becomes available. Regardless of how large the community becomes, we strive to treat everyone like they are our only customer.

**What is your strategy for getting people to your site and then converting them to a customer?**

Honestly, our main strategy is offering a free Edition of 1CRM. When learning about a product for the first time, a certain degree of risk is involved in the purchase. Will they like it? Does it fit their business model? By offering a free and fully functional Startup Edition, we are able to draw customers in, and provide them with a risk-free introduction to the system. Many then opt to upgrade at a later date.

Is there any advice you'd like to give to budding marketers to help them work smart and stay productive?

1. Dedicate a certain amount of time to Social Media and then move onto another task. It's easy to let the hours melt away while updating your various profiles.
2. Exercise after lunch. Working in one place for too long, you can get a bit of cabin fever. A nice run outside refreshes my mind and body to finish off the work day.
3. Whenever possible, answer emails immediately. Putting emails off is an easy habit to fall into, but then new ones come in, and you forget about the old ones. I find the best practice is to just respond as soon as you read the email. It's one less thing to remember to do.

Lance Padgett
of Formstack
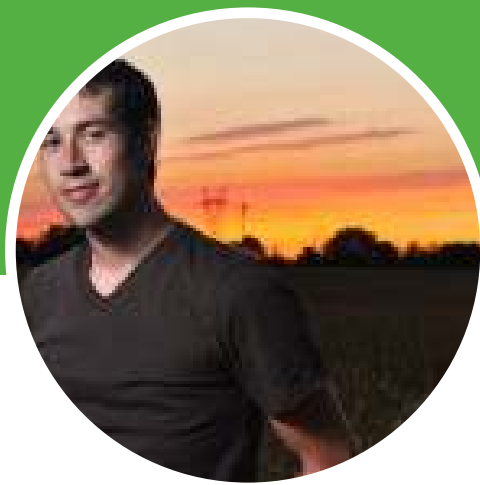
💼 SEO specialist at Formstack

📍 Location: Indianapolis, Indiana

📱 Your favorite gadget: Macbook Pro

☀ You start your day with: Occasional coffee

⏱ Your favorite time-saving trick: Finding a quiet place in the office.

"If you really want to be productive,
close your email tab and only check it 2 to 3 times per day."

Describe an average day at Formstack.

As if there was an average day! Some days are quieter, and you're focused on your current project or campaign. Others are more heavy on meetings and brainstorming. There's always ping pong involved at our Indianapolis headquarters. Even though our team is remote and several of our employees live in other cities, we are always collaborating and cracking jokes, both offline and online.

As a marketer, what are some of your favorite productivity hacks?

I love to find a quiet place in our office to focus. If you really want to be productive, close your email tab and only check it 2-3 times per day. I also use Gmail filters to flush out the email I get, but don't want in my inbox.

As a person who is well versed with online marketing, I'm sure you rely on a few marketing tools to automate your efforts. What are the top 3-5 tools you use?

As an SEO specialist, I use the Moz tools quite heavily. I'm also frequently plugged in to Google Analytics, looking at trends and statistics. A simple Google search is probably my third "tool." I'm often going through search results, comparing metrics, etc.

There are other form building tools out there. How does Formstack stand out and how do you convey that in your marketing messages?

Formstack offers several features that cater specifically to the digital marketer and aren't offered on any other online form builder. For example, the Formstack app is 508 Compliant, which means our forms can be accessed by internet users with visual impairments. Formstack also offers a wider selection of in-app integrations and mobile apps on iOS, Android and Windows Phones.

How do you drive traffic to your site and what top 3 strategies you'll use to convert people trying the app into paying customers?

We drive traffic through many channels. Direct traffic plays a big role for Formstack. We also focus on driving traffic via organic search by building targeted, useful content. We have a fun culture at Formstack so we try to leverage that on social media and throughout our website. Additionally, paid search ads and sponsorships close to our target market play a key role in driving traffic to our site. Our top three strategies for converting people to customers include building and showcasing helpful content, using email marketing to build a relationship with leads and new users, and helping our existing customers with issues via our awesome support team and social network profiles.

Formstack has a growing community of users. How do you use this treasure trove of customer insight to power your marketing efforts?

We often do case studies, feature blog posts, and even some videos on our customers. Every feature launch or product update ensures that our customers can have a better experience within our application. Being able to showcase how our customers use Formstack to make their business or department run smoothly inspires us to keep improving. Additionally, our product manager works with a Customer Advisory Board, which includes a sample of our target customer base, to plan product improvements and other projects.

Is there any advice you'd like to give to budding marketers to help them work smart and stay productive?

There are a lot of things to look for when you're combing through data for helpful trends and figures. Focus on the metrics that matter most to you and your business. Try and optimize those first so that you have a good foundation under you, then branch out to the smaller items.

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Belle Beth Cooper
of Exist

💼 Co-founder at Exist.io

📍 Location: Melbourne, Australia

📱 Your favorite gadget: Kindle Paperwhite

☀️ You start your day with: Checking emails

⏱️ Your favorite time-saving trick: Keyboard shortcuts for everything.

"We try to avoid automation because we want to have
a real connection with our users."

What is the story behind Exist?

I tried using an app called Moves to track my steps and gave up after a few weeks because it wasn't motivating me to walk any more than normal. My co-founder Josh and I realised that a lot of people have this same problem with fitness apps and trackers because a step count alone isn't enough to motivate you to exercise more. We also realised that there's a lot of data missing from fitness trackers that affects your life, like weather, what you do at work or on your phone every day, what music you listen to, etc. We're pulling all of that data together and finding the correlations between it all to offer useful insights you can act on.

Describe an average day at Exist.

Since we're not working on Exist full-time yet, there really isn't an "average" day. Most of the time I spend on Exist is a mixture of writing blog posts, answering customer emails and meeting people to chat about our plans for Exist.

As a marketer, what are some of your favorite productivity hacks?

I recently started finishing work at noon, which makes me focus more in the mornings to get everything done and frees up my afternoons to work on Exist.

As a person who is well-versed with content marketing, I'm sure you rely on a few tools to automate your efforts. What are the top 3-5 tools you use?

I use Buffer, of course, to spread out content. The @existapp account shares a link every day about quantified-self and self-tracking, so Buffer helps me to manage that. Apart from that, we try to avoid automation because we want to have a real connection with our users.

How do you drive traffic to your site and what top 3 strategies you'll use to convert people trying the app into paying customers?

We're using content marketing, because that's what I know best and it fits our market of lifehacking, fitness and self-tracking. Our app is paid-only so all customers are paying customers.

How do you juggle your time between growing Exist and writing for Buffer?

I finished working for Buffer a couple of weeks ago, so now I'm doing freelance writing and working on Exist.

Is there any advice you'd like to give to budding marketers to help them work smart and stay productive?

Pay attention to the little things you do over and over again and find ways to automate them. Invest in tools like TextExpander, Keyboard Maestro, Launch Center Pro and Hazel if they can save you time.

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