

What Keeps a CMO Up at Night

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As **CMO** of a fast-paced technology company with a half billion in revenue that is growing very quickly, I have plenty of things keeping me up at night.

Three crucial pieces of the **marketing** puzzle seem to always be on my mind as I look for ways to stay ahead of the curve.

1. How do I keep making and redefining the market?

I do not believe in trying to defend and expand a market position or sharing an established market.

I strongly believe that to keep growth rates high and achieve a position that is unreachable by competitors, a company needs to create a new market, one in which it is perceived as the pioneer and leader.

By establishing that new market, companies define new perspectives from which customers suddenly start to look at their problems. The challenge is to not rest on early success but to keep making the market and redefining it—like an ongoing metamorphosis—without leaving customers and channel partners behind.

Recently, my company **Veeam** was riding the wave of success with the new market we had created when the company was first founded. At that time, it was all about expansion and facilitating the growth by putting resources in place. Now, that is becoming more difficult because the speed of innovation is increasing, and new solutions and approaches are creating their own new markets quicker than ever. Staying ahead of and above this tsunami has become a challenge.

So, we focus on reinventing ourselves and continuously changing and **innovating** for our customers at full steam, seeking early adopters in our customer base, promoting them, driving massive awareness for our new approaches, and educating customers to take a different look at their problems and possible new solutions.

2. How do I deal with a hyper-connected and hyper-informed market?

Customers and resellers are informed and connected like never before. With that comes a tectonic shift... Customers can access so much user-generated content (such as assessments and ratings to opinions, recommendations, and warnings) in a much easier way, and they lean toward those types of information sources much more than vendor information because they naturally trust their peers more.

The key challenges for marketers are...

- Having an ear to the ground because the information flow is taking place between customers
- Adapting our **marketing** strategy and execution to this new situation.

My recommendation is to engage the community. Make those who successfully use and are invested in your products become advocates for you. Work with and engage influencers in your market. You cannot control them, but you can be known to them. Engage them and show respect.

Of course, this type of community engagement requires a minimum of customer satisfaction and a good reputation, earned with a top product and customer experience.

3. How do I make sure I have the best marketing technology platform?

There is an abundance of available **marketing** and data technology solutions, and the vendor landscape is rapidly evolving.

At the same time, having the right platform can be the difference in winning the race to get customers' eyeballs—by presenting the right content at the right moment via the right marketing channel in an efficient way.

As marketers, our challenge is extracting the requirements for the best selection of tools from our **marketing** strategies, knowledge, people, and actionable road map (especially as the tools may offer something we traditionally have not even considered possible). How do we weave them into a **marketing** technology platform that ensures integration and also allows for constant innovation and iteration as things are so rapidly evolving?

We have seen tools using Big Data specific to our market that show incredible opportunities to further optimize and automate our **marketing**. Moreover, we continue to assess new technologies as they emerge. Two years ago, we thought we could live with our technology platform for at least three to four more years, but now it looks like we need to constantly monitor and evaluate new approaches.

At my company, we operate with thoughtful innovation, meaning we innovate and iterate. We constantly monitor what is coming on the market, and we keep our platform flexible and open. We regularly make proof-of-concepts with new interesting tools, and those that look promising are tested in a limited scope to then be expanded with adjustments based on first learnings.

In other words: Do not try the Big Bang approach; you will get stuck.

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These are just a few of things racing through my mind that often keep me up at night. But it is out of these sleepless nights that come the best ideas. If you want to remain a leader and stay ahead of the game, don't get caught sleeping!

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