

MAKE IT SNOW

**FROM ZERO TO BILLIONS: HOW SNOWFLAKE
SCALED ITS GO-TO-MARKET ORGANIZATION**

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WILEY

Contents

<i>Foreword</i>	<i>Mike Speiser</i>	<i>vii</i>
Phase I	Stealth	1
Chapter 1	Embed Sales and Culture Early into Your Startup	3
Chapter 2	Develop Your Sales Strategy	15
Chapter 3	Hiring and Deploying Your First Sales Reps	27
Chapter 4	Target One Competitor, for Now	41
Chapter 5	Scaling with Partners	53
Chapter 6	Scale Your Culture	61
Phase II	Build	71
Chapter 7	Enter Marketing	73
Chapter 8	The Five Pillars of Marketing	91
Chapter 9	Advance Your Sales Team	107

Chapter 10 Absolute Alignment Between Marketing and Sales	119
Chapter 11 From Product to Platform	133
Phase III Scale	137
Chapter 12 Hiring, Retention, and Parting Ways	139
Chapter 13 Build for a Billion	149
Chapter 14 Bottom-up Sales	163
Chapter 15 Scaling a Data-Driven Marketing Organization	173
Chapter 16 Going Global	191
Chapter 17 Alignment for the Ages	207
<i>Acknowledgments</i>	<i>215</i>
<i>Index</i>	<i>217</i>

Foreword

“It’s like one brain in two bodies.”

—Mike Speiser on Chris Degnan and Denise Persson

IF YOU’RE SELLING to eight billion people, like Apple, marketing is the lead and sales follows marketing. If you’re selling enterprise software, and you have tens of thousands of customers, sales is the driver and marketing serves sales. In either case, there has to be absolute alignment between these two organizations in order to be successful. Every great marketer I’ve met understands they must have a great relationship with sales. But a lot of marketers don’t. The standout sales professionals I’ve met believe the same, but a lot of them don’t work in lockstep with marketing.

Chris Degnan and Denise Persson worked side by side at Snowflake for nearly nine years. Theirs is one of the longest working relationships between a company’s chief revenue officer and its chief marketing officer. It all began when Chris arrived in 2013—one year after Snowflake’s inception. Denise arrived in 2016, when the company had just over 100 employees and annual revenues of about \$3 million. Over the years, Snowflake would surge to more than 9,000 employees and \$3 billion in annual sales. Along the way, it has delivered the largest software IPO in history, among many other

industry milestones. Chris and Denise, and their growing organizations, have been there, in perfect alignment, delivering one sonic boom after another.

Hundreds of books exist about how to sell. The same amount exists on how to market. Many of these books deliver great strategies and some go further to guide organizations on how to execute. But there's nothing I've read that explains why these two organizations should be in perfect alignment, how to create and deliver on such a relationship, and what could happen to your company once you accomplish this.

Why should you learn about this from Denise and Chris? Snowflake's competitors are the largest technology companies in the world and have dominated their industries for decades: Google, Microsoft, Amazon Web Services, and others. Snowflake has successfully sold and marketed with and against them. Denise and Chris have also helped steer Snowflake through the COVID-19 pandemic and have served under all three of Snowflake's CEOs, who operate vastly different from one another. Frank Slootman joined in 2019 and brought the company to IPO a year later. Upon his arrival, he swapped out most c-level executives who would report to him, but not Chris and Denise.

Chris was hired to jump-start the sales organization. He was made a director, not a CRO. He had never before operated a large sales organization and was told from the very beginning that Snowflake would hire someone above him, eventually. When Frank and his CFO Mike Scarpelli arrived to Snowflake, they tested Chris to see if he could grow revenue and drive profitability for what would become a multibillion-dollar company. Frank is a sophisticated operations person but Chris passed each test. He hired a head of North America sales who reported to him—a person who had more experience than him. He split the sales organization into enterprise and commercial teams, and he hired people who operated at a bigger scale than he ever had. And he kept blowing out the sales numbers every quarter. If we hadn't tested him, if we hadn't pushed him, Chris wouldn't have become Chris. He just kept killing it, over and over.

Denise was already a seasoned executive, having been a CMO twice before joining Snowflake. She is one of the best, if not the best, CMOs I've ever seen. She is exceptional because marketing is tough. It's not one function, it's really five functions. Product marketing is

different from field marketing. Brand marketing is different from lead generation, and so on. And it's a very tough job to get world-class people to lead these areas. It's more like being a CEO, and her organization is extraordinary in so many things that are fundamentally different from one another. She has an ability to find people who are exceptional for each of those functions.

Never has Chris said, "I generate all of the sales and I'm the more critical person." Denise had been in more senior roles before she arrived and had a wider breadth of responsibility. A lot of people like that have big egos and have trouble saying to sales, "I'm going to serve you." That's not Denise. In her interview with Chris, she said: "You are my customer."

Chris and Denise have absolute incredible trust. Never in the history of Snowflake, since I've known both of them, has Denise ever said anything critical of Chris, privately or publicly. And never has Chris said anything critical of Denise. They may get frustrated with another human but they understand how important it is to have trust. They make it look effortless, and that takes a lot of work. They always came to board meetings together and finished each other's sentences. It was like one brain in two bodies. Snowflake would not be Snowflake without Denise and Chris.

Read this book and you will learn how to accomplish many things in sales and marketing that have made Snowflake wildly successful from a startup to an industry powerhouse. You will learn that and much more—how to align two critical areas of an organization to deliver more than they deliver on their own. So sit down, lock in, and enjoy.

—Mike Speiser

PHASE



Stealth

2

Develop Your Sales Strategy

“In those early days, we were intellectually honest with ourselves about what the product could do and how to sell it.”

—Chris Degnan

SNOWFLAKE WAS BUILT to do many things with data. One of those is data warehousing—a sector of the technology industry that emerged more than 20 years before Snowflake’s founders typed their first line of code. It was ripe for disruption, so they got working on a solution that was vastly different from our competitors’ legacy technology.

By the 1980s, companies were becoming more aware of the analytical insights trapped inside their databases designed solely for online transaction processing (OLTP). These solutions handled thousands of small data entries to add, update, and delete information each day. It all came from an organization’s sales, marketing, payroll, invoicing, purchasing, and inventory management teams, to name just a few. But when they attempted to analyze this information for business planning, their OLTP databases would slow or even crash. The analytical power needed pushed these systems beyond their limits.

At the time, the only way to get around this problem was to copy that data into a different type of database for analysis only. Hence, the online analytical processing (OLAP) database, or data warehouse, was born. Instead of millions of small updates to the data in OLTP systems,

data warehouses were designed to handle incredibly large queries of the data in the warehouse. The insights derived from that data informed every part of a business, revealed previously unforeseen efficiencies, and brought into view new market opportunities.

These data warehouses were often at the core of an organization's data strategy, yet their own limitations emerged not long after their creation. They couldn't scale to keep pace with the vast amount of data available beyond what organizations created on their own. The explosion of data from website traffic, smartphone usage, and IoT (Internet of Things) sensors created exponentially more data, kicking off the era of "big data" at the start of this century. Modern forms of data sharing, app development, and unifying data silos have continued this trend and fuel data-hungry pursuits such as artificial intelligence (AI), machine learning (ML), and generative AI.

Determine What Differentiates Your Product

The first thing you must determine are the major features your product offers over your competitors' and what problems they solve for customers. I talked at length with our founders and first engineers about what made Snowflake different. Back then I was still wrestling with how to message to customers the benefits of Snowflake's data warehouse. Benoit and Thierry knew the product was cool but explaining it to a layperson like me, who then had to message it to customers, had its challenges. They would end up getting into the technical weeds of Snowflake. "I don't understand what you're saying," I told them. "Dumb it down for me so that I can explain it." And that's what they did.

I learned how Snowflake's data warehouse architecturally separated data storage from the computing horsepower needed to analyze all of that data. This was a first in the industry. Other products coupled the two elements together on the same disk. The idea back then was that close proximity between the two elements meant better performance. But the downsides of this approach were many, such as limiting an organization's ability to increase data storage and computing independently of each other.

And similar to legacy on-premises data warehouses, Snowflake could ingest structured data, which is stored in tables as numbers, dates, and short text. MS Excel is a form of structured data. But traditional data warehouses could not store semi-structured data, which does not have the rigid format of structured data. This type of data became more common and included the JavaScript Object Notation (JSON) format. Semi-structured JSON data could be data from IoT devices, web browsing activity, and smartphone usage. To capture this vital information, organizations had to store it in Hadoop, which was not a data warehouse but an open framework that comprised a number of different modules of that solution. By the 2010s, Hadoop was good at storing this type of data but difficult at extracting and analyzing it. In essence, Snowflake was able to store and analyze both structured and semi-structured data, consolidating the benefits of two products—the legacy data warehouse and Hadoop—into just one solution.

Snowflake was also the first data warehouse built to operate solely for the cloud. All other solutions were built for each customer's hardware that they housed and managed on their own premises. This forced customers to buy way more hardware than they first needed, knowing they would eventually need more later as their data needs increased. Until then, they would have to own and manage idle hardware because the complex challenge of adding hardware to an existing system would make it near impossible. Worse off, the day would come when they would exceed their hardware constraints, forcing them to copy data to other repositories for data analysis. The result was data sprawl—a data governance nightmare. Customers would also have to run non-essential data activities at night and on weekends to avoid slower response times when business users analyzed data during normal business hours. In the cloud, with a product built for the cloud, there is nearly endless data storage and computing power available. A customer could dedicate any amount of computing power to each data workload and dial down that computing once a job completed. All the while, all of those workloads were simultaneously accessing a single copy of the data. These and other unique architectural differences made Snowflake much more powerful and much easier to use versus teams of hardware and software professionals required to babysit an

on-premises solution. Snowflake took care of all that management with a cloud-built data warehouse as a service.

So, that's what we focused on in the early days: storage separate from computing, natively ingesting semi-structured data, the limitless power of the cloud, and near-zero management required by the customer. Those core architectural features were the background of our messaging and what I used to build my sales pitch.

Your startup likely began the same way, or it should. Your founders had been analyzing an area of industry during their undergraduate or postgraduate studies and determined a gap or need in the market for a technology the incumbents didn't offer. Others worked for one or a number of similar technology companies and figured out they could build a product that was architecturally superior and offered enough new features that would significantly differentiate their solution from the major market players. On the flip side, the tech industry has always been littered with "solutions" that offer something new but very little in the way of value. "A lot of times developers think they have a new platform or an app, when what they've developed is just a feature," Bob Muglia once told me. When that happens, the more probable path for success is to sell that feature to the company of the app for which it was originally designed to enhance.

Keep It Simple, for Now

As Snowflake's product development progressed, our own team realized that what they were building was more than a product that would disrupt the data warehouse market. "We were developing a platform," one of our founding engineers, Ashish Motivala, once told me.

A true computing platform is pretty huge. It has many use cases, and data warehousing could be just one of them. It's also not just a product you use but one that you can build your own software products with to use internally or offer commercially. This would be transformative for customers, and that enticed me. What could Snowflake become one day? The next Microsoft or Oracle? But those lofty pursuits would have to wait. We were a tiny group with a promising technology that would offer benefits other data warehouses didn't. At the same time, it would lack bread-and-butter features that competitors' products had been offering for years.

Wholeheartedly diving into the abyss of positioning Snowflake as a platform crossed my mind. Yet, I knew better. I had 10 years of sales experience, most of which I acquired at EMC. If you want to grow big, you have to keep it simple and focus small. We stuck with cloud data warehousing and it worked. Not just then but even 3 years down the road when Denise arrived. I remember a meeting of the executive team and a few others around that time. I told them: “Data warehouse. That has to be in the product name. When it comes to IT spending, customers have a budget line item that says ‘data warehouse.’” For me, there was no clearer justification to offer a product that appeared so prominently in a customer’s IT strategy. My input came in response to a months-long branding exercise that Denise understandably kicked off with an independent firm in Silicon Valley. It could have changed “data warehouse” to something else, including “data platform.” That exercise was exhaustive and delivered a huge insight to our marketing and sales organizations. It also revealed we should stick with “data warehouse,” for now.

Develop Your Ideal Customer Profile

Armed with our product’s unique benefits, we went to work to develop our ideal customer profile (ICP). I worked with John McMahon on Snowflake’s initial ICP. According to John, you have to answer the following questions to determine that profile:

What are the major differentiators in my product?

What pain points does the product solve for the customer?

Inside of which use cases do those pain points emerge?

Who (which personas) owns those use cases?

In which companies are those personas and use cases located?

Based on this information, John and I started with a very narrow profile—technical professionals working for ad tech companies and gaming companies with fewer than 1,000 employees. Ad tech platforms serve up millions of ads per second. Whenever you go to a website, 10 ads pop up and 10 JSON files are created, for example. Multiply that by tens of millions of users and you get trillions of JSON files.

For online gaming, every time you pulled the virtual slot machine, a JSON file was created. While you're playing, dozens of JSON files are created based on what you're looking at, what actions you took, and how long you've been playing the game. If the game is popular, those microtransactions generate astronomical amounts of JSON data. And online gaming and ad tech were already in the cloud. On-premises computer servers didn't have the capacity to handle that volume.

Armed with that information, we targeted tech professionals such as database administrators, whose jobs were to keep on-premises data warehouses up and running. We also sought out data engineers, who were in charge of the data pipeline. They develop methods to locate, move, and convert raw data into information data analysts and data scientists can use to extract insights. Snowflake was still in beta back then, and even when the product became generally available, we mainly sold to personas in these two industries. The total addressable market for data warehousing back then was \$10 billion but we focused on a small part of that. "What we have to do is keep going down these two bowling alleys," John told me. "As much as we can, sell to those ad tech and gaming companies and keep giving feedback to Thierry and Benoit. As they expand the product, you'll be able to go down another bowling alley, and another. But you have to have patience."

John was right. Even when I sold into ad tech and gaming, I spent small amounts of time gathering data from other industries and companies of other sizes. I wanted the engineers to know the new features and functionalities we had to add so we could eventually expand our ICP. I was finding product market fit through sales, not marketing, because that function didn't yet exist at Snowflake, and not engineering because those guys needed to focus on developing the product.

Develop Your Sales Pitch

The benefits of Snowflake over our competitors' products were obvious to us, of course. But our company and our product were unknowns to everyone who knew the database, data warehouse, and especially the data platform sectors of the tech industry. So, we carried forward what our founders and engineers started—solving customers' problems. Snowflake's unique architecture and initial set of features

defined us, but leading with that message would be akin to the young shepherd David attempting to sling a stone the size of a Chevy at his much larger adversary.

Instead, we positioned at the forefront of our messaging the issues that forced our targeted personas to waste vast amounts of time on laborious tasks—tasks that were necessary and preliminary steps before they could actually analyze data to reveal and address their business problems. We took the view that there was no sense selling someone a car that had air-conditioned seats and power sunroofs but required them to tune the engine every day in order to keep it moving.

I had to find the wording that would get customers interested. For our zero-management pitch, I explained to customers that the 15 tasks they had to do, which would take them a weekend, we did it all automatically as a service. That was the iteration of the sales pitch. For example, data scientists had to do administrative tasks, such as “vacuum” their data warehouse and build sort keys and indexes. And they had to do this on weekends because weekdays were solely dedicated to performing analytics. If they attempted to perform vacuuming or other such tasks during the week, business users running queries on that data would see performance slow to a crawl or the system would crash altogether. All of a sudden, we changed that dynamic.

For harnessing the near limitless power of the cloud, we coined the phrase “multi-clustered shared data architecture” as the tagline to describe Snowflake’s underlying architecture. Its name is a variation of the tagline to describe the legacy architecture our competitors’ products were built upon. It used some of the same words, so we were talking their language but conveyed Snowflake was something much better. Each business and technical user who touched the data warehouse could access near-infinite amounts of dedicated computing power at their fingertips to execute their own data workloads, whenever and from wherever they wanted. There was no competing for computing power, and adding as many users as you wanted wouldn’t impact performance. And there was only one copy of the data that they needed to access simultaneously.

But still, we positioned their issues at the forefront of our messaging. It’s how most of us think as professionals—solve problems first. Then, and only then, did we back up our claims with our technology.

At some point, you need to flip the switch so customers stop rolling their eyes when they're hearing about features and functionality. Instead, tell them first the big problems you can solve for them that other products can't.

Generate Demand

I started at Snowflake in late 2013 and didn't hire my first sales rep until February 2014. Until then, I had to generate all customer demand on my own. A few months for a small startup with zero sales is a huge window of opportunity, or missed opportunity. I was at ground zero—a scary place and yet it propelled me to be the most resourceful and ingenious in my career up to that point. I signed up for our first Salesforce account and got to work.

Sutter Hill was still an immense resource for me to lean on and Mike Speiser was still interim CEO, working at our Snowflake office one day a week. Sutter Hill collected about 100 names of potential prospects before I arrived. The Snowflake folks let those prospects know what we were up to but they hadn't received much of a response. That list became the start of me manually building my own database of prospects. Our office manager, Nancy, was taking night classes and got to know a young college student who was looking for a part-time job. I hired her to help build lists. I would reach out to about 2,000 people a week. We would go to job boards and see who was posting jobs for our would-be competitors and we would contact those people. My goal was to generate eight meetings a week and I exceeded that on a regular basis. Then I would follow up with those prospects. I talked to them in their terms about how Snowflake could solve their data problems. To the contrary, speaking about features and functions is like throwing 100 puzzle pieces on a table and saying, "you figure it out." John McMahon convinced me that you have to put the pieces together so they can see what this picture is going to look like before they buy.

I had two major roles in the company when the product was pre-GA. I was a business development rep, making phone calls to get meetings with prospects and trying to get the product in front of prospects. The second part of my job was that of a product manager. I had to bring

feedback from these prospects about the product to our engineers. I had to convey what they liked, what we could improve, and what they wanted in the product that was missing. Early on, it was a really tough job because the product was still being developed and we had nothing to sell. I would make my own lists, send my own emails, make cold calls, and then get in front of prospects. I would then give that feedback to the engineers and founders so they could further develop the product. I asked prospects to prioritize three to five must-have features they would like to see added to the product. Often, I would get a prospect on the phone with Benoit and Thierry to explain what they wanted. Once a company grows, you have product managers who do that but we weren't there yet.

Of special note, there was one aspect of Snowflake sales in those early days that I didn't see coming. The data warehouse industry had been established decades before I started pitching to customers. Those legacy systems were built to operate solely in on-premises computing environments and they were dinosaurs by then. Snowflake only operated in the cloud and the architecture our founders and engineers designed and built had never been attempted. When I did get in front of prospects, they flat out didn't believe what I was peddling was possible. I would say more often than not: "Don't believe anything I say. Assume I'm a liar and try it out because you are not going to believe it." It didn't end there. After we went GA, and customers did buy the product, they attempted to operate it similar to the legacy on-premises system that we replaced. They had no other such experience with a data warehouse up until Snowflake. In essence, they were still trying to drive a 1972 Buick, when we just sold them a car that could fly.

Be a Product Manager, Not a Product Monster

Selling successfully at an early-stage startup has a few major components. Developing a growing pipeline of qualified leads is one of them. Being a good product manager is another. Convincing engineers which new features they should add based on customer feedback is a no-no. The list of product features customers want added to your product will never end. And that list will only grow as your

product management and engineering teams grow. A sales leader of a startup will be tempted to push certain desired features over others, thinking those features will help close a quick deal. Don't let that happen. At this stage, engineers are best to prioritize this list. They know what the product is missing and which new features will have the biggest impact across the largest number of potential customers. Those features must happen first. Niche or nice-to-have features will come later, even if it means your company won't land a Fortune 500 customer until they do. A sales leader who attempts to influence that process will only sour their relationship with their engineers. When it comes to personalities, there's not much common ground between the two and sales folks are the ones more likely to irk engineers—not the other way around.

Related to this, your pre- and post-GA product will be missing a whole bunch of features that your competitors' products have offered for years. That's okay. Those bread-and-butter features are not why your product first exists. Instead, your founders and your first engineers set out to disrupt an industry, not emulate it. They determined that what was on offer before they arrived failed to solve a multitude of customers' problems, which stifled their ability to grow their businesses. Snowflake was conceived on such a premise. Our product's architecture was revolutionary. To this day, it remains the bedrock of how we continue to add amazing new features to the product. But focusing on building something so new from scratch had its tradeoffs. Our product lacked basic features, such as data loading, data security, and data deduplication. What we could offer in the beginning overshadowed the features that prospects expected Snowflake to have but came later. What our founders and engineers developed from the outset, which comprised my initial sales pitch, created enough customer appeal to get them interested, provide me product feedback, and eventually generate a constant and growing revenue stream.

Be Patient, Remain Focused, and Be Humble

While this was happening, I realized the importance of having someone like me in this job. As I mentioned in Chapter 1, hiring a head of

sales early on with the right amount of experience is key. I didn't mind going it alone for a while and doing some tasks that a recent college grad could handle. Sales reps often do. Sure, they have managers and technical sales consultants who often help out. But most of the time we're on our own and we're wholly responsible for making our quota no matter what the stated goals are in our annual contracts. Rarely do companies these days overpopulate a region or industry with too many of their sales reps. There are many software tools that help automate the process of accurately revealing the potential viability of a sales region. From there, you choose the annual quotas and the number of reps to match that viability. If a sales rep repeatedly falls short of their quota, they're likely in the wrong job. I set my goals early on and exceeded them. If I failed, the Snowflake board had every right to fire me. I never gave them a reason to and no one else did either.

In those early days, the engineers were available when I needed to meet with them so I could develop my sales pitch, and they were very receptive to hearing the product feedback I received from prospects. John McMahon and I met on a regular basis and he bestowed upon me his vast knowledge about sales. When a sales rep falls short, that person's customers and prospects are not getting the knowledge and value they need to make the best business decisions or best technology decisions, respectively speaking. The company suffers because it's giving up customers and revenue to competitors that may not necessarily have a superior product. If I failed, an entire company could fall over, or at least be no closer to the revenue we desperately needed to help get us from one financial quarter to the next. Venture capital funding is not a money tree. In essence, I had to be focused, and be at least as good at sales as our engineers were at developing the product. And those people are pretty amazing.

If you're not prone to being humble, start. It's what has kept Snowflake grounded. Silicon Valley is full of super egos, and justifiably so. There's an incredible amount of very smart, skilled, and talented people here. Without humbleness in that mix, it can become pure arrogance. Decades ago the Valley was lauded for that type of behavior, from executive leadership all the way down to newly hired college grads. People would foster or become victims of brutal work environments. Not only would morale suffer but so would the

customer experience and company performance. Some of that still goes on today. Snowflake's founders, our board, and our first engineers are all driven, accomplished, and humble people. I knew that from the outset and I emulated that as Snowflake's head of sales. It was particularly important that I do. The best sales managers and reps want to succeed. But they have to do so with respect for their customers and their colleagues. Otherwise, a sales team is just a bunch of lone cowgirls and cowboys shooting up the place. Read on to understand how we accomplished that.

PHASE



Build

7

Enter Marketing

“Chris, sales is my customer.”

—Denise Persson

I GREW UP in Sweden. My father was a construction engineer, and my mother was a teacher. I didn’t grow up with people talking business around the table. But education was important to them, and I’m grateful for that. My parents urged me to do well in school and go on to college to earn a business degree. But it was my only sibling, my sister, who exposed me to the business world at a young age. She is eight years my senior and began working in marketing and advertising while I was in high school. I often went to her office after school to do homework. She subscribed to *Resumé*—the Swedish marketing communications news magazine. Every week I rushed to her office to read the next edition. I read it from cover to cover, learning about the different campaigns companies relied on for their success. It drew me in and inspired me to become a career marketer.

After I graduated from Stockholm University, I joined the conferencing software company Genesys in 1996. My sister had a close friend who was a sales manager there and talked me into joining when it was just a startup. It was the mid-1990s and the highly coveted jobs back then in Sweden were at large companies. Joining a startup right out of college influenced my career heavily. I spent 12 years at Genesys,

bouncing from Sweden to France and then eventually settling in the United States. During that time, I ascended to my ultimate role at the company as executive vice president of marketing. We invented then what Zoom is today. Genesys was acquired in 2008. Soon after, I joined the virtual communications software company ON24 as its CMO. I spent five years there and then occupied the same role at Apigee, an API platform company. I left Apigee in 2016, when Snowflake approached me.

When I interviewed with Chris, he asked me to reveal something about how others view me. I looked at him deadpanned and told him I was often referred to as the “Ice Queen” in my career. I was still locked in eye contact with him, paused, noticed he was stunned and then let him off the hook with my next statement: “Actually, people don’t know that I’m pretty funny.” We both smiled and laughed. What I am all about is going for it, delivering on decisions immediately, and bringing absolute impact to everything we do. I stay clear of esoteric discussions, I challenge vague promises, and I keep conversations in the trees, not the weeds. No one slips anything past me, especially in a group meeting. I will challenge them when I sniff a strategy that isn’t one or when its execution is half-baked. I’m upfront but purposeful, so everyone else listening or watching knows not to repeat what they just witnessed. The first people I hired inspired those who came later. They had worked for me previously, so they copped twice as much because they knew better and they bounced back immediately. My gaze isn’t narrow. I treat vendors the same. We pay them a lot of money based on commitments they make to gain our business. When they don’t deliver, and it happens sometimes, I let them know why and what’s at stake for our customers and our company.

Your CMO

A lot of CMOs have big egos. They know how good they are at what they do. Hire someone who has bragging rights but doesn’t brag. They must be humble, for at least three reasons. Most days they will work very closely with the founders and executive management. Chest beating isn’t well received when those on the other end of that behavior are humble and brilliant. And egomaniacs tend to hire people like themselves or hire a bunch of door mats—neither of which will fit

your company's culture and values. Your CMO must also work in lock-step with sales and must be willing to work as an individual contributor in the beginning, while trying to hire their first few key marketers. Rolling up your sleeves early on in your tenure as a CMO is a must and gains a lot of respect. But if that person continues to work heavily as an individual contributor after they hire a team, and not pass those responsibilities to their subordinates, that too is a cause for concern. When they're not engaging their peers, they have to manage their team with impact. They must focus on driving measurable results with every strategy, program, and execution. This mindset must cascade down to every layer of management and to every individual contributor. If it can't be measured, then it won't deliver impact.

No two CMOs approach marketing the same way. We all manage a number of distinctly different functions. Yet, we each have our own mission that defines how all of those functions operate alongside one another and toward that mission. What makes sense for one marketing organization during a specific phase of a company may not work for others. Snowflake hired me for a number of reasons, including the promise I made to Chris that marketing would serve sales if I was at the helm. They desperately needed to increase their trickle of leads to a constant flow, so our sales team could establish Snowflake as a viable competitor in a tech sector owned by 8,000 lb rhinos, young and old. Revenue can't grow without sales doing its job. Sales can't do its job without an abundant amount of qualified leads. Sales doesn't have the time to generate all of their leads, but marketing should.

Assessing Marketing Incumbents

The first thing I had to tackle was building the team and figuring out how we were going to establish credibility for Snowflake. We were going to compete against some of the largest companies on the planet. At the same time, we had to convince customers to put their most valuable asset, their data, into Snowflake. My job was to come in and build the team. In particular, build the demand generation function with other marketing functions supporting it.

Back in 2016, Snowflake had just over 100 people, which still comprised mainly engineers and sales professionals, and a few finance

and customer support people. But the company had also hired seven marketers prior to my arrival. The person who led the team when I arrived was very intelligent and incredibly talented, but they came from a product background, with limited experience building functions such as demand generation. That couldn't work if sales and marketing were going to be successful and absolutely aligned with each other. There was also friction between sales and marketing when I came on board. It was a culture of conflict. I fired two marketers within a couple of months. Over the next couple of years, we let another few of them go for various reasons. Looking back, they should have departed Snowflake sooner than they did. They were good people but either in the wrong role, at the wrong company, at the wrong time, or a combination of all three. How that showed up each day was how they aligned themselves with our company values and our sales team.

Chris was Snowflake's first sales rep, so he had to be careful about who he hired in the early days and going forward. I had to be similarly vigilant. I also had to assess the people in marketing who arrived before me. If they didn't align with our values, then keeping them on the team would be similar to hiring someone new with that same disposition. I also had to show the company that I was willing to tackle issues head on, and immediately, no matter how sensitive they might be and even if the departing employees started long before I arrived.

I needed to shift the focus of the team to realize that we are here to help the sales folks sell. That's our job. Not to tell sales what to do. We had to give more to the other side before they would reciprocate. That's how you get trust from sales. You can't come in and demand trust. Trust is built. It took about six months to accomplish this. By then, the leads were coming in and the sales reps were generating deals from those leads.

Your First Hires

I needed to hire, and fast. I chose people who had a lot of experience, could wear many hats, and who had no problem with rolling up their sleeves as individual contributors until they would hire and manage their own teams. They had all worked for me previously or I knew a lot about them through previous experiences. Reason being, hiring is such a gamble. You may not know for six months whether or not that person

is going to work out. The more senior the person, the longer that evaluation can take. In addition to their versatility, they had to be entrepreneurs in their own domains and have that same spirit when collaborating with others. They had to know their craft, be self-starters, and be ready to huddle with no notice. They had to come up with great marketing ideas on the fly that would grab prospects' attention and leave a lasting impression. They also had to be committed to the Snowflake cause, meaning, they believed in Snowflake to such a degree they would remain for at least five years or when Snowflake failed, whichever came first. And they had to know people—people whom they wanted to be their first hires. Contractors were also a big part of our efforts early on. We also needed the help of small agencies that specialized in specific areas of marketing that could do the work because we didn't have the headcount yet for those functions. Of course, new hires had to believe in our company values and would live them every day.

At other companies, too often I see people pointing fingers at each other, shuffling PowerPoint presentations from one department over to another. There's little execution taking place. When we're trying to hit a triple, triple, triple, double, double, in terms of revenue, year over year, you need execution. As Frank Sloodman, one of our previous CEOs, said: "Your strategy is only as good as your execution." Otherwise, your strategy will sit on a shelf somewhere if you can't translate it into actionable deliverables. All of my first hires dedicated at least seven years to Snowflake and counting. All but one were still working at Snowflake as this book took shape.

Demand Generation

Chris was generating the leads, but they were trickling in and there was no machine in place to ramp that up. He told John McMahon, "I'm nervous that I don't have a partner on the other side who understands demand generation." The CMO is someone who has to generate sales leads. It's the number one most important thing a company in growth mode can do. You can have a mediocre product but market the hell out of it and still make money. But even the best technology in the world won't sell if your demand gen is substandard. If you don't have leads, you're dead.

Of all the marketing functions, demand gen is the one that flies closest to sales. I devoted big resources to that and had a strong sense of what good looked like based on my time leading other marketing organizations. Snowflake was starting to gain traction. Chris wanted a genuine partner he could work with and a marketing team that would align with sales to bring in potential customers. He was under pressure from the board to scale the sales organization, and demand gen was an essential enabler of that.

Establishing a productive and effective demand gen operation, and everything it needed from other marketing teams, was my mission when I arrived at Snowflake. We had to increase the outputs of that function almost exponentially. Lars Christensen had led demand gen teams for a number of tech companies and did so when he worked for me at ON24. He was already a tech veteran when I contacted him within days after I joined Snowflake. He had the experience, insights, and humility that were vital to jump-starting a world class demand gen organization. Lars focused on a few key initiatives to get things rolling that a company should expect from its head of demand gen.

1. As an individual contributor, increase the flow of leads, while liaising with sales management on an almost daily basis.
2. Contract with small marketing consulting firms to execute aspects of demand generation until the team is large enough to bring those functions in house.
3. Hire proven experts from different functional areas of demand gen, who had worked for him previously and who could be individual contributors before they built out their own teams.
4. Deploy the apps and marketing operations needed to automate nearly every process of demand gen, and to track the impact marketing campaigns had on advancing prospects through the sales funnel.
5. Partner with a content marketing leader to develop value-based content and messaging that would address the top challenges faced by Snowflake's targeted personas.

When Lars first arrived, everything at Snowflake was ad hoc. Lars and I approached demand gen in terms of repeatability and predictability. When you align yourself with sales, you can't just show up once

a month and say, “Hey, we were at a trade show, and now we have 300 leads for you.” Then, nothing more happens for the next three weeks until you send out the next email, when you might get another 150 leads. As the leads flow in, they roll to each sales territory. The sales team can get snowed under with too many leads at a single point in time. You must create a pipeline with a steady flow of leads so reps can work on them each day in a very predictable way. We wanted to stimulate demand, not in waves, but in a constant flow.

With demand, it’s about using many channels, digital advertising, and optimizing and building up our own database. Our team would target our personas en masse and also conduct targeted campaigns by mapping out a big enterprise prospect, identifying the key individuals and educating them. We targeted them with offers via social media. It’s all about how we engage people in that account. It’s also about timing the value prop with a prospect’s need. It could be up to 15 touchpoints to engage them and then we follow up and eventually hand the lead over to the sales team. Making a salesperson find the right people in an account is not where they should focus, but marketing can do that at scale.

Content Marketing

A solid demand gen machine requires a great deal of value-driven content. Without it, you might as well own a Ferrari a thousand miles from the nearest gas station. Messaging and content are crucial to how a startup positions itself to customers, the market, and the investment community. The genesis of your content strategy isn’t about delivering a bunch of white papers, ebooks, and product briefs. It helps drive all of your marketing in those early days. Product, customer, and field marketing all need content and public relations, as well. Tight budgets and absolute brand continuity from day one demand that your content strategy and execution are in lock step with all of marketing. But there’s something more. You need a company-wide editorial process, plain and simple, and it has to start at the very beginning. Otherwise, your customers and prospects will get the same brand experience they get from most other startups and large companies—mediocre and conflicting content, and disjointed messaging from multiple fiefdoms operating independent of one another.

I hired Vince Morello to lead content because marketing today is about education. I called him at 9 am on my first day at Snowflake. He and I met a year before while I was CMO at Apigee. He didn't take the job we offered him then but joined Snowflake six weeks after I did. I sought him out because he had worked in demand gen and later in sales at Oracle, a soon-to-be Snowflake competitor. He later retrained to become a news and investigative journalist. He was my first hire as Lars needed a few months to exit his role at his previous company. Sales and journalism made Vince a highly competitive person when it came to content. His mantra is to always grab readers with the first three words, provide a fresh angle, and then deliver value throughout every piece of content. He observed that very few tech firms accomplish this. To do so at Snowflake, he deployed the art of storytelling, in everything from a short banner ad on social media to an 80-page booklet about data warehouses.

He was originally tasked with jump-starting Snowflake's content marketing, which is not about traditional product marketing. It's the phase at the very top of the sales funnel—content designed to provide insights into your prospects' problems without pushing your products or services. You become more their partner than a vendor. They begin to rely on your content and then develop a curiosity about what you do offer in the way of solutions. As they move further down the funnel, you expose them to more traditional content about your products and services before they eventually make contact with a sales rep.

Vince produced the content offered in our demand generation campaigns, but he also wrote the emails, web landing pages, and banner ads that enabled those campaigns. He developed our press releases and content for our product, customer, and field marketing functions. He produced content across all mediums—digital, web, print, video, and audio. He was the only writer and editor in marketing at the time, and he took the same approach for those traditional forms of marketing as he did with content and thought leadership marketing. As a journalist, he had interviewed thousands of people, so he worked well with our engineers, and our sales reps and sales engineers, to understand everything about the product and about the customer pain points Snowflake could solve. He once adapted a slide deck from one of our sales engineers and turned it into an ebook. It performed

incredibly well. Like a journalist, there were no boundaries when it came to generating ideas for content. As a former salesperson, he saw the value of minimizing direct contact between sales reps and prospects early in the sales cycle. He produced content that addressed questions prospects often had during that phase, so our sales reps could focus on opportunities further down the funnel. This streamlined things for our sales team, helping them scale their operations outside of hiring more reps. Vince spent seven years at Snowflake, with his last three years as our chief storyteller.

Marketing is about promoting great educational content and spending time with sales reps to make sure content always addresses the things prospects want to learn about. Every Friday, Vince sat down with sales engineers to learn about the conversations they had that week with prospects. This helped him understand how to position Snowflake to address their technical and business challenges around data and how to advance their data strategies overall. No one else had that content, so people would come to Snowflake to learn. Not enough marketers really execute on that. Putting ourselves in their world, not the other way around.

Kicking off your content strategy early in your startup stage is vital to all areas of marketing. You need someone who can write incredibly well, and fast. That means they will hire those who can meet that same level of quality and speed as you expand your content operations. In all of your marketing teams, you need an edge. For content, it was our journalism style of writing and our newsroom style of envisioning and producing content. You also have to prepare yourself for the resistance from marketers who later join the team. Product marketers, like many others in your marketing organization, consider themselves to be writers and will draft a product brief or white paper, edit and proofread it themselves, and then send it to a graphic designer. Marketers aren't writers but they know the product area they oversee very well. So, they should be involved from the very beginning, but they can't be the only person. They have to conform with the editorial process that you establish. Some will resist at first but most will be patient long enough to see the benefits. Others, well, they end up having to depart your organization.

Customer Marketing

Early on, we already had happy customers. Because they were so delighted with the product, they were happy to talk about it. Eszter Szikora worked for me at Apigee as head of social media and marketing communications. She was my third hire at Snowflake. She jump-started our customer marketing and was given public relations and other teams to manage as the marketing organization continued to grow. Eszter is the manifestation of relentlessness with a smile. In the early days, Eszter built strong relationships with many of our customers and got them involved in our marketing. She didn't promote them like other tech companies did—showcasing them like they were prized ponies in the Snowflake stable. Instead, she had them speak for us.

She produced dozens of short, sharp, and simple customer videos. This accomplished a few things. First and foremost was our tight budget. We didn't have the money to do big video productions around our customers. Secondly, Snowflake didn't have any big-name customers. Even our first few big-name customers wouldn't do any marketing with us. They viewed becoming a customer of such a small company as a risk they could handle. But appearing in our marketing programs was something else entirely. For our smaller customers, we developed a short list of questions to get each interview started and then let things roll from there. It was just Eszter and a single videographer with a tripod and camera, and Vince helped out from a storytelling perspective. Because our product comprised about 10 or so technology areas, she got customers to talk about which of those areas were most important to their organizations and how Snowflake was uniquely different from our competitors. From there, our customers discussed the business benefits of Snowflake, such as ease of use and greater access to more data and insights than competing products offered.

That first wave of interviews was done so simply. They happened during our customer advisory meetings at local, mid-range hotels. We would ask one of them to step out for 10 minutes for an interview. The customer sat on a stool in front of the camera in a small hotel conference room. We once hosted a happy hour for these customers in the kitchen area of our small office space. Sure enough, one by one, we would politely usher them across the hall into our conference room where we were ready to film. With a target of just two minutes per

video after editing, we moved customers through each interview quickly, extracting all of the vital points and surrounded by their passion for their jobs and how Snowflake made their jobs so much easier. We had to get the videos approved by each of our customers' legal teams, but that never prevented us from politely capitalizing on having so many happy customers in one place at the same time.

The same strategy happened with our live events. Bob would deliver a passionate keynote, creating clear delineations between our technology and that of our competitors. Sometime later in that one-day event, we would get four or five customers sitting on stage together. We had our own moderator ask a few questions to get the conversation rolling. Then we let the panel take over the conversation, inspiring prospects in the audience to ask question after question. A lot of those questions were in response to the disbelief of what they heard. Snowflake was almost too good to be true, and they needed a customer to confirm it for them.

We did not have a vertical marketing strategy, segmenting customers by industry. That came later. As a small company, we were simply focusing on the technical benefits of Snowflake and what it meant to store and manage their data more easily and comprehensively, and extract insights from that data. This approach made sense for the first couple of years of marketing. But our method of delivering those messages was first and foremost through our customers. We made them happy because of our technology, and we treated them well during the relationship. And that strategy remained as the marketing team grew. Data warehousing became one of a number of data workloads Snowflake could handle, and we eventually verticalized our go-to-market strategy. As a startup it can be time-consuming to manage a customer marketing program when you have limited resources, but it's worth every minute. Second to our initial public offering (IPO), I can attribute nearly 100 percent of our brand awareness to customer advocacy.

Field Marketing

Field sales reps are as critical and impatient as they are driven. They know how important their jobs are to a company, so when they call on someone from outside their organization for help, they *really* need it.

If you don't respond immediately or respond but fail to deliver value, then they will dismiss you and your organization. Why? Because they need to focus on developing opportunities and closing business with urgency. When marketing takes the initiative, continues to deliver more than what a field sales rep expects, and delights them in the process, you've cemented a relationship that traverses a path from the bottom up. That can be more effective than a sales-marketing relationship that starts with your executive management but often fizzles somewhere down the line.

Caitlin Griffith DeMartini started at Snowflake just a month before I did but as a sales development rep (SDR) with Chris's team at our San Mateo office. It was her first and only sales job, and she was successful in that role for her first six months. But I saw even bigger potential for her in field marketing and politely stole her from Chris. Even a short time in such a small sales organization, which was moving very quickly, exposed her to working relationships with most of Snowflake's field sales reps. They already knew her, so gaining their trust was easier than if she was a new hire or someone who had no sales experience.

Caitlin got to work quickly to understand each sales rep's needs in terms of lead generation and the types of events each rep or region needed. At this early stage, we didn't have a repeatable or scalable event that we could host around the country—or the world, for that matter. We didn't need one. We had a few dozen reps, so we hosted small events at cool venues such as microbreweries and the like. The reps chose the prospects and customers they wanted to invite. Caitlin suggested venues and worked with each rep to create an agenda and secure speakers for brief talks during these events. One of the key ways that we measure our field marketing programs is through the pipeline dollar value that a program touches. When you're looking at customer progression in a sales funnel, you have different digital vehicles out there (mainly content) reaching prospects via different touch points. Field marketing really kicks in after customers enter the sales cycle. At our smaller hospitality events and highly targeted field events, we typically attract attendees who are already well into the sales cycle. They are not new prospects. It's just too expensive to use those events that way, at that level. They are part of a pipeline acceleration strategy. Many times, we will attract those prospects and a number of their

colleagues, who have a say or a stake in their organization choosing Snowflake. When this happens, it's a telltale sign they are close to making a purchase decision.

Partner Marketing

Saqib Mustafa is what we call a “true believer.” He was working for Teradata—a long-time data warehouse competitor that started more than 30 years before Snowflake’s founders and engineers typed their first line of code. Teradata created an all-in-one “appliance” that included on-premises hardware and data warehousing software. Later on, Teradata offered a cloud version of its solution. Saqib had a computer science degree and was working in pre-sales at Teradata when he heard about Snowflake. After a closer look at what Snowflake was about, he was hooked and joined the product marketing team a few months before I arrived. There was someone in charge of partner marketing when I arrived, but the role was not a good fit for that person. So, I moved Saqib into that role. His job was to work closely with product marketing and Snowflake’s alliance team to develop marketing strategies with our growing group of technology partners.

If we deliver marketing events on our own, it's a lot of work to get people to come. But if we host a live event with two of our partners, we will all invite our customers and prospects. We're going to get three times the reach compared to going it alone. We also did webinars, display advertising, and content marketing together. And even though we positioned Snowflake bigger than a startup, we always piggybacked on the credibility of much larger partners. Budgets weren't incredibly tight, but you have to be very smart with the money you have.

Joint marketing programs cement a clear and consistent message to convey to your target audiences. Many startups strike partnerships with other technology companies and promote those relationships on their websites. That's not easy but it's the easiest part of a go-to-market strategy with partners. The true challenge is messaging around that partnership—how each of your products works, how the technologies integrate, the value customers receive, and how that integration and value from that partnership differ from a competitor's relationships with other partners that market a similar joint solution.

Only during a content strategy session, do you realize all of this. Otherwise, if you skip this part, all you're doing is placing your product messaging next to theirs. This is lazy marketing, and your prospects will see that for what it is.

You can't market with all your partners. We first cemented our relationships with the cloud infrastructure providers, the ETL and ELT technology companies, and the business intelligence solution providers. These complementary technologies were essential to hosting Snowflake in the cloud, getting data into Snowflake, and getting insights out of Snowflake. Following that, we struck relationships with all kinds of technology and service providers. We needed them all, but we could only invest a great deal of time and money with partners that we often joined forces with in sales opportunities. One or two joint opportunities in a year doesn't justify joint marketing with a partner. Closing dozens or even hundreds of joint deals with a single partner each year does.

Account-Based Marketing (ABM)

ABM is integral to sales and is one of the marketing functions that helps enable absolute alignment between sales and marketing. But how does it work? At Snowflake, we jump-started this team when we created our first named account team within our sales organization. As we grew from hundreds of customers to thousands, we scaled our ABM strategy to align with our goals to grow our named account customer base. We started by deploying a multi-level strategy by aligning our ABM people with named account sales reps. Later, we aligned ABM with our sales development reps (SDRs), who advance leads to a point where sales reps can justifiably make contact with those prospects.

Tier 1: Our regional sales vice presidents identify up to five prospect accounts each that they see as having significant deal-size potential. These are huge organizations that could generate a multitude of sales opportunities. They have many use cases that span departments, subsidiaries, and geographic regions and could benefit from deploying our product. We create events, custom emails, advertising, microsites, and other forms of one-to-one custom content. The topics focus

on the prospects' technical and business pain points, the topics of interest they share with our sales reps, and the challenges they often encounter specific to their vertical industry. We also leverage SaaS products that capture intent data to reveal the topics the people in these accounts are researching. The cross-functional team you assemble and assign to execute your ABM strategy for each of these accounts should include someone from ABM, sales development, field marketing, partner marketing, and field sales.

Tier 2: Have your account executives in field sales identify between five to seven prospect accounts that would be strategic to their sales pipeline. Then deploy a one-to-few approach with custom ads for each group, a microsite they can visit that features existing but curated content and events, personal outreach from your field sales rep, and tailored outreach from your SDRs. Invite these prospects to field marketing events with their region and include content about your product and services that can help address their technical and business challenges. Assemble a cross-functional team similar to your tier one approach. But because this is a one-to-few strategy, swap out your ABM person for folks from your demand generation team.

Tier 3: This is also a one-to-few approach, but based on intent activity within a specific region and led by your ABM managers, district sales managers, and SDRs. This cross-functional team identifies top themes within a geographic region and uses intent data to choose three to five accounts in a region that are actively researching those themes. From there, create engagement, establish first meetings, and reveal new opportunities in these prospect accounts. Your programs for these accounts should take advantage of the alignment and scale you continue to develop across and between marketing and sales. Your ABM team can launch targeted ads that point to a microsite focused on a region or theme. Build this personalized microsite to turn visitor insights into page customizations upon page load. This is not a one-to-many approach that offers the same experience to all accounts within a single segment. Instead, it allows you to deliver a one-to-one ABM experience at scale.

Overall, use your ABM strategy to land and expand new accounts and to expand existing accounts. Many accounts that qualify for an ABM strategy will become strategic to your sales strategy as they come to trust your company and rely on your product and insights. At the very top, a single named account can be the only account a field sales rep maintains. Some of these individual accounts require more than one sales rep, because the amount of business they do with you is significant. Yet, with all of the benefits that a well-run ABM strategy delivers, your demand gen team still plays a significant role developing awareness and interest in your named accounts. Both ABM and demand generation focus on understanding the needs of different industries and sub-industries, and the pain points of prospective buyers, by delivering personalized marketing messaging and sales efforts.

Public Relations

PR firms are limited because their clients are spread across a number of industries. Even if a firm has a tech focus, their clients could span dozens of different tech sectors. We were impressed with each one we chose. Their people and presentations were always solid but none of them understood the depth of our technology, how it differed from our competitors, or what it would require from a PR firm to help achieve our overall company strategy. We couldn't expect them to. We had so much to tell the public about our product and we were the best at doing so. We also faced challenges that many startups have to endure. Our competitors wrongly stated what our product was capable of or how our product compared to theirs. Journalists had good intentions, but similar to the PR firms we used, didn't always accurately explain what our product offered. Once we developed a robust PR strategy and hired enough people, we moved nearly all of that function in-house at Snowflake.

We added PR to Eszter's responsibilities. She had more than 10 years of marketing communications experience at companies prior to joining Snowflake. She got to work quickly, expanding her team globally in lockstep with Snowflake's expansion due to customer demand in Europe, Asia, and Australia. She also coordinated all of our PR

employees, contractors, and vendors across the globe, so they were in sync with worldwide product announcements and events. It was not long before we brought most of the PR strategy and execution inside Snowflake. PR firms have their place but just be sure that you're getting the value for what these firms charge. You won't really need one when you're still developing your product. When you're nearing GA, or when you've started marketing via other channels, employing a PR firm makes sense. Just set your expectations correctly about how far they can help you and what you should pay them based on the services they actually provide your company.

What Matters

We hired great people, but still we deployed a quarterly results system to hold each marketer accountable. We titled it, "What Matters in Marketing." Each person in marketing works with their manager to develop a short list of the most important projects they planned to complete in every financial quarter, and the measurable results they would have to attain to show their success. We often call these the huge "rocks" we plan to move. For the demand gen folks, it would be the number of programs they completed, how many campaign responses we received, the engagement created within a targeted named account, prospects who attended our live or online events, and how many qualified prospect meetings they generated. For public relations, it's about the PR calendar of events, how they promote them, and the measurable response they created. It also relates to how many original articles about Snowflake that PR gets placed in industry publications or how many times Snowflake is mentioned in articles written by journalists about our industry. It goes this way for everyone in marketing. At the end of each quarter, each marketer reports on what they achieved against their stated goals from three months before. Their performance, or lack thereof, determines how much of their quarterly bonus they receive. Minor projects or daily activities do not make a person's What Matters list. Anything that resembles a statement from a job description doesn't make the list either. Those are broad responsibilities that can't be measured, and to which you can't hold people accountable.