



The Essential Guide to SaaS Marketing Roles: Structuring Early-Stage Teams



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You've done the coding, the testing, the tweaking—and now you're ready to roll out your product to the world at large. While outbound sales might provide a bit of traction, ambitious startups won't get the returns they want from cold calls and emails alone.

To really take off, startups and established companies alike need a comprehensive marketing strategy that covers all the bases, from product positioning and market analysis to website development and lead generation.

And that's where your SaaS marketing team comes in.

Maybe you've already hired an internal marketing team in the past but had little luck moving the needle and getting everyone on the same page.

OR...

Maybe you've outgrown an outbound strategy and want to move past your audience of tech enthusiasts, expanding into new fields and product developments—but building a team of marketers from scratch feels daunting (and possibly out of your price range).

This guide can help.

Our guide to building a winning SaaS marketing function includes:

- A look at what sets SaaS marketing apart from other fields (and why it pays to have specialists)
- An in-depth description of the types of roles forward-thinking companies may need to plan for as they grow
- An introduction to fractional marketing and how a fractional approach can help scale your department for growth—without breaking the bank

SaaS marketing is unique—and that's a good thing

There's a reason SaaS companies are some of the hottest properties in the tech world today. Your business model—which allows for subscription-based access to software services, often for a B2B audience—is not only convenient, but also scalable and remarkably efficient.

What's more, the low barrier to entry means that even small startups can compete with larger, more established companies. This level playing field has spurred innovation and creativity in the industry, as well as a healthy dose of competition.

But while the SaaS business model is unique and advantageous, it also presents its own set of challenges when it comes to marketing.

1 **SaaS marketing is an area of specialists**, which means that there are a lot of different roles within a SaaS marketing team. This can be daunting for small startups who are trying to figure out how to structure their own teams and who to hire first. (And second, and third...)

2 SaaS marketers at startups are often facing very real deadlines in order to win over investors. Many **investors expect to see steady growth**, whether or not your company is profitable at this stage.

3 **A focus on customer lifetime value (LTV)** in SaaS (taking into account both revenue and churn in your marketing metrics) means your marketing talent may be split between attracting new business and retaining existing customers.

4 Tech is a saturated market, so it's important to have a clear understanding of what sets your product apart and **succinctly relay that unique value proposition (UVP)** to your target audience.

5 Not only are you competing for business, but **you're competing with other SaaS businesses for talent**, too. When your marketing leadership is wrapped up in trying to recruit and retain the next great talent, it can be difficult to focus on the actual marketing tasks at hand.

You need strategic marketing leadership to confront challenges

That means you need marketing leadership that can face these challenges head on. The right hire(s) will:

1

Have a deep understanding of what sets SaaS apart from other industries and know how to market to this unique audience.

2

Provide an objective perspective on your marketing strategy, implementation, and effectiveness.

3

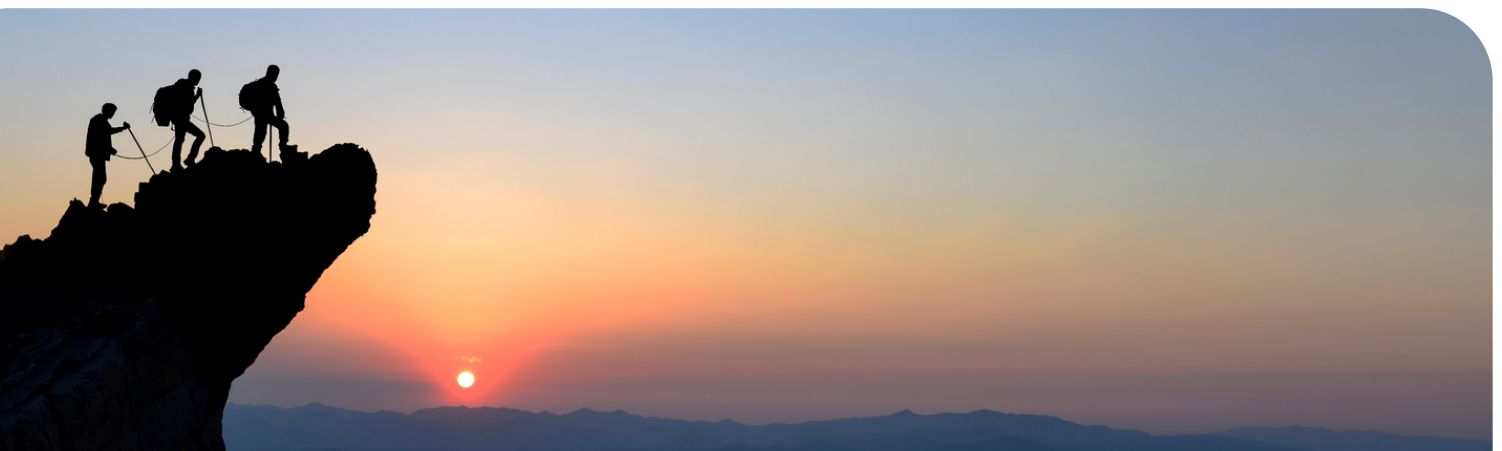
Be well-versed in the latest marketing trends and technologies and can help you stay ahead of the curve.

4

Have a proven track record of success in growing SaaS companies through effective marketing initiatives.

5

Become an invaluable asset in recruiting and retaining top talent for your marketing team.



So who should be your first marketing hire?

Your first marketing hire is essential to helping you compete in a sometimes saturated (and almost always complicated) SaaS market.

It may be tempting to go with the budget hire, a marketing manager or coordinator with some experience in the field who can post blogs, create social posts, film videos, and more.

This can seem like a great way to dip a toe into marketing--until it isn't. In the long-term, your "strategy" will boil down to a series of random tactics and prescriptive attempts to build a marketing program. More than likely, initial results from an uptick in marketing activity won't last for long.

Real, sustainable growth comes from strategy. And strategic marketing comes from a strategic marketing leader--preferably a CMO.

Why might you need a CMO? Let's break it down:



They develop your marketing strategy

The first step in any journey is to know where you're going. The right CMO will get to know your business intimately to ensure messaging is on point and that tactics are the right fit for your goals.



They align it with your goals and set KPIs

A CMO ensures that marketing efforts are always tied back to business objectives. They work closely with other departments, such as sales, to make sure everyone is on the same page and working together towards collective success.



They oversee marketing execution

The CMO leads the charge when it comes to executing the marketing strategy. This includes managing campaigns, budget, team, and results.



They build a team

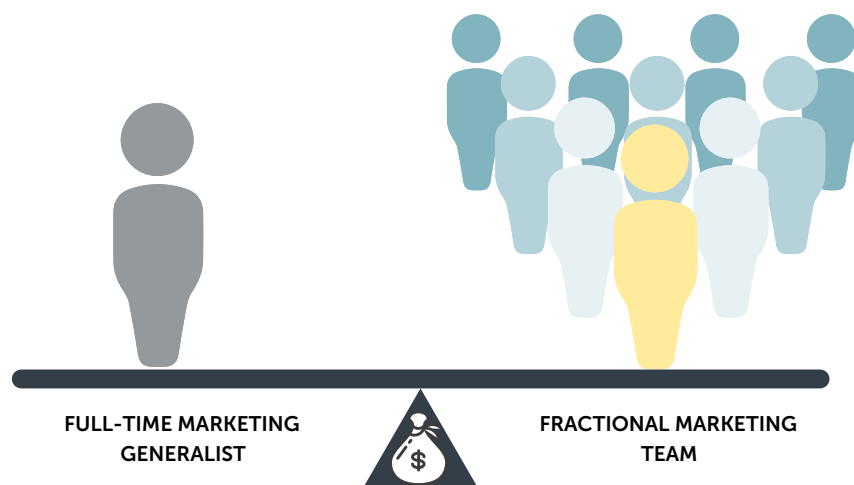
The CMO is responsible for putting together a top-notch marketing team that can execute the vision and drive results. This team may include specialists in various areas such as content marketing, demand generation, and product marketing.

Can you hire a CMO on a budget?

All that said, many SaaS startups and even established companies moving on from an outbound strategy don't have the budget to hire an in-house CMO--not to mention the tools and team needed to carry out recommended marketing tactics.

That's why many SaaS companies are moving towards the fractional CMO model.

A fractional CMO is a consultant that provides C-level marketing expertise and leadership on a part-time or project basis. This is a great option for SaaS companies that need high-level marketing guidance but don't have the budget for a full-time CMO.



The duties of a fractional CMO vary depending on the company's needs, but they typically include:

- Developing and executing an overall marketing strategy
- Planning and managing budgets
- Leading product positioning
- Creating and analyzing KPIs
- Managing campaigns and initiatives
- Building and leading a team
- Identifying new growth opportunities
- Conducting market research

- Creating go-to-market strategies
- Overseeing communications and PR
- Managing digital marketing efforts
- Crafting brand identity and messaging
- Building relationships with customers, partners, and influencers
- Planning events and tradeshows
- Planning sales enablement materials
- And more...

All at a fraction of the cost of an in-house hire.

They can help you save money, get organized, set goals and KPIs, oversee marketing execution, improve team morale, and so much more. Plus, they come with a wealth of experience and knowledge that can take your company to the next level--especially CMOs that are already experienced in high-growth SaaS environments.

They already have the tools for the job. And the best fractional CMOs come with their own fractional marketing teams--but more on that later.

Understanding SaaS marketing roles

So you've hired a fractional CMO to lead growth (or another strategic marketer) and you're ready for your first marketing hire.

Before you make any snap decisions, it's important to understand the overall landscape of marketing specialties and how they interact with each other. In this guide, we'll cover the three main categories of marketing roles in a software-as-a-service (SaaS) company: growth marketing, content marketing, and product marketing.

This is not our recommendation for hiring, especially for the middle market. However, it's helpful to understand all of the specialties so you can make an informed hiring decision.



Growth Marketing

Growth marketing is often used interchangeably with demand generation, an area deals with digital specialties that all contribute to attracting new leads and customers. Roles within this specialty are data-driven and results-oriented. They require a deep understanding of how to use marketing technology (MarTech) and the various digital channels available to reach target audiences.

Common growth marketing roles in a SaaS company include:



Digital Marketing Manager or Marketing Operations (Ops) Manager

A digital marketing manager is responsible for planning, executing, and measuring all digital marketing activities. This may be an ideal first person to hire for a growth marketing role, as they'll likely know a little bit about most digital areas. However, advanced companies also have additional roles in this list.



Search Engine Optimization (SEO) Specialist

An SEO specialist is responsible for improving a company's organic search results. They do this by optimizing website content, working on technical SEO issues, and building link popularity.



Paid Search Specialist

A paid search specialist is responsible for managing and optimizing a company's pay-per-click (PPC) campaigns. This includes choosing the right keywords, setting up ad groups, and bid management.



Social Media Specialist

A social media specialist is responsible for creating and managing a company's social media presence. This includes posting content, engaging with followers, and running ads.



Email Marketing Specialist

An email marketing specialist is essential for reaching customers in today's crowded inboxes. This specialty focuses on crafting effective email campaigns, building targeted lists, and measuring results.

Content Marketing

Content marketers are responsible for planning, developing, and creating effective written, visual, video, and audio content as part of a cohesive strategy. This specialty demands creativity, technical knowledge, and an understanding of what type of content will resonate with a target audience.

Roles within content marketing include:



Content Marketing Manager

This role is responsible for creating the strategy and overseeing all content marketing initiatives. They map your content calendar to targeted keywords, campaign plans, and current events to build and manage a holistic strategy.



Content Writer

A content writer produces the written, audio, or video content that will be used in content marketing campaigns. Many content marketing managers are also writers but will need support to get everything done.



Graphic Designer

The designer creates visual elements like infographics and motion graphics that complement written content. Enterprise companies may have other design roles like UX design or videographers.



PR Manager

The PR manager promotes your content through earned media placements and outreach. This role is increasingly outsourced in SaaS.

Product Marketing

Product marketing is another common area of expertise for SaaS companies, but one that is not usually critical in the early stages. Product marketers are responsible for understanding the needs of customers and creating messaging and positioning that resonates, a role that a fractional CMO or another marketing leader can also take on. If you get to this stage of hiring, however, this specialty will work closely with the product team to ensure that the products they are marketing meet customer needs.

Product marketing roles can sometimes overlap with other areas, but may include:



Product Marketing Manager

The product marketing manager is responsible for the go-to-market strategy for a product. This includes developing messaging, positioning, and promotional plans.



Sales Enablement Manager

The sales enablement manager works with the product marketing team to develop sales tools and training. They also work closely with the sales team to ensure that they are using the most effective methods to sell the product.



Customer Marketing Manager

The customer marketing manager is responsible for keeping a pulse on what customers want, building relationships with existing customers, and documenting intel to help develop key messaging for various products and features.



So where should you start?

Strategic leadership is essential for growth, and we highly recommend a fractional CMO hire as soon as you can. Many fractional CMOs come with their own marketing teams and can help structure your team for the future while providing a flexible team structure to utilize as needed within your marketing plan.

If you do decide to hire an in-house tactical specialist, we recommend starting with a content marketing role.

A content marketer can help you build essential assets for your website and blog, create helpful guides and resources, and develop a thought-leadership program to get your company name out there. Many also have insight on SEO and branding. This will help launch your marketing program because it will give you a strong foundation of content to share across all your channels.

As your marketing becomes more strategic or as you tap into new markets, you will have the initial content marketing in place to support your growth and enable sales. From there, you can add on growth marketing roles to help promote your content and your product in the best ways.



The best option is a fractional marketing team

SaaS companies are working with tight budgets and need to be strategic about where they invest their money. This is why a fractional marketing team can be the best option for many SaaS companies.

A fractional marketing team is a group of marketing experts that you can bring on board for a set number of hours each month. This allows you to have access to top talent without having to hire full-time. After all, your marketing needs are likely to change from month to month and even from day to day, and it may not make sense to hire a full-time SEO specialist, for example, when you only need this specialty once a month.



Buyer beware: many fractional CMOs work independently and don't quote a fractional marketing team in their initial proposals for new business. Rather, along the way, they'll recommend hiring freelance writers, designers, PPC specialists, email marketers, and others to get the job done, without providing any real transparency into how much this will cost you.

Be sure to ask about whether or not your fractional CMO will be working with a team, and if so, how much that team will cost you on an ongoing basis.

The bottom line: The future of SaaS marketing is fractional

It just doesn't make sense to hire a complete team of in-house marketing talent when tomorrow is always uncertain for a SaaS company. You need:

Marketing leadership that comes equipped with best practices and customized strategies focused on your growth.

A marketing team that is flexible, nimble, and scalable to meet the changing needs of your business.

The solution is fractional.

About Marketri

The right marketing strategy, talent, technologies, processes and analytics are key to B2B SaaS middle-market growth. Marketri is a strategic marketing consulting firm that moves you towards your goals by putting strategy first.

We provide you with the fractional talent needed to move the needle on goals and KPIs, tailored to your company's stage of growth and budget.

You'll have a fractional CMO to develop your strategy, supported by our in-house and outsourced team of SaaS experts as needed, to get work done quickly, and efficiently.

The result is a marketing function that is strategic, nimble, and scalable to meet the changing needs of your business.

Contact Marketri to learn more about fractional marketing for SaaS companies.