

Virtual Events as the New Normal: How to build a successful event and drive pipeline

Hosted by: Dani Hao, Marketing Coach and Consultant

Guest speaker: Mark Huber, Head of Brand & Product Marketing, Metadata

Dani:

Hi everybody, welcome to another episode of Supercharge Marketing. Today we have Mark Huber on the podcast. He's the director of growth at Metadata. So, Mark was actually a first-time customer turned full-time employee. He loved using Metadata so much that he knew he needed to find a way to work at Metadata and in his own words, he begged them. So joining as the second marketing hire, Mark has redefined Metadata's brand positioning and messaging and he's built a content marketing engine in the process. Welcome Mark, and thank you so much for coming on the show today.

Mark:

Thank you for having me, I'm excited for this.

Dani:

I'm excited for this as well. So, Metadata recently hosted DEMAND 2021, which was a huge hit for the B2B marketing community. I personally had the pleasure of attending a few sessions and learned so much. I was trying to take notes but you know there was no point doing that because I knew you guys would probably come up with some great follow up content. So yeah, let's just start it off with a space for you to really brag and showcase the success of the event. What were the final results for that?

Mark:

Yep, so it was our first-ever event. So I think in a lot of ways it forced us to rethink how we wanted to put an event together because we couldn't really go off of anything that we knew, and we didn't really want to copy any other events that were out there. So when it was all said and done we had, I think, 4400 and 1800 attendees. So the show rate is around 40% which again you're typically looking for 25% as a success. So for year one I think we kind of set the bar a little too high for year two!

Dani:

Yeah, that is wild. For your first event like a pretty much 50% attendance rate? Yeah, that's an amazing accomplishment.

Mark:

Yeah, don't remind me I'm already stressing about DEMAND 2022. No, I'm kidding. But for real.

Dani:

That was one of my questions for later which is will there be a DEMAND 2022? So now we know there is.

Mark:

There will. I won't share too much but we can keep it towards the end of this. But yeah, it'll be bigger and better.

Dani:

Ooh that's awesome. Can you tell the audience how this idea kind of came about and how you got the team to gather to execute this, and how long it took for you?

Mark:

Yeah, so I would say we came up with the idea over the summer and we wanted to do some sort of virtual event. We didn't really know what we truly wanted to do but we wanted it to not be a day-long, what we call pitch slap, when you attend something and you're just listening to a sales presentation for the entire day. I hate going to those so we're the type of marketers where we only want to do marketing that we ourselves would respond well to.

Mark:

So as we started to think through what would be a good idea for the event or kind of a theme, which is, the notion of getting closer to revenue. So as marketers are moving away from you know, just measuring MQLs to opportunities and pipeline and revenue, in order to do that you can't just change your metrics overnight and then say 'all right, we're reporting out on pipeline revenue and it's all going to work'. So what we thought of was, what are those things that you need to take into consideration that can help you do better marketing? And we actually started with the topics first for the event. I think many people tend to start with the speakers first and what we did was we started with the topics first and tried to figure out what people would be most interested in from a content perspective. And then once we figured that out and landed on those topics, that's when we figured out who the speakers would be. So we tried to do it a little bit differently than what we've seen other people do before.

Dani:

I love that. And I feel like you know with topics too, you're able to kind of test that beforehand and then find the right speakers for all those topics. So that's a really great strategy.

Mark:

Yeah, and we definitely did test a lot of this with our Customer Advisory Board. We have a Customer Advisory Board of, I'd say, somewhere in the range of 15 to maybe 20 ish B2B marketers. So they were involved in kind of teasing out the agenda and getting feedback on the topics and the speakers and everything, so it was a cheat code for us that we were able to get some good feedback beforehand before we announced this to the public.

Dani:

So how did you come up with the topic clusters for the event? What did you want to focus on? How did you figure out those topics?

Mark:

So for us, a lot of it comes from what we're kind of seeing with prospects, and almost with some of our own customers too, and that people tend to think that demand gen is just straight-up running ads. And yes, paid ads are a component of B2B demand gen but just running paid ads is not B2B Demand Gen. So, what we wanted to do was think through what are all the facets of good marketing that you need to have in order before you can run ads that actually convert?

Mark:

So whether it was positioning and messaging, or how you're using content to drive demand, or how you're building audiences and targeting people, or how you're using intent data, it was all of the different components that you kind of need to have in place before you can run really good campaigns. So, if you were to watch all of the sessions over the course of the day we strongly feel that you would be able to run better campaigns.

Dani:

Yeah, I love that approach. I feel like a lot of times when people are in their roles, they're kind of stuck in the roles and they're like 'well this is outside of my role so I shouldn't care about that'.

Mark:

100%. So that's why we were trying to get, I would say, content that would you know intrigue people and that may fall outside of the role typically, but also you know you pick up things that you can then go ask whoever's in product marketing at your company, or whoever is in demand generation or content strategy and go bounce some of these ideas off of them and just start better conversations at your company.

Dani:

Yeah, absolutely. So you drove a lot of registrations from basically the summer all the way leading up to the event. So what kind of campaigns worked for you, and did you partner with other organizations to drive those leads? How did it work? Maybe I shouldn't use the words leads.

Mark:

Yeah, we just think of it as registrants because we're not big lead people, at least for ourselves at Metadata. So I guess a couple of places that we can start: The first place is our own organic promotion of the event itself on LinkedIn specifically, and not just from our company account but from all of our employees too. Our employees are really bought in to helping market Metadata. They realize that marketing is not just a function of the marketing team at Metadata, but that the faces behind Metadata can help market the company and drive better results. So we were able to get people really excited to post and announce the event on their own profile, so that helped us out quite a bit.

Mark:

And then when we initially announce the event, one of the big differentiators for us was that a lot of the speakers that spoke we had built and developed relationships with over the course of the

last, let's say 6 to 12 months, so we had done co-marketing with them, we had featured them in our content, and we had given away a lot without asking for very much in return. So when we did finally ask them for some help they were super willing to do so and help us out with that.

Dani:

Yeah, I think that's a huge cheat code there because I feel like for a lot of B2B companies when they pull off something big like this with an event, they're like okay, what's the speaker budget right? But I feel like you guys had a mix of people that you're friends with already and then also people that you're building new relationships with, and that's really like the key.

Mark:

Yeah, definitely and I think what we wanted to do with the mix of the speakers was get some really big names to get people excited, but also to find people either in our network or people who we've come across and haven't worked with just yet that we feel strongly about as being the next marquee speakers 3 to 5 years from now, and kind of giving them a platform to just continue to build their own brand. So it was an interesting mix of the names that you would expect but also some of the rising stars in B2B marketing.

Dani:

Yep, I love that approach. And did you give them any guidelines on how to share the event or any incentives? Or were they just kind of happy to do that on their own?

Mark:

Yeah, so I think again because of the relationships we didn't need to give them any incentive. They were excited to do so. We gave them some talking points and said 'we're not going to tell you to be a robot and just post everything exactly how we want you to post it. We'd love for you to put your own spin on it.' So there is a short little google doc with probably a half-page worth of bullets and just overview words, and they put their own spin on it and it worked.

Dani:

Yeah, I loved seeing my LinkedIn blow up with the event. Like a few weeks before the event and everybody's own voice and tone on it - I think that's what makes LinkedIn great. You know it's like a community of people not just doing self-promo but having their own opinions about things.

Mark:

Yeah, and I think one of the big things that we did - you asked about campaigns and just how to try and drive registrants - was leading up to the event, I think about 10 or so days out we were about a thousand registrations short of our 4000 goal and I was pretty nervous if we're being totally honest because I was thinking to myself, this is the first event that I've ever done, how in the hell are we going to get a thousand registrants in 10 days when it's taken us, you know, almost 3 months to get 3000 registrants?

Mark:

So I'm a sucker for Instagram contests typically from brands that I like. And it's as simple as following a page doing whatever they say in the description and trying to enter into a contest with some sort of giveaway for you. So we did the same thing for Metadata. So what we did was. You had to be following our company page, you had to register for the events and then if you shared which session you were most excited about after you had registered and tagged metadata, you were entered to win 1 of 3 \$500 Airbnb gift cards. And that actually worked really really well for us. We had over 100 people who had entered the contest by following all of those rules and then at that point it's not just 100 additional posts that you're getting but it's 100 additional posts to each of their own networks. So we're kind of widening our reach too.

Dani:

Yeah, I feel like there are so many like B2B companies that are a little bit shy about using Instagram because we kind of get that message from Instagram that it's like the Instagram influencers, more B2C content. So I'm just curious, how did you guys leverage Instagram as kind of like a social channel that worked for you?

Mark:

Yeah, so we ran paid ads on Instagram. We are a super small marketing team so we do not have anybody running Instagram right now. But we do serve ads on it and I think the ads that we were promoting on Instagram were really promoting the social proof behind it. So, showing people's faces like the speaker's faces and just trying to show that hey, even though this is Metadata's first event, we've got some pretty impressive names. So we got, I'd say, probably a little less than a quarter of our registrations from paid advertising for the event.

Dani:

And and that's kind of meta too because that's what you guys do, right? So you're able to kind of test in multiple channels and really crank this out really quickly too.

Mark:

Yeah, and like for us, we definitely had a budget for the event, and I think for some companies that may have larger event budgets, they can afford to spend more on paid advertising, so it really just came down to what were the cost per registrations that we were generating and was that going to fit in our budget. So we tested a few different types of ads out and then ran paid campaigns on Facebook and Instagram and LinkedIn, and I think took some learnings away. It wasn't the best way of generating registrations but we were able to definitely learn some new things that will apply for next year.

Dani:

I'm just curious, what was the overall kind of event budget and how did you set realistic expectations and goals?

Mark:

Yeah, so I would say the goals themselves were based on, wouldn't it be cool if we could have a 50% attendance rate as a starting point. And then as far as year one goes it was, wouldn't it be cool if we get 4000 registrants. So it wasn't super scientific by any means, it was admittedly a big stretch goal for us and that was intentional. So we did want to try and just knock it out of the water with some crazy goals if you will. And we had talked to a few other B2B marketers in our network who have been doing virtual events for you know, basically 2-3 years now to see what their targets were in year one, and then once we heard what their targets were we were like, 'alright, let's do it bigger and better'.

Mark:

And as far as budget goes, I can tell you what we budgeted for, I don't want to share the total number. It was mid-five figures. I would say in the event platform itself, which we're going to get into here in a bit, I have no hesitation giving her a shout-out. Her name is Carly - I can give her contact information out ,aybe at the end of this. She was our Freelancer who I could not recommend more than I have already. I mean I'm giving a shout-out to her on this podcast! She works for a small event firm and all the things that like we weren't really aware of or should be thinking about, she kept us on track. So a lot of the success behind the scenes was definitely because I her.

Dani:

I love that it's kind of the unsung heroes. Sometimes when you don't see them as the face of the event, or they don't show up at the event, but you know they're working hard behind the event. And I saw some other unsung heroes too within the chat as well. It was going crazy but you've got like people from the team kind of manning that and making sure people were engaged. It's also unsung heroes.

Mark:

Yeah, it was I think pretty cool for us because we have a really good relationship with our sales team and really just everyone at the company because like I said earlier, they're very aware that marketing is not just marketing's job. So they get excited when they can help play a role in marking metadata. So what we did was we basically sent out a couple of announcements internally and said we needed volunteers to monitor the chat, to help moderate Q&As, and to help lead some of the networking rooms. We basically broke it up into a few different shifts and everybody was really really excited to play a role, no matter how big or small the role was. And I think the chat itself was really really fun and was actually a differentiator for the event too.

Dani:

Absolutely. I also loved how you were able to react to other people's comments. So sometimes you got like you know within the chats little discussions going on and people voting and saying like 'yeah this is my like problem with it'. So yeah, I love seeing both sides - the panel side but also the audience side too.

Mark:

Yeah, so we used Goldcast for our virtual event platform and that was one of the features that we really liked too. It almost felt like Reddit in a way with how you could upvote certain comments and react to it and whatnot, and during the the 12 or so minutes when the platform went down (there were some back-end server issues) the chat is what kept it alive and what kept me from having a heart attack too.

Dani:

There's always some sort of technical difficulty I feel like for these things, and you know it's like a mini heart attack, but also you know you played along, right? You play it like it's a fun joke and people are like 'ah, well I guess we're just going to keep the show going on ourselves'.

Mark:

Yeah, I think for us, I mean I'd be lying if I said I wasn't in a very dark place as that was going on. We were trying to figure out what the backup plan was in that moment but because, you know, we're what, a year and a half into this whole virtual thing. And over the course of the last year and a half everyone has sat and through their fair share of tech issues. So I hate to use this as a crutch but I think everyone kind of expects that there's going to be some tech issue at a virtual event now. How big or small that tech issue is, is up to the platform. But people are a little bit more accepting of that and I think especially with the topics and the speakers and really just the agenda that we had set up for the day we didn't lose anyone. We actually looked at some of the reports and we lost a very very very small percentage of people which I would say was marginal at best. People stayed on just because they didn't want to miss the rest of the content that was coming their way.

Dani:

Yeah, I think you guys handled it really well. I remember for April's talk, it kind of cut short before she did the Q&A, but the way that you guys handled that, you turned it around by you know sending the rest of the recording and also April's contact information, which I thought was great because I know sometimes event hosts are kind of more hesitant on sending out that information, but you guys did it right away. So I thought you turned it around. It wasn't a big deal, at least as an attendee.

Mark:

Yeah, I'm glad that you noticed that because that was by design, and it was not by the original design either. So one of the things that we were planning on doing for the attendees and the registrants was to kind of drip the content out a little bit almost like a Netflix approach. So you know, teasing episodes out each week so you can't binge it as much - as we all want to binge Netflix TV shows, I'm guilty of doing that!

Mark:

And then I think for us, we realized that, hey, this was not how it was supposed to go down so as a thank you for sitting through those tech issues with us and battling through it with us we gave away April's session and the corporate bro session immediately once the video recordings

had come our way from Goldcast. They weren't super polished which was fine for us because I think it just showed one, how quickly we turned it around and two, it was kind of rough and authentic and I think that goes a long way. Knowing our audience is B2B marketers at the end of the day, and they appreciate that sort of thing.

Dani:

Yeah, absolutely. I think the authenticity is key. Especially in B2B marketing in general. You get a lot of people who are able to smell the BS behind what you're doing.

Mark:

I couldn't agree more. And we try to do the exact opposite in every single thing that we do when it comes to marketing, so you are preaching the choir.

Dani:

Yeah and even in the chat, right? You got people like kind of talking about you know some of the pain points that they've seen, they got people ranting... I think that's kind of the community that you know we should strive for as B2B marketers - not just talk about the successes but also talk about the fuckups.

Mark:

Yeah for us, it's like, I'm big on self-deprecation. I love using LinkedIn kind of as a platform to get in front of our audience but I also love shitting on myself and you know showing that I'm by no means a perfect marketer. I make mistakes all the time, some of them fairly big mistakes, and I think that lends itself really well not just for me personally but for our own marketing.

Mark:

Because like for example, when we announced this event in mid-august, we didn't have everything finalized yet and I was very very open about that in the follow-up email that was sent out about an hour or so after people had registered, and I said, 'hey we don't have all the details finalized but I can tell you that we have a really high bar that we hold ourselves to, and based on the conversations that we're having right now with speakers and trying to line them up, I will promise you that these are going to be next level speakers with next-level content.' And I was kind of blown away at how many people had even responded to that automated Hubspot email, saying it made them even more pumped that we were being that transparent.

Dani:

Yeah, I love that. It almost seemed like you were talking to the audience 1 on 1, at least that's how you kind of wrote it. You know you were kind of using more Slang, writing like you're talking. I feel like that's one of the key concepts I've learned in my role as communications within B2B marketing. You've got people speaking almost like robots, but then you've got people writing how they speak. I think that's really the key to connecting with your audience. Are you actually being authentic? Are you actually communicating in a way that's true to yourself? And I think you guys nailed it for that part.

Mark:

Yeah, and that's again, something that we pride ourselves on in all of our marketing. People are always saying 'write like you talk' and I think some people say it but aren't really practicing it. I like to say that I write like my 10th or 11th Grade English teacher would puke if she saw it. It's the same way that you would text. Like, how would you text a friend? It's not gonna be grammatically incorrect. It's not going to be perfect. It's gonna be short, punchy, conversational and it's how we all talk in the real world. The real world and the B2B marketing world should be the same thing. I hate reading the robotic, run-on sentences when it's like, we're 3 or 4 lines in and it's still the same sentence, like what are we doing here?

Dani:

Yeah, exactly get to the point here.

Mark:

Yeah for sure. So that was a big thing that I'd say we made sure was very evident throughout all of our follow-up emails around the event, the emails leading up to it, and our social posts. So yeah, we're big believers of that principle.

Dani:

I love that. And let's touch on the speakers a little bit more. I know we kind of talked about it but um, how the hell did you manage to score people like Corporate Bro and April Dunford. Was there a speaker budget? What was the strategy behind that?

Mark:

Yeah, so we did have some speaker budget. We did pay for Corporate Bro. It's funny, I'll kind of ramble here for a sec - I love Corporate Bro as does Jason, our VP of Marketing, and I'd say the rest of us at Metadata thinks Corporate Bro is hilarious. Now we were a little nervous because we did not know how Corporate Bro would land with our audience at the end of the day. What we did was we went and asked a lot of our CAB members, like 'what are your thoughts on this, do you think it's funny, do you think it'll land?' and it was pretty much unanimous.

Mark:

And then for the people that weren't there at DEMAND 2021, the Corporate Bro session had me on the verge of tears. And then for people like April Dunford and you know Dave Gearhart, we did have some relationships with those people either through mutual connections or through actually working with them, so it was a little bit easier to get them to agree.

Mark:

One of the things that we did when we were trying to secure more speakers is lock down some of those big names first so that when we were doing outreach, either to people who we already knew that we were trying to get to speak, or maybe people who we knew a little bit and were still hoping that they would say yes, is we really used those names as social proof so that when you got that email, you know much like any of us when we receive an outbound sales email, if you see company names in there that you either aspire to be like or big recognizable names, the

same way goes for speakers in an event email. So when you can promote the social proof that you have it's like, 'well I've never heard of Metadata' or 'this is their first event but they've got these people like that's crazy. Of course I want to be a part of it.'

Dani:

Yeah, I'm going to pause there because I think that's also another cheat code -getting the right speakers out there in the very beginning. I worked in PR for many years and this is one thing that we do in press too where you get like a really well-known publication and then you trade up. So eventually, you get like even bigger publications. And that's kind of like case studies too. You want to be able to kind of get the customers on board where they're influential in the space but also where there's a lot of following behind them. So then it's easier for other customers in the space to kind of say, 'oh I want to be a part of this too' or 'Oh I see that there's trust already being built out'. So that's a really good tip right there.

Mark:

Yeah, and then I told all the speakers after DEMAND, I said everyone's grandfathered in. So if you so you spoke this year you're definitely getting an invite next year, and so far nobody's told us no, so now we've just got to find some bigger names to add to the list.

Dani:

I love it. I wonder what's going to happen next year, like what kind of surprises are in store.

Mark:

Yeah, it's funny because the first few days the following week after DEMAND were still pretty stressful because we were trying to get all the content up and out the door just because we want to be known as really quick and timely in the follow-up. It wasn't until later in the week that we did a kind of post-event recap of, 'what did we screw up, what could be improved upon, and what do we want to make better next year?' And we did have some really cool names for big speakers so the challenge is going to be continuing to curate an agenda with topics and speakers that people are not just interested in but it holds a really high bar because we don't want this to turn into another event that the quality of the event, from a content perspective, ever goes down.

Dani:

Yeah, I love that and I'm looking forward to seeing how the event evolves as well in terms of topics too because every year B2B marketing changes so I'm interested in hearing more about that. So I also want to address you know one of the elephants in the room. We're all on the same page that the summit was not to sell anything, not to promote products or anything, because you know marketers, they know what they're doing. So how are you driving these registrants and attendees down the funnel and eventually driving them into pipeline?

Mark:

Yeah, so one of the things that we were very clear about in the follow-up was that we were not going to be handing any of them off to our sales team. We had a virtual booth inside the event

platform. We did not go in with any expectations that people were going to visit that booth and sure enough, we didn't have a single visit to that booth, which is totally fine because that wasn't the purpose of the event. But what we're trying to do is use the let's say 4500 people or so that had registered and continue to promote not just the recording of the content, but also as we release these new episodes every Tuesday, we're sharing our own thoughts on the session itself with key takeaways too. So we're trying to give them you more unique content just because they had registered for the event. Now, over the course of the next year or so before DEMAND 2022, one of the ideas that we've talked about already is trying to break into almost like quarterly smaller events and again very community-driven events. So we've got some ideas that we've talked about so far, and I can't give too much away, but we are trying to parlay this into a few more mini-events, ideally hybrid events, so that we can continue to bring that sense of community to B2B marketers, because it is missing.

Dani:

That's going to be really cool. I'm excited to hear about that. And you know, if you wanted to do something in Vancouver I would love to partner with you guys - just shouting it out there.

Mark:

You don't have to twist my arm! I love Vancouver, I love Canada. Actually, this is a Banff sweatshirt - I didn't plan that I was going to wear this sweatshirt today too. So yeah, Jason lives out in Seattle so maybe you can do something in Seattle or Vancouver.

Dani:

Represent the West Coast! And how are sales supporting post-event? I know you guys are not sending these people over to sales right now but are there any campaigns that you guys will be doing together post-event, that you'll be driving together?

Mark:

Yeah, so I can't share too much but I can say before the event even happened we had 9 triggered opportunities and 2 closed-won deals from the event. So it was people who had come to register for the event and then after they registered they had looked around and requested a demo. So what we're doing is there have been more events that have been created since but we're letting the people come to us and we feel like that's been working so far. I think a big about the way we operate at Metadata is that we only send over people who are requesting demos to our sales team, so they know that when people come over they're ready for a conversation. And the sales team really likes that too because we're not trying to waste their time either.

Dani:

I like that is honestly the dream, Mark. Like, I wish we are there. To be honest, with Lumen5 we're definitely in the stage where we're still kind of driving them down the stages. But you know, I think we're going to get there and I think that's really the future right? We don't want to be forcing our prospects into a journey that we're doing just to appease the leadership team or appease the sales team. We want to make sure it's a journey that works for everybody, right?

It's a win-win situation. So I think what's really the key here is that you're giving value to whoever is coming into the pipeline or content journey that they're in right now, and then you hope that, hey, if Metadata is a fit then it's a fit, if not then you know no worries, at least now they trust your brand, they're going to engage more with it.

Mark:

Yeah, for sure and I think that's one of the ways that we approach our content in general and definitely with the post-demand content that we're rolling out, is we're playing the long game. We're trying to give away a lot without asking for very much in return, and we're trying to build that relationship with our audience so that they know, like and trust us, and when the time comes they're ready and are coming to Metadata because Metadata has been at the top of their wish list for a while. So it doesn't happen overnight - I think the only way that you can put yourself in a position to do that is to make sure that whatever demand targets you are held accountable to, that you are consistently hitting or exceeding, so then you can also do that in parallel if you're not meeting the targets that you have in place and you're trying to play the long game with your content. It's not going to go over well with your leadership team so you got to make sure that you're doing the short-term things before you can start to invest in doing the long-term things too.

Dani:

Yeah, that was actually my next question for you, which is, how could you actually convince your leadership team about this? Because you sometimes get those CEOs or CFOs where they're very fiscally conservative and they will only do something if you show them the proof or show them the ROI, even though it's something really new, like this is your first ever event. So how did you kind of get the buy-in for that?

Mark:

Yep, and I think we got the buy-in for this because we had consistently hit all of our short-term demand targets in the previous year and a half, so it takes time and it takes trust to build that relationship with your CEO or your CFO, or whoever is breathing down your neck. So you have to be able to prove consistently that, 'hey, we know what we're doing in the short term to capture demand' and then once you've proved that out enough you earn those opportunities where you can say 'hey, you know we need some additional budget for this event, we think this event is going to drive X number of registrations that can help build a community that will continue to nurture' and then in time you know I'd be lying if I said we didn't hope some of these people come to us to become future Metadata customers. But that isn't you know the Q4 goal. It's probably a sometime in 2022 goal.

Dani:

I love that approach, of kind of balancing the short-term wins, which are quite important too, but also a long-term vision. Because the short-term goals kind of lead up to the visionary and the vision in itself is more of a long-term play, and you're just gonna have to kind of wait on it, but all the little things that you're doing, it's leading you there.

Mark:

For sure. You can't just only do short-term marketing activities. I mean, you can, but I wouldn't recommend doing it because then you're just constantly on this hamster wheel and you're never thinking longer-term or tackling some of those bigger strategic vision projects. If you are only doing short-term stuff, you won't ever get there. The longer term, more strategic-like visionary projects are the things that compound over time. It can drive serious results. So we feel like we are just on the I'd say cusp of starting to recognize that, and there's a whole lot more work for us to do but we feel this event, in particular, has put a lot of winds in our sails and we're going to try and ride this out to build on it.

Dani:

Yeah, I love that. I think I've been on so many marketing teams where we're kind of like just fixing shit, you know not trying like any...

Mark:

Yeah, I've been there. That should be like a therapy podcast for recovering marketers who've worked in those environments before because I have definitely been there too. Yeah, we might have to do our own podcast together on that.

Dani:

Ah, maybe I should get a therapist on this podcast. Let's talk a little bit also about post-event repurposing. I know Justin is not on this podcast but he's going to be working with us on a repurposing panel, but just curious, how are you getting the most out of all that amazing content? I know you guys are doing the weekly releases for the videos, but what else is in the pipeline?

Mark:

So I'll share with you what I know as Justin is like the master at this which is also why I hired him. He's much smarter than I am in here and I'm all about hiring people that are smarter than me. But, we looked at this event not just from a brand perspective or from an event perspective, but from just as much a content perspective too. And we were trying to figure out how do people typically do this? Well, they record all the sessions, they post them on their site, they announce that they post it, and that's it. And you expect people to go find that.

Mark:

I think there were like 13 or 14 sessions at DEMAND. A little more than half were recorded and that was for a couple of different reasons. One, logistically it just made it easier on the day of the event, but two, from a content perspective, the event was on October 22nd, we had all of those recorded sessions in by October 1st, and that gave us a 3-week head start to not just edit and produce the recorded sessions, but to also start to cut them up into a million different pieces. So whether it's shorter videos that you can use on YouTube, whether it's thirty-second clips that we can use on LinkedIn, whether it's social posts that we now can create from the content, whether it's a longer-form blog post or two... I think by our standards, and again, Justin is the master here, if we were to stop every other content marketing-related activity that we had planned

through basically the end of the year and beyond, we would still have enough content that we could repurpose from DEMAND to last us about five months, and that's posting daily on LinkedIn.

Mark:

So, we looked at this as an enormous opportunity for us to create a bunch of content and truly differentiate ourselves and how we approached it. Now, It is not easy by any means and Justin will share how it's not easy to do that because it takes a lot of planning, discipline, and time. It's not the most glamorous work in the world but we're big believers in trying to get as much as we possibly can out of the content that we have. We're a super small marketing team so we don't have the resources that everyone else has where they can constantly create new content every single time. Now, will we create new content and will we continue on with some of the other content marketing activities that we have? Sure. we're not just going to stop everything but the repurposing out of it has been amazing and how quickly we've been able to repurpose the content has been next level. People were noticing that we were posting day of, and even on the Monday after.

Dani:

Yeah, it's pretty wild what you guys come up with and the speed that you turnout these things, and I'm sure Justin has its own tips and tricks too. I know he recently posted something on LinkedIn where he was thinking of different content formats too, doing infographics, videos, things like that. Yep. So yeah, I'm totally on board with that. I think as someone who's worked in content marketing for a long time, one of my pet peeves is when people only think of content as written content.

Mark:

Ah, it kills me. And like the whole 'if you build it they will come' mindset. So, Justin's big on not just the repurposing of content, but the distribution of content. So if more people thought like that and approached content that way, I think you would see a whole lot more good content from companies instead of 'hey, we published this blog post' or 'we published this white paper and there it is'. People don't find those the first time that you publish hit.

Dani:

Exactly, good luck, right? Like, 'oh did you see that tweet from 2 weeks ago.' 'No what tweet.'

Mark:

Yeah, Justin and I were talking about that this morning. So yeah, you'll have a good episode with him because he's a real pro behind all this.

Dani:

Yep, spoiler alert by the way. I know we're nearing the end of the podcast so if you wanted to check out all the sessions from DEMAND 2021, I'll link that below, and also link Mark's LinkedIn profile, as well as a link to Metadata in case you want to check those all out.

Mark:

Yeah, and feel free to connect with me on LinkedIn. I definitely do not take myself too seriously. I share my fuckups just as much as I share my successes for Metadata. What you see in the Metadata marketing is what you see on my own LinkedIn Profile. So I'm not one of those thought leaders who's constantly trying to game the algorithm.

Dani:

I love it. Yeah, I always love your posts, Mark, and I think everyone else would definitely want to follow you and check out all the things that you're talking about. So two more questions. So what's next for Metadata? Are you launching something else that's going to be your next big splash besides the virtual summit for 2022?

Mark:

So, again, I'm transparent - I'm an open book. We're gonna be launching a pretty badass podcast that has been in the works for probably about two-ish months now. We see a huge gap in podcasting for B2B marketers and there are a million podcasts out there. Trust me, we've done our research, and we feel like we've got a pretty unique approach to the podcast in that we're going to be going deep on a single topic for each of the episodes that we're recording and you'll see Jason, you'll see myself, you'll see Justin and then you'll see some guests occasionally when we want to bring them in and have them speak to whatever topic we're focusing on. So we'll be launching that soon and that will be another huge pillar of our content in 2022.

Dani:

I am so stoked for that. And I like how this is almost like a teaser too. Well, let's close off the episode with one of your favourite questions. I know this was one of the themes for one of the um social rooms for DEMAND 2021. So, what was your biggest campaign fail in the marketing world and what did you learn from it?

Mark:

Oh boy. I think it was my first job out of school and I was working as a digital marketing analyst at Accenture interactive, and let's just say I forgot to put some controls in place on paid search over Black Friday and Cyber Monday, and I completely destroyed any budget that we had, and I had to come up with a pretty solid apology - not just to my manager but to the customer too. So, thankfully, we were able to generate some sales out of it, but I was in some hot water there for a bit afterwards.

Mark:

How I work is usually I have to have my hands burned or once to realize 'hey, you can't do that' and 'this is how you've learned so you don't do it again'. So I haven't done that again since but it was a pretty expensive fuck up to begin with.

Dani:

One of my mantras has always been try first and then ask for forgiveness later.

Mark:

I would say I use that mindset for everything that we do at Metadata, but that also means that you're intentionally trying something first, or at least in my eyes. I wasn't intentionally trying to blow through budget so it was a little bit different there.

Dani:

Well, there you go that was one fuck up and never again!

Mark:

I've had my fair share since but that's the the most memorable one.

Dani:

Love it. I'm glad the customer and the company was okay with it, so that also tells a lot about the culture of the team.

Mark:

Yep, for sure. And we had done pretty well leading up to that fuck up and then after, so as long as you're delivering nine times out of 10 they're willing to let the expensive one time out of 10 fail.

Dani:

I love it. It's just a blip. Well thank you so much, Markm this was an amazing episode. I really appreciate your generosity in giving all the tips to the audience.

Mark:

Thank you for having me. This was honestly a blast and just because of how soon we recorded after the event it's all so fresh in my mind. Had we waited another couple of weeks and I'm sure I probably would have forgotten some of this stuff. So thank you for scheduling this so quickly.

Dani:

So yeah, no worries. Super excited to release this episode and to the audience also if you wanted to check out, you know Mark's LinkedIn profile. I'll link it below and also all the links that you'll need. Once again, thank you so much, Mark, and I'm sure we will be in touch soon as well.

Mark:

Awesome! Thank you for having me.