THE ORIGINAL TECH AUNTIES

The Road to Wussville: Or Marketing's Not So Grand Adventure

Episode 2 · Marketing Track · May 7, 2023

> *In the first marketing-track episode, Angelia McFarland takes an unflinching look at how the marketing discipline has lost its seat at the table in most organizations — and why that matters. She and Gina Rosenthal explore how marketers have been reduced to execution functions, separated from product decisions, and what it means for business when marketing is silenced.*

SPEAKERS

Angelia McFarland
Co-host; tech marketing veteran and founder, EOP Media

Gina Rosenthal
Co-host; technologist, product marketer, and founder, Digital Sunshine Solutions

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TRANSCRIPT

ANGELIA MCFARLAND
Welcome to the Tech Aunties podcast, where we're bringing you industry context and vision from myself, Angelia McFarland, and Gina Rosenthal. On each podcast, we will share our marketing and technology industry experiences along with the team. Listen to us as we explain the past so you can have context to understand and create your own version of the future. So let's get into it.

ANGELIA MCFARLAND
I'm really excited because this is the first of the marketing podcasts. If you're listening, you saw the title — The Road to Wussville, or Marketing's Not So Grand Adventure. I am nothing if not brutally honest with my feelings. I have watched as marketing has lost its seat at the table. The discipline has been diffused so much across so many other roles that it has become innocuous at best — and in some instances harmful to business. When you don't have marketing at the table, products come out that do harm. Either the company doesn't know because marketing wasn't included — or they know and willfully go out and do it anyway. I believe marketing is a check and balance. The true marketing function has been remade into what executives want it to be — a pretty bow on top of whatever they choose to do.

GINA ROSENTHAL
Have you always been in marketing your whole career?

ANGELIA MCFARLAND
In business school, when you specialize in marketing, you learn the four P's: product, price, place, and promotion. When you leave school and get put into corporate environments, you realize that in most companies, marketing is seen as just advertising or demand generation. I have been in one company — a large tech company — that saw marketing in its full, correct way. Every other company I've worked for saw marketing as promotional only. And promotion is not done well without understanding the other three P's. They all start with product. I've always been a product marketer. And most companies now see product marketing as spec sheets, launch activities, and sales support. We've been kicked out of the product room. When we get kicked out of the product room, products come out that sometimes aren't even products.

GINA ROSENTHAL
In technology companies especially, there will be a couple of people who hold the information and don't want to share it. They feel like if they drive the idea and everybody just supports them, customers are going to buy it — versus actually helping people understand the direction and letting marketers ask the questions they need to ask to get the product sold.

GINA ROSENTHAL
Using that extra energy to make connections and learn things — it helped me survive, but it also built new core competencies. Community can be internal and external. If things are bad at work, spend some of that energy finding the other people who see the same thing — you can learn more about the product, know more about the business. That's what enabled me to eventually say, 'I'm done,' because I knew I had the experience and know-how to do things on my own.

ANGELIA MCFARLAND
As we come to the end of this discussion — this is a two-part conversation, because I don't want to end on the problem. This episode was the problem. The next episode — 'It's OK to Move On' — is how we get out of Wussville. This is a journey. It starts possibly at corporate doing some things, and then moves into something else. In the next episode, we want to talk about how we came out and moved to the next stage — so that if you're at a turning point in your journey, it may help to hear from others. Thank you for joining us today on the Tech Aunties podcast. Until next time.