

HIRING PRODUCT MARKETERS: THE INSIDER'S GUIDE



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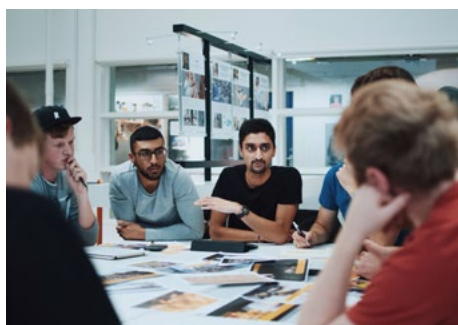
ROBERT WALTERS

THIS EBOOK IS DEVOTED TO THE ART AND SCIENCE OF HIRING STRATEGIC PRODUCT MARKETERS WHO CAN FLEXIBLY MOVE BETWEEN THE DIFFERENT AREAS OF RESPONSIBILITY AND COVERS THE ENTIRE, END-TO-END HIRING PROCESS.

CONTENTS

03	About the book	12	Step 3. Conduct masterful interviews
04	Introduction: Defining product marketing	15	Step 4. Perform rigorous reference Checks
07	Step 1. Craft the right product marketing job description for your needs	19	Step 5. Make an offer they won't want to refuse
09	Step 2. Read resumes the right way	20	Wild card suggestions

ABOUT THE EBOOK



“ REAL-WORLD ADVICE FROM TODAY’S LEADING PRODUCT MARKETERS & THE PEOPLE WHO RECRUIT THEM ”

Robert Walters and Owl have collaborated to produce this comprehensive guide to recruitment for hiring Product Marketers.

FEATURING INSIDER ADVICE FROM:



Michael Stapleton,
CEO,
Owl



Julia Horiuchi,
Head of Go-to-Market
recruitment, Robert Walters
California



Maia Josebachvili,
VP of Marketing, Strategy and
People at Greenhouse



Renette Youssef,
Founder,
The Four Marketing



Yvonne Chen,
VP of Marketing,
Udemy for Business



Elaine Szu,
Executive in Residence at Accel
Partners and former Product
Marketing Lead at Twitter



Barbara Martin Coppola,
CMO,
Grubhub

About Robert Walters

Robert Walters is a Global Search Firm with offices across 28 countries. The California practice is based in San Francisco and works with start-ups and larger technology companies to help them find up-and-coming functional leaders at the director-VP level. Our team has made multiple successful placements at companies such as Medium, Udemy, Atheer, Branch, Sonder, Houzz, UserTesting, and Coinbase (to name a few).

We have a team of 20 consultants that are split across the following functional specialist teams:

- Go To Market (Marketing, BD & Sales)
- Engineering
- Product Management
- Finance & Operations
- Design
- Data

For more information, please visit www.robertwalters.co



About Owl

Owl is a product marketing consultancy that helps companies strengthen their go-to-market strategies. Unlike traditional demand generation-focused firms, Owl helps companies strengthen the strategic foundation for their offerings. Whether you need help with personas and positioning, or pricing and product launches, Owl can help you chart a path to market dominance.

Services include:

- Competitive Analysis
- Market Sizing
- Segmentation & Targeting
- Positioning Statement Development
- Buyer Persona Development
- Win-Loss Analysis
- Pricing & Packaging
- Go-to-Market Planning
- NPS Programs

For more information, visit www.owlconsulting.com



INTRODUCTION: DEFINING PRODUCT MARKETING

Ask any group of 20 CMOs how they define product marketing, and you'll get at least 10 different definitions.



A great product marketer can be a game-changer. Great product marketers don't just add to go-to-market effectiveness; they multiply it. Imagine how much more successful your sales and product development teams can be when they have a clear understanding of your ideal target audience, know which points of value your audience is willing to pay more for and understand why your customers bought your product over the competition's.

Michael Stapleton, CEO - Owl

It's one of the most nebulous areas of marketing and means different things at different companies. Some ask product marketing to focus on sales enablement. Other product marketing teams are thought leaders, publishing whitepapers and analyzing market trends. At some businesses, product marketers spend significant energy optimizing pricing and packaging and setting a product vision based on market feedback.

For our purposes, we're going to define product marketing according to its aims.

Product marketing is the discipline of maximizing the odds of success for a product in the market.

It's a broad definition, but it holds up under scrutiny, especially given the range of responsibilities associated with product marketing.

Top-tier, strategic product marketers often work on the following areas:

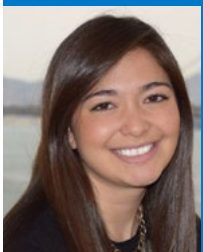
- Market Analysis
- Product Concept Testing
- Segmentation, Targeting and Positioning
- Pricing and Packaging
- Competitive Analysis and Intelligence
- New Product Launches
- Sales Enablement

Finding such creative strategists is no small task. That's why this eBook is devoted to the art and science of hiring strategic product marketers who can flexibly move between the areas of responsibility outlined above.

It covers the entire, end-to-end hiring process. Read more to learn about:

- How to craft a compelling product marketer job description
- How to evaluate product marketers' resumes
- Tips for interviewing candidates
- How to conduct a reference check
- Making a compelling offer
- Wild card tips: off-the-wall ideas for hiring top-notch product marketers

Plus, get insider tips throughout the guide from marketing leaders interviewed exclusively for this eBook.



Product marketers need to know that they have a seat at the table with the product management, marketing and sales leadership team. The right product marketing hire can seamlessly integrate these often disparate and sometimes combative functions

Julia Horiuchi, Manager - Head of Go-to-Market recruitment, Robert Walters California



Product marketers are at the epicenter of an organization. They have to take sales feedback and use that information help guide product development. They have to take product stories and package them in a way that supports sales. They have to take analyst feedback and use it to inform how the company talks about itself publicly. And those examples are just scratching the surface. Because their work impacts so many different areas of the business, product marketers must be exceptional at collaborating cross-functionally.

Yvonne Chen, VP of Marketing,
Udemy for Business





Product marketers need to be able to take on and be good at a broad range of responsibilities: product launch intricacies, go-to-market strategy, product positioning and value messaging, internal and external communications related to product features and bugs, competitive intelligence, internal product training, and pricing and packaging. On top of all of this, they need to be product detectives and experts so that all teams know where to turn when they want to know how to talk about the value of a specific product or feature.

Yvonne Chen,
VP of Marketing,
Udemy for Business



I consistently look for the same traits in great product marketers: strong conceptual ability, collaborative skills, project management experience, creativity, and goal-setting capabilities.

Elaine Szu, Executive in Residence at Accel Partners and former Product Marketing Lead at Twitter

STEP 1.

CRAFT THE RIGHT PRODUCT MARKETING JOB DESCRIPTION FOR YOUR NEEDS

Your search for the ideal product marketer begins with the job description. If well-crafted, it both defines what you're really looking for in a candidate and attracts professionals whom you want to consider the position.

The reality is there's no one-size fits all product marketing job description. It should change based on a range of factors, including scope of role, seniority of the position, and the industry you're hiring for. But, the best product marketers share some common traits that CMOs should look for, and the job description must reflect those.

To the right is a Product Marketing Manager job description that can be adjusted for different product marketing roles but includes the core competencies exhibited by the best product marketers.

The job description could easily be tweaked to a Director or VP-Level position by augmenting the strategic components of the job description and adding more information about leadership responsibilities.

At the same time, it could be altered for a Product Marketing Associate or Specialist role by removing some of the more strategic responsibilities--such as pricing and packaging--and focusing on more tactical responsibilities, like producing collateral or competitive battle cards for your sales organization.

However you customize your job description, the process of doing so is as much of a goal-clarification exercise as it is a recruiting necessity. Without discerning what you want out of a product marketer, you won't know what exactly to look for when you start receiving resumes.

PRODUCT MARKETING MANAGER

[Company Name] is looking for a savvy Product Marketing Manager to help maximize the success of our products and help us continue to gain an edge in the market. Reporting to the Director of Marketing, you'll work hand-in-hand with the product team to ensure readiness for new offerings, optimize pricing and packaging, coordinate the launch of new offerings and ensure customer-facing employees are able to sell and support our products. You'll be an expert not just on our products but on our target audiences, understanding how and why they buy, and what it takes to achieve product/market fit.

RESPONSIBILITIES

- **Sales Enablement.** Inspire, equip and train our Sales team to engage and win new customers.
- **Success Enablement.** Work with Customer Success to ensure our products are used in the most effective ways to drive value for our customers.
- **Competitive Intelligence.** Be the expert on our competition and how we can consistently win against them.
- **Product Collateral.** Develop product and sales materials that maximize conversion at each step in the sales funnel.
- **Pricing & Packaging.** Monitor and update product and feature pricing to help us meet our sales and profitability goals.
- **Go-to-Market Planning.** Own the launch planning for new products and significant new features. Ensuring the product has the functionality it needs to succeed and launch activities are coordinated to enable rapid market traction.

REQUIREMENTS

- 4-5 years of [industry name] product marketing experience
- Strong cross-functional skills. Be able to work well with different personalities and multiple stakeholders.
- Excellent verbal, written, visual/presentation skills
- Experience conducting market research and analyzing both quantitative and qualitative data
- Experience with [top 3 skills: sales enablement, pricing and packaging, product launch management]
- Ability to dive into a product and become a passionate champion
- Ability to start and successfully accomplish multiple initiatives in parallel



Verbose resumes are a red flag. I look for strong and concise messaging because strong product marketers pay attention to the way they communicate and craft their content accordingly. While someone's background and direct product marketing experience is a big advantage, a poorly worded resume says a lot about a person's work quality and communication skills.

Yvonne Chen, VP of Marketing, Udemy for Business



I don't expect my product marketers to be brand marketers per se, but I always look for a marketer who can write compelling stories. That skill is critical for crafting messaging for different target audiences and at different messaging levels.

Elain Szu, Executive in Residence at Accel Partners and former Product Marketing Lead at Twitter

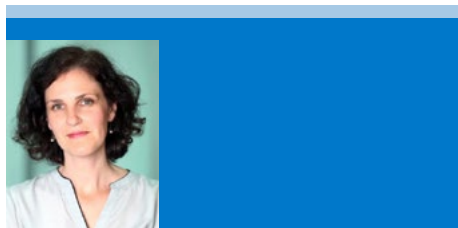
STEP 2.

READ RESUMES THE RIGHT WAY

Just as there's no one-size-fits all job description for product marketers, there's no one ideal resume. In fact, we'd argue that the resume is particularly problematic for product marketing roles. So, we're going to go over what you should look for regardless of the format, and in many cases regardless of the industry.

The reality is that resumes can be incredibly misleading. That's especially true for a function like product marketing, where core competencies matter much more than tactical experience. Product marketers have to take on new responsibilities and manage nebulous projects all the time, so expect your best candidates' resumes to include examples of such instances.

Still, you can't ignore resumes altogether, so we've compiled some important tips to keep in mind. Plus, we've included real resume examples to better illustrate what to look for.



To get a sense of strategic thinking, and the candidate's ability to adapt to left- and right-brain thinking, I like to pose case study questions, such as, 'what do you need to know before setting up a plan to launch a new product in China?' In that instance, I'm looking for the candidate to demonstrate a kind of athletic mentality where the candidate thinks: whatever I have in front of me, I'll be able to tackle it.

Barbara Martin Coppola,
CMO, Grubhub

TIP 1

LOOK FOR STRATEGIC SKILLS

Consider projects that the product marketing candidate has completed in the past. Unless you're looking for an entry-level product marketer you want to avoid product marketers that are really tactical specialists in just one area. A strategic product marketer will have achievements such as:

"Developed go-to-market strategy for new product, including definition of target/persona, positioning, messaging, sales narrative, and GTM strategy. Exceeded revenue targets for the three-month launch period by 13%."

"Streamlined the go-to-market process to include: business objectives definition, buyer persona development, buyer journey mapping, competitive analysis, positioning, pricing, and sales training."

Both examples represent product marketers who not only approach their roles with the big picture in mind, but consider it their jobs to help craft what that picture looks like. Many product marketers will reference go-to-market strategy, but pay particular attention to those that define go-to-market strategy as more than just launching campaigns to promote a new offering. Seek out product marketers who get involved in the entire go-to-market process.

TIP 2

SEEK EVIDENCE OF COLLABORATION

This should be self-evident; product marketers have to work with a broad range of stakeholders to get this done. But it's hard to identify a collaborative person from a resume. Here are some resume examples from candidates who embrace collaboration:

"Acted as the voice of the customer, feeding insights back to product and sales teams. Initiated cross-functional customer feedback group that met weekly to digest new learnings that might impact the product or how we sell it."

"Served as primary point of contact for all product input. Met weekly with Product, Sales, and Customer Success teams to review relevant customer feedback and new product announcements."

STEP 2.

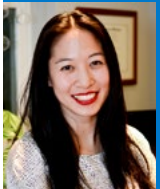
TIP 3

SEEK QUANTITATIVE SKILLS

Good marketing is grounded in data-informed decisions. Be very skeptical when you meet a marketer who claims that marketing is purely art. A product marketer with solid quantitative skills should showcase achievements like the following on their resume:

“Analyzed sales numbers quarterly and initiated cross functional collaboration to define opportunities and action plans to increase top line revenue. Crafted plan to lift close rates by 15%.”

“Led country-specific research into different price drivers by region and ultimately optimized go-to-market pricing and packaging for different countries.”



I gravitate towards case questions when I'm interviewing product marketers. Skilled product marketers have to be able to think on their feet, have an ability to dissect and diagnose a problem and come up with creative solutions to tough problems.

Elaine Szu, Executive in Residence at Accel Partners and Former Product Marketing Lead at Twitter

TIP 4

SEEK QUALITATIVE SKILLS

It's necessary to have product marketers that know how to collect and analyze market data, but quantitative skills alone aren't sufficient. A product marketer with solid qualitative skills will have achievements that go beyond market data. Look for accomplishments such as these:

“Crafted a positioning and messaging framework to support all go-to-market activities for a new product launch.”

“Drove product feature awareness through social media campaigns, ultimately leading to a 25% lift in user adoption.”

“Crafted an emotional customer story that was selected to be part of [Company's] brand campaign and generated 21M impressions.”

TIP 5

IDENTIFY SIGNS OF INDUSTRY FIT

All too often, marketing leaders overemphasize the importance of industry experience. It's true that industry experience gives a product marketer a leg up on the competition, but a great product marketer can achieve significant industry knowledge within 3-6 months of starting their job. After all, a quality product marketer is a quick study. They should be able to learn your industry in short order and eventually surpass the industry expertise of their peers.

If you still aren't convinced, we encourage you to look for signs that the candidate can quickly learn your industry. If you operate in a technical product business with a strong services component to your value proposition, consider marketers who have worked in the services industry. They know how to support a workforce that relies on customer intimacy to succeed. Need a consumer product marketer to help you refine your app and enhance market adoption? Consider a B2B2C product marketer who has had to gain traction among the employees of their business buyers.

CONCLUSION

At the end of the day, you want your product marketers to be like mini management consultants. You absolutely need someone who can write a compelling customer story and build a resonant sales pitch, but you also need someone who can craft a pricing strategy that reinforces that sales pitch and knows who should receive that pitch in the first place.



Product marketers have a unique ability to translate technical product updates into value adding USPs. They can also help sales teams better understand their competition in the market, as well as close more deals

Yvonne Chen, VP of Marketing, Udemy for Business



A top product marketer could also work in product management, or perform well in other function within marketing. The lines between product marketing and other functions are blurred, so the best candidate can create value regardless of the setting

Barbara Martin Coppola, CMO, Grubhub

STEP 3.

CONDUCT MASTERFUL INTERVIEWS

It's in the interview process that you'll really get to uncover who has the product marketing chops you need to gain an edge in the market. Because product marketers have such a broad range of responsibilities and constantly have to take on new tasks, we recommend hiring more for competencies than for specific skillsets. If your new hires are strong enough, they'll quickly pick up new skills as needed.

Below are a list of competencies and questions you should ask to check candidates' strengths in each area. You may also want to assemble a hiring team before the interview process begins and set minimum ratings for each competency. To calibrate, consider a 1-5 scale, where 5 means "exceptional for this position," and 1 means "Completely unqualified for this position." Doing so helps to mitigate the risk that you'll favor candidates who are just a bit more charismatic or hold common interests with you.

CORE COMPETENCIES

INTELLECTUAL

Intelligence. Can acquire and process new or complex information quickly.

Interview Question: Tell me about a time you had to either study a new industry or learn a new skill. What did you have to learn and how did you do so?

Analytical Skills. Able to parse complex information and identify trends, problems or opportunities. Can conduct quantitative analysis that strongly informs go-to-market decisions.

Interview Question: When was the last time you had to analyze data that maybe wasn't so straightforward in its meaning. How did you analyze it? What conclusions did you draw?

Judgment. Consistently thinks through situations and makes reasoned, objective decisions. Not overly reactive

or driven by emotions, especially in difficult situations.

Interview Questions: Tell me about a time when the stakes were high and you had to make a big decision. What were your options? How did you weigh them against one another? What decision did you make, and upon reflection, was it the right decision?

Strategic Skills. Determines opportunities and threats through comprehensive analysis of current and future trends. Comprehends the big picture and plans accordingly.

Interview Question: During the last time you had to work on go-to-market strategy, what kind of market analysis did you conduct, and how did you conduct it?

PERSONAL

Resourcefulness / Initiative. A self-starter who finds ways around obstacles, even with a lack of resources. Doesn't need hand-holding. Is action-oriented and results-focused.

Interview Question: When in your last position did you find yourself facing a barrier that you felt had to be overcome? What was the barrier, and how did you get around it?

Team Player. Acts in the best interest of the team not himself/herself. Avoids silos and overcomes "we-they" mentality.

Interview Questions: Explain a big, cross-functional project you had to manage. What was the project? How did you keep everyone on the same page? If there were conflicts among team members, what did you do to resolve those conflicts?

Excellence. Keenly aware of what high quality work looks like. Holds self and others to lofty standards and doesn't tolerate average work.

Interview Questions: When in your past two jobs have you set new

standards for your role or the company overall? What did you do, and what made you think new standards needed to be set?

INTERPERSONAL

Listening. Focuses on fully understanding the thoughts and feelings of others. Doesn't rush to be heard. Listen actively.

Interview Question: This can be assessed by the interviewer's experience in the interview process and by asking about listening abilities in the reference check phase, should the candidate reach that point.

Customer Focus. Keeps customers top-of-mind when making important, market-facing decisions. Gathers input from customers and avoids internally-driven decisions that impact customers.

Interview Question: How do you measure customer satisfaction in your current role? Which customers have you worked closely with? How did you establish those relationships?

Assertiveness. States his/her opinion without being overbearing. Tactfully shares his/her ideas even in high-stakes or heated situations.

Interview Question: When was the last time you had to express a strong opinion? How did you do so? Note: this can also be assessed by the interviewer based on his/her experience interviewing the candidate. It should also be asked about during the reference check stage.

Communications (Spoken). Writes compelling copy. Able to write effectively for different goals: persuasion, information-sharing, humor, motivation, etc.

Interview Question: Like assertiveness, this can also be assessed by the interviewer based on his/her experience interviewing the candidate and asked about during the reference check stage.

Communications (Written).

Writes clear, precise, well-organized documents using appropriate vocabulary, grammar, and word usage.

Interview Question: Ask the candidate to provide a sample piece of writing from a real work project.

SKILLS TO LOOK FOR

Pricing. Skilled at setting pricing strategies that align with perceived value and revenue targets.

Interview Question: How did you contribute to the pricing strategy of the last product you helped launch? How did you come up with that strategy?

Segmentation, Targeting and Positioning. Able to segment the market, target specific audiences and set positioning strategies for those segments.

Interview Questions: Tell me about how you segmented the market for that same product and identified your target market. What was your process? Once that was done, how did you define your positioning strategy?

Market Research. Skilled at conducting both qualitative and quantitative market research.

Interview Questions: Describe a situation where you had to conduct market research both quantitatively and qualitatively. What did you do?

Sales Enablement. Experience delivering materials and message guides to sales that improve sales performance.

Interview Questions: Describe a time where you had to develop materials for a new product. How did you work with sales to do so? What was the product? What materials did you develop, and how did you know they were effective?

Cross-Functional Training. Ability to train others on new product developments, explaining features and benefits. Can help others more effectively understand and

communicate the value of product developments.

Interview Questions: For the last product that you launched, what was your process for training customer-facing employees on how to position, sell and support the product?

Voice of the Customer Representation. Ability to implement and manage a consistent feedback loop that feeds information to key stakeholders (sales, marketing, product, exec, etc.).

Interview Questions: How did you gather feedback from customers for [product xyz]? Once you gathered that feedback, what did you do with it? Who originally set up that process?

Go-to-Market Planning. Ability to set timelines and integrated plans for new product launches and developments. Coordinates multiple teams in the process.

Interview Questions: What was your go-to-market planning process for [product xyz]? How have you evolved your go-to-market approach over the course of your career.

CONCLUSION

The competencies and skills above are generally well-suited for strategic product marketers, but there are dozens and dozens of competencies and skills you'll want to consider based on your unique needs. Whichever abilities you choose to explore, make sure your interviews are thorough and cover everything you're looking for in your new hire. Don't be afraid to interview on 20 or 30 competencies. Hiring product marketers is difficult, and while probing on so many competencies is time-consuming it's well worth it when you realize it led you to find a highly capable product marketer.



Communication competencies are the hardest to find among product marketers. Effective product marketers have to be able to command the attention of a diverse audience with the substance of their language and their physical presence. They need to be deliberate in both written and verbal communication, as well as nuanced in their non-verbal communication. They know the intricacies behind what and when to communicate and to whom and why.

Yvonne Chen,
VP of Marketing,
Udemy for Business



One of the hardest things to find in product marketing candidates is a passion for interacting with customers. Product marketers often get so caught up inside the organization with multiple stakeholders that they forget to interact with the customer as much as they should, or they grow tired of doing so. I look for candidates who are so customer-oriented that they never forget to spend time with the audience that matters most: customers.

Renette Youssef,
Founder,
The Four Marketing



Because product marketers have to work with so many groups across the business, in reference calls I ask, 'How was this person viewed in terms of effectiveness throughout the organization?' I'm looking for the reference to clearly and compellingly say that the candidate was successful with more than just marketing, product, sales or engineering. I want them to be described as a cross-functional leader that people across the company knew, relied on, and trusted.

Yvonne Chen, VP of Marketing,
Udemy for Business

STEP 4.

PERFORM RIGOROUS REFERENCE CHECKS

Anyone who's conducted high quality research knows how unreliable self-reporting is. No matter how upfront, specific, and wonderful a candidate may be, there's just no way to sidestep the bias that occurs when talking about oneself.

Speak with the full 360 degree of players, managers, peers, and employees.

Don't be afraid to direct the selection of references. Allowing candidates to select all their own contacts is a recipe for biased and incomplete feedback. Intentionally curating references, on the other hand, is the most effective way to collect an appropriate set of perspectives on the candidate's strengths and weaknesses. While managers may offer valuable insight into a candidate's ability to respond to criticism, peers will be more effective in evaluating their ability to collaborate. It's important you explore all of these angles.

This is your opportunity to ask a previous manager about any concerns you have relating to managing and growing this person.

That said, these questions must be framed in a way that all but forces the contact to be honest in their response. With few exceptions, people are inclined to gloss over shortcomings, preferring instead to deliver a positive review that will help land their former colleague the job. Thus, it's preferable to ask questions that necessitate conversation about weaknesses, such as: "Tell me about a time this candidate struggled to learn a new skill."

Ask a few of the same questions, especially if you have a specific concern, to gain an idea of how they developed in that area over time by talking to a few previous managers.

Keep in mind that the people you'll be talking to have a variety of relationships to the applicant, and may have worked with them at quite different points in their career. Accruing multiple answers to particularly critical questions allows you to average out some of this variation in order to gain the most accurate understanding of the applicant's generalizable strengths and potential for growth.



I ask candidates about their experience with win/loss analysis. It's easy to do but very hard to do well. If someone can tell me about a time that performing a win/loss analysis taught them something compelling and unique about the product at hand and how to differentiate it, they've likely mastered a crucial and difficult skill.

Renette Youssef,
Founder,
The Four Marketing



Ask the reference how they define product marketing. Assuming the reference worked directly with the candidate, their response will help elucidate the real role the candidate played in his/her previous job.

Michael Stapleton,
CEO,
Owl

STEP 4.

Do backchannel reference(s) but do them well. Know their working relationship with the candidate before taking their word as the end all be all and ask someone you trust.

Backchannel reference checks should be conducted as thoughtfully and professionally as any other reference check. Not only is this conducive to collecting quality information, it's critical to maintaining a healthy relationship with your potential new hire. In a way, the backchannel contact can be thought of as a double agent, which means one should never expect these conversations to stay private.

CONCLUSION

The bulk of these guidelines are sound advice for any reference check, but they are particularly imperative when hiring a product marketer. By nature, a position in product marketing demands adaptability and efficient learning. These tactics make it feasible to assess these relatively abstract qualities and accurately determine any candidate's potential for success.



Product marketers have to remain calm and act intelligently under pressure, so I like to ask fire drill questions, such as, 'You've been working on launching a huge product for the last 5 months, but when you walked into work yesterday part of the product went live to users when it wasn't supposed to. What do you do?'

Yvonne Chen,
VP of Marketing,
Udemy for Business



Product marketers have a unique ability to translate technical product updates into value adding USPs. They can also help sales teams better understand their competition in the market, as well as close more deals.

Julia Horiuchi,
Head of Go-to-Market
recruitment,
Robert Walters California



I always do three things during reference checks. First, I ask the candidate's manager if the candidate delivered the results they cited on their resume. Second, I ask them if the person was a joy to work with. (Product marketers have to be strong interpersonally, and we're all going to have to spend a lot of time together). And third, I do backchannel reference checks whenever I can.

**Barbara Martin
Coppola,**
CMO, Grubhub



This isn't limited to product marketers, but it's a great technique. During the interview process, I ask each candidate to tell me about some of their passions. Then, when I'm ready to make an offer, I send them a gift related to their passion. If they say, 'I love coffee,' I send them a bag of boutique coffee. It stands out and shows them they matter on a personal level.

Renette Youssef,
Founder, The Four
Marketing

STEP 5.

MAKE AN OFFER THEY ~~CAN'T~~ WON'T WANT TO REFUSE

Finally, you're at the offer stage! You're probably really excited about the candidate you have in front of you, and now you need to seal the deal. What's critical at this point is making sure the candidate is as excited about you as you are about them. A job offer is no small deal, for you or the candidate - accordingly, it should be exciting, personalized, and well thought out. Here are some guidelines for boosting your odds of getting your ideal candidate to accept your offer.

Know their compensation requirements BEFORE you make an offer.

You need to enter the conversation with a plan, and the last thing you want to do is make an offer a candidate thinks is insultingly low. You also don't want to give away the shop and offer the candidate more than you need to. Don't forget that compensation includes more than just salary—mention benefits, perks programs, and even company culture so the candidate understands the full value of your offer.

Present the offer professionally and in full.

Do it in person or on a call—this is a momentous event and no matter how many exclamation marks you use, an email will never express the level of enthusiasm your voice can. At the same time, it's important you follow up with a thorough written offer. Your candidate is making an important decision and will appreciate this as they deliberate. In fact, this is potentially one of the most important decisions this person will make for years to come, and you should take the decision just as seriously.

Be knowledgeable about the market rate.

There are three primary factors to consider: the pay of similar positions within your organization, the pay of similar positions at other organizations, and the candidate's previous salary. Get advice if needed. Ask your board for salary data, consider purchasing compensation benchmarks, talk to colleagues and peers at other

organizations, or ask a recruiting firm for data.

Be excited or state your interest in working together.

Better yet, demonstrate your excitement to the candidate. One genius way to distinguish yourself as uniquely excited is to ask them about a personal interest during the interview. A few days before you make an offer, send them a gift related to that interest—if they're a coffee fanatic, send them beans from your favorite local shop; if they love basketball, get them tickets to a game. This will set a precedent of amazing employee value that will get them excited about your company culture and keep them thinking about the offer. Most people join (and stay) at a company because of their manager, so you're as big a selling point as the salary or title!

Emphasize the right work opportunities.

At this point, you're confident that the candidate has everything you're looking for, but the candidate may still be unsure about you. Highlight what the candidate is most excited about. For great product marketers, that means you should often emphasize things like the ability to work on a range of strategic projects, the importance of the role as a strategic ally, not just a sales enablement manager, and the ability to help shape the product roadmap.

CONCLUSION

It takes a lot of work and a little luck to find the perfect candidate, and an effective job offer should show them just how special they are—plus, the sheer act of making the candidate feel this way will make your company look special. It's a win-win. These tips go above and beyond standard best-practices. Never assume that after you have found “the one” the work is over. Making a compelling offer is as imperative as any other in hiring a desirable candidate.



The way you make an offer has to depend on the person. But I always stress to candidates I really want that because product marketing interacts with so many other functions and plays such a critically strategic role in the business, they continue to grow they'll be setting themselves up to be marketing leaders.

Elain Szu, Executive in Residence at Accel Partners and Former Product Marketing Lead at Twitter

BONUS: WILD CARD SUGGESTIONS

We received lots of tips that don't fit neatly into any one bucket, so we decided to compile them into one section. These are unique, sometimes off-the-wall ideas that can help you attract and hire top-tier product marketers.

Sure, look for high-performing MBAs, but consider philosophy majors and interdisciplinary scholars too.

Philosophy majors often get made fun of. (Often, that's for good reason.) But strong philosophy majors are drawn to solving big problems, which is one of the most important aspects of product marketing.

Let's face it: getting an MBA can be uniquely valuable for product marketing. So much of product marketing is going through case study-like strategic scenarios and figuring out what's going to add to a product package's competitive advantage. It's what you do during business school, making an MBA a good sign they know how to think through what makes a product successful in a market.

Science & Humanities dual degree graduates are far too overlooked. These are hidden gems. When you find someone with a B.S. in Chemistry and a B.A. in History, you've found someone who really can balance head and heart. And that's precisely what you want in a product marketer.

Don't worry about whether the candidate has been a product marketer before!

Management Consultants can turn out to be phenomenal product marketers. They're trained to think wholistically about business and aren't just tacticians. Most of them have enough raw IQ points to learn new skills quickly, have enough client-facing time to be skilled communicators, and have hundreds of hours under their belts working collaboratively in consulting pods.

Solutions Consultants can be exceptionally well-suited to product marketing because they're required to work so consultatively with customers. According to Udemy's Yvonne Chen,

hiring managers should pay special attention to candidates with customer-facing experience. "For product marketing roles that emphasize outbound go-to-market work, I love looking for people who have been working directly with customers or users, but want to shift their career into marketing," says Chen. "I don't like to completely disregard candidates just because they haven't had a formal product marketing title before. Often times people who are customer facing already have the communication skills and product knowledge they need to be effective in a PMM role."

Product Managers, especially PMs who want to get away from the engineering side of product management because they're naturally more drawn to thinking about overall perceived value and its creation can make excellent product marketers. And, because they will have worked closely with product marketing in the past, the transition is often a smooth one.

Prioritize emotional intelligence over intellectual intelligence.

Grubhub CMO Barbara Martin Coppola notes that, while product marketers have to be great strategists, it's hard to understate the importance of their softer skills. "Try to gauge the intelligence of the person first in terms of their emotional intelligence, and secondarily in terms of their rational intelligence," says Coppola. "Whether they're individual contributors or managers, product marketers have to do a lot of people management, and someone who isn't emotionally intelligent is going to be a disaster."

Use networking events to source top-notch candidates. It's true: in today's digitally-dominated world, people still go to in-person events. Check out these events and organizations to build your product marketer candidate pipeline:

- Pragmatic Marketing
- Startup Product Academy by Cindy Solomon
- Behavioral Marketing Summit
- The Product Marketing Community
- Product Development and Management Association

Make it an extensive hiring process.

According to Maia Josebachvili, VP of Marketing, Strategy and People at Greenhouse, you really shouldn't try to quickly narrow your candidate pool. "Be ready to have 100 conversations, because it's a detailed position with lots of nuances," recommends Josebachvili. "The resume isn't going to tell you enough, and you don't want to rule out the false negatives."

CONCLUSION

At the end of the day, hiring great product marketers is a balance of art and science just like the function itself. It requires carefully thinking through what you want to achieve with the position, identifying the most important competencies and skills you need in the ideal candidate, and not giving up on your search.

After speaking with leaders from a range of different businesses, it's clear that top-notch product marketers are defined by three shared traits. They all:

- 1) Have a **strategic orientation to their work**. The capacity to do so suggests the candidate can take on a range of projects and can learn new things quickly.
- 2) Demonstrate **cross-functional expertise**. Product marketing rarely, if ever, operates alone without the input of other groups, particularly sales and product management. To succeed, product marketers have to be able to lead without authority and build relationships that act as the foundation of successful work projects.
- 3) Are **skilled communicators**. Though product marketing requires well-honed quantitative skills, the best product marketers have a way with words that facilitates strong go-to-market messaging and a greater ability to lead internally on cross-functional projects. They know that a product's position in the market is only partly defined by its spot on a positioning map with functional axes.

Whether you have no idea where to start in your quest for product marketers, or you just want some tips, tricks, or new ideas, we hope this eBook is helpful. Hiring product marketing professionals is never easy, but be persistent, and never compromise on quality of hire. When you do find a strong product marketer, you'll be glad you were disciplined and deliberate in your hiring process. After all, a great product marketer can have a dramatic impact on your ability to win in your market.

CONTACT US

To discuss this eBook or talk about your go-to market needs in more detail, email Owl at **info@owlconsulting.com**, or find our contact information below:

OWL SAN FRANCISCO

1284 Vallejo Street
San Francisco
CA 94109

t: +1 415 944 2708
e: info@owlconsulting.com





CONTACT US

To discuss this ebook or talk about your recruitment needs in more detail, please contact Robert Walters at sanfrancisco@robertwalters.co or get in touch with us on the details below:

ROBERT WALTERS CALIFORNIA

101 Mission Street
Suite 2000
San Francisco
CA 94105

t: +1 415 549 2000
e: sanfrancisco@robertwalters.co

ROBERT WALTERS

AUSTRALIA
BELGIUM
BRAZIL
CANADA
CHINA
FRANCE
GERMANY
HONG KONG
INDIA
INDONESIA
IRELAND
JAPAN
LUXEMBOURG
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