

# Grad Comm Ep 62

**Cheryl Broom:** Gil, thanks so much for being here today. It's a pleasure to have you on the podcast.

**Gil Rogers:** Of course, I'm, I'm excited to be here. This is gonna be fun.

**Cheryl Broom:** Now you are one of, I think you're the only guest of your kind so far. So I definitely want you to start out by explaining what you do for a living and how you got there.

**Gil Rogers:** Yeah, so if I'm the first of my kind, I'm either a trendsetter or I'm an idiot, right? One of the two we'll decide, see me in another year or two. We'll figure out how that goes,

**Cheryl Broom:** Well, the fact that you're on this podcast means you're a trendsetter.

**Gil Rogers:** Right, there you go!

**Cheryl Broom:** Yeah.

**Gil Rogers:** So, so I, yeah, so I'm, my job is a fractional CMO, right? And so, about two years ago or so, I was let go or laid off from a ed tech startup. And I've worked at ed tech startups essentially my whole career after working in a, an admissions office at a couple of different private schools in the New England area, right?

So I've always been in enrollment management, higher ed marketing, that space. And then it's just been about what have I done right? Whether it's lead generation or digital advertising or student retention, you know, the, all that sort of work. And so when I was, when I was laid off, I thought, you know, do I want to chase another startup and be another head of marketing at another small place where I'm kind of fighting for table scraps and trying to, you know, get my strategies going.

Or do I do what I like to do, which is kind of. Chase shiny objects and, and work with really cool and fun ideas and do that for a couple of different places. And so I started working as a fractional CMO a couple years ago, and I've been, you know, been in and out of different clients over the past couple years.

But my job is to help the company that I'm working with and supporting with establishing their marketing strategy, developing their content plan, outlining their KPIs. Some places I'll manage their marketing staff as a external consultant, but in the role of the CMO others, I'll act as a kind of an individual contributor to, to get projects moving forward, supporting the, the marketing leadership.

A lot of it just depends on the need and the, and the scope of what they're doing. But my true north is: Am I working in a place that's doing something to really help support student outcomes and student success? And if they're doing those things, then I'm, I'm happy to kind of step in to be the, the person that helps to amplify that message or refine that message.

Because, you know, and, and you know this, you know, there's, there's no shortage of, you know, founders and, and business leaders in the, in the education technology world that have the, the next big solution that's gonna solve all of higher education's problems. But a lot of times what they're missing is understanding the language or understanding the landscape.

And that comes, that, that starts with marketing, right? And so that's, that's kind of the work that I do.

**Cheryl Broom:** It's so interesting and I see this trend a little bit inside higher education. It's been very hard for colleges we work with when their marketing director leaves to find a suitable replacement. It's a very difficult job to fill 'cause there's so many responsibilities. So they often bring in what's called an interim, but you're a little bit different than a person that would actually sit in a seat.

I mean you're, it sounds like you can do your job for a couple different types of companies at one time.

**Gil Rogers:** Yeah. And that's, and that's the main difference. And the key word is fractional. Right? I think the for a fraction of the salary that you'd be paying for a fraction of the time that you'd be paying someone in that role, right? The, the, that's the, that's the difference, right? So am interim oftentimes is like a, is a temporary full-time person, right?

Whereas fractional is providing that, that scope and that time, but not at a full time basis. So I, I do a lot of time blocking. I do a lot of like working for this client on this day and working for this client on that day, and we schedule around those sorts of things. But with a fractional CMO, what you're really

paying for is the, is the short term, fast input and rapid feedback, right? And rapid output. You know, whether it's building out the content plan or the marketing plan or KPIs or, or whatever it is. You'd be surprised at how, you know, how, how fast a senior leadership person can do those sorts of things. I'm not the only fractional CMO in the world, and they're, even though I'm the first one on the podcast, I'm not the only one in the world.

The, the, the, there's, there's a certain level especially, and, and this is more on the ed tech company side than the institution side where I think institutions tend to value presence of a person in an office. They tend to value having a person that can walk around the office and that sort of stuff.

Whereas a lot of the ed tech companies are, are distributed workforces, so it doesn't really matter where that person sits and where they, where they, where they make their dinner at night, right? It's what am I doing on the hours that I'm dedicated to that company to drive that strategy forward?

**Cheryl Broom:** I know we have a lot of marketing directors that listen to this podcast and they're probably like drooling at the idea that they can be a marketing director that gets to work on strategy and, and quickness and not have to attend a thousand meetings or run across campus. So I think it'd be a kind of a dream job for a lot of people I work with.

**Gil Rogers:** Yeah, I mean it's, it's, it's interesting 'cause there are some days, I'll be candid and say that there are some days where I'm like, I do miss sometimes the singular focus of working for one company or for working for one school. Right? But then I think about it, about the flexibility that I get to, you know, before we hopped on and started recording, you know, I, I run my son's youth hockey association.

I help coach his baseball team. I'm able to drop him off at school, right? And these are things that I get to carve the work into the cracks of my life and not the other way around. Right? And so it makes it so that there's an opportunity, and again, when I'm working with a company, they have my singular focus during that time. I joke 'cause my, my uncle years ago before he retired, he was talking about how efficient he was in his job and one of his favorite things he would say is, "I'm so efficient. I work 90 minute hours." Right. Thinking, you know, the communicating that I'm, I'm that good at my job that I'm, an hour of my time is worth an hour and a half of somebody else's, right? And so it was a running gag in the family for years. But now when I go to family gatherings, I get to kind of say the same thing where it's like when it's like you're working with me as a

fractional CMO, you're, you're getting the value of a full-time employee for a fraction of what the, what you would invest.

And, you know, for a lot of these smaller and mid-size ed tech companies, the challenge is, you know, obviously they have runway of their, you know, that they need to think about as far as their funding. They need to think about the expenses of their operation. They have to think about, you know, equity and what they're giving to, to people in these senior roles and you know.

When they hire a full-time head of marketing or CMO or whatever fancy title you want to call it, that's a big investment of time and effort and trust for them. And what happens if it doesn't work out and that person isn't a great fit and you've spent six months finding them, three months, recruiting them a month and a half waiting for them to come because they got a wrap up, whatever they were working on.

And then 2, 3, 4 months in you, you, you realize, ah, this, this person's not a great fit, or they realize it's not a great fit. It's a, it's in a lot of ways, it's a, it's a security policy from a leadership or it's an insurance policy, rather, from a leadership perspective where you can work with me on a six month, eight month, twelve month basis while also searching for that full-time person if that's what you want to do, right?

But that way the, the lights get kept on the, the projects get going, the strategy gets put in place, and you don't have to spend all those resources and time finding that person to realize they're not a great fit.

**Cheryl Broom:** Yeah. And I love this idea and, and one of the reasons I wanted to have you on the podcast is because you have such a breadth of knowledge working across so many different ed tech companies. So I wanna ask you about that. But I also want just to put like a little bug in people's ears. We get asked in our company a lot if we do interim work and we don't, that's not what my agency does.

But there's not any reason for colleges in between marketing directors to have to go out and find an interim that's willing to come to campus when you have like these people, like you Gil, that are out there, that are fractional, that can help with strategy and decision making and get things set up while you hire the next great person.

So I just think, something different to think about for educational institutions.

**Gil Rogers:** And, and we, and we did this during COVID, right? Like everybody was remote work during COVID. And I feel like there, the college and university space overcorrected in a lot of ways. And there are still plenty of remote people that are doing great work, but it's like regional admissions counselors and that sort of stuff. But regional leadership, or remote leadership people are, are a great opportunity to have the the best and brightest crayons in the box, but not have to have them move and relocate to where you are, right? And so for a lot of people, they want to, they want the, they want to be where they live and they want a really cool job. And those two things don't necessarily always overlap. And when given the choice, many people are choosing, they want to stay where they are, and they're, they're gonna keep looking for that great job, right?

And so if you could break that down and open up the opportunity for that, that senior leadership person to have that flexibility to put their head on the pillow wherever they want to be at night, while dedicating their time to, to you and driving that strategy, that's a, that's a great opportunity for both.

And again, on the fractional side of it, it's, you're not putting all the effort of bringing on a full-time person and all of the other bells and whistles that, that go with it, just to find out that that person's not a great fit. Like I wouldn't tell this to my clients even though they're gonna be listening to this podcast, but I'm fireable, right? Quickly fireable. I'm a contractor, right? At the end of my contract, which is usually six months, they, they, if they don't wanna work with me anymore, you can go work with somebody else. You don't have to pay a severance, you don't have to worry about losing out on equity. You don't have to worry about any of that sort of stuff.

You, you get the high impact effort upfront. And then if it's not, if it's not a fit, it's not a fit. And it's a much less risky endeavor to with, with much greater upside potential.

**Cheryl Broom:** Yeah, for sure. I love it. I think it's a great solution. I was an interim for four years at a college.

**Gil Rogers:** That's not interim!

**Cheryl Broom:** Not interim after a while. President just didn't wanna deal with the hiring committee.

**Gil Rogers:** Yep.

**Cheryl Broom:** I could have been a fractional CMO. I could have made the same amount of money work from home.

**Gil Rogers:** Yep, probably!

**Cheryl Broom:** One of the cool things though that you get to do is you work for, it's a bunch of different EdTech Connect. So I'd love to hear a little bit about some of the trends that you're seeing uh, out there, some things that are out that can possibly help colleges better serve students, and then any marketing trends you might be seeing.

**Gil Rogers:** Yeah, yeah. So maybe I'll start by just sharing a couple of the places that I'm working with and just give, I'll give some shout outs because I, I love 'em all. I might not, I might not mention 'em all, and I'm sorry about that to the ones that don't get mentioned.

**Cheryl Broom:** It's like the, it's like the Academy Awards, so if you forget, like, don't forget the important one!

**Gil Rogers:** That's it! That's it. I mean, I'll, I'll start at, I mean, with my longest running client, you know, HAI Analytics. They're, that's a, it's a small company based out of Massachusetts.

**Cheryl Broom:** And we've had them on our podcast.

**Gil Rogers:** There we go! So yeah, so you've got, you know, Emily is amazing and Jen is amazing and they do great work. And it's one of those, it's one of those companies where there's so many, I call it the, and they're part of it too 'cause they have the letters in their name, but like it's the alphabet soup of higher education, right? You've got the three letter acronym companies that everybody uses and they bop back and forth between for marketing services and financial aid leveraging and predictive modeling and all that sort of stuff. And if you don't like this section of the alphabet, move to this section of the alphabet, right?

But HAI is different in a sense that like, you know, the H stands for human right? And, and they, in the age of artificial intelligence, they, they've maintained that human element. And so, you know, they, they, have developed a dashboard to help institutions with, with analyzing data and predictive modeling. And they, they do some financially leveraging work for clients that want to do that, that those sorts of things. And they've just been, you know, very successful at supporting their, that kind of core group of, of folks. So I've been

helping them a lot with content, right? If you go on their blog, they, you know, regular blog content and social content and webinar plans forthcoming and those sorts of things. But they, I've been working with them since almost the beginning of my company, so they're, they're so shout out to, to HAI.

One of my other, one of my earlier clients was a company called Science Interactive. And what Science Interactive does is they develop lab kits for students who might be taking an online science course. So, you know, online, online business courses and English courses and that sort of stuff are, are pretty straightforward, right? You don't need. Like a hands-on element to, you don't need to be able to touch and feel things to do the, the, the online business program. You need to be able to use software in those programs. But you don't need to, you don't need to, to dissect a frog.

**Cheryl Broom:** Right.

**Gil Rogers:** You don't need to, you know, do you know chemical experiments and those sorts of things. But if I'm a student at, in a rural area that is taking an online biology course, and I don't have a lab component, now if I want to transfer from my local community college to a four year school, that class is not transferable. So it's an, it's an equity issue, it's an accessibility issue of content. And so they develop these, these lab kits that accompany the curriculum for online science programs.

So that institutions can accommodate those remote students or not have to spend \$20 billion building a new biology building. 'Cause that'll take five years and it won't, and by the time that happens, demand declines for the program and then they're screwed, right? And so it's, so they, so they're able to supplement their, their, lab space with these sorts of things.

That was an interesting case because I wasn't brought on to be the head of marketing. They actually had, and still have, an amazing vice president of marketing who's smart, sharp, driven, does great work. Her issue was when I came on to help, she was a department of one. And she had to run the work with the ad agency, she had to work the, the PR firm. She had to work the, the website redesign project, all of that stuff. And she literally needed someone to push day-to-day projects forward and needed a strong number two, right? And so I came on as kind of a strong number two for day-to-day things, for content and for social and for webinars and events and those sorts of things. After the first six months they hired a couple of junior level folks and I transitioned into kind of training and handoff mode. So for them, the following six months as they brought on people to do those jobs, I was able to pass on those



responsibilities. And then I disappear and say, hey, great working with you. Love ya. Still, still text with people there and still stay connected because we didn't separate because I sucked, we separated 'cause I did the job, helped them build it, and then I walked away. Maybe I did suck and they didn't tell me and they're really nice, but I, I don't think I sucked, right? And so, so those, that's, those are the kind of like great opportunities and, and you know, things I, I hosted a podcast for, for a little bit as well, which is why I think my microphone is pretty good because I still have it.

**Cheryl Broom:** Yeah, it does sound great! I was actually thinking he's got one of the best sounding-

**Gil Rogers:** There we go. Still using that, won a couple awards doing that. That was fun. And right now I'm working, there's a couple of small project things that I'm working on, so they're not super public. But it's every, everything is kind of focused on helping students with overcoming challenges, you know, in the scholarships, financial aid space and that sort of stuff.

And so it's and I and right in my, I'm also working with a, with Immersify. They're a dental education and nursing education curriculum program with a mobile app with AI and AR and immersive technology. And they're based in the UK and building their US market. And so I've, I've had the opportunity to, to work with, again, you know, digital marketing, lead gen, academic curriculum development and design, learning design. You name it, I've probably touched it at this point in the space. So it's been, it's been a lot of, a lot of learning on the job and a lot of fun.

**Cheryl Broom:** As you're talking and explaining about those companies that you work with now, it seems like the common thread between them all is they're all really trying to, to help students succeed, especially maybe students who come from like a non-traditional background, right? They're looking at serving a student population in new ways or predicting how that population might need extra help or extra support.

**Gil Rogers:** Yeah. I mean when you look at the work, HAI does, right? Especially, and it's interesting or challenging in, in the political climate that we're in, right, is like how to, how do institutions that wanna still support access and equity do so without saying the words out loud, unfortunately. Right? How do we do, you know, and so working and navigating through those sorts of, of issues and challenges.



And then you have companies that, one I did not mention, but was a great partnership for two years or so, is Ease Learning. Ease Learning is a curriculum design company that, that learning design, they develop the curriculum for online programs, right? And so they're really focused on skills-based learning credentials, stackable credentials, micro learning you know, apprenticeship programs. And these are all a different, preparing the workforce for the, with the skills that they need for the jobs of today and tomorrow. Right? And so it's, like I said, if my true north is working with companies that are developing programs or platforms or, or software or whatever it is to support student outcomes and student success.

That's where I'm gonna, I'm gonna really get the most excited about my work.

**Cheryl Broom:** Yeah, I wanna ask you a little bit about how colleges can best work with ed tech companies. But before we do that, let's take a little break.

Okay. We just heard from our sponsor, EdTech Connect, which does a listing of EdTech companies all over the nation. And Gil is a fractional CMO for a lot of different ed tech companies and higher education firms and companies that work in that space.

Before the break, you were talking just about the different types of places you work, and I was thinking back to my days at a college and going out and trying to find a solution for any problem I might have. Maybe it's like a website or I want a new website, or I need some analytics assistance. Or you know, maybe somebody's come and been like, do you know any company that does science kits? Right? Like that I can get, you know, in the lab. And a lot of times it's overwhelming. Like you don't know where to start, like what to look at, who to call. Like, what are some things that you think colleges should be looking at? At least from your perspective in marketing and sales, like what questions should they be asking companies? How do you vet, like what's gonna be a good fit for your institution? What are some things that you're putting out as a marketer to try to get colleges or universities to think about you being the best solution?

**Gil Rogers:** Yeah, I, I think that one of the things that I, that I work with a lot with my clients on is, one being likable, which is, you know, it's an underrated attribute. There are so many, again, ed tech companies. A lot of the founders don't come from higher ed, so they, they, they're great people. They have great ideas, but they get frustrated about the long sales cycle and the relationship element of sales and how, why does it take so long and all these sorts of things.

There are benefits to longer sales cycles, right? Longer sales cycles oftentimes lead to longer term contracts. They lead to stickier contracts. They lead to a better relationship in the long term, 'cause there's a better understanding of, of what the needs are and working together. But you know, obviously when you're under the, under the lights of your, your private equity firm trying to figure out what, why, you're not hitting your quarterly numbers, that's hard, right?

And so what I, but what I try to do is help my, my clients understand that, you know, you can't underinvest in helpful content, right, and helpful resources. And being the company that when I have a problem related to X, I think about this company. Right? And so, that's why a lot of my work with the companies I work with is focused on creating blog content, creating resource guides, email campaigns that are not buy now, buy now, buy now. But hey, have you thought about this? Hey, here's a resource. Hey, here's a resource. Because then those inbound leads to sales, quote unquote inbound leads come in that process. Or when you're at the trade show or exhibit the exhibit hall at the conference the, the people recognize you because, oh, yeah, I get emails from you.

People get a lot of emails! So if they remember that they get emails from you in a positive way, that's a good thing, right? And they're not gonna read every single one. They're not gonna download every single guide. But they know that you're the company that's going to support them with whatever your unique, you know, value prop is, right?

And so I think from a, for institutions, it's kind of, you know, really think about it from a space of there are other industries outside of higher education where these people could be investing their time and resources and energy and probably make more money if they get it right as far as the software they're developing or the approach that they're taking, right. But they, they do it in higher ed because majority of these companies are working from a place of, they want to help students be better because they see all these problems. Many of these ed tech startups are created by people who had a problem themselves and said, I want to fix this problem because it impacted me. And then they create a business out of it.

Right? The, so when you, if you come at this with a, with the angle of vendors are bad, vendors are terrible, they're just in it to make a buck, right? The reality is, is that that's not the case for the majority of service providers or quote unquote vendors in the, in the higher ed space. They want to be your partner and they want to help you solve problems.

And for the most, for good salespeople at these companies, which most of these places have good salespeople, they don't wanna work with someone who doesn't want isn't a good fit. They just want to get a response. They want to know, hey, are you a good fit? And so, you know, having this, there are people on, on LinkedIn, the keyboard warriors complaining about vendors and outreach and that sort of stuff. There are more good people working on solving student problems than there are people who are just trying to create a problem, to make a buck. Right? And I think go into it with trust. Go into it with, look for the likable companies, 'cause the likable companies are the helpers, right? And find the helpers 'cause they're the ones who are gonna help solve the problems.

**Cheryl Broom:** You just had like so many good points that you said that I wanna touch on. But first, your email comment cracks me up because just yesterday I had a college reach out for some marketing help and their marketing director said, “You know, I've heard so many great things about your company!” and I was like, “Oh, that's great.” And I had just assumed that he was a referral. And I was like, “Oh, where'd you hear?” He's like, “I don't know where I heard about you.” And we talked for a while and at the end of the conversation I said, “Oh, I'm gonna put you on our email list, 'cause we do a weekly like newsletter and our newsletters really, it's really to help. It's not sales, it's like information.”

**Gil Rogers:** Yeah!

**Cheryl Broom:** And I gave it to my marketing director and she put him in. She's like, “He's been a subscriber since 2021!” A 4 year subscriber to the newsletter. That's how he's heard of us, is getting the newsletter.

**Gil Rogers:** Yep. Yep. And he likes you!

**Cheryl Broom:** And he likes us. But he doesn't remember that he got the email and people are always like, oh, email, email. But it really does work. I mean, they may not remember they read about you in an email, but they are gonna remember you for sure, so.

**Gil Rogers:** Yeah. Well, and it's, and it's obvious like there's, there's recommendations that people come back with for, you know, email marketing and best practices. And it's one of those things like, do we have to make the recommendation that you should make email personalized at this point, right? Like, we probably shouldn't have to make that recommendation, especially if you're a marketer, right?

But the definition of personalized is different, right? Dear first name is not personalized. Dear first name is table stakes. Personalized is email that is based off of a specific action or behavior or need or demonstrated need or a subscription or what have you, right? Not just mass emails for the purposes of mass emails.

Those are what make you not likable is when you start sending out a bunch of just spam. And it's interesting because. I'll, I'll pick on the admissions people for a minute. They, they complain so much about getting so many mass emails from companies that they've never heard of that just wanna sell them stuff. But then they'll turn around and they'll build these email campaigns to recruit students that they've bought names from that are impersonal. And they, and the students are getting bombarded with emails from schools they've never heard of before, right? And so you can't, it, what's good for the goose is good for the gander sometimes, right?

Like especially when the companies who are reaching out are the companies who wanna help them do better at student recruitment. And they get frustrated because, but, but then the irony of, if you're bad at email marketing to the college, how are you gonna help that college do well with email marketing to students, right?

**Cheryl Broom:** Exactly!

**Gil Rogers:** But I will say as a fractional CMO, there is a difference between B2B marketing and B2C marketing. Right? And so the, the companies that are marketing to, to the school might be really good at marketing to students, but they stink at marketing to the school. And that's where people like me come in, is help them with improving those things.

**Cheryl Broom:** Right. Yeah, and I, but I think there are some lessons that are great to learn from, you know, like what you are doing, which is you know, B2B, basically. Like you're helping businesses get business from colleges. And this whole likability thing is so important for colleges to think about themselves because, especially those community colleges out there. Because you are part of the community and when people start liking you, they start talking about you and that can drive enrollment. And I think that marketing often doesn't have a chance to really like showcase the ways that their college is super likable.

I mean, anything from, I remember at my old college, we wanted to hold a farmer's market for years with the like perfect location right next to a strawberry field. That makes you likable, but it was a fight 'cause nobody wanted to do the

work. But then once we finally got the farmer's market to come, all you'd hear about from people is how great the colleges have never been here. Oh, it's so beautiful. Wow, I didn't know that you had a, a biotechnology facility or a horticulture lab like, wow! And you know, it's all from doing something to help people. Not necessarily to market your programs, but to get them to like you.

**Gil Rogers:** Yep! I mean, I'll say one of the, one of the best things we ever did when I was a, I was a senior associate director at the University of New Haven in Connecticut. That was my last college that I worked at full-time, right. One of the things we created, and this was a landmark thing at the time, was because all of our, all of our name buy vendors were telling us buy names earlier here, here buy a list of sophomores. We're like, we don't have anything for sophomores. Like, what, what are we gonna see?

**Cheryl Broom:** Yeah, you're not gonna come in as a sophomore.

**Gil Rogers:** 'Cause all of our com flows were apply now, apply now, apply now, right? So it was one of those, so what do we do? So we created a marketing piece called The Sophomores Guide to College, presented by the University of New Haven.

But 95% of the book was literally just college planning resources. And then we had like an ad on the back page for our, for our school. Right. And like and obviously when there was, if you need help with financial aid and that sort of stuff, here's our financial aid office's number. Like, if you need help with admissions outreach, like go to this page and find your admissions officer.

But it wasn't apply now, apply now, apply now. 'cause that it's a sophomore, and they're not going to apply now, right? But you need to build a relationship, right? And I think that that's, that's where, you know, this is gonna be a complete left turn in the conversation. But that's where the challenge with things like direct admission come in, right, is like institutions just automatically just skip to the, hey, you've been admitted, now, enroll, enroll, enroll. That's expensive lead gen. Right? The reason why localized programs work better localized directed mission programs work better is because of things like you just mentioned. You hosted events on campus. They've been there, they know who you are. Even if they haven't applied, but they're admitted by virtue of the fact that they're in the backyard meet the criteria. They have a relationship. You're liked because they've been around, versus just letting every kid from, from, you know, I'm in Maine, you're in San Diego. I happen to buy a list of, of names from San Diego, right? Like, it's not that, that, that's not the same feeling as the kid from down the road that passes your campus every single day.

**Cheryl Broom:** Yeah, exactly. And I think another part of likability, when the conversation earlier when you were talking about finding a company that you like that I think is really important, and this is kind of like self-serving, but I really do believe in it. When you're looking, for a, a partner you really do wanna find someone that has experience in higher education.

Like every, like third party I hired or was involved with at my college that didn't come from a higher ed background, like burned. Like crashed and burned. So I think that was such a great tip. You know, when you're out there looking for a new partner, you're not just looking for a vendor, you're looking for someone that has experience and passion and knows what you do.

**Gil Rogers:** Yeah, yeah. And 'cause I mean, it's a great point. Even from like software perspective, the companies that build software specifically for higher education applications versus just like the off the shelf stuff. The off the shelf stuff might have better features. It might have a better, like it might look cleaner and prettier and shinier and whatever. 'Cause they have billion dollar market cap 'cause it's a publicly traded company. Or they, they have, you know, a bajillion dollars in, in private equity or venture capital behind them or whatever. These smaller companies that are, are building something specifically for higher ed, one, they're gonna, they're gonna adapt and adjust themselves based on feedback a lot more quickly than others, right, because they're not building for the masses. They're building specifically for higher ed. And from the company side of things, that's the, that's the likability factor coming in. A lot of times admissions officers and marketing directors and, and you name the role on the campus, they're gonna go with the provider that they like more than the provider that they don't, more often than not. Even if the company they like doesn't have as many shiny bells and whistles and tools. Because what does like lead to, like leads to trust. Trust leads to purchase. Right? And so they're, if they like you, they're gonna trust you. They're more likely to trust you, and they're more likely to then purchase from your company. Right? And so it becomes a, it becomes just a great value in your entire marketing strategy is just being likable.

**Cheryl Broom:** A hundred percent. And people notice bad service before they notice a bad product, so.

**Gil Rogers:** Yep. I mean, yeah, that's a great point. I think one of the other, it's funny, every, every tech company that wants to say they're a SaaS solution.

When they do the surveys of their, of their customers and ask what their favorite things are. It's always my account executive, right? Like it's never the, it's never

the features and the tools. It's always, oh yeah, the team is great. It's like, but we're a SaaS offering, you're not supposed to need the team!

**Cheryl Broom:** Yeah. Well, it's true, like if you go on Yelp and look in a restaurant, like I'll go and be like, oh, why does this place have one star reviews? It's always because of the, the waiter or the waitress is rude, not the food's great, but one because the waiter sucks.

**Gil Rogers:** Yeah. Yeah. It's, that's what it is. And it's, it's just, and that's where like, I think a big part of the issue for, and it's, it's starting to change a little bit in the, in the tech company side anyway, is there was all this like. This is for, for people who don't care about the business element of these things, maybe skip the next 30 seconds of the podcast.

But like the issue is, is that the, the valuation of these companies was predicated on being a SaaS offering, right? And like looking at the multiplier on the company, it's like, oh, we're gonna get a five x multiplier on revenue because it's a SaaS offering and blah, blah, blah, blah, blah. But the reality is, is all these companies are not SaaS companies. They're SwS companies. They're software with service, right? And so, that's the challenge that so many places kind of run into is like, they, they want to be a, they wanna be a software company. But if they don't have the client support, the client services, client success, whatever you want to call it, role helping the client with using the product, then the client doesn't use the product, then they don't see value, then they don't renew, and then your renewal numbers are trash, right? So what would you rather be like? Invest, invest in people, keep your company or not, and then tank your renewals and then your, your private equity gets mad at you for your bad renewal rate, right? So you're never gonna win.

**Cheryl Broom:** Well, I think it's a great thing to, to wrap up the podcast on a great thought is that we can't forget the human relationship and the importance of that relationship when it comes to hiring a partner or a vendor, but also when it comes to recruiting a student. I mean, it is key. It's the most important thing.

You can have all the shiny bells and whistles and tools, but at the end of the day, if you don't like who you're working with or you don't like where you're going, you're not gonna go there. You're not gonna last there. So, yeah.

**Gil Rogers:** Absolutely. Couldn't say it better myself.



**Cheryl Broom:** And yeah, and as marketers, you know, we've, we're pushed to show statistics and numbers and data, but these are important things to look at as well and some of them aren't measurable.

Well, I've had a great time talking to you. I love your, your job. I know that you're doing most of this for ed tech companies, but I'm sure there's colleges out there that are interested in this model as well. So, is there a way people can get ahold of you where they can reach you if they wanna talk more?

**Gil Rogers:** Yeah, absolutely. I mean, I'm pretty active on LinkedIn. I've been lurking there more than contributing the past few months, but that's because I'm too busy doing my job to do my job sometimes.

**Cheryl Broom:** Aren't all marketers like that, though? We're so busy marketing.

**Gil Rogers:** Yep, absolutely. Or just [gil@gr7marketing.com](mailto:gil@gr7marketing.com). Shoot me an email. Those are the two best ways to find me, or smoke if you're sending smoke signals, I live in the northeast corner of the country, so I'll, I'll keep an eye out.

**Cheryl Broom:** Well, it's been great to talk to you and I hope that next time we connect that you've been successful in building your kids' hockey rink. So, any hockey fans listening, Gil needs some help getting a hockey rink built in his town.

**Gil Rogers:** That's it! Gimme, if you got \$5 million, give me a call. Uh, I can help you. I can help you with that. I can help you with that.

**Cheryl Broom:** Well, thank you so much for being a guest. I really enjoyed the conversation.

**Gil Rogers:** Thanks, Cheryl. Appreciate it. Have a good one.