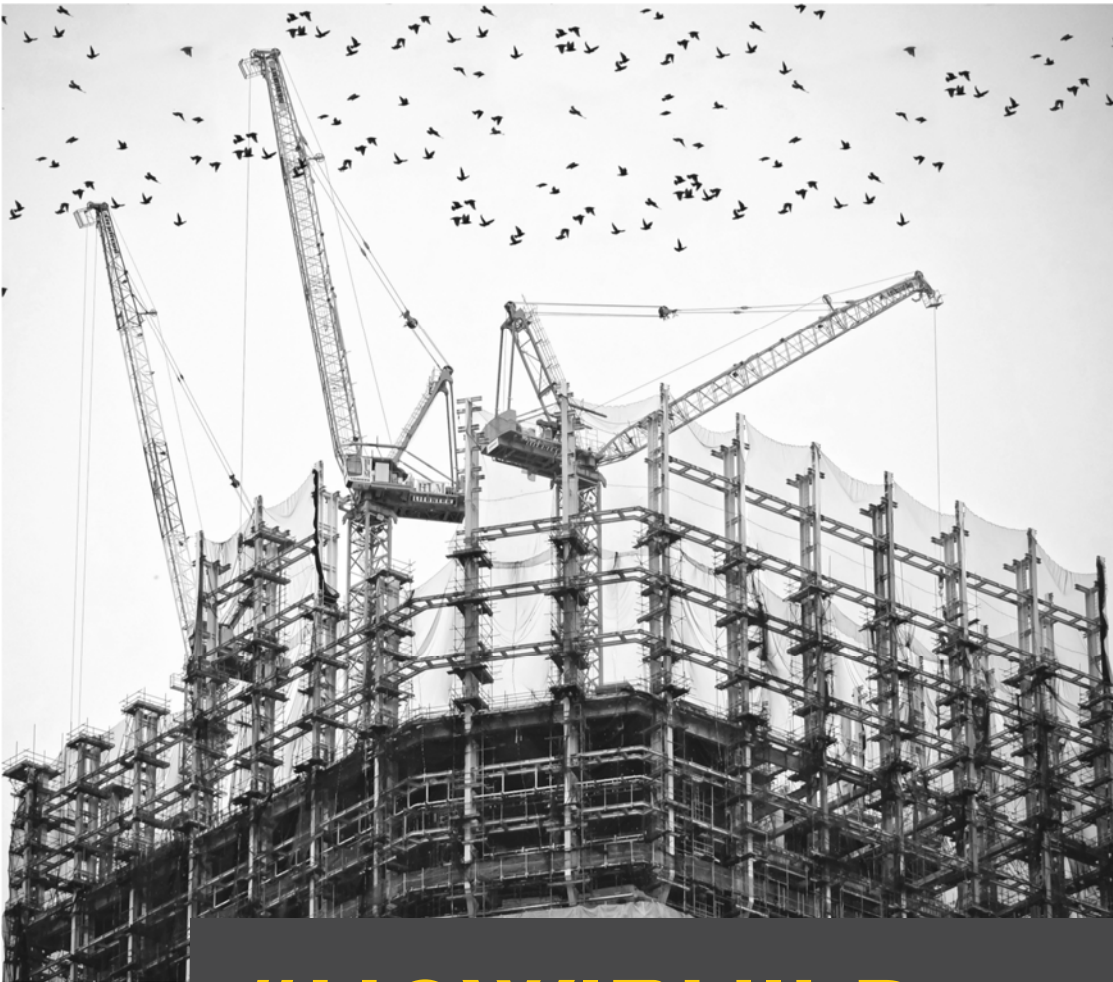


#HOWIBUILD



#HOWIBUILD INTERVIEW SERIES

An in-depth look into the key themes behind the role of Product Leaders and the strategies and methodologies they use to build some of the most complex products on the market.

More specifically, we wanted to understand their role, vision, and how they align with various departments. The outcome is a deeper understanding of how these products are built and innovated upon in today's customer-focused and data-driven market.

#HOWIBUILD

Thank you for taking the time to read this interview series where we chat with some of the most innovative Product Leaders who develop and strengthen the products that you may have already implemented and/or currently utilize in your day-to-day operations.

#HowIBuild is a comprehensive interview series to shed light on how products are currently built today, in a world where customer experience and technology are intertwined in its relationship.

This series was built with 3 value points for you:

- To share insights into how complex products are planned, built, managed, and innovated.
- To reveal the key methodologies that are followed to execute on strategies.
- To discover how Product Leaders align with stakeholders and cross-functional teams that make up the organization.

Throughout the series you will find commonalities and key themes across each of the interviews that allow these companies to innovate and excel by putting their customers at the core of their development.

PLEASE TELL US A LITTLE BIT ABOUT YOUR PRODUCT

Communications Insight is a piece of technology geared towards unraveling some of the mysteries associated with Sales Attribution. Although we've made great strides in understanding the marketing part of a buyers' journey, there is still a lot of work that needs to be done on the sales side in terms of being able to clearly understand the impact of Sales Activities.

That's where Communications Insight comes into play by easily hooking up into your existing communication channels and CRM systems in order to track both inbound and outbound sales communications. As per any plug and play technology, it ensures that no manual work is required on the user's part while also improving traditional adoption, overcoming training hurdles, and reducing costs.

The data that Communications Insight makes available allows you to start tracking a myriad of sales-related customer metrics including, but not limited to, account penetration and communication cadence. These metrics allow your organization to start to demystify some of the uncertainties related to your sales cycle by providing clarity around optimal sales touches and ideal customer behaviours i.e. the ideal opportunity profile for your organization.



ABRAR ALI
PRODUCT LEADER,
ENTERPRISE SOLUTIONS
COUCH & ASSOCIATES

WHAT WOULD YOU SAY ARE THE MOST FULFILLING PARTS OF BEING A LEADER OF A COMPLEX SOFTWARE PRODUCT?

For me, the most rewarding aspect of being on the forefront of complex product development is the journey itself which starts with the birth of an idea and then seeing it through to fruition.

As a product leader, you must work with a bunch of different people with different skill sets and usually trying to get all these people to work together towards a common goal can be quite a challenge. On the one end, you're trying to build a great product by solving all these technical and strategic challenges and on the other side, you're trying to make sure that the people that are going to help you solve these problems are focused and committed. It's a fascinating process.

HOW DO YOU ALIGN WITH MARKETING, SALES, AND SUPPORT IN BUILDING OUT THE PRODUCT?

As a product leader, sometimes working with cross-functional teams can be as challenging as solving complex technical problems. What you can't forget is this – your product is only as good as the people behind it. Therefore, team cohesion and chemistry is something that I always focus on and one of the ways that I've found this to be useful is to build one-on-one relationships with each and every member of the team in an agile working environment. This not only allows you to build trust within your team, but it also allows you to ensure that each person working on your product understands their role and contribution to the larger picture.

However, things do tend to get more difficult as your team grows in number which is why regular conversations, frequent updates and lots of team communication helps you to maintain that sense of community and teamwork.

HOW DO YOU MANAGE ITERATIONS OF THE PRODUCT?

While experimentation and innovation are key during the initial pilot development phase of a product, improvements made after the initial launch are predominantly dependant on user needs and behaviours. As we operate primarily within the B2B enterprise space, iteration cycles can be longer due to several reasons such as user adoption, training, etc. A good way to iterate effectively is to use a data-driven approach towards product management i.e. analyze key moments within a user's journey as they interact with your product thereby identifying drop-off points as well as areas of improvement.

HOW DO YOU GET BUY-IN FROM NON-PRODUCT EXECUTIVES?

In my experience, the best way to get buy-in from all departments is to keep it simple. When you're dealing with a variety of departments such as engineering, sales and marketing; you'll realize that each team needs to hear the same message but in a different way.

For instance, engineering will need to know about scalability, usability and quality. Sales will care about what the product can do and when it will be available which means you need to provide them with the value statements as well as a timeline. For marketing, the message would be similar but more focused on the bells and whistles of the product and how it's relevant to a larger audience.

IF YOU COULD GIVE ONE PIECE OF ADVICE TO YOUR PRODUCT LEADER COLLEAGUES, WHAT WOULD IT BE?

The biggest piece of advice I would give to my fellow product leaders is to create an environment that fosters open communication and trust as that has a positive direct impact on the performance of individual members of the team which can then be directly translated into the growth of the product or initiative. Open communication enhances creativity that allows for free flowing of ideas while fostering trust ensures that each member is aware of the fact that their opinion matters and that they will be heard. Product Development is as much about the people working on the product as it is about the product itself.

ABOUT COUCH & ASSOCIATES

Couch & Associates designs and delivers innovative solutions to the most complex sales and marketing challenges for the world's biggest brands.

The Couch & Associates model combines strategic advisory services, marketing technology expertise and software development capabilities to help clients improve performance through unique approaches tailored to their environments. Fortune 1000 firms choose Couch & Associates as their partner in optimizing operations, achieving growth and remaining competitive in the digital era.

With offices in Canada, the U.S. and the U.K., the Couch & Associates global services team has performed over 1000 engagements for hundreds of leading companies. Couch & Associates is a certified partner to the top sales and marketing technology vendors.



ABOUT ABRAR ALI

Abrar comes from a background in economics and computer science which has allowed him to provide a unique business and technical perspective in problem solving within the martech space. He loves to be challenged within his 5+ years of experience within the marketing technology industry working with over 50 enterprise clients. He's a strong believer in supporting every company to become more data-driven in their sales and marketing decisions and is proud to be a part of the Couch & Associates team leading the industry to fulfill on that desire.