

# Aligning Sales And Marketing

An Interview with Denise Persson, Chief Marketing Officer, Snowflake

**EDITORS' NOTE** Denise Persson has 20 years of technology marketing experience at high-growth companies. Prior to joining Snowflake, she served as CMO for Apigee, an API platform company that went public in 2015 and Google acquired in 2016. She began her career at collaboration software company Genesys, where she built and led a global marketing organization. Persson also helped lead Genesys through its expansion to become a successful IPO and acquired company. She holds a BA in Business Administration and Economics from Stockholm University, and holds an MBA from Georgetown University.



Denise Persson

**COMPANY BRIEF** Snowflake ([snowflake.com](https://www.snowflake.com)) is the platform for the AI era, making it easy for enterprises to innovate faster and get more value from data. More than 11,000 companies around the globe, including hundreds of the world's largest, use Snowflake's AI Data Cloud to build, use and share data, applications, and AI. With Snowflake, data and AI are transformative for everyone.

## Would you discuss your career journey?

I grew up in Sweden, and while business wasn't really part of our dinner table conversations, my sister exposed me to marketing early on. She worked in advertising and introduced

me to the world of campaigns and communications, which fascinated me. After earning my business degree, I joined Genesys in 1996 when it was still a startup – long before startups were the coveted career path in Sweden. That decision shaped my trajectory. I spent 12 years there, moving from Sweden to France and eventually the U.S., ultimately becoming EVP of Marketing. From there I served as CMO at ON24 and Apigee before joining Snowflake in 2016, when the company had about 100 people and \$3 million in revenue.

## How do you describe Snowflake's culture and values?

Culture has always been central to Snowflake's success. Early on, we realized we needed to codify our values to preserve the camaraderie and mutual respect we had built while giving us a framework to scale. Today, our eight values reflect both the unspoken culture from the early years and the discipline we need to execute at scale. The first and most important is "Put Customers First" – which permeates everything from engineering to sales to finance. We also emphasize integrity, accountability, and teamwork. A strong culture isn't just words on a wall; it becomes the North Star that guides hiring, behavior, and decision-making.

## What have been the keys to Snowflake's industry leadership?

Several things stand out. First, the clarity of our mission: empower every enterprise to achieve its full potential with data and AI. Second, our alignment between sales and marketing. There's often friction between those two functions, but at Snowflake we worked hard to build trust and absolute alignment, which became a competitive advantage. Finally, discipline in execution – whether it's in how we scale globally, build our ecosystem of partners, or define our values – has kept us focused while competitors chase distractions.

## What do you see as the role that marketing plays in driving growth and scaling revenue?

At Snowflake, marketing serves sales. It's the first thing I told Chris (Degnan, Chief Revenue Officer) during our initial interview. Our job is to generate demand, build the pipeline, and equip sales to close deals. That means everything from creating awareness and thought leadership, to running targeted campaigns, to delivering qualified leads that sales can convert. It also means listening to customers, amplifying their voices, and building credibility in the market. Marketing has to move beyond vanity metrics and hold itself accountable to revenue impact. That's how we scale.

## In your book, *Make It Snow*, you write that it took around six months to build trust between sales and marketing. What did that trust building phase entail and what were the defining moments?

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When I arrived, sales had been running its own demand generation, so there was natural skepticism about marketing. Trust wasn't automatic; it had to be earned. For us, that meant delivering. As high-quality leads kept flowing in and the pipeline grew stronger, the sales team saw the value we brought. Over time, we developed implicit trust because results spoke louder than promises. That alignment became one of our greatest strengths and fueled our growth.

**What interested you in writing the book, and what are the key messages you wanted to convey in the book?**

Chris and I had one of the longest running partnerships between a CMO and CRO in enterprise software. Together we scaled Snowflake from \$3 million to \$3 billion in revenue. We felt there was no book that explained why sales and marketing must be in perfect alignment, how to achieve that, and what it unlocks for a company. We wanted to share not just strategies, but the reality of building trust, scaling culture, and aligning functions in a way that others could learn from. So we hope *Make It Snow* is helpful for start-ups or founders who were once in our scrappy position on how to build, innovate, and scale the relationship between marketing and sales.

**How is AI impacting the marketing function?**

First and foremost, you can't have an AI strategy without a data strategy. Great AI starts with great data. It's the mandatory first step; you can't bypass it. Once you have your data strategy in place, your entire organization can move with confidence. And ultimately, that's how you scale AI from a set of pilots to a true enterprise capability.

For marketers specifically, the speed and accessibility of AI is truly transformative, especially when it comes to democratization. For years, marketers understood the power of data, but we were often dependent on analysts or technical teams to access and analyze. Today, using natural language as an interface to your data is a complete game-changer. It puts the power of AI

intelligence directly into the hands of the business user. Now, anyone can "talk" to their data and get answers in seconds, which is accelerating both insight and impact. It's safe to say that the dashboard is dying; we're now having a strategic conversation with our data agent, who is accessible 24/7.

**What do you feel are the keys to effective leadership, and how do you approach your management style?**

Effective leadership is about clarity, accountability, and trust. I believe in hiring great people, setting high expectations, and then giving them ownership. I don't tolerate half-baked strategies, but I also make sure my team knows I'll support them fully when they execute with purpose. Leadership also requires empathy – especially in marketing, where you must deeply understand both customers and sales. My style is upfront, decisive, and impact-oriented, but always grounded in values.

**What advice do you offer to young people beginning their careers?**

Take risks early. Joining a startup right out of college was the best decision I ever made, even though it wasn't the safe choice at the time. Surround yourself with people you can learn from, and seek out mentors. Work hard,

stay curious, and don't be afraid of setbacks – they're part of the journey. Most importantly, focus on impact. Whatever role you're in, ask yourself: how am I moving the business forward? That mindset will set you apart. ●



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