Building Audience and Reaching New Personas on InfoQ: An Interview with John Staudenraus

InfoQ recently sat down with John Staudenraus, Digital Marketing Manager at VMware Tanzu. Tanzu - a portfolio of products for building and managing Kubernetes-controlled applications - launched in March 2020, right around the time the COVID-19 pandemic hit.

John describes how he had to quickly change his approach to getting in front of his target audience and how InfoQ helped him reach his strategic personas.

He talks about the performance of his recent campaign and how InfoQ helped him not only generate a pipeline of quality leads, but also expand awareness amongst an important new audience for VMware.

John, can you tell us a little bit about yourself and your role at VMware?

John Staudenraus: I'm a Digital Marketing Manager at VMware Tanzu. My role is to help market to the developer space. I've been helping create new avenues for personas that VMware typically hasn't targeted in the past. I'm managing some new outlets that haven't been a traditional VMware audience.

InfoQ represents a new audience for us. One of the biggest positives we've seen is around awareness, because VMware isn't really thought of as being in the software engineering space. I think just getting it out there that we offer a portfolio of products for developers - and the fact that we have some of the leaders in the industry sharing that message with this audience - is probably some of the main benefits that we've seen.

InfoQ: VMware has traditionally been a company focused on the software infrastructure side of things, such as virtualization. As the company has grown - through acquisitions and such - how has its target market changed?

Staudenraus: I think VMware has - from my understanding - gone through multiple phases as a company since that virtualization phase. They've traditionally been more of an infrastructure play, and right now, they're moving into the application transformation phase and starting to look at ways to bridge the gap between the infrastructure and the application side of things. They're looking at more of the DevOps roles. Software engineers are now an important persona for VMware.

InfoQ: It's been a little over a year since you first started advertising on InfoQ. How has the experience been for you overall?

Staudenraus: I think it's been extremely positive. I think that the engagement that we've gotten on InfoQ has been really strong. In particular, the assets that we've been running have seen great engagement. We've seen a lot of downloads of our content. InfoQ has been stronger than many of our other channels.

InfoQ: InfoQ's mission is to help technical leaders drive innovation at their companies. How has InfoQ's editorial approach helped you in your marketing efforts?

Staudenraus: I think that it aligns well with the personas that we want to target along with the same subject matter that aligns with our products.

InfoQ: Kubernetes has been an important topic for your campaign this past year. Isn't one of the co-creator of Kubernetes, Joe Beda, still at VMware?

Staudenraus: Indeed, Joe Beda is still here at VMware. He and Craig McLuckie were the co-creators (of Kubernetes) at Google. They left, started their own company, and then they were acquired by VMware.

One of the cool things at VMware is that there are a lot of people that have been leaders in the space that are around. It really helps us as we are looking to the future, that they see the roadmap and understand where the technology is going. It's allowed us to create the products that really fill that need for the developers.

InfoQ: What have some of your strategic goals been this past year? How has InfoQ helped you make progress on some of these goals?

Staudenraus: With the timing of VMware Tanzu launching (in March 2020), and then the pandemic hitting, it definitely changed how we had to go about getting in front of our audience. Our approach certainly became much more digital. InfoQ really helped with this because we couldn't rely on the typical conferences and in-person stuff, the field marketing, etc. We basically had to go 100% digital.

InfoQ: Have you guys achieved your goals in the last 12 months given some of the perceived setbacks?

Staudenraus: Yes. We have hit our numbers each quarter despite the pandemic.

InfoQ: Are there any lead nurturing tactics that have worked particularly well for you in terms of getting people qualified, and pushed further along the funnel? Any tactics or best practices you can share?

Staudenraus: I don't think that there's anything really out of the ordinary that has worked for us that probably isn't working for others. We've put a pretty big emphasis on lead nurture, and continuing to put them through the funnel.

Our webinars have been extremely successful at generating pipeline. Typically, those are people that have already been in our nurture, so I think continuing to stay in front of them and providing them with relevant content is important. When we get top-of-funnel leads we segment them out, so that the content that they're getting through the nurtures and through the webinar offers are pretty relevant to them.

InfoQ: Are you able to share any new customer success stories, based on your recent lead gen program at InfoQ?

Staudenraus: What we're finding is that there are so many touches that come into play in our sales cycle that generally on InfoQ, while it could

be the first touch, there's just so many other things that come through. We are seeing pipeline, which is great. It is a positive number.

How would you describe the quality of leads that you've received from InfoQ?

Staudenraus: I would say that we have received high quality leads from our campaign. We have a measurable pipeline that is significantly more than other channels targeting this audience. The pipeline number keeps growing as we continue our nurture to these leads and as more become qualified.

Would you recommend advertising on InfoQ to a peer. If so, why?

Staudenraus: Recommend – Absolutely. The engagement with InfoQ feels more of a partnership than a client/vendor relationship. The customer service that InfoQ provides is much greater than what you would typically find in an ad platform. They have taken much of the heavy lifting during the process and make standing up campaigns super easy. The wide variety of ad formats is also great as you aren't stuck with just running banners that rarely generate leads. The lead volume and quality have been great as well. This has become a major source of TOFU leads for us