

Moira Vetter, Founder and CEO of Modo Modo Agency, Discusses How They Make B2B Marketing *Sexy* for The Midmarket Challenger Brands and Global Leading Companies They Represent



Moira Vetter
Founder & CEO

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Interview conducted by:
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CEOCFO: *Ms. Vetter, before we get to your terrific agency Modo Modo and what you are doing there, I read somewhere that as a 3rd grader, you started working the cash register for your dad's pharmacy. Very industrious for someone so young. How did that influence your life and career choices?*

Ms. Vetter: My parents were both very brave people. My father escaped a communist country and came to America. My mother had to move away from home at an early age. After they were married, they had a business, so they were in business together. Because of that influence I have always had a sense of ownership and responsibility for the task.

I had bosses that said early on that I always acted as if it were my company. There was a degree of accountability and ownership that always came through. I was raised in a family business and I love the people that work here. We are a loyal group and care about each other. We work hard and play hard. That stuff is as real to me today as it was before.

CEOCFO: *Tell us about the name Modo Modo, where it came from, and what was behind the founding of Modo Modo?*

Ms. Vetter: Modo means "the way." There are different terms where people say, "A Modo Mio," which is "My Way." Modo Modo is repeated because frequency leads to recall. We are not pre-designing for our clients. It is not our way, it is not creativity that we want to advance, it is not what we think they should do. We are helping them navigate that path with their customers by finding the way. There is a lot of that language that comes in and out of us as a business.

We have "The Way" on the wall. We talk about "way finding" in terms of message mapping and conversations, and even for our employees on their fifth anniversary their gift is a Tiffany sterling silver compass that on the bottom says "Never

lose your way." We find ways to bring the idea of being on a journey and having a mission and a purpose and keeping going a part of all things, whether it is internally for us, or the work we do for our customers.

CEOCFO: *The Modo Modo Agency is a recently announced four-time Inc. 5000 company and 2022 Inc. Power Partner Award winner. What do those awards mean for you?*

Ms. Vetter: What it means for us is we work with primarily midmarket challenger brands and global leading companies. When you are the best of the best or you are emulating the best, you want to work with people that understand what that pursuit looks like. If you are a leading company you want to work with people who are leaders, on top of their game and are growing.

We not only want to help great companies talk about how great and innovative they are, but we also want to do that ourselves. Therefore, when you work with us you will know we understand what it means to walk the talk and grow properly by diversifying offerings, staying relevant and making a difference in the community. When you do all of those things you grow. That is what Inc. represents to me, and the Inc. Power Partner is especially important because unlike many industry awards (and we have a lot of industry awards), those are panels of judges that have a lot of criteria, and there is probably a lot of subjectivity to those.

The Inc. Power Partner uses detailed surveys that your customers answer on behalf of you and your index. That one to me is a much higher bar because we have to submit many of our clients to speak on our behalf.

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CEOCFO: *Would you tell us about the vision for the company? Why the focus on B2B (Business to Business)?*

Ms. Vetter: We talk a lot about B2B being sexy. I made note of several phrases, such as B2B is smart, B2B is rich, B2B is powerful and influential. B2B is more forward, it is trendsetting and not trend following. It requires alignment. I think all those words are words that people typically associate with consumer marketing and consumer products and think of it in a flashy way. What we see is all of these things being a part of B2B. It is a bigger part of the economy; it is a harder part of the economy to understand. Once you do understand it you realize how influential it is.

CEOCFO: *What were you doing before you started Modo Modo? Tell us about your early career and how it helped you understand B2B?*

Ms. Vetter: Before I was an agency, I started my career as an enterprise software salesperson. I was in B2B and I had to sell enterprise software to economic decision-makers, business unit decision-makers, C-Suite people, tech nerds and all these people. They all have an entirely different set of cares, understandings and points of persuasion. I also did a lot of healthcare work which is similarly layered. It is like peeling an onion. There are so many layers and that just appeals to every part of me, how to appeal to layered stories that are added and how to connect things that if left disconnected, the world would not be as good or the kind of innovation or the thriving communities.

If somebody does the hard work and connects things and brings those points together along a channel, wonderful things happen. I have been privileged to have my whole career in the agency in the B2B space. We have done work with household-named clients like Coca-Cola, Carrier Air Conditioning, Chick-fil-A; there are a lot of companies where people do not think of all of the B2B aspects of those companies. We excel at it.

CEOCFO: *Why do you do it?*

Ms. Vetter: We think it is hugely important and we love the complexity of it, but we are good at it and there are not a lot of people that are good at it. It is not simple. It should not be made to be hard but you do have to know a lot about business, the psychology of organization and the mechanics of a long-term committee-based sale. Those are the hard components. You just have to love advertising and marketing which I think many people do, but it is the appreciation and understanding of the complexity of B2B where all that stuff comes together where you can tell beautiful stories.

CEOCFO: *Why do you say B2B is sexy?*

Ms. Vetter: It is powerful, rich and trendsetting, those are the things that people think of when they think of "sexy," and they are absolutely real. However, what is sexy to an engineer designing an electric vehicle charging system, may be very different than what is sexy to a sixteen-year-old picking out a prom dress. That is what marketing should be about anyway, what the meanings of words are and what influence is derived from different kinds of people in different places. We do a lot of education of our people on this topic of business. They have to understand business, the importance of sales and how product marketing interacts. They have to understand how HR and the ability to do workforce development around new innovative skill sets is going to impact your ability to be an innovator. If your offerings are technology or whatever they are, you have to understand all of this.

Alignment is a huge part of that. Especially with global organizations, you wind up with disconnected things. There was a stat that I found about how much misalignment costs major corporations and it was something like misalignment costs up to 25% of your gross revenue a year. These are things like misunderstandings, false starts, not connecting this to that. There is a lot that we do that has to happen regardless of whether there is an ad or a campaign. However it manifests itself, it always turns to that business aspect. Especially when you think about "sexy" and what is sexy to a CEO. If it is a technology offering, the CEO of a major corporation does not want to know all of the, "speeds and fees." He wants to know if this offering or product is going to make us faster or move us from second to first in the market and if it is going to make his share price go up. Then if the answer is yes, go talk to his people. Then there are different decision makers. There are economic decision-makers, technical decision makers, implementers and operators. They all have a different set of things they need to know.

If you just try to show all the messages in front, you drown yourself out and the message is missed. If we did not understand the difference between an economic buyer and a C-Suite decision-maker we could waste a lot of time with marketing that would never hit the mark and not move for anybody. Because we understand those differences and that psychology, we know that a very short something would work with the C-Suite, and for that technical decision-maker, we might need a paper, a webinar and a session. To me, the understanding of business has an impact on how we bring marketing to life.

CEOCFO: *What types of businesses do you work with?*

Ms. Vetter: We work primarily with two sets of businesses. Gartner has four quadrants and their upper two quadrants are challengers and leaders. Those are the companies we work with primarily. The leaders would be a billion-dollar-plus. They could be publicly-traded or private, but are very large organizations that have a growing concern and are top in their market. That is a very different kind of stance and even set of resources than challenger brands. Challenger brands to us would be midmarket companies which are Inc. 500 companies or Inc. 5000. It is less about the exact dollar amount of the revenue than it is them aggressively growing. Once you get to \$100 million to \$200 million, you usually have a more sophisticated sales and marketing engine. When you are on the smaller side of the business, it is very emotional. The founder is very involved and it can be very slow sometimes because of that connection. Rapidly scaling midmarket companies are trying to get to market faster, expect to invest in marketing and sales and hopefully align the two.

In terms of industry, it is pretty broad but we have a lot of depth in medical and healthcare, and every kind of technology and data. We also have a lot of experience in manufacturing, chemicals and things like that. Some of it has to do with the complexity of their business operating channel, independent sales organizations they might sell through, or sales agents, distributors, dealers or any of those types of apparatus where going to market creates more challenges for how you can effectively market through others. All of those create a very fertile ground for us.

Unfortunately for all the companies in the world that are in these spaces, there are not enough good marketers because B2B is not the platform in most marketing educations. When you learn it, you get the Google, Coca-Cola, NBC and Nike case studies. They do not talk about Nike sales channels or the manufacturing arm. That process is a challenge for companies; where they can find talent that already knows so much of this information, that I can just hand them my challenge and not give them a lot of background information and they can go. Especially for companies that are already in the lead, or companies that are trying to get there and are accelerating their growth. It is theory and practice to be able to come into the door and we understand so much of this already that we can just be out of the gate quickly.

CEOCFO: *What is your approach and how do you help these companies reach their goals?*

Ms. Vetter: In B2B you do not have the luxury of only thinking long-term and worrying about your 2030 strategy or worrying about your quarter's revenue because what you do by nature in B2B is typically a 9 months or 12-month sales cycle. I think some clients are more focused on their workforce challenges and how to enable their people to do what they do better. Some of our clients need to be sexy in what they do. There is a large part of the world, particularly in the mechanical and industrial industries, where what they do is sexy to a lot of people but they have not messaged that appropriately.

What is typical in the right client is they know they have large business challenges; they know their brand needs to do more of the work for both their dovetails and marketing team, and there is some amount of urgency as well as long-term need. That is where we plug in so well because we think in terms of how to bring sales and marketing together. We understand that you have to be urgent but we are very much systems thinkers. We see the pattern; we see long-term sales cycles and we know how you can do lots of actions and activities and start filling something in against a larger idea or a longer roadmap.

CEOCFO: *In closing, you are an author, speaker, and mentor. You are the CEO and founder of Modo Modo Agency and named Woman Business Owner of the Year at the 2022 NAWBO National Women's Business Conference in Louisville, Kentucky. With so much success already, what is next for you?*

Ms. Vetter: I want all of the people that I serve, both my clients and all of the people that have come up in this company, to have all of this. I am trying wherever I can to enable people, whether it is education for one person so that they can become an expert in an area of passion, or whether it is helping someone whose later career changed to a nonprofit environment because they want to take what they have learned but do it in a different place.

I feel it is my role at this point to be enabling others with the influence that I have been honored to collect. There is a lot of value in the network that I have. People talk a lot about a network effect but I want to use my network for good and I want to use it for people who are going to do more good. It is a pay-it-forward strategy.

