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Honeycomb co-founder and CEO Christine Yen explains that, while her product found immediate traction with practicing software engineers, it was harder to make inroads with the buyers in the organizations they were targeting. She describes solving this problem with a two-tier sales system: an inexpensive self-service tool for enthusiastic early adopters, and a more robust product that a professional sales team could bring to bigger organizations.

Transcript

   - Because of a lack of a really strong business voice early on, we do a lot of exploration, and we had a lot of early success with folks who had been around the block, tried a bunch of tools and got it, who were like, hey, I hear you, you're saying like Honeycomb is taking the right approach.. I believe in this, I'm ready to place a bet on you, almost like investors do with seed stage companies, and I think the thing that we discounted in trying to repeat that is the role of navigating an organizational structure, finding your way to that buyer from a practitioner who might absolutely get it, but has no pull in their organization.. And so I would say that in 2018 and especially the end of 2018, we've gotten a lot better at, first, finding a kind of pressure release valve for those practitioners who are very excited, but are never gonna be able to justify a large deal, so okay, we've released a self-serve tier, you can self-select into this.. You don't have to talk to a sales person, and you can just get up and going and on your way.. At the same time, we've gotten a lot better at understanding, first, identifying who our buyer is, what our entry point is, who to talk to.. And second, not framing the value of Honeycomb in terms of our technical capabilities, but what it will enable their engineering team to do, right? Very natural for engineers.. Hey, remember how you wanted to try to do this thing and you couldn't, and you're on call and your life sucked, we have the solution.. That works really for the person who's actually being woken up, not so much for the CTO or VP of engineering, who's like, oh, on call, I remember when I was on call X years ago.. And so it has been an education and a revelation in figuring out how to speak to that person, as well as how to assemble the right team of folks to help us speak to that person because Charity and my brains are wired precisely the wrong way constantly, and so it's this un-wiring, constant un-wiring that we have to do when speaking to buyers.. - That takes a lot of discipline...