

# THE COMBUSTION CHRONICLES

Episode 95

## BEYOND THE CCO: UNLOCKING YOUR WORKFORCE POTENTIAL

Host **Shawn Nason**  
Guest **Scott Roth**

**MARCH 29, 2023**

**Shawn (00:00):**

Welcome to the eighth season of The Combustion Chronicles podcast, where bold leaders combine with big ideas to make life better for all of us. I'm your host, Shawn Nason, CEO, and founder of MOFI. As a maverick-minded, human-obsessed experience evangelist, I believe the only way to build a sustainable and thriving business is to put people first. Throughout this season, we'll be connecting you, the listener, with cutting edge leaders who are challenging old ways of thinking with bold, new ideas and a commitment to human-centric design. Experience matters, people matter and revenue matters. That's why it's time to ignite a people-first experience revolution.

My guest today, Scott Roth, is Chief Customer Officer at Beamery, the leader in talent lifecycle management. In that role, he works with the company's customers to design, build, and implement talent transformation initiatives that will enable them to unlock the potential in their workforce, improve the talent, experience, and ultimately achieve key business targets prior to joining b Marie Scott spent years leading the global customer success team at Medallia. He has also led professional service teams at Oracle and Deca and Arthur Anderson Business Consulting. Across all those stops, he has shown a passion for pushing the boundaries of the customer experience. Welcome to the Combustion Chronicle, Scott.

**Scott (01:36):**

Thank you, Sean, for having me. Super excited to be here today.

**Shawn (01:39):**

What a career you have had, and we could talk just about all the companies you worked for, but. We're going to jump into a lot of stuff today when we're recording this show though, Scott, just as you start your second year at B Marine, happy anniversary to that. What's, thank you. What's been the best part of your job so far?

**Scott (02:00):**

So, Sean, I think one of the things that is exciting personally for me is to learn a new industry. I've always worked with hiring manager, that I've been a hiring manager. I've worked with recruiters that have helped me find talent, but I didn't really understand everything that went into finding talent for a hiring manager to interview.

The whole effort to source a candidate, the whole effort to market to the employee population out there about why your brand is so different than the other brands out there, and why should someone work for you versus somebody else. And I didn't have an appreciation for all of the legal items that have to be addressed along the way.

The compliance issues, these are things I. Didn't even know existed and just took it for granted. And I have such a great appreciation now for everything that sources and recruiters go through and for talent marketers go do to bring talent to the table and hiring managers, you should thank those team members out there because they work. The unthankful job behind the scenes that no one sees and the effort they have to go through are tremendous.

**Shawn (03:01):**

Yeah, I can vouch for that too. I had no idea until I got in that role and I'm like, you have to do what? So, I so appreciate that and that you acknowledge that. So as you know Scott, we met through a good friend of ours and on LinkedIn, I'm kind of known as the experience evangelist. And more importantly, we at MOFI, we talk about an Experience Ecosystem, and a big part of that is the employee associate experience that you focus on in your job. So, the workplace right now, as we know, is undergoing a huge upheaval with trends like the great resignation quiet quitting, which is fascinating to me and arguments over work from home versus return to work. How can HR professionals navigate these choppy waters?

**Scott (03:51):**

Yeah. It is one of those times where there is no playbook, right? It's very much like when Covid first came out, there was no playbook to fall back on that you've been there and you've done that, and so it's interesting.

Crossing of my last company, Medallia, and my current company, Beamery, and how both of them are so focused on both the employee experience and the candidate experience. And I think for the HR professionals out there, my best advice is to listen. Listen to your employee base. Listen to what they're telling you. Listen to what they're asking for. Now, you can't do every single one thing they're asking for. It's probably going to be physically impossible, but there are going to be themes that develop and there are going to be things that the employees are recommending. And, when we try to solve a problem for a customer, we look at the employee base and we say, team, what should we do here?

You know better how to fix this than I do. You're in the day-to-day throws of it. And the same thing for the HR process there. Your employees know better than you do. Like they know it's important to them. They know it motivates them. Your job is to unlock that potential. Your job is to remove those roadblocks to them and make sure they're successful. So, if updating your work from home policy is something that's going to make, 90% of your employee base happier. And they're going to do a better job because they're happy and they're going to make your customers more successful. Then why shouldn't you make an update to the policy? It's times now where we have to think differently about the way we work.

We have to think about how do we bring teams together to work in a safe environment that everyone feels safe in, but also like how do we make sure our customers are successful? And Richard Bernstein, you know his famous quote, right? Like the employees, your top focus, and if you focus on your employees, and make them successful, then your customers will be successful, and it's never been truer.

**Shawn (05:29):**

Yeah. And Scott, you and I have had conversations. I have a background at Disney. I worked there and yeah. Listen, as a cast member, all I can say is yes to everything that you had said, right? Like you were, you focused on that. And I remember hearing Bob Iger speak one time and he said, we want to take care of you so you can take care of our guests. And I think we've seen that, this last fall with them ousting, the CEO and bringing Bob back in right like that was not the mentality that was being kept in. We saw a huge transition. So, you've described four phases of the employee associate experience, you call it introduction, acquisition, retention.

And becoming part of a valued alumni network. So, here's the question because I think this is a huge mission in the industry, in the experience space. Why should organizations stay engaged with their former employees? Whether it be a good experience or a bad experience for that employee.

**Scott (06:34):**

Yeah, that's a phenomenal question. I think if you look at the consulting world, I think the Bain and the McKinsey's out there, they do it best. If you think about their retention and their alumni network, if you look at the future leaders of big corporations, A lot of them have been developed through the Bain and the McKinsey Consulting model, and those folks were partners at McKinsey or Bain, and they worked on those accounts. And next thing you know, they're the president and they're the CEOs of those organizations. And if McKinsey was to turn their back on those alumni and not treat them with respect and dignity, then where's their work going to come from? Like their employed, where is their next like, find a project going to come from, right?

People grow and become successful in the world, and they take on new jobs. I remember when I first started my career at Arthur Anderson, I just came out of undergraduate. I was like watching these partners have conversations with people and I'm like, how do they know so many people? What, where does this happen? How do they know this person and that person? And, 25 plus years. I'm now in a position where like my friends call me like, well, how do you know so-and-so? I see, I'm on LinkedIn. I'm like, oh, that person, you seemed to be my manager at Arthur Anderson. We're really good friends.

Or I went to college with that person, or that person was a client of mine two companies ago, and we still stay in contact. And my network has grown over these last years working where I now have those executive relationships because I've been out there doing it. And so, it's, you just need to treat people with dignity and respect. My, I was raised in a family where you treat people the way you want to be treated. And just because someone doesn't work for your company anymore doesn't mean that's a bad thing. As managers, our job is to grow our talent. That's our job. And a lot of people don't think of it that way.

A lot of people think about, as a manager, I have toys in the toy box and I'm not going to share my toys with other people. And if you're a really good manager, you grow your person up and out of your organization because theoretically they've outgrown what your business can do for them, and you have to help them find their next role somewhere.

And when you make them successful at the next place, then they're going to remember that and they're going to pay it forward. So, when you call into them and say, Hey, you know, congratulations on your new role. We should talk about what my company do to help you. They're going to take that call and bring you in, and they're going to be your champion navigating that organization so you can help sell your product and services into it versus the other way of doing it, where you're disrespectful and rude to the person, then they're going to make sure I'm hell or high water. You're never doing a deal with that. You're never going to do anything. Never doing a deal. Right? So, it makes no sense. And also, this term boomerang, right? People that come back.

Like why shouldn't people go off and get new skills and then bring them back to your current company? Right? They know your culture, you know them. They were a great employee. They went and developed some new skills and now they bring them back to come work at the place they started. That's not a bad thing either, but people don't know how to, they don't know how to harness the talent and allow people to move about. People I think are very stuck in this very rigid model of you're a band 10 and you're a band 20 and a band 30 and move up the way and that model is changing drastically.

**Shawn (09:25):**

Yeah. I remember my first team I led in corporate the first time someone came to me and said they were taking a new position within the company. At first it was hard for me, but then I realized, well then maybe I did my job. I gave them the tools. They went on and did something. And I'm still friends, as you said, I'm still friends with that person today and several of those people today because we built a relationship. And I think that's where I just see a huge gap and I so appreciate how you looked at that and talked about that today.

So, we all have our own origin and stories and we all come to our careers from different places and for different reasons. For sure. Like I never imagined I would be in the space that I am today. So can you tell a story about the moment when you figured out that you wanted to build a career around, Talent lifecycle management or around talent?

**Scott (10:24):**

Yeah, I don't know Sean, if I actually ever thought I wanted to build the career around it, to be completely honest with you. I think what ended up happening was when I was ready to leave Medallia, I was talking to a whole bunch of companies and organizations and when I learned from those conversations was the mission of the company mattered to me a lot, and I didn't think about that when I first started having conversations.

I'm like, oh does the mission, does it really matter? Do I really care? But after talking to a bunch of organizations, I realized like that, yeah, I'm a mission-driven individual, and I didn't know that about myself. And once I realized that the mission of the organization mattered, it really helped me hone my search on where I wanted to go next.

And when Beam Marie was introduced to me, it struck a chord. Personal family. There were some family members that were impacted by employment issues throughout my life growing up, and it shaped me who I was as an individual. And when I learned what Beamer was trying to do, about how to trade work, equality for all, how to help anyone that wants to find a job, how to remove bias from the recruiting process, like that mission resonated right away.

And I was like, that's a company I can get behind, right? If I can go help some other person find employment and have their family not go through hardship because they were able to find employment quickly. That's something that I could see doing for, a good part of my career. And so, I think things happen for a reason.

I'm a big believer of that and I think Beamery came across my desk at this time in my, my professional journey because it was my turn to help out in that regard.

**Shawn (11:51):**

So, let's add onto that. So, because of your own experience and your experience as an employee wherever it has been, how has that experience affected how you serve now, the employers that are your customers?

**Scott (12:05):**

I was shaped by a few things. So, my grandparents play a huge role in my life growing up, and my grandparents owned a liquor store together for 37 years. And before I joined Medallia, which is a customer experience organization, my grandparents actually taught me what customer experience was before it was a piece of software, right?

My, my grandfather was known by everybody in our town. And he had different types of customers. He had the derelicts that came in before 9:00 AM to buy their bottles alcohol. He had the daily customers that came in throughout the day that were getting a bottle of wine for a dinner party. They were going to, he had the fire stations and the police chiefs, and the judges that he would bring the holiday gifts to.

And then he had the brothels that he served alcohol to. They said, my mom was the best dressed baby in town. But he treated every single one of those customer bases with respect and dignity. And because of that, things happened to my grandparents that I don't know what had happened to other people in my town. They grew up in Syracuse, New York. There were riots in the sixties and my grandmother's African American customers would walk her from her house to her store and they would stand outside of my grandparents' store while the stores across the street and next to them had windows broken in and riding at her looting.

My grandparents' door was never touch. Because his customer base took care of them, because he took care of them. So, that kind of shaped me for who I was. And so going to Badai was super easy because it was customer experience and I totally got it. I was raised up. And what I've learned with servicing customers is that we're all human, right We all have goals that we have to achieve. And I think it's really important when you're in the chief customer officer position is to understand what the goals are your client's trying to achieve and show them how you can help them get there. Also, you don't sell vapor, right? I don't go in and say, Hey, we're going to, we're going to bake you bread today.

Like, we're not a kitchen, we're not a bakery. We don't make bread. That's not our core skill, right? You say what you can do and do what you can say, and you have to deliver on your promises. And I think that's so important because at the end of the day, all you have in this world is your word, right? It's your word and your reputation, and either people trust you because like you've delivered for them time over time, or they look at



you as someone who is unfaithful and not trustworthy, and they don't give you the time of day. So, I think it's about being sincere.

It's about telling people what you can and can't do. Being transparent and honest and having that hard conversation. When you screw up and saying, look it, we screwed up. Here's what we did wrong. Here's what we're doing. Not to do that again. Apologize for it. Own it. And hopefully that strengthens the partnership, and you can move forward.

**Shawn (14:32):**

Love the story of your grandparents and love what that has ingrained in you as a person, but then affected your career. It's so powerful. So, thank you. Thank you for sharing that with us. And we talk at MOFI about being maverick minded and human obsessed. Okay. So, I firmly believe that success comes to people and organizations that think like mavericks, especially in today's time, and know that humans matter more than anything else. And we're seeing that shift even in our industry to people now talking about human experience. So, both at Beamery and at Medallia, you've worked with a bunch of Fortune 50 companies. Is it possible to be maverick minded in that type of environment, in those types of companies?

**Scott (15:22):**

You have to be. There's no other way to do it. So, I think it's really important to remember, people buy from people, right? At the end of the day. Two software vendors show up to the table to do their presentation, and you are going to have a connection to someone across the table, and their software is going to be better or worse, but it's going to be that person that you want to buy from. And so, it's super important to create relationships with your customers and to make sure that you know something about them. So, one of the things that I strive to do when I'm first meeting someone is learn about them as a human. I don't want to know about their job. I don't want to know about what they do for a career.

I want to know; do they have a family? Do they have interest in the arts? Are they a sports fanatic? Do they like to go skiing? Are they tennis players? what is it outside of work that makes them a person? And from there you figure out how you can connect to them directly and what do you have in common.

And then when you can show the commonalities you have, then they can relate to you. And then from there you can have the conversation about business. But until you earn the right to have the conversation with business, what's the. You're just the next person calling on them to try to learn something versus creating a friendship and a bond.

So, I have this one, one customer who, if she ever listens to this podcast, will know exactly who she is. So, we were selling to her and she's a great woman and she's a great friend now. And during the sales cycle we learned it was her birthday. But she wanted to keep it super quiet. Well, there was no way I was going to let that go. So, it became this thing where we talked about going out for shots for her birthday. And the thing is, the funny thing is like she doesn't. But we made a big joke about it. Like it was like, come on, we got to go out for your birthday, let's go.

And so, it just became this thing that every time we saw her, it's like, what are we do to celebrate your birthday today? Even though it wasn't her birthday anymore and it just became the same thing we bonded over and she has children that are older than mine. And so, she was explaining to me about what it's like to be a parent with kids off in college. And my kids are in middle school, so I am like, she's like a bunch of years ahead of me, but she's explaining to you what, but I'm about to go through, right? So, she's mentoring me. And so, we started creating this friendship and this bond over things that like I was going to be experiencing in my life in the future.

And she was helping guide me and that was awesome. And it, and today, we still talk about things, and I ask her advice on what she sees coming next just because I'm like, Hey, you've been there and done. That mouth went from somebody. Let's go.

**Shawn (17:44):**

Yeah. And so, we call that radical relationships, and we wrote that in our book, kiss Your Dragons is, and I say to people, it's a simple three point sermon for me as leaders, as people that do what we do, there's three simple things you got to do. You have to be transparent; you have to build those relationships. And most importantly, you have to love people. I don't know how you can be a leader. I don't know how you can lead teams, lead organizations if you don't love people and that's what you're talking about there. And our first design principle at MOFI is know me; know me as a customer first before you do anything else.

And so, I love that you just, you like put the icing on the cakes of all that for us. Alright, two last questions for you here. Can you tell me. What advice do you have for someone who just started in a chief customer role, in an HR role, in a CX role? What's the one piece of advice that you would give them?

**Scott (18:48):**

The thing that's super important and, it is different by role. So, if you don't mind, I'll try to answer a couple of the roles. Cause I think, it's a little more fun. So, I think there's a bunch of like different things, for HR, I would say try a bunch of different roles, payroll benefits, HR, business partner, there's many different things inside of HR. It's not just one thing. See what you like. Try a bunch of different gigs and then once you figure out what you, become a specialist in it, right? Know the crap, learn it. Become an industry expert. Get yourself involved, in the various disciplines of your business and make sure you become, you have an industry recognition about who you are.

I think being a Chief Customer Officer, it's taken me a long time to get here, and Medallia really is what kind of got me, what I believe ready for this role. But at the end of the day, it's about being customer centric. If you're going to be a good chief customer officer, you have to make sure that every time we talk about something, it's customer first. So, one of the things that I was brought to Beamery to do was really to drive customer centricity throughout the organization. Make sure the voice of the customer had a seat at the table. Make sure the decisions we were making, we said, how will this impact our customers? What will this be? A positive impact, a negative impact, a neutral impact. How are we going to deal with that and how do we want to deal with that?

Making sure that the employee base understands how they impact the customer. You know, people that are in the accounting team that send out the invoices, they're like, we don't impact the customer. Of course, you do. How many times do you send out an invoice that's come out that has wrong information? How upset does your client get? How much time do you waste of theirs? Because, you're not, your bill's not getting paid, and then they have to go talk to their accounts payable team. And if we would've just done it right the first time, it would've gone through the whole process, right? So, everybody inside an organization touches a customer, and everyone needs to think that way. And you have to make sure, you're all overly obsessed about making it a great, frictionless experience for the customer. That's super, super important.

**Shawn (20:33):**

Love it. Love all that advice that you just gave out there. Okay. What's your next big idea?

**Scott (20:40):**

Well, I thought it was winning the mega ball last night, but I only matched two numbers, so that was definitely not a very big idea I had. But I think really the next thing I think we're going to see a real focus on, and it's been talked about for so many years in the industry, but I think it's really going to start happening finally, is internal. I think companies, you talked about, the great resignation, the quiet quitting; what people have always talked about is internal mobility, we want employees to move from department A to department B, but companies either don't have a way to facilitate that or they don't. Reward managers for moving talent through the organization. Right. Going back to the toys and the toy justice comment I made earlier in our conversation, companies, the ones that are really going to set the future of talent are the ones that are going to be promoting the idea that it's okay to move around internally.

Managers are recognized for moving their talent around and giving them new opportunities. Cause what that does is it creates a very, very strong organization. Right. You have a trusted employee that's worked for you, that you know their skillset, they know your organization. They have a relationship, and they can go from, and I'm going to make this up, like the marketing team to the accounting team. And that's going to make the company stronger because they're going to have those relationships work across the aisle and get things done. And so, I really think that the thing we're going to see a focus on in 23, 24 and beyond is driving mobility inside of c. and getting people stronger.

Some of these stories we hear about these CEOs that started off as a janitor. What a great story that is. I had a manager at Arthur Anderson who said, you never ask someone to do something you're not willing to do yourself. And that's been with me for over 20 years. That mantra is in my head, because that's the way I lead. Right. I don't ask my team to do anything I wouldn't do myself. And if everyone works in that kind of mindset, then the organization becomes stronger. No one's better than anybody else, right? They just have more experiences. But you still are going to learn from each other.

**Shawn (22:44):**

Again, I love the concept of don't ask anyone to do something that you're not willing to do. Now, my team would probably say to you, there are things that I want to do that they don't let me do. But that's a whole different story.

**Scott (22:56):**

All right, fair enough.

**Shawn (22:58):**

Particularly when it comes to writing, they don't like me to do that, so, thank you, Scott. Love all these perspectives, all these little nuggets that you gave us today, but it has come to that point in this episode when we get to our combustion questions, which are three randomly selected questions that my human algorithm provides for me, and I don't know what those questions are as you don't until about right now. And so, are you ready for your three questions?

**Scott (23:27):**

Oh, man. It feels like, the hot seat here in one of those games.

**Shawn (23:30):**

Here we go. You might need to use a lot of brain power for these, okay. If you were a major league baseball player, what song would you want to be played when it's your turn to bat?

**Scott (23:44):**

Oh. Enter Sandman. Do I say why? It just got such a great drum beat to it and it just like, you get like 40 or 50,000 people to hop into the stadium and you all hear him going thud, thud, thud. I think that would be pretty cool to walk out into a major league field with that in the background.

**Shawn (24:01):**

So next time you're at a conference, I'm going to make them play that when you come out.

**Scott (24:05):**

There you go. There you go.

**Shawn (24:06):**

So, question number two, would you rather be a penguin or an eagle?

**Scott (24:14):**

I'd rather be an eagle.

**Shawn (24:16):**

I have to ask this one. Why?

**Scott (24:18):**

Yeah, why? So, if you think about the two animals, and they're both amazing and my niece is a penguin fanatic, so she'll probably hate me for picking the eagle. But the eagle, the ability to soar and cover so much ground so quickly and see things from so many different perspectives, high, low, left right, I think is just extraordinary. And I just think that the awe strength of an eagle, like they have such strength and power and, I witnessed my first, eagle-rabbit conquest last summer where an eagle swooped down and then got a rabbit in the field, we were in.

I have never seen one that live like in person, and I see it on TV, and it was just like, as gross as it was, it still pretty amazing to watch nature occur in front of you like that, and it was very powerful.

**Shawn (25:02):**

Great. Okay, last question. What do you think about donuts?

**Scott (25:07):**

I love them.

**Shawn (25:08):**

What's your favorite type?

**Scott (25:10):**

Oh, that's a tough one. So, I don't know if people are going to call this a donut, but I'm a huge Apple fritter fan. Would you call that a donut? I don't know.

**Shawn (25:19):**

We can keep it in the donut category because I'm a huge Apple Fritter fan as well.

**Scott (25:23):**

Yeah, I love a good apple fritter that's warm and the icing is still melting with a cup of black coffee.

**Shawn (25:28):**

Oh, see? Now you're speaking my love language, Scott.

**Scott (25:31):**

There we go. See, this is how we bonded, Shawn. Now we can talk about anything.

**Shawn (25:35):**

That's right. When we get together in person, we're going to have apple fritters together.

**Scott (25:40):**

So, there we go. There we go.

**Shawn (25:42):**

Thank you so much for your time. Thank you for giving this wisdom and knowledge to the listeners and I can't wait till we actually do get in person and have more conversations. So, until then, thank you. Be safe and be well.

**Scott (25:55):**

Thank you, Sean.

Thanks so much for listening to this episode of The Combustion Chronicles. If you've enjoyed this episode, please take a few minutes to subscribe, rate and review. Remember that I'm always looking to meet more big thinking mavericks, so let's keep the conversation going by connecting on LinkedIn. If you want to discover more about human-obsessed, maverick-minded Experience Ecosystems™, go to <http://mofi.co> where you'll find ideas and resources to help you ignite your own experience revolution, or go to [experienceevangelists.com](http://experienceevangelists.com) to learn more about my mission to challenge leaders to blow up outdated, siloed systems and rebuild them with an aligned human-first approach. As always, stay safe, be well, and keep blowing shit up.