Episode 38: Anneka Gupta, Chief Product Officer, Rubrik

Rashmi

How did you get started in product management, and did you always wanted to be a chief product officer?

Anneka

Well, I think when I graduated from college, I didn't know what I wanted to do with my career. I had done an interdisciplinary degree. It was a little bit of computer science, a little bit of math, a little bit of statistics. And so I didn't have a set-upon path of what I wanted my career to look like. I knew that I wanted to work in a tech company. I wanted to work at a startup so I could see how decisions were made and also just to figure out what kind of role I eventually wanted to do. But I started in software engineering. And I think my interest in product, I did actually, when I was graduating, interview for product management roles, as well, but I didn't really know what product management was and I eventually decided to take a role in software engineering.

But my interest in product management really came about because I saw our VP of product at the time operating and really being the go-between with sales, with customers, and then with the engineering team. I looked at what he was doing and I was like, "You know what? I want to do that job." That was where my initial interest came in. And over time, I was given the opportunity to move from engineering into product management within the same company, which was a great introduction into getting into product management, especially because I didn't really know what the role entailed and how I was going to like that.

Rashmi
Did you want to be a chief product officer?

Anneka

I've always had big career ambitions. So I think for me, even when I was starting in my career, I knew I wanted to be in leadership at some point in time. Both of my parents were actually entrepreneurs and ran their own company, so I had these amazing role models growing up, and both of them set very high aspirations for me in terms of what I should do in my career and what I should aspire to. So leadership was always in the cards for me, I think figuring out what path I wanted to go down, what function I wanted to lead in took me a couple years of self-discovery, and seeing really how companies operate and what these roles actually entail, because you can talk to a lot of people, you can read things online, but you don't really know what the day-to-day looks like until you see leaders in action. And for me, that's really

what helped me set me on the path of product and eventually becoming a chief product officer.

Rashmi

Oh, awesome. In this journey, what kind of detours or pivots that you happened to undertake in order to get to this chief product officer, as you were doing the self-exploration, inspiration from others, starting with your own home and beyond? So what details or pivots did you undertake?

Anneka

I had so many. For me, I've always been an intensely curious person. So I love learning about what other people do and I love experimenting and trying new things. And within my career, I was able to go from a software engineer to becoming a chief product officer, all at the same company, which was a really special and a unique opportunity, I think. But along the way, I had so many detours. I did a lot of different roles in trying to figure out exactly what I wanted to do. So I started in software engineering when we were a 20-person startup at LiveRamp. This was before we found product market fit. Once we found product market fit, I became our first product manager. And it was just me and our VP of product, so it was very, very small product team.

And then, I did a detour into running marketing and recruiting because we were a startup, there was a need to do that, I was interested in expanding what my own experience is because I knew the technical side of product management, but I didn't really know the outward marketing side of it. And so I thought that that was a great opportunity to run marketing and eventually recruiting to get that kind of experience. And then, I came back in to lead the product team after we decided to hire a VP of marketing and really scale out our marketing function.

So I took a few different detours. And then, even after that, becoming a chief product officer, I had the opportunity to run our customer implementation and support team, I had an opportunity to run a part of the sales team for a period of time. And all of those experiences, I think, have helped me become a better leader for the company and a better chief product officer.

Rashmi

I think getting that experience across these multiple areas, I think, really fuels or makes the chief product officer a more complete function. Would you agree with that?

Anneka

Oh, absolutely. I think what really distinguishes the chief product officer role and why it's such a difficult role is that you are the glue between all the different functions at

the company. Developing great products that people love and then solving a important and urgent problem for the customer, it's not just about building great technology, it's not just about selling that great technology; it's about how you put it all together into a machine where you're constantly innovating, iterating, and continuing to figure out what you can do next and how is that all going to pull together across the company. So it's a very integrated role, and I think that makes it really challenging. But it also means that if you can get these experiences where you can really empathize with different functions within the company and understand how it all fits together to bring a product to market, I think that is truly what this role is all about.

Rashmi
Awesome. I think we'll definitely go into a little more details about really who is the CPO and what does the CPO do.

But just before that, how did you land this position in Rubrik? Were you more recruited towards this or did you actually approach the company?

Anneka

I spent almost 11 years at LiveRamp. About 10 years into that journey, I realized that I needed to do something new to expand my experiences, diversify and just re-accelerate my learning again. So I started to search for a leadership role. I knew I wanted to stay in technology, but I wanted to branch outside of LiveRamp's industry, which was marketing technology and advertising technology, really into something new, where, again, I could learn a lot and contribute a lot. I looked at different industries. I looked at security, which is where I ended up, I looked at FinTech, I looked at healthcare. I really wanted to find an industry where there was a huge amount of change going on, and therefore, a huge opportunity for innovation. And so I looked far and wide, I probably talked to a hundred different companies, and Rubrik ended up being the one that I chose, and they were doing a chief product officer search when I got introduced to them. I definitely got recruited in, but it was part of a broader process of really figuring out what I wanted to do next after an incredible journey at one company.

Rashmi

No, that's an amazing observation, at least for people like us. How are you actually able to translate your chief product officer experience from LiveRamp, which is, in a particular, in the marketing data platform industry, to… There is some kind of data protection there, but still, it's a security domain, it's a whole new ballgame. And the company is probably a little larger, almost twice the size of LiveRamp, even though similar revenues. How were you able to translate that and how could you prove that you could manage a bigger team, a bigger portfolio kind of a thing here?

Anneka

It was interesting. It was something I was very nervous about. I didn't know what it was going to be like to translate my experiences running product and running a much broader set of functions at LiveRamp into running product at Rubrik in the data security world. What I found was that there was more that translated in my experiences at LiveRamp than I thought. I think whenever you're building great products, the methodology, the approach of really being customer-first, really thinking about what are the strengths of the company, how do you continue to build on those strengths, how do you go from a one-product company to a multi-product company, and what does that expansion look like, how do you build, buy, and partner to realize your strategy, how do you set that product strategy, all of those things, even if it was in a totally different industry, the methodology translated well. And building teams, that's something that translates well across industries, as well.

So I think there was a lot that translated. One of the things that I did do was really spend a lot of time in the beginning listening and learning, because I didn't want to come in and assume that I knew a bunch of stuff and could implement a bunch of changes really quickly, because I didn't know the industry, I didn't know the space. I really wanted to spend time to get to know the products, get to know the team, really understand the culture of the company, really understand what the team was doing really great and where were the opportunities for improvement. And I think taking that time upfront and really spending time to learn helped me, then, take all the experiences that I've had at LiveRamp and translate them in a completely new environment.

Rashmi

Oh, that's pretty awesome. I think there is so many valuable insights there, especially when you look at translating your experience from one place to the other. I think very well put. Thank you for that.

Continuing on that, what do you recommend, at least for some of the aspiring people, aspiring leaders who are, like, one or two steps away from a chief product officer, based on your experience of growing organically within a company to achieve product officer versus approaching this function in a totally different company, these two paths, what's your recommendation about that for some of our aspiring women?

Anneka

I was really lucky. I ended up, in my first job, at a company that went through an intense amount of growth, who was really willing to promote from within and allow me to continue to take on bigger and bigger roles that I had never done before. Not every company is like that. So for people that are aspiring to be a chief product officer, you have to realistically look at your company and say like, "Hey, does it have the growth profile, and does it have the culture where I'm going to be able to

continue to learn and grow and see career development within the company? Or am I going to have to jump to a new company to really see that?" Either path works, but you have to be realistic about what the externalities are, and there's only so much that you can do.

Now, there's a lot that you can do, I think, as an individual to set yourself up such that if you do end up at a company that has that growth profile and has the culture of promoting from within, that you're in a place where you'll be able to keep growing with the company. And I think some of those things are just continuing to adopt a growth mindset and realizing that, especially when you're in a growing company, that what worked for you yesterday, or even today, isn't necessarily going to work for you tomorrow. And in my 11-year journey at LiveRamp, I had to constantly reinvent myself as a leader. And anytime I got stuck in the past was a time where I started to not be doing as well in my role, and I could tell because of the feedback I was getting, because I wasn't able to help the business achieve what it needed to do next. And I had to reevaluate and realize that, "Okay, I need to change how I'm thinking about things, and I need to let go of what was done in the past and really look at this with fresh eyes." So I think that's a really big piece.

And then, the second big piece is, as I was talking about before, product is a really integrated role. And I think when you're in an individual contributor role and starting to work up into leadership roles and product, it's really easy to think about, "Okay, the primary people I'm working with in the company is engineering. Okay, now, maybe I'm working with marketing a little bit and more with sales and with these other functions," but starting to build connections and empathy and influence across the organization and really building out those relationships so that you're broadening your sphere of influence outside of the immediate functions that you work with every day, I think that's what's needed in order to actually end up being a chief product officer. And I see people getting stuck sometimes in, like, a director or VP role and not being able to make that leap because they haven't necessarily built the empathy, the relationships, and the understanding of how to influence much more broadly across the entire company.

Rashmi

Hmm. Awesome. I think, really, it resonated your comment about: What you have today is probably not going to help with what will be tomorrow, and you've to constantly reinvent yourself. Probably that's true for all leaders, but I think even a lot more for a chief product officer, I believe.

So, just now, kind of double clicking on your preparation to actually become a CPO, as you took through these different pivots in your career, what skill sets do you actively seek to acquire in order to prepare or to be qualified as a CPO? How did you start learning some of those? How did you start really preparing for this role?

Anneka

Yeah, it's a great question. I think there are multiple components to it. There's a people leadership aspect, and then there's actual functional expertise that you really need in order to be a chief product officer within product management. I think on the people leadership side, I was given the opportunity to work with executive coaches pretty early on in my career. And that was really valuable to me because going from being an individual contributor to a people manager, I mean, you've been through that, it's a complete change in mindset and you have to approach things really differently.

It's not just about what you're contributing to the company anymore; it's now also about how do you build a team, how do you delegate, how do you empower, how do you enable career development, all these things. And that's a really different skill set that people... I mean, yeah, it can be a natural edit, but you still need to learn and you're going to make mistakes along the way. And people are complicated, and every situation that you encounter with managing people is different. And while you can apply some of your lessons from before, you have to be really responsive to the different people that you have on your team and where they are.

And so that was something where I continue to work with an executive coach. It's something that is really, really valuable to me because getting an outside voice, an outside perspective, and really understanding different frameworks and learning from other people's experiences, that's been something that's really helped me be effective and prepare myself to take on larger and larger teams, make different kinds of transitions, and, like I said before, reinvent myself as a leader. So, that's been a really beneficial part of my growth in becoming the people leader that I need to be to be a chief product officer.

I think on the functional expertise side, the big leap that I needed to make was going from, really, just kind of tackling the execution of product management and helping my team do that across the team, to really be able to set a multi-year product strategy and then figure out what are all the pieces that we need to do to execute against that strategy. So coming up with the roadmap, and not just the product roadmap, but truly the roadmap across the organization, for how are we going to achieve this three-year vision. I think that part is harder to say, "Oh yeah, there's these resources you can learn from." I learned from a lot of the leaders that I reported to. I learned through trial and error of trying something and saying, "Hey, is this going to stick? Is this going to work out? Is this going to resonate," and then learning along the way and iterating. I think that piece is challenging, but typically, if you're working for a great CEO who is a visionary...

I've had this great opportunity to learn from these amazing CEOs of, "Okay, how do you think about setting a big vision for the company," and really emulating that. And then, of course, with my expertise on understanding the product and where we are today, it's made it possible for me, then, to chart out, "Okay, these are the steps we need to take if we want to achieve that vision." I've done that a couple of different times now, and truly beyond cultivating the team, which is probably the

most rewarding, truly the most rewarding part of the role, the second most rewarding part is really setting that vision, getting people excited about it, and then figuring out what's the path that we need to take across the company to get there.

Rashmi

Talking about the teams that you just mentioned, the question popped up: How do you learn to actually build these right teams that works for the company's culture? I don't know if your teams have been pretty similar across Rubrik and LiveRamp, and if they even differ across companies and cultures. But how do you just get that right team? Because it all starts with that, right? That's your first recipe for success: the right people.

Anneka

Yeah. The right people. And it's interesting because it's the right people for the moment in time that your company is in. So I would say that it's never been exactly right. It's a constant iteration. I mean, obviously, people are leaving, people are coming in, sometimes the company is growing, you need something different in your team in order to help achieve the potential of what you're trying to do within the product. So I think it's this ever-evolving thing. Hiring is an imprecise art and science. It's hard. It's really hard to make sure that you're bringing in the right people. And I will admit that I haven't always made perfect decisions in hiring. I think the big thing is just continuing to really look at your team, see what the gaps are.

I really believe in hiring a diverse team, and not just thinking about gender diversity or ethnic diversity, but really what are the experiences that people have had, and making sure that I have a team of people that have experiences from maybe smaller companies as well as bigger companies, or experiences across different industries. Rubrik, one of the things that we've been doing is a major transformation to becoming a SaaS company. So bringing in people with SaaS experience to augment people that have more of the experience of our core products. So thinking about all of these different aspects of how do you have a diverse team and how you both make sure that you cultivate and you keep the knowledge that exists today in the team that's grown over time, and that you're promoting people that have been with the company for a while, while also bringing in outside experience.

And I think I've learned over time that you have to have both. You have to have a mix of both of those things because the people that have been with the company for a while, they understand how to get things done, they understand the culture, they understand the customers really well. Bringing in people with outside experience will help the team rethink some of the things that they've held to be true for a long time. And so getting that mix is really, really important. And then figuring out what's not working and where do you have gaps, I think that's the hardest part is it's really difficult to really objectively look at your team and say, "Okay, where are the gaps today? What's not working?"

Especially for me, I love people. I love each person on the team and I feel very connected to them, and so sometimes, it's hard for me to say, "Okay, there's a real gap here. This isn't working." That's something that I've had to work on and continue to evolve. But then, in my mind, I'm like, "Okay, there's certain things that we need for the company, and so let's figure out how we make sure that the team embodies those experiences so that we can bring the best out in our product."

Rashmi

So, in all of this, where do you think was the hardest or the biggest barrier to break while moving into the chief product officer, and why was it hard and what did you do to overcome?

Anneka

I think the biggest barrier for me... I think on the people leadership side, as I was just talking about, I get very attached to people. And so, really, being able to objectively look at my team and say, "For these people, where are the gaps? How do I help them and give them feedback to improve on those areas," but also recognizing when someone isn't working out for the team, I think that was really hard. And that's really hard for a lot of people moving into people leadership is saying, "Hey, this isn't necessarily working out with the particular person," and being able to make those difficult decisions, even though you're never going to have a hundred percent proof, one way or the other, that someone is working out or isn't. So I think that was a really big thing that I had to work through.

I mean, it was just one of those things where the way I did it is I got a lot of feedback on particular people and I tried to work through it. And of course, for making difficult decision, like firing decisions, typically the first couple times you do it, you wait too long and you see the impact that that has across the organization. I certainly did that. And I learned from those mistakes, and I said, "Okay, I'm not going to do this again in the future. It's doing a disservice to this person because I'm not putting them in a place where they can be successful, and I'm doing a disservice to the company, as well." So that was definitely a difficult lesson.

And then, I think on the product management, functional side of things, the part that I really had to work on was how to, I think, bridge the vision for where the company was going with an ambitious enough plan for execution. And what I mean by that is that it's really easy, when you're doing or thinking about execution within the product, to focus on incremental changes that you know your customers want, that can deliver incremental value. And it's harder to say like, "What are those big leaps and the big bets that we should make? And how should we make those in a disciplined enough way where there's a higher chance of likelihood that those bets are going to play out?" Because it's easy to make big swings and then not do it in a very disciplined way, and then you just are wasting time and money.

So I think figuring out that balance of like, "Okay, we have an ambitious vision. How are we going to get there," what does it take to organically do innovation within a company and do something that's totally new and different from what you've done before, what are the types of people that you need for that, and then also, how do you think about acquisitions or partnerships or non-organic ways for innovation, and doing that well, too, because those are also risky, challenging, time-consuming efforts, too. So figuring those pieces out, that was a very challenging, and figuring out how to balance, it took a lot of trial and error, again. It's not like every time you get it right, but you try to keep iterating and seeing what works and fixing things that aren't working.

Rashmi

Very interesting. How did you learn to equip yourself for the board approval? Because that's one of the key things, as well. How did you equip yourself for that?

Anneka:

It was interesting at LiveRamp because I grew within the company, and because the leadership, at many different stages, gave me a lot of early exposure to the board, it was easier for me to get that approval. I think what is very helpful is being aware that you need the board approval and that that's something that's going to be important, and then working, hopefully... in my case, always the case, the CEO was very in tune with what the board cared about and what I needed to do to show up well for the board. All the different CEOs of LiveRamp coached me on how to show up appropriately and would work with me anytime I needed to do a board presentation. And that was very, very helpful. And so I think that's a really important aspect.

They were proactively doing that, but even if your CEO isn't proactively doing that, asking for that and really trying to understand, "Hey, what's the board going to care about? If I'm presenting the product roadmap, what level of detail should I go into? What is it that they actually want to hear," and gaining that understanding, that's something that... Coming into Rubrik, I already knew some of the board members, which was helpful, but even then, it's a different board, a different stage of company. Trying to understand, "What do they care about? And how do I make sure that I'm presenting information to them in a way that is relevant, and that I'm answering questions and I'm coming across as authentic and knowledgeable?" Especially when I was new to the company, I was like, "I don't know a lot of things, but I have a lot of ideas for what we can do." So those are things where I've worked with the leaders who already know the board members well, in order to figure out what's the best way to present myself in front of the board.

Rashmi

For some of the aspiring CPOs who are probably one or two steps away and do not have much of a board experience, what would your advice be for them?

Anneka

I think talking to your chief product officer about how they approach working with the board, that's a great resource because they're going in front of the board all the time and that understanding. And then, at both LiveRamp and Rubrik, in my chief product officer role, I've given people on my team the opportunity to present at the board. And I think that's something that, hopefully, many other companies do and would embrace as well, or other leadership teams where giving people opportunity that are experts on the team to come in and talk about their part of the product, and then coaching them ahead of time on how to do that. So I think if you're in an organization where that happens, that's great. If you're not, it's something that you can ask your chief product officer about and say, "Hey, are there opportunities where I can get in front of the board? Or is this something that's appropriate," and then making sure that you're getting the mentorship and guidance appropriate so that you're showing up well and talking, again, at the right level for what the board cares about.

Rashmi

That's an excellent advice. I think at some point, it's not just about you doing the job but how do you coach the others and bring people along as well to do that. I think that's an excellent advice.

Coming back to our responsibilities of a chief product officer, which I know we spoke about how different it could be based on the company size, the place they are in in the market and things, how do you describe the responsibilities and how do you think it's different from being a VP of product?

Anneka

I think the chief product officer, ultimately, is responsible for the success of the company, especially if it's a product-driven company. Like, if you're a technology company and you're outselling products, and that's really what it's about, it's not a services company or something like that, then I think your chief product officer role is really about how do you make the company successful via... The vehicle of doing so is the products that you're bringing to market. I think the difference between what's required for a chief product officer versus a VP of marketing is really that integrated approach in role. There's an integrated approach that you need to take as a VP, but as a chief product officer, the people that you're working with across the company are your chief revenue officer, the chief financial officer, maybe a COO, a chief marketing officer, the CEO, obviously. You're dealing with the rest of the C-level executives. And the role that you play is both a leader of the company, but then a leader of your functional role, as well. And the approach you have to take is one where it's like, "Okay, how do you..."

As a chief product officer, my role is to set the three-year vision, along with the rest of the leaders at the company, and then chart the path for how we're going to

get there. And that means collaborating very closely with all of these different executives and kind of doing a mind meld of how do you take... because it's not all my ideas, it's not all the CEO's ideas; it's really everyone, where you have to kind of take all of their approaches, their ideas, their concerns for what is it going to take to get there, and really meld that into a plan that everyone can get behind. And that tends to be quite different than what you have to do as a VP of product or a director of product. And of course, the complexity of that is different depending on your company size, the complexity of your product portfolio. But it's a pretty big leap because often, what is required to be successful at different levels isn't necessarily what's going to set you up for success in the higher levels within the company, too. So it's definitely interesting to navigate that.

And I think as I've grown in my career, as I said, I had to reinvent myself as a leader, and it wasn't just because the company was going through different stages, it was also because my role was truly changing and what was required of me was truly changing.

Rashmi

What is the key to working with all these leadership team at large, and especially the CEO, as well?

Anneka

It's funny. I actually think that being a product manager prepares you well for interacting with all of these different leaders, because if you think about what it takes to respond to customers, which every product manager is finding a customer, it's asking great questions, it's being a great listener, it's being able to synthesize what people are saying and understand where do you push back, and say, "Okay, your problem is right; maybe your solution isn't right." It's a similar thing. You practice that all the time when you're interacting with customers. And I think that's the same thing that you have to do when you're interacting with C-level executives is truly like: be a great listener, ask a lot of questions, and know when to push back and how to push back respectfully if you don't agree or if you think that there's a different way of approaching things. It's almost like taking all these skills that you've learned for building a great product to the relationships that you have within the company, as well.

Rashmi

So, now, if you have to go back in time to change something regarding your entire approach to being a chief product officer, if you had a chance, what would you do? Or is there anything that you actually want to change? It just seems so perfect.

Anneka

I mean, I tend to live my life without regrets. And so I think every experience that I've had, even experiences where I failed, have helped me become better as a leader, better as a chief product officer. So I don't know that I would go back and change anything. I feel incredibly lucky that I've had such amazing opportunities, and not just opportunities to grow but opportunities to make mistakes and learn, because that has made me better. And I think just as like you're not going to learn a lot if you have a product that immediately has success and you don't have to iterate upon it, it's the same thing, too, in your career. It's like, you learn a lot by the failures and by things not going well. And truly, the times in my career where I've had the most amount of growth are the times when I've been the most challenged, where I've been the most felt like, "Okay, I don't know if I can do this right now. It's so difficult. I don't know what to do. I see all these problems and I don't know how to tackle them."

And truly, those are the opportunities where I've had to learn the most. I think the thing I've learned is that when I hit those moments, is reaching out for help and asking for help early and often from anyone, from everyone in my network. That's really what has helped me get over those humps.

And so, maybe I would say the thing I would do differently is: In some cases, I didn't ask for help early enough, and I was struggling on my own for too long and getting discouraged and not feeling like I could make the moves that I needed to make. But as soon as I started asking for help and started really trying to take the control of the situation and take control of my own mental state in that situation, things got solved a lot faster than I even realized. So that's definitely a learning for me. And now, every time I hit a difficult situation, even though something small, then my first reaction is, "Okay, who can I ask for help from," and cultivating that group of people that have experiences different than mine that I can reach out to.

Rashmi

So, being this amazing and successful leader that you are today and inspiring, did you have to make any personal or professional sacrifices to get to where you are today? And are they really worthy of those sacrifices do you think, if you just reflect back?

Anneka

I think anything that you try to achieve doesn't come without some kind of sacrifice, right? There's only 24 hours in a day, so you can't do... And there's so many things that I want to do: I want to spend time with family and friends, and I want to have this great career, and I want to give back to the community, and I want to advise people and mentor people. So everything comes at a sacrifice in some way. For me, I guess I don't view it as a sacrifice of, "Okay, this is something that I'm giving up," it's like, I have a portfolio of things that I want to be doing with my time, both on the personal side and the work side, and the biggest thing for me, biggest challenge,

honestly, and the thing that I continue to work on is like, "How do I take all these things that I want to do and fit them into the 24-hour day?"

And every day is going to be different, a different balance of things, and "How do I do the time-blocking to make time for the things that I really care about," and make sure that I'm doing so, because if I do something like sacrifice too much family time or too much friend time for work, I don't think it actually serves me while at work. I don't think I actually show up as the leader that I want to show up as. I don't think I'm as creative or as capable of doing my job.

And vice versa. It's like, if I'm doing too much stuff outside of work and not really focusing on work, then I don't feel like I'm putting in what I need to get for the company and for what I want to be doing in my career. And so it's always a balance. I mean, it's going to be a new balance for me. I just had a baby, my first baby five weeks ago. And so-

Rashmi

Oh, my God.

Anneka

Yeah. And so I'm thinking about this all over again. I'm off of work until October. And so when I go back, I'm going to have to go figure it out all over again. I think that's part of the challenge is like: Life is constantly changing, your priorities are constantly changing. How do you fit it all together in a way that's going to make you feel satisfied in getting the fulfillment that you want out of your life? It's tough.

Rashmi

No, that's totally... Especially being a woman and playing so many different roles as a mom, as a wife, as a daughter, as a daughter-in-law, as a leader and everything that a woman encompass in it. So that's pretty amazing.

And fast forward 5 years or 10 years down the lane, how do you think this chief product officer role will change, even though it's fairly new, given at this point in time, how do you think that might change, or how does the future look like?

Anneka:

I think it will change. As you said, it's a relatively new role. I also think that it's a difficult role, and it's hard to recruit for, it's hard to make people successful in the role. If you look at the average tenure of a chief product officer, it's something like two years-

Rashmi

Two years. Right.

Anneka

Yeah. And that's not very long at all. And so something is going to change. I don't think that it's perfectly working for companies right now and for people. And you also see that a lot of chief product officers, they do the role once, and then they move on to being a CEO or move on to be doing something else. So you don't see a lot of people that are repeating and doing multiple chief product officer roles. So I think something is going to change about the role. I don't exactly know what that's going to look like, but I think that it has to, because right now, I don't think that we're in a sustainable place in terms of how chief product officer roles are thought of, how they're recruited for, and then how, ultimately, chief product officers are made successful within the organizations that they join.

Rashmi

Probably one last question from me: What advice do you give to other woman directors or VP of product who are aspiring to be a chief product officer?

Anneka

I think talk to as many people as you can, build the connections across the organization, and not just within your organization but think about reaching out externally, too, and building relationships with people that are other chief product officers or other C-level executives, because I think, again, that one of the hardest leaps to make is really be that influencer across C-level executives in your organization, and getting as much practice with that and getting as much experience with that as possible is going to really set you up well to take on that role in the future. And of course, be ambitious, because I really feel like more women should aspire to be chief product officers. There's not enough of us yet in the industry.

Rashmi

Completely. Yeah, absolutely.