Building the Commercialization Capability Concur Needed

How one strategic problem revealed the operating model, and the organization, behind it.

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7	6	$20M+	$200M+
AI & CLOUD PRODUCTS	NEW MARKETS	RECURRING REVENUE	INFLUENCED PIPELINE

Executive Summary

When SAP acquired Concur in 2014, it paid $8.3 billion, the largest acquisition in SAP's history. The logic was compelling. SAP needed to prove its transition from perpetual licenses to cloud subscriptions, and Concur's 23,000 customers were a fraction of SAP's installed base of more than 250,000. More than 90 percent of that base was untapped, in a corporate travel market worth $1.2 trillion a year.

Those expectations landed on a business not built to meet them. Concur had to keep growing as a standalone SaaS company while becoming SAP's proof point in the cloud, and every market Concur could not enter was attach revenue SAP could not capture.

I joined Concur to build its first global Product Marketing organization. The real challenge was bigger: creating a commercialization capability that could align Product, Engineering, Sales, Marketing, and regional teams around common investment decisions. This is that story.

The Challenge

My mandate was clear. My starting point was not. Product saw commercialization as an extension of product strategy. Sales believed customer messaging belonged with the field. Regional teams had their own approaches, shaped by local markets.

The obvious path was organizational design: define the mandate, negotiate ownership, draw boundaries. That would have created more debate than progress. First, we needed to show that Product Marketing could solve a problem the business cared about.

> *I wasn't looking for a home run. I was looking for a base hit.*

I had inherited a valuable asset: a small regional Product Marketing team with deep knowledge of local customers, regulations, and market conditions. International expansion was the right opportunity. It mattered to both Concur and SAP, and it needed exactly the expertise we already had.

A Shared Commercialization Framework

My first question was simple: how do we decide which market comes next? There was no consistent answer. So I brought the CEO, global Sales leadership, Product Management, Engineering, and the regional team together to build a common framework. Every market was scored on the same criteria, from commercial opportunity to engineering effort to time to market. It was messy, but we ended with a structure leadership could use to make investment decisions.

The framework changed the conversation. Instead of each function arguing its own priorities, we compared opportunities on the same basis and agreed on where to place our bets. The result: a prioritized roadmap for international expansion, and clear proof of what Product Marketing could do.

The Pivot

The framework also exposed a harder problem. Engineering was at capacity, balancing international requirements, platform modernization, and technical debt. Better prioritization could not create more capacity to build.

Our CEO responded by accelerating an acquisition and OEM strategy rather than asking Engineering to do more. The question changed. It was no longer what to build. It was where acquired solutions fit, how to package and position them, and which markets could accelerate revenue fastest.

> *The business revealed the organization it needed. It was my job to understand it and make it a reality.*

Our earlier work became an advantage. We knew the economics of every market, and the regional team could turn new capabilities into market-ready offers. The work was pointing toward a different kind of organization: Product Marketing leaders embedded in the regions, and a small central team providing the shared disciplines to operate globally, including portfolio positioning, launch methodology, pricing, and messaging.

We didn’t spend months debating the ideal structure. We demonstrated what worked and invested in it.

Business Outcomes

The test was whether the model could turn market insight into growth. It did. Seven new AI and cloud products generated more than $20 million in annual recurring revenue and significantly improved customer ROI on the Concur Travel & Expense platform. The same capability carried Concur into six new international markets, influenced more than $200 million in pipeline, and gave the business a repeatable way to evaluate opportunities, prioritize investment, and launch globally.

> *We didn't just build a Product Marketing team. We built a commercialization capability.*

Three Leadership Lessons

The first: the right organization is not always obvious at the beginning. I expected to build a global Product Marketing function. I did not expect the distributed model we created. It emerged from the work, and once we saw it, we invested in it.

The second: influence is earned through impact. Defining Product Marketing through ownership debates would have created resistance. Solving a real problem created credibility, and credibility created the space to build something bigger.

The third is personal: Concur changed me as a leader. The culture valued trust, relationships, and kindness. I had often led through urgency and execution. At Concur, I learned to slow down, listen, and build alignment before pushing for a decision. It was not easy, but it permanently changed how I lead.

I remain grateful for the journey. It challenged my assumptions, expanded how I think about organizational design, and made me a better leader.