

The background is a solid black field populated with numerous thin, red-outlined geometric shapes. These shapes include rectangles of various sizes and orientations, as well as semi-circular arcs. Some of these shapes are solid red, notably a small semi-circle and a vertical rectangle located near the center of the page. The overall effect is a dynamic, layered composition that suggests a sense of movement and assembly.

**PRODUCT  
COLLECTIVE**

**PRODUCT MANAGEMENT**  
**TACTICS**

**VOLUME 1**

# ✓ INTRODUCING TACTICS

## **A comprehensive look at the latest**

Product Management tactics available for you and your team. This ebook contains contributions gleaned from live presentations from renowned product leaders given at INDUSTRY: The Product Conference, one of the top rated software product management conferences in the world -- held each year in Dublin, Ireland and Cleveland, Ohio. In most cases, we even include links to the live presentations so you can continue the learning! But we've captured the highlights here, dissecting the most critical points just for you.

This inaugural edition of TACTICS is brought to you by Product Collective, a online community of 15,000+ Product Managers from around the world.

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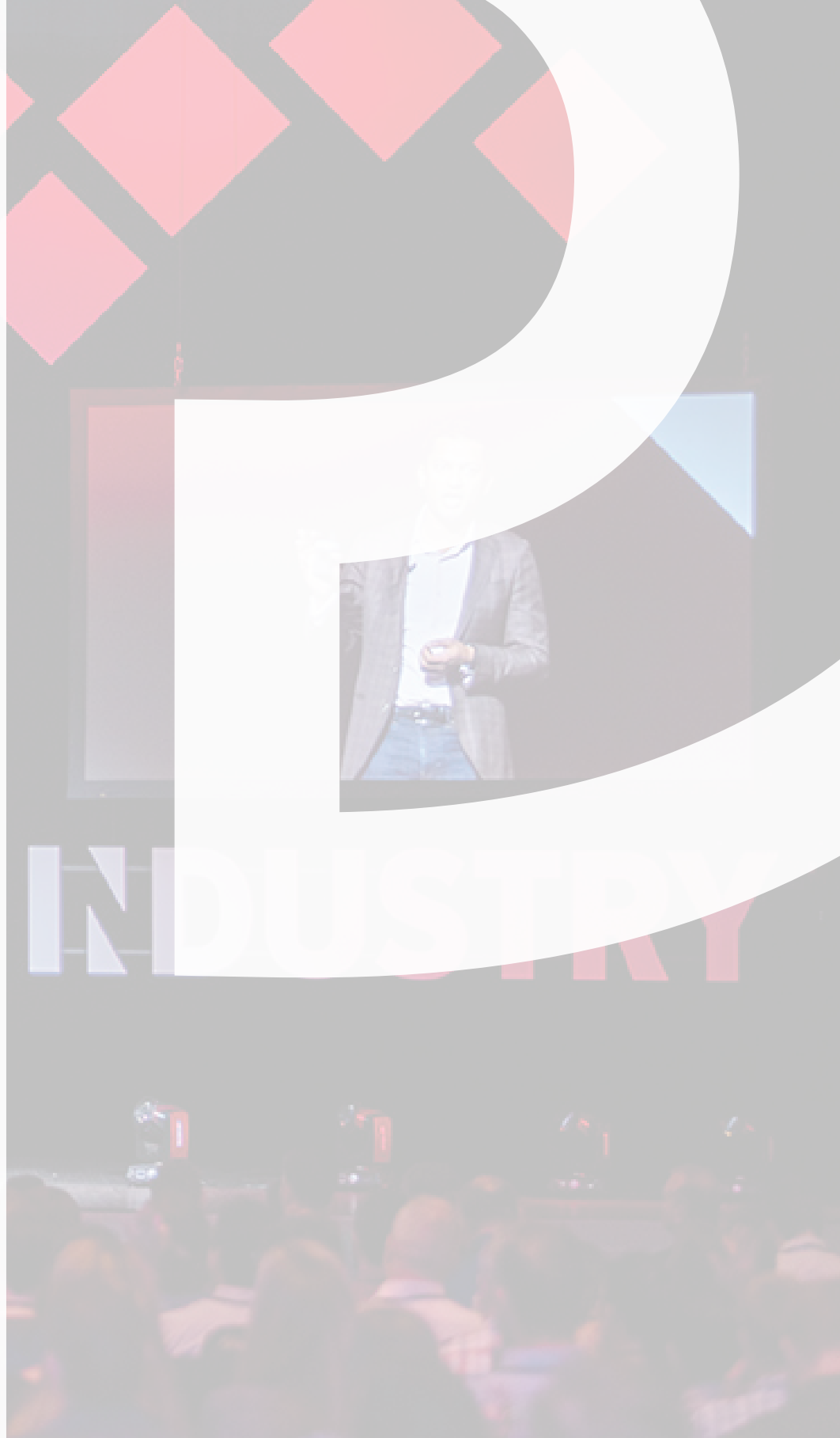
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# PRE- PRODUCT



## ✓ STARTING WITH CUSTOMERS' PROBLEMS

The following insights were gleaned from  
a presentation at INDUSTRY given by:  
Ash Maurya of LEANSTACK  
[@ashmaurya](#)

Most products fail, simply because we build something nobody wants. This begs the obvious question: Why does this happen and how do you build what customers actually want? Traditional approaches like surveys, focus groups, and even asking customers don't work because customers themselves often don't know what they want.

The challenge today isn't just how to build products, but understanding what defines a better product. The Build, Measure, Learn loop popularized by Eric Ries and his book, *The Lean Startup*, is an idea validator. It can be used to learn whether an idea is good, better, or bad. But if the idea isn't there in the first place, customers will simply leave.

So it begs the question: Where do good ideas come from?

To find good ideas, we product people shouldn't simply start with just idea discovery, but problem discovery as well. Too often, we rush to build the solution and deliver it without feedback, which doesn't get us anywhere. Starting with a solution is like starting with a key but without a door. We don't necessarily know what problems we're going after. Instead, focusing on problems allows us to ultimately get to better ideas, and better solutions.

Of course, focusing on problems does lead to other challenges. Actually, a couple of challenges:

First, Innovator's bias is hard to shut off. We fall in love with our own ideas. Often times, instead of asking what problems can we solve for a customer, we ask what problems can we solve for our customers with our own product.

Also, asking customers about their problems doesn't work. We often only get surface problems, and that's because customers don't understand the deeper issue. Customers are also solution-biased. They tend to try to "help" you answer the question by leading you right to features that they wish they had (or they think they wish they had). But feature requests are often solutions disguised as problems.

So, what's a better way? Try a backdoor approach. What are people trying to get done or wishing that they could achieve? Using another analogy (from Theodore Levitt), most people don't really want a quarter-inch drill bit. They want a quarter-inch hole. It may be hard, but don't think about the tool. Think about what the tool can do for you -- the finished outcome that the tool helps you achieve.

✓ Of course, customers can be tricky in how they act...

Customers stay at rest until something changes in their world. For instance, if your group of friends gather for dinner one evening and your friends start discussing new cars they recently purchased, your car, which may be perfectly fine, may start to feel old. This is a triggering event. Remember, for every motivation for a desired outcome, there is a resistance to change. Conversion occurs when motivation for change is greater than resistance to change. These types of triggering events can cause conversion.

On competition:

Many startups, in particular, think their company and new offering has no competition because of how they define their offering. For instance, a brand new productivity tool might not necessarily seem like it has competition because of the unique features it offers. Yet, even if those features truly are novel, it certainly has competition. Microsoft Excel, for instance, might be its biggest competition yet. Remember that your product isn't just competing with other products, but other ways of solving the problem that you're trying to solve.

People choose a product when the push and pull is greater than the friction. People use multiple products simultaneously, too. The customer forces of each product being used are all working against them. If you can learn these forces, you can apply them to acquire customers, retain them longer, or use customers to get referrals. You may even be able to get customers to switch. How? Forget personas. Look for the smallest number of distinguishing characteristics that cause people to buy from you. A triggering event is one of these characteristics. Learn to identify these, and you can be in a better position than competitors. For example, when is the best time to run an ad for a mattress that alleviates back pain? Early morning or at bedtime? Or even better, at 2:00 AM when your customer can't sleep and is watching TV or is online looking around.

Customer retention is all about preventing customer switch. Customer switch can be prevented by removing the friction from your product. The easier your products are to use, the more perceived value your customers will assign to it. But aside from removing friction, you can also build habits into products. If using your product becomes a part of their day-to-day, a price decrease from a competitor or novelty of a new alternative will seem frivolous to your customers. Switching won't seem like an alternative to them, because they have to live with your product every day.

Of course, if a customer does switch -- be sure to ask them why and where they're going. It's important to learn from their leaving. Is the switch that they're making because you and your product did a poor job? Or, is the job simply done? These are two very different reasons.

To learn more about the above, visit [InnovatorsGift.com](http://productcollective.com/love-the-problem/) and view Ash's full presentation at <http://productcollective.com/love-the-problem/>

## ✓ STARTING SMALL

The following insights were gleaned from a presentation at INDUSTRY given by:  
Deborah Clarke of CarTrawler  
[@debclarke](#)

Big ideas may be the fuel behind the fire, but aren't enough to strike a match. In order to actually execute, it's critical to get more detailed and focus on specifics. Instead of focusing on trying to find that "big idea", starting small can actually end up making a big impact for your product.

When you're at the start of an idea for a solution to a problem that you're considering moving forward with, ask yourself three questions before you get started:

1. Is this worthwhile?
2. Is this actually innovative?
3. Is this nuanced enough to compete?

Whether an idea is actually worth pursuing is a balance of risk and opportunity to learn. Some of the biggest decisions you will make as a product person will have a high risk and a high reward. Cartrawler's decision to become part of Ryanair's mobile app was a high-risk move since there was a heavy focus on mobile, which wasn't something that Cartrawler had focused on beforehand. The bet paid off with big mobile growth and a stronger business.

When asking yourself whether something is innovative, it's important to have a definition of what innovation actually is. Innovation is about knowing why and when buyers act: the entire buyer journey. It requires creating additional value for the user, not just adding features for the sake of adding features. Different decisions are made at different times. Understanding how and why your customers act will help you build the product they want.

Nuance requires focusing on customer pain points and solving them. Sometimes, those pain points aren't so obvious, though. At Cartrawler, it was discovered the language around car rental insurance was just not understood very well at all. Simplifying the language to better describe car rental insurance options made a 5.9% increase in the number of customers opting-in. It was a simple enough copywriting change, but it made a real impact because we were able to hone in on a very specific pain point.

Don't assume too much about what your customers know. Icons that may be common among people in the tech industry may not mean the same thing to the average person at home. Instead, spend time with your customers. Try to step into their shoes, so to speak. Understand the lives that they're living every day... before, during, and after they're actually using your product. It will help you gain

✓ the empathy you need to create products that solve problems for them.

To view Deb's full presentation, visit <http://productcollective.com/art-building-impactful-products/>

## ✓ WHAT IF GOD WERE AN APP?

The following insights were gleaned from a presentation at INDUSTRY given by:

Jon Vars of Varo Money

@JohnV

Early renaissance philosophy has more to do with product management than you might think? John recalls how four overarching themes taught to him in college philosophy classes actually extend into product management — and how the implementation of those themes can make the products and apps that we build almost “God-like.”

Philosophers in the Enlightenment were debating the existence of God and determined four qualities of God:

1. Omniscience - all knowing
2. Omnipresence - all places
3. Omnipotence - all powerful
4. Benevolence - all good

The quality of Omniscience comes from using data well and responsibly. We are in a new age of data collection. The companies of the future will need to use data to understand their customers’ past and future better than their customers may know. Using data in a way that also helps customers find answers themselves will help companies serve their products even better. The better we can protect our customers’ data, the more we can actually help them.

The quality of Omnipresence relates to a good app being wherever its customers are. In this modern age, that means it must be truly mobile. However, the definition of “mobile” is changing and entering a new phase. There were plenty of predictions about mobile smartphones that have already come true. Nearly everybody has a computer in their pocket and spends more time with that device than any other device they own. But we will soon start to see things that weren’t predicted. And it’s important that we stay on top of how our customers’ lives are changing so we can adapt with them.

The quality of Omnipotence relates to your product being able to do everything your customers expect and more. That requires utility (being a “painkiller” and not just a “vitamin”), usability (eliminating as much friction as possible), and creating delight (matching emotional experience to expectations).

The quality of Benevolence relates to needing to do good to do well. If you truly align your business to your customer’s success, it can become second-nature for your business and products to live this quality. Of course, today -- we can find many instances where this *isn’t* happening. Many banks make





which means they make a profit when their customers are doing poorly. But your customer's success should equate to your success. And the use of your product should result in a better world for your customers and the people that surround them.

If you truly want your mobile app or product to be “God-like”, you must follow these laws and live these qualities. You can push the line in certain circumstances, but you must never cross the line. If you cross that line, you will begin to lose trust with your customers. And for many customers, that trust can never be regained.

To view John's full presentation, visit <http://productcollective.com/if-god-were-an-app/>

## ✓ PLAYING TO YOUR ADVANTAGE WHEN BUILDING A NEW PRODUCT

The following insights were gleaned from  
a presentation at INDUSTRY given by:  
Rohini Pandhi of Square  
[@RohiniP](#)

Just like a game of chess, getting to product-market fit takes a series of strategic steps and focused execution (along with a little bit of luck). Rohini shares best practices for iterating on your product, eliminating tempting distractions, and building value that resonates with your customers.

The most important quality of a Product Manager is to take a lot of data from multiple sources and turn that information into a usable tool. It's all about prioritizing. If everything is a priority, nothing is a priority. Of course, the types of data and the actual sources that are most valuable will vary from company to company. So it's important to establish a framework, but one that works for your business.

When you actually start building a new product, though -- don't be afraid to fail. In fact, failing will often help ensure that you don't become fragile. Being fragile causes you to have a bias to not change. The problem with this, though, is that the world doesn't stay the same for long. It's important to keep iterating and taking different approaches to adapt with the world. If you can be open to the possibility of failing, though, you can take the chances that are necessary. If you do fail, your lack of fragility will allow you to dust yourself off and just keep going.

When you are marketing your new product, pay attention to the world your customers live in. Communicate your benefits in ways that your customers are used to. For instance, Square noticed that many of their corporate customers were used to paper invoices. They sent these invoices via mail. So, when creating a product marketing strategy for Square's invoice product -- it didn't simply have an approach that included web and social marketing only. It actually created physical marketing one-sheets. Why? Square's customers were used to living in this "paper world" when it came to invoices.

When onboarding customers for your new product, use a funnel strategy to get customers, keep customers, and grow usage. Create a timeline for how you want customers to come into contact with your product at every stage you can imagine. When did they first even learn about your product? When did it catch their interest? When was a purchase decision made? All of this should be included in a robust funnel. Square's funnel strategy involves building awareness, onboarding, driving engagement to keep the customers around, and promoting referrals.

# PRODUCT BUILDING



## ✓ END SQUEAKY WHEEL SYNDROME BY CHANGING THE WAY YOU PRIORITIZE

The following insights were gleaned from a presentation at INDUSTRY given by:  
Jenny Wanger at Spothero  
[@JennyDove](#)

Whether they realize it or not, many product people decide what to build next using the “squeaky wheel” prioritization method, where the person screaming the loudest gets their way. But instead, it’s best to focus on basic principles of prioritization: customer needs, business outcomes, and available resources.

We’re all bound by the space-time continuum. We only have 24 hours in a day, and we simply can’t be in two places at once (at least not in the year 2018). As such, we can only work on one thing at a time. So, how do we determine what thing we are to work on? Unfortunately, often times, work is determined when people come to us. We hear a customer or colleague’s problem as, “Why aren’t you fixing my problem?” With empathy, we help and sometimes move their problem to the top of our priority list.

Here’s the thing: We may have this magic ability to help our customers, partners, and co-workers solve their problems, but we can’t solve them all at once. This is why prioritization matters.

The scenario above may seem like there’s no real system being used, but it does fall into one prioritization system. Albeit, a reactive one. It’s the “Squeaky Wheel” system. But as it’s been said, “If you take what the world throws at you, that puts you up on your heels.”

The best prioritization systems, however, are proactive... not reactive. A proactive system allows you to be aggressive toward your goals and make deliberate choices. Ultimately, you’ll end up with better outcomes when the decisions you make are intentional and done to further your goals.

Ultimately, the type of proactive prioritization system you choose doesn’t matter. Or rather, the right one for one company might not be the right one for another company. But buy-in matters. All different types of stakeholders should have a voice in finding the right prioritization system. Even if they’re not ultimately leading the effort or are responsible for decisions being made, being a part of the process can help you make sure that once a system is established, it actually gets used.

Oftentimes, proactive prioritization systems are chosen based on internal factors at play:  
Key resources: Funding, Hiring, and other internal needs  
Strategic alignment: There’s an overall, overarching goal that each team rallies around

Regardless, so long as you know your goals, can present all of your possible prioritization strategies, customize the right one for your business as a team, and begin prioritizing together... you’ll be way ahead of when the “squeaky wheel” determines your roadmap.

✓ To view Jenny's full presentation, visit:  
<http://productcollective.com/end-squeaky-wheel-syndrome-changing-prioritize/>

## ✓ PURPOSE OVER PRODUCT REQUIREMENTS

The following insights were gleaned from a presentation at INDUSTRY given by: Jen Dante, formerly of Netflix (now at Google)

A Product Manager's job is to get everyone aligned around what needs to be accomplished — and create a plan to make it happen. Yet, it's actually impossible to lay out \*every\* single requirement. However, teams can create product with purpose, even without every single requirement.

As a project manager, most of us have written up a product requirement document (PRD), stipulating the tasks needed to accomplish the project. It might be overly detailed in a way that's condescending to developers. It might be too vague, giving developers too much leeway creating a messy end result. Either way, a PRD is not as useful in giving the team a purposeful goal.

The problem here is that many disagreements come from misaligned goals. The project manager's goal is to define a product. The developer's stated goal is to build a great product. However, the developer's real goal is to build the required product on time with the minimal effort and bugs.

So, what is a product team to do?

Really, it's all about aligning goals. Product Managers should manage the goal and the framework to help the team achieve it. This can be done by including the team into the goal-making process. This process shouldn't be done in isolation anyway. Better outcomes will be achieved if developers and designers are a part of this process, as they will have more ownership and, most likely, will contribute ideas that the Product Manager simply wouldn't have thought of otherwise.

To help establish the buy-in, a Product Manager can show why the team is working on a specific project instead of simply the step-by-step system to accomplish the project. Showing the “why” treats your developers and designers like adults instead of valued team members. That mentality improves results and leads to happier workers.

The nuts and bolts of this could be as follows:

First, work with the design team to create a mockup of the product. Next, write up a quick project spec in a shared place like Google Docs or Basecamp. That document shouldn't just be an overview of the product and project itself, but it should also state the background (why the project was green lighted), the goals (hypothesis based on accurate success metrics), and the high level requirements. Give your team edit rights to this document and have them share the ownership of this with you.

Often times, the initial product team meeting ends up resulting in a radically changed set of product and project requirements. And that's OK! In fact, it's a sign that your team has truly bought in to the process

To view Jen's full presentation, visit: <http://productcollective.com/purpose-not-prd/>

## ✓ WHY THE CONCEPT OF “FEATURES” CAN BE TOXIC

The following insights were gleaned from  
a presentation at INDUSTRY given by:  
Elizabeth Ayer, formerly of Redgate Software (now with 18F)  
[@ElizAyer](#)

We can all see a brighter future in Lean, Jobs-to-be-Done, and techniques to focus on real value and feedback loops above pumping out new capabilities. Yet many times, these efforts get dragged back to the irresistible concept of a ‘feature.’ What is it that makes features so appealing, compared to problems or outcomes?

First, let’s talk about “features.” Whenever we think about building out our product roadmap, it certainly is easy to immediately begin thinking of new features. Features are easy to add but have serious long-term costs in functionality. Too many features can increase sales at first, but after some time, it will force a product to collapse upon its own weight.

Rather than immediately thinking of building on your product with new features, first begin to think about desired outcomes. A good example: an output or “feature” for a government might be building more roads but the desired outcome is improving traffic flow. When we focus on a pile of features, we lose perspective on the impact our product has on the real people who use it. If you’re managing outputs, you’re judging yourself on what you produce, but not on what you’re affecting.

Avoid the Cobra Effect. In the British Raj, Delhi was overrun with snakes, so they offered a bounty for snake skins. That worked for a while, until someone discovered they could just breed cobras, kill them, and sell them to the government in order to turn a profit. The bounty system wasn’t paying off, so the government stopped it. When that happened, though, the cobra breeders simply released their snakes, making the cobra problem worse. Too many features are like a pile of snake skins. At first, they help. However, in the long term, there’s a diminishing return and even increased costs.

But this is hard, because building new features is enticing and tempting. Understand those temptations to resist them. We love how features are concrete. We love how good shipping feels. We love the control. We see features as a currency with defined price for removal. However, self-control is imperative.

But, shouldn’t we be releasing some new features at least? Yes -- but only when they’re the right features. And you can determine this by shortening the feedback loops with the right data to get accurate perspectives about how well your product is functioning and where it really does need more iteration.

Even still, don’t overemphasise shipping, even though it feels good. Treat shipping an update like a gymnast finishing a routine. She may give a smile when she “sticks the landing,” but the real celebration comes when she and her team see the score. Celebrate the feedback instead of the shipment. That’s working based on outcomes rather than output.



As you work this through, though, be sure to be easy on yourself with this. Outcome-based management is like exercise and eating right. It's tough but takes constant practice and is worth it in the end.

To view Elizabeth's full presentation, visit::<http://productcollective.com/toxic-concept-product/>



## ✓ SATISFYING THE UNSATISFIABLE THROUGH CONSUMER SCIENCE

The following insights were gleaned from a presentation at INDUSTRY given by: Gibson “Gib” Biddle, formerly of Netflix  
[@GibsonBiddle](#)

Product people should work to move beyond customer focus to “customer obsession” to really discover what delights customers in hard-to-copy, margin-enhancing ways. To do this, there are four sources of consumer insights that can help. Gib illustrates these tactics through his time at Netflix using real-world cases that still are applicable today.

Is customer delight really so important? Jeff Bezos of Amazon thinks so. He once said, “Even when they don’t yet know it, customers want something better, and your desire to delight customers will drive you to invent on their behalf.”

According to Gib, the Product Manager’s job is to delight customers in hard-to-copy, margin-enhancing ways. This “delight” often gets overlooked. We’re so focused on providing a product that functions and works, that we sometimes forget how important that “delight” is. Especially when the other products we’re competing with technically work. Instead of overlooking that delight, we should be doubling-down on our efforts to delight customers.

But, where within our product should we be focused on introducing “delighters”? Consumer science can help point us in the right direction. Forming a hypothesis, conducting experiments, gathering data and results, and assessing your findings, and repeating that process over and over again, can help show you where your product has room to delight.. Then, of course, you’ll need to ask yourself and your team whether it makes sense to implement some sort of delighter.

Sometimes, though -- there is a cost for doing something that’s right. At one point, Netflix outlined a potential delighter that would cost quite a bit. In fact, the cost for implementing alone would take \$50 Million. There was some projected revenue that would come along, but it certainly wouldn’t cover the cost. In fact, that revenue was projected at just \$8 Million. Yet, Netflix decided to move forward anyway. Why? Well, it certainly wasn’t a short term profitability decision. Instead, the leadership felt that implementing this delighter would ultimately buy goodwill, and while that goodwill might have a value that’s difficult to determine in the short term, it would be better for the customer base and Netflix long term.

In the end, we all should have the courage to make decisions like these. Deciding to move forward with a project that is scheduled to actually lose money in the short term, though, takes courage. One might say it takes an obsession with customers, too. After all, customer obsession is about putting your users and audience at the center of all you do to invent a better future for everyone. We should all look for ways where we can live that out as product people.

To see Gib’s full presentation, visit:  
<http://productcollective.com/customer-obsession-satisfying-unsatisfiable-via-consumer-science>

## ✓ EXPERIMENT-DRIVEN PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT

The following insights were gleaned from  
a presentation at INDUSTRY given by:  
Jon Noronha of Optimizely  
[@thatsjonsense](#)

When it comes to product development, experimenting badly can be worse than not experimenting at all. As one of the most powerful tools available to product teams, when done right, experimentation allows teams to iterate gradually and validate ideas with data.

We're all familiar with the process of building and launching products. The problem is that until we know how it went, we're essentially blind. There's a better approach: Experiment and iterate from start to finish, repeatedly.

Product experimentation involves learning, building, measuring, and repeating. Once this happens, we can start to quantify the impact that product changes has. Failure will happen, and that's OK -- we should embrace it. In fact, failing can help us find bigger and better successes as long as we're working to learn from those failures. But failure often happens from simple mistakes that can be avoided. Some of those mistakes include:

1. Optimizing the wrong metrics. Most product people understand the importance of setting goals in place -- but what happens if we're setting the wrong goal? Put yourself in the user's shoes. Ask, "What if this went up and nothing else?" Constantly re-evaluate and don't underestimate the value of trusting your gut at times.
2. Getting tricked by the stats. Don't peek at A/B results too soon. There's a risk of false positives — more than you'd normally see. If you're in doubt, get a data scientist or statistician, or use a platform that can help you dissect the results at the right time.
3. Thinking too small. Experimentation is often misunderstood as simply A/B testing... with a literal "A" and a "B.". A better system would be A-B-C-D-E-F testing because at that level, creativity increases. Testing five or more variations can improve your win rate by 75%.

And like products, your experimentation process should always be open to iteration and improvement.

To view Jon's full presentation, visit:  
<http://productcollective.com/experiment-driven-product-development-weve-learned-1-million-experiments/>

# MANAGING PRODUCT



## ✓ GETTING GO-TO-MARKET ALIGNMENT RIGHT

The following insights were gleaned from a presentation at INDUSTRY given by:  
Brianne Kimmel, Startup Growth Advisor and Investor  
[@BrianneKimmel](#)

It's no secret, the fastest-growing software companies in history have all started with a product-led growth strategy. And while many billion-dollar companies like Dropbox, Slack, and Zendesk didn't start with a sales team, they did eventually add traditional go-to-market channels like sales and business development -- as self-serve growth rarely lasts forever.

You'll know it's time for a change when your dollar per customer starts to flatten out. Revenue will keep coming in, but the growth will slow. When this happens, some solutions to augmenting purely organic growth include adding sales, customer success, and support teams.

Sales-led growth increases utilization, feature add-ons, target account growth, and can help prevent churn. But at this point, power dynamics can begin to change. Because sales is customer-facing 100% of the time and is responsible for bringing in revenue, which is the lifeblood of a company, much of the organizational power can move to sales. To avoid power conflicts, it's critical that product and sales align even when the very first sales professionals are being hired. When these teams work together, the company benefits. After all, conversations will happen every day between sales teams and customers, and the transfer of knowledge to the product team is critical.

When product and sales are not aligned, power conflicts start to appear. These conflicts could result in blind spots in your funnel, channel conflict between self-serve and sales-assisted growth, and expansion revenue including plan upgrades and product add-on's are an afterthought.

This kind of alignment can't happen on it's own, though. It must be worked on. And there can be a systematic way to drive alignment, over time. Consider a Go-To-Market alignment loop that looks like: Educate, Activate, and Iterate:

- Educate: Develop shared language and goals, product methodologies, and user research.
- Activate: Develop self-serve tools for sales, invest in data literacy sessions, and create product-related incentives.
- Iterate: Conduct weekly post-mortems, provide market insights and competitive intel, and establish industry benchmarking.

While getting sales and product management aligned is no small feat, if it's done successfully, it can create quite a competitive advantage for your organization and everybody will be better for it.

To view Brianne's full presentation, visit:  
<http://productcollective.com/getting-go-market-alignment-right/>

## ✓ MASTERING SaaS PRICING

The following insights were gleaned from a presentation at INDUSTRY given by: Kyle Poyar of OpenView Venture Partners @PoyarK

Building great products is hard enough — but pricing them can be just as tricky. Pricing and packaging is one of the most powerful yet overlooked levers to drive growth in a SaaS business. Yet, just like we manage our products, pricing and packaging can also be thought about and managed in a data-driven manner, allowing us to gain an understanding of the best monetization strategies for each stage of company growth.

Steve Ballmer of Microsoft once said, “This thing called price is really important. The only difference between companies that succeed and fail is that winners figured out how to make money.”

Yet, for as important as it is, SaaS pricing tends to be a gut-based judgment decision. There tends to not be as much scientific process or rigor that other areas get. But pricing is not something you can set and forget. There are five common pricing mistakes.

1. Your product is too cheap. You're protective of your pricing, but customers aren't that sensitive to it. If you're only winning deals because you're the lowest price option on the market, you haven't found your fit yet. You want customers coming to you because of the value you provide.
2. You picked the wrong value metric. Historically, this defaults to “seats.” Less than 50% of SaaS companies have a seat-based pricing model at this point. The right value metric can help you differentiate against competitors and generate more revenue.
3. You are selling to customers in a way that's not aligned with how they make purchases. Software companies have nine competitors on average. If your pricing page is too confusing to understand, people are going to leave. Your pricing page can be your best performing sales rep. Use it to address and resolve any lingering doubts from your prospects and customers.
4. Usage-based pricing and feature packaging drives net negative churn. Use features to drive expansion, not create confusion about your products.
5. Your pricing is static — not dynamic. Pricing should evolve as your company evolves. It is never 100% complete. Most companies don't do any pricing research, or at best, only cursory pricing research. It's even worse with price testing. Instead, you should think about iterating your pricing model the same way that you iterate your product over time.

Ultimately, who should own pricing and make these decisions? It can fall into sales, marketing, operations, finance, and product -- and each has benefits and drawbacks. Find where it makes the most sense for your business. This, like the pricing model itself, can be experimented with and iterated upon.



To view Kyle's full presentation, visit:

<http://productcollective.com/mastering-saas-pricing-price-package-product-mvp-ipo/>

## ✓ HOW BEHAVIORAL ECONOMICS CAN HELP MAKE BETTER PRODUCTS

The following insights were gleaned from a presentation at INDUSTRY given by:  
Glen Holmes of Workday  
[@HolmesGJK](#)

Why does a bottle of Chateauneuf-du-Pape cost 3 times as much as a bottle of Cotes Du Rhone Village? The answer may help us product people build better, more engaging, products for our users.

Economics for a long time assumed that people were rational when they made decisions. Behavioural economists realized that this is a bit of a misnomer, though. People actually aren't always rational. However, they aren't usually simply irrational. They are predictably irrational. Essentially, people oftentimes don't think as much as they think they think.

People put more value on things they perceive as scarce -- whether or not they're actually scarce. With luxury consumer goods, we sometimes see "limited edition" used in marketing materials to promote scarcity. In the world of software products, though, scarcity can certainly be used as well. Referral systems with an artificially limited number of invites can be much more effective than open-ended referrals when a new product is introduced.

Most people also can be procrastinators, yet hate missing out on things. That's why hotel booking sites now have hints all over the page warning that others may book the room before you. Those are opportunities to instill a fear of missing out.

Sometimes, we are encouraged to give our customers lots of choices. But despite what most think, humans don't like too much choice at once. Simplified products are easier to engage and can be more successful.

But people do, however, sometimes need cues to get to where we want them to go. That cue doesn't need to be too deliberate. It can be just a nudge, which is more like a subtle hint. This is akin to steps showing how many calories are burned if steps are chosen instead of an escalator. While a nudge may seem like a small thing, it can certainly make a big impact.

When it comes to value, though -- behavioural economics suggest that people are much worse than we might imagine. For instance, people can sometimes put just as much weight on saving \$25 on a clothing item compared to saving \$25 on, say, a computer. The actual amount saved is the same -- but since a computer is a much more expensive purchase, the relative value is much different.

In the end, product people might not think of ourselves as behavioural economists -- but we may be better off if we did. Behavioral decisions that we make for our products can actually have a big impact.

To view Glen's full presentation, visit: <http://productcollective.com/on-behavioural-economics/>

## ✓ SUBSCRIPTION OPTIMIZATION

The following insights were gleaned from a presentation at INDUSTRY given by:

Antoine Sakho of Buusu

[@antoinesakho](#)

Truly understanding how subscription models works can help you multiply your app revenue. While there are lots of tricks that can help you optimize, some can be counterintuitive.

In a Google survey of users who went from being free users to paying subscription users, most said they wanted access to more content. The second biggest reason for upgrading were discounts offered. These reasons suggest that many people are open to trying the free version of an app, but if it's actually delivering value -- they're willing to pay in order to open up more access to that app. For people that are on the edge of trying those premium features, discounts can certainly help. But it's important to incentivize longer plans, not just subscriptions in general.

It is helpful to lock down content strategically to encourage users to upgrade to a subscription. Sometimes the strategy that increases conversions fastest leads to shorter subscriptions and therefore brings less revenue. So it's important to be thoughtful about the way we're trying to encourage users to upgrade and not end up seeing a result counter to our goals.

Sometimes, free users are looked upon as creating all sorts of costs. But keeping users involved longer with free content could actually lead them to subscribe for longer plans, creating more revenue down the road. So rather than setting a goal to convert free users as soon as possible, think about a plan that gets users engaged with the product for longer periods of time before converting.

Signposting is another practice that cannot be ignored. Subtle hints at the premium product tend to be much less effective than a sticky banner encouraging users to upgrade. The sticky banner may seem more out of place and less visually appealing, but despite what you may expect, most users aren't always aware of what your premium subscription product actually is.

And when the time comes to convert those free users, keep in mind that free users care more about what they can't access than what they can see. It is important to focus on what the free users want to access rather than making what they already use prettier.

You can also never underestimate the importance of continuing to experiment and constantly price test. Busuu ran a complicated A/B/C pricing test in multiple countries, and found the market was far more elastic than was initially thought. That makes a big difference in the company's bottom line.

But like any business, churn is always an issue. Busuu decreased churn by 30% by creating a multi-step cancellation flow. They offer help first, in case the cancellation comes from confusion. Then, the user is offered to suspend the account temporarily, since language learning (Buusu's business) can understandably take time. Finally, they offer discounts to see if that will get customers to resubscribe. While multiple steps may arguably make for a worse customer experience, it's true that many consumers that are unsubscribing aren't necessarily closed to the idea of sticking around if their concerns are addressed. So before they walk out the door, see if you can help them first.



✓ To view Antoine's full presentation, visit:  
<http://productcollective.com/software-subscription-optimization/>

# PRODUCT TEAMS



## ✓ HIRING AND SCALING YOUR FIRST PRODUCT TEAM

The following insights were gleaned from  
a presentation at INDUSTRY given by:  
Merci Victoria Grace, formerly of Slack  
[@merci](#)

Founders and Heads of Product at early stage companies are often trying to do two impossible things at once: take a product from 0-1 and take a product management team from 0-1.

For companies at the startup stage, some major challenges include finding the right product candidates, hiring the perfect fit, and building up the ideal product team. It's important that the new product managers that are onboarded fit into the existing culture and values of the greater team. Every company has their own version of "product management" though, which can only be learned by actually practicing it. The product people that practice it, though, need to be the shape that fits into the company.

At a startup, who typically makes the best product people? Oftentimes, they are generalists who can do a variety of different things -- or internal subject matter experts. Generalists work really well within startups because the needs of the organization can change over time. People that are highly adaptable and can move to different tasks and complete them well (and enjoy doing so) can be great initial product managers. But, don't overlook internal associates that may start off in customer success, sales, or marketing. Their knowledge of the product over anybody from the outside can often make for valuable adds to a burgeoning product team.

When hiring those generalists though, startup experience does matter a lot. Whether somebody has worked at a major tech company (like Facebook or Google) matters less than whether they have thrived in a very early startup environment... even if the company is less known.

Use a hiring process that highlights real work and represents your culture. Finding ways to incorporate your current team into the interview process -- whether for one-on-one interviews or a team interview -- is one way to do that. But when interviewing, don't just ask about experience with common platforms. Ask open-ended questions to prompt stories. Learn how they resolved conflict with a difficult person. Ask about how they would approach a situation. Get an understanding for how they behave in unpredictable situations (as many startup companies experience those quite often).

Choose a good problem -- a real one -- and ask the potential hire how they'd solve it. Great product managers will spend time drilling into what the problem is, and they'll ask questions. The heart of product management is constantly asking questions.

When going through the interviewing process, work to:

1. Be consistent



2. Ask about execution and impact
3. Ask calibrated, non-leading questions
4. Let candidates ask questions
5. Ask candidates for feedback on your hiring process

Ultimately, this process is all about building trust. You need to be comfortable with letting them run the product. If you trust them on day zero to do the job, they're going to do a better job. Set clear expectations. Help them understand what "great" looks like at your business. When people leave companies, they're often leaving their boss — not the company.

But don't move fast. In fact, hire slow. Fire fast. For every under-performer you're keeping in place, you're chipping away at engagement with your best performing employees. Top performers don't work well with low performers.

To view Merci's full presentation, visit:

<http://productcollective.com/0-1-product-teams-hire-scale-first-product-team/>

## ✓ THE CHALLENGES AND PITFALLS OF RAPID TEAM GROWTH

The following insights were gleaned from a presentation at INDUSTRY given by: Nick Caldwell, formerly of Reddit (now at Looker) [@NickCald](#)

Product teams -- especially ones that are growing rapidly -- go through so much. It's not uncommon to see a product team go from survival mode to optimization, deal with changes in roles and responsibilities, work through massive team growth, see issues with communication and coordination, handling reorganizations, managing ambitions and all sorts of other issues. And, of course, be expected to thrive instead of simply survive.

From the Startup Genome Report, 92% of startups fail within three years. Of those, 43% fail due to issues with scale. So how can a product team avoid becoming part of the statistic?

First, it's important that everybody truly understands roles and responsibilities. Consider using the RACI matrix (Responsible, Accountable, Consulted, Informed) with a "trust but verify" approach. Allow team members to do what they have to do, but make sure you verify that they're actually doing it. Most people want autonomy, and it is important to trust team members enough to operate with autonomy. But it is still the responsibility of the product leader to make sure that people are doing what they say they are doing.

Early on, it's common for program/product/engineering to take on similar duties. As you scale, this will need to be split. Product considers the "why", and engineering oversees the "when." If you have "tech leads" and are implementing structure, ask if they care more about people or architecture? This will inform their path (i.e., manager or architect).

As you scale your team, be sure to do so appropriately. More people doesn't equal more productivity. Coordination costs can outweigh hiring benefits. Reorganization and process will be required, and that affects the team quite a bit.

Another thing to manage is the fact that everyone wants to know what everyone else is doing. As teams are created and grow, coordination loss makes a negative impact. Missing dependencies can cripple your production roadmap. If you're in a situation where you need to roll out improvements and process, avoid process junkies and boilerplate solutions. Create something that works for your team. Allow processes to emerge from the bottom up instead of trying to push processes down on everybody unnecessarily. Over time, these processes will become part of your culture.

## ✓ BECOMING A SUCCESSFUL CONTINUOUS DELIVERY TEAM

The following insights were gleaned from  
a presentation at INDUSTRY given by:  
Teresa Torres of Product Talk  
[@ttorres](#)

In some organizations, the teams that are actually creating the product aren't exactly the ones who are learning from customers and conducting user research. But increasingly, the best modern product teams are different than that. The core product teams (i.e. product manager, designers, software engineers) are the ones responsible for doing their own discovery. They do their own user research, conduct their own experiments, and synthesize what they are learning week over week to support their daily product decisions.

Product management is changing — it's moving toward a focus on outcomes. Product teams are getting more autonomy to choose the best path toward an outcome. But autonomy comes with responsibility. There are three mindsets shared by the best teams.

1. Collaborative mindset: We have to collaborate to deliver products, but there's more to it. We often let the product manager handle the management. In this case, it's not really collaboration. The trio (PM, design lead, tech lead) are the minimum required to build good digital products, but we need the expertise of others. There may be engineers, QA professionals, customer success team members, data analysts, and others to consider as well.

It's easy to take collaboration too far and turn it into consensus. We don't need consensus from everyone. Just collaboration. Consensus can often lead to opinion battles, which isn't productive. While it may be difficult, don't simply advocate for your own point of view. Take everyone's perspectives and co-create a solution that addresses them.

Cross-functional co-collaboration is hard. Because it's hard, we tend to resort to handoffs. They feel efficient, but they're not with products. It's not about efficiency, it's about effectiveness. We need the best, not the fastest. How do we create the most value?

We each bring different knowledge to the table, regardless of the fact that we're all coming from different places. That's why we need to develop a shared understanding. We assign voices to engineering, design, and other roles. It's important that we synthesize knowledge so we understand what the customer needs. From that shared foundation, you can make a team decision.

Experience mapping helps you align around what you know about your customer. The opportunity solution tree helps you align around the best path to your desired outcome. Story mapping helps you align around specific solutions.

2. Continuous mindset: The industry is shifting toward this. Continuous discovery is weekly touch-points with customers by the team building the product where they conduct small

research activities in pursuit of a desired outcome. Product teams need to know how to get fast answers to this week's questions from customers.

Avoid "whether or not" situations with regard to research and ideas. It sets you up to fall prey to confirmation bias. We're seeking validation and ignoring evidence. Instead, set up compare and contrast decisions. This helps you find the best solution.

3. Experimental mindset: A/B testing as a discovery tool doesn't work. You should do more than simple A/B tests. Include prototyping and other forms of tests and experiments.

Our experiments should be failing and often -- that's an indicator that we're learning. Test your assumptions and kill your flawed theories. Be prepared to be wrong. Combine confidence and doubt to be wise. Maintain a state of doubt. Consider how your team can be more collaborative. How can you continuously seek solutions? How can you be more experimental and embrace being wrong?

To learn more about Teresa, visit [ProductTalk.org](http://ProductTalk.org) and to view Teresa's full presentation, visit: <http://productcollective.com/becoming-successful-continuous-discovery-team/>

## ✓ THE ROLE OF PRODUCT TEAMS IN LARGE AND SMALL ORGANIZATIONS

The following insights were gleaned from  
a presentation at INDUSTRY given by:  
Dheerja Kaur of theSkimm  
[@dheerja](#)

Product plays a very different role within organizations both big and small. Defining the role of product through the different stages of a company and how we instill product thinking throughout the organization can help us build the right product team for our companies.

But let's face it -- injecting product into an organization is hard. Focus on how product can help the various people within the organization -- not how it's taking away their responsibilities. Product "swim lanes" are an easy trap. Really, it will take people reaching over to different lanes in order to see to it that our products are managed successfully.

Instead, focus on building a culture that embraces flexibility and agility. There is no perfect way to organize a product team. Assume it will constantly change and be okay with that.

When it comes to the characteristics to look for in ideal team members, EQ and self-awareness are just as (if not more) important than hard skills. Can product managers help the people around them and know how to motivate them? Can they balance leading with conviction while being open to challenging viewpoints?

It's also critical that product people are truly obsessed with their customers -- especially at the early stages. It's at these stages where iteration is so important and a true desire to fulfill needs for customers can help a product team find the right solution to iterate to.

At the very early stages, focus on building product thinking and culture from the ground up. The entire company should live and breathe user first. But the product team should be the champion of the user and encourage this mindset.

In truth, there is no "right" way to build products. Use each opportunity to develop your philosophy on product development that leans into the ethos and assets of the company. Don't worry about following "the" best practice, but rather find the right practice for your team and your company.

As your team starts to grow, find inflection points in the company's trajectory and identify how product development should look and operate differently. Things will need to change, but embrace change and find team members that also embrace that change. The product people you bring on board early on should be product people that are eager and ready to see the product organization grow. Build a diverse product team that complements and challenges each other. Identify and lean into the "X factor" of a product manager in your organization. Is it the "technical" product manager? Is it the "user-obsessed" product manager? Whatever it may be, look for that key characteristic.

To view Dheerja's full presentation, visit:  
<http://productcollective.com/role-product-product-teams-large-small-organizations/>



## ✓ DYSFUNCTIONAL TEAMS AND THE WISDOM OF ANTS

The following insights were gleaned from a presentation at INDUSTRY given by: Kirsten Butzow, formerly at Pragmatic Marketing (now at Salt River Project)  
[@KirstenButzow](#)

Cross-functional interaction is critical for success. This is true for any team, but product teams in particular. Surprisingly, an analog and useful metaphor for thriving product teams can be derived from ants. Yes... ants.

Ants are known for being highly efficient and effective team members. They have a shared vision. They have clarity and know why they're doing what they're doing. Your shared vision is critical to creating a high functioning team. Your products and technology aren't your vision. They're what help you achieve it.

Have you noticed that not everybody is completely aligned and that shared vision doesn't seem to be "shared" so much anymore? Then it's important to re-calibrate your vision statement. Ensure you're all marching in the same direction in fulfillment of the bigger goal. Ask, "Do I believe it? Can it succeed?"

If people don't buy in, it won't work. This creates infighting, which just leads to more issues within your team. Convert your vision into something tangible that people can believe in and truly buy into.

Consider how ants essentially form a superorganism by working together. Think how your team can function together as a single unit as opposed to a collection of individuals working separately. Organizations tend to overemphasize their organizational chart. This shouldn't be the case, though. The focus should instead be on the work that needs to be done -- regardless of what the organizational chart looks like. If it isn't, people will find workarounds. The system breaks down quickly from here.

You can create a great shared vision, commitment in it, and succeed with it. If ants can do this successfully, product teams certainly can, too.

To view Kirsten's full presentation, visit:  
<http://productcollective.com/dysfunctional-teams-wisdom-ants/>

# PRODUCT STRATEGY



## ✓ BUILDING A PRODUCT STRATEGY FROM THE GROUND UP

The following insights were gleaned from a presentation at INDUSTRY given by:  
Aurélie de Sainte Preuve of Seenit  
[@Aurelie\\_sp](#)

What happens when a company grows and the products expand? As a product leader, what are you to do when you're faced with creating a product strategy from scratch?

Product strategy is a cycle that starts with creating before moving onto advocacy, iteration, data collection, and curation. The creation and advocacy make up the roadmap. The other three steps come from the implementation of the product in the marketplace.

When you do set an initial strategy for your product for your team, remember to ensure you are constantly communicating and mapping KPIs to success metrics and regularly holding strategy check-ins with all stakeholders. Everyone needs the focus of well-mapped KPIs and it's critical that all team members are on the same page.

Even the best plan needs to evolve as markets change, though. Talk to customers regularly and understand their struggles. That helps you ensure the product you're creating is worthwhile right now. Your strategy should have room to change and iterate as you learn more about your customer and the competitive marketplace.

To that end, don't build a 12 month roadmap based off of that product strategy. The hardened nature of a defined calendar roadmap can actually stifle creativity. Plus, since the market will constantly evolve, there's little use. Instead, use information you gather from stakeholders, clients, and your team to define the "North Star" for the year -- and regularly check in and create a path for getting to that North Star.

As you advocate for your creation, realize you have internal and external audiences. The internal audience begins with your team and extends to the company's leadership and the other teams within the organization. The external audience is made up by clients, your corporate board, and investors. Every one of these audiences has different goals in mind and their input will be based on those goals. Keep these different motivations in mind, though, and remember that you're ultimately building for customers who are willing to pay for your products. Even still, your strategy is likely to be impacted and influenced by every one of these groups and their motivations, so go into it understanding and accepting that.

To view Aurélie's full presentation, visit:  
<http://productcollective.com/building-product-strategy-ground/>

## ✓ PRODUCT STRATEGY WHEN SCALING A COMPANY

The following insights were gleaned from a presentation at INDUSTRY given by:  
Des Traynor of Intercom  
[@destraynor](#)

A good idea can carry a company through one cycle of tech innovation but building a company that lasts and thrives in a fast-growth environment is another thing entirely. And it all comes down to the team behind those ideas and products.

To set your organization and products up long term, focus your team around the value that your products bring to customers, rather than simply “innovation”. Make sure that your team understands the overall mission and vision of your company -- as understanding that empowers members of the team to make decisions. If everyone has the right framework and understanding, then all of the debates and differing opinions that come up will sort themselves out.

Strategy can be both actionable and philosophical. The plans aren’t just about creating a roadmap. Instead, strategy can help companies find and focus on the most valuable product.

When it comes to executing that strategy, your focus will turn on building the products. And when designing a product, focus your scope to the smallest viable part of a critical business process. If your product is too big then no one will adopt. If it is too small, it won’t be useful. Build to solve aspects of large, frequent problems rather than rare, small problems.

Adding new features to close deals is easy, but it leads to overly complicated consulting software in the long run. So stay away from this trap. Think of each feature you consider adding as something that needs to be defended. When you and your team take the mindset of needing to defend every single feature, you’ll be able to start to see which areas can simply be left alone.

When designing a new product, make it like a cupcake rather than a wedding cake. With a wedding cake, you master each part -- assembling the base, topping it with frosting, placing decorations, etc. But when you put it all together, the cake may still taste awful if the parts don’t compliment each other. Then, you have an entire, horrible wedding cake. However, if you make a cupcake first -- a smaller version of the cake that you can sample first -- the risk of failure is smaller. Sure, that cupcake might be terrible, but you’ve only wasted a little bit of time (and cupcake). You can iterate to a better version much easier.

Finally, ensure that your product team builds what you sell, and your sales team sells what you build. If either part of the process is out of sync, problems arise. In that case, product teams could build software no one wants, and your sales team could make unreasonable promises. It sounds like common sense, but all too often product teams and sales teams get out of sync, especially as organizations scale. So as your company grows, make it a point to be sure that these teams are on the same page.



To view Des's full presentation, visit:

<http://productcollective.com/product-strategy-scaling-company-w-des-traynor-intercom/>

## ✓ DEMAND-SIDE INNOVATION

The following insights were gleaned from a presentation at INDUSTRY given by: Bob Moesta of The Re-Wired Group  
[@bmoesta](#)

There is an oversupply of innovation and technology and really, consumers simply don't know how to fit all of it into their lives. But by focusing on the jobs-to-be-done that consumers have, we can create better products and entirely new business models.

Every decision the customer makes shouldn't be thought of as trivial. The customer is actually making that decision and "hiring your product" to do a job that it has out for hire. If you do not understand the deep, detailed, and real reasons why the customer chose to "hire" your product, you're operating blindly.

So, how is one to get this deep understanding of their customers? Have rigorous conversations with a few customers to get a full picture around why they chose your product, how they use it, and why they got rid of their previous solution. It is also helpful to have similarly rigorous discussions with former customers or potential customers. Listen intently. Don't start thinking about the next question until the customer finishes their answer. In fact, when they answer, ask them why. Dig in more with them. If you find yourself asking too many questions, so much that it's a little uncomfortable, that's OK. That means you're doing things right.

By getting down to the small details, you can see patterns of pain points emerge. With that perspective, you can find ways to rapidly improve your customer's experience. If you listen well, you may find a solution your customer wants but didn't even ask for.

Invention is creating a thing. Innovation is creating something that has a lasting impact on the world. Innovation builds on previous innovations. For instance, the Segway was an invention, but the typewriter was an innovation. The typewriter, with its QWERTY keyboard continuing to have an impact on the world today. The typewriter, while it isn't used today, has changed the way that our society creates content.

Demand-side innovation uses feedback from consumers and focuses on problems first rather than jumping to potential solutions. That works better than supply-side innovation, which focuses on a specific solution. After all, if the demand isn't present for that specific solution, all things fall apart.

Also, our products aren't just products. Every product is a service, and every service is an experience. It is imperative to understand how customers actually use the product. The way that they use it is actually a part of the overall product experience, which we still have a responsibility for.

In the end, though, our products aren't the solution. They are a tool for the customer to progress and reach their own solution. If customers cannot figure out the product or figure out how to progress, that is our problem as product people, not theirs. So constantly pay attention to how well your customers can progress with your products. If they're not progressing well, it's time to iterate.

✓ To view Bob's full presentation, visit:  
<http://productcollective.com/jobs-done-innovation/>

# LEADERSHIP





## ✓ MANAGING THE UNEXPECTED

The following insights were gleaned from a presentation at INDUSTRY given by:

John Vars of Varo Money

@JohnV

Life changes fast. This is true for us as humans, but as well as the products that we manage. It's all well and good to have a plan, but as Mike Tyson says, "Everyone has a plan until you get punched in the face."

Product people run into roadblocks constantly. When the roadmap changes, team conflict arises, or any other sort of chaos ensues, how do you approach it? Do you address it right away? Or wait a bit to see if things can work themselves out? If you find yourself pausing, recognize that and think about how can you be more decisive. Run at the problem even faster. Execute in the face of chaos.

Of course, while we can't control that chaos -- we can control the decisions we make when it's happening. When managing change, never surprise your boss or manager. When things slip or risk enters the project, talk about it. Keep it on their radar. You'll need your manager's support throughout and the best way to get that support is to have them work through things with you.

And while we can't control everything, we can reduce risk for the unexpected happening. Often-times, delays in releasing a product or feature could be one source of pain. Spend more time in estimation. Track your project and products closely. Make sure that processes are in place and being followed. It won't protect you completely, but it certainly reduces the chance for things going awry. Expect that some things will slip, and anticipate it early. Have people in place who can handle that -- both in terms of how to manage things, but also communicate accordingly.

Create a culture where people can be vulnerable or speak truth to power and provide feedback. Sometimes, things go haywire when they didn't have to -- but the people who saw it coming don't speak up because they feel that they're not empowered to do so. Do what you can to change that, and make sure that everybody knows that they're not only permitted to speak up, but are expected to.

Sometimes, these unexpected negative events happen purely because of pride. Somebody so close to the feature or product falls in love with it, and when they see things happening that might lead one to believe that changes need to happen -- they don't speak up because it may hurt their product or feature. Reinforce that nobody should fall in love with features or the product itself -- but instead, to fall in love with the mission. Keep everyone focused on that north star.

To view John's full presentation, visit:

<http://productcollective.com/happens-things-dont-always-go-planned/>

## ✓ THE ART OF BEING COMPELLING

The following insights were gleaned from a presentation at INDUSTRY given by:  
Sachin Rekhi of Notejoy

[@sachinrekhi](#)

As Product Managers, we spend so much of our time convincing stakeholders of the right path forward, whether it's fellow Product Managers, engineers, designers, executives, or even customers. The most successful Product Managers become well versed in making compelling arguments every day around product vision, roadmap prioritization, design trade-offs, resource asks, and so much more.

In fact, it's estimated that the best Product Managers spend 60% of their time on the substance of Product Management and 40% on the style of Product Management.

- Substance includes the hard skills of Product Management. This includes customer discovery, prioritizing a roadmap, and deriving insights from data.
- Style includes the soft skills of Product Management. These include having a good communication style, being able to influence without authority, and connecting with executive management.

Do you or don't you have "style"? Well, some symptoms of a lack of style include: Feeling unappreciated, thinking there are too many cooks in the kitchen, and feeling that decision-making is consensus-based and slow. If this is the case for you, you may need to work on improving your Product Management style.

How do you improve it? It all boils down to being compelling. As Product Managers, you're expected to influence all sorts of stakeholders: engineers, bosses, customers, etc. This doesn't mean convincing these groups that your idea or solution is the best one. But it does mean that these groups should respect your role as a product person and believe in your work.

Being compelling is a combination of substance, style, and audience. For audience, identify the stakeholders that matter most and find out who's succeeded with them. Consider some of the following to help you continue to improve:

- Framing: How you frame a specific situation matters. If there's a situation that people are avoiding simply because it seems risky, challenge them. Position it as an ambitious one. It may or may not be the right solution, but this can help remove the possibility of people dismissing it simply because of risk alone.
- Social Proof: Leverage the shared opinion of others to convince key stakeholders. Often, data wins arguments. But data doesn't have to be simply charts and graphs. How others feel about a certain situation is still a data point, albeit a more qualitative data point.



- Goal Seek: Redefine your initiative in terms of a decision maker's own goals. For instance, if you're trying to convince someone to green light a product, reposition your initiative as the input for their goals (if it does, in fact, match).

To view Sachin's full presentation, visit:

<http://productcollective.com/the-art-of-being-compelling/>

## ✓ LEADING PRODUCT MANAGEMENT EXCELLENCE

The following insights were gleaned from a presentation at INDUSTRY given by:

Jeff Lash of SiriusDecisions

@JeffLash

What factors make Product Management successful? Of surveyed companies, only 15% said that 75% of their products met projected revenue goals. What are these companies doing differently? What sets them apart from the other 85%?

There are four best practices that correlate to success: 1) customer needs focus, 2) disciplined product investment spending, 3) product lifecycle process, and 4) functional roles and development.

Successful companies have an above average understanding of customer needs, customer and market focused product lifecycle processes, and a commitment to a formal customer needs program. Those that are struggling see all sorts of things happening:

- Experiencing low win rates
- Competition is catching up or, worse, overtaking your market share.
- Low retention
- Customers demanding improvements
- High cost and levels of support required
- Reliance on price breaks to close deals
- Low levels of product satisfaction.

There's no substitute for watching customers use your product. Don't just do this with your customers. Talk to competitors' customers. Understand them deeply to make improvements to products and strategy.

Successful companies have disciplined product investment spending. Of those analyzed, 71% have formal investment scoring criteria and 61% align product spending tightly with business strategy. Investment decision-making problems result in bad products getting too much funding and high potential/growth opportunities not getting enough. Support for a product investment decision-making process helps those submitting requests for funding as well as those involved in making the funding decisions. When you're making investment decisions, look at the overall investment cost. Don't focus on the opportunity only — also focus on the ability to win.

On Product Lifecycle Process: 37% of successful companies have a defined lifecycle process that nearly all initiatives adhere to, and 30% have a process that includes all required activities and deliverables. Without a consistent product lifecycle process, too much can be left to chance according to the knowledge or preferences of individual product managers. Assess existing processes, then implement an improved process in phases and provide support and upskilling to enable Product Managers to follow it.

On Functional roles and development: 77% of successful companies indicate that the role of

- ✓ Product Management and its goals are very well understood, with 71% providing upskilling training and support on an ongoing basis. Issues in this area are often visible relative to internal processes and behaviors. They also affect the product in the market. Collaborate on changes to Product Management roles and responsibilities. Assess the current maturity, competencies, and processes in place within Product Management and look for quick wins in the most pressing areas.

To view Jeff's presentation deck, visit:

<https://intelligentgrowth.siriusdecisions.com/product-management-leader/product-management-excellence-e-book>

## ✓ THE BASECAMP WAY OF WORK

The following insights were gleaned from a presentation at INDUSTRY given by:

Ryan Singer of Basecamp

@RJS

Basecamp has a reputation of not only being one of the most respected product-driven SaaS businesses, but also a company that tends to challenge the status quo within the tech world. Basecamp has its own way of doing things to consistently hit deadlines and ship major improvements to their massive customer base -- which includes how it defines projects, tracks uncertainty, stays focused, and handles difficult decisions along the way.

**Before starting a project:** Sketch up a plan before a plan before assigning any resources to a project. By having a basic framework, your team can make accurate presumptions. Break up work to make the tasks easier to accomplish. Treat a high level plan like a cut of meat. Some parts of the work are interconnected, but many operate independently. By “slicing” the bigger project into scopes, the team can prioritize the more important tasks. Decide what matters: not every scope should be treated equally.

**On Problem Solving:** Solving problems is much more important than completing tasks. When there are unknowns, that can create more bottlenecks down the line. By spotting unknowns early on, Singer and his team can adjust their plans to figure out those mysteries. But unknowns don't work on schedule. They can block your progress. Once the unknowns are known, completing each task will become much easier.

As teams tackle the various scopes of work, ensure the design and programming are completed before calling it fully done. By having the cross-functional tasks visible for each scope, it's easy to see what really needs to be done.

Like most product teams, though, you're likely at some point to get stuck. The tricky thing is that it is often hard to know if work is stuck. Everyone wants to convince you that they're good at their job. A good tool will allow a project manager to see what's falling behind and have the right conversations to fix it. Consider using a hill chart with the left side of the hill showing when things are unknown and the right side shows when things are known. Once you're over the crest, everything becomes easier. Empower your team to find ways to tackle unknowns together. That means allowing one task to miss its deadline in order to solve unknowns before moving forward with everything else.

To view Ryan's full presentation, visit:

<http://productcollective.com/basecamp-runs-business-w-ryan-singer-industry-europe-2018/>

## ✓ THE MESSY MIDDLE

The following insights were gleaned from a presentation at INDUSTRY given by:  
Scott Belsky of Adobe  
[@scottbelsky](#)

Creating something from nothing is a volatile journey. The first mile births a new idea into existence, and the final mile is all about letting go. We love talking about starts and finishes, even though the middle stretch is the most important and often the most ignored and misunderstood. This is known, as Scott Belsky puts it, as “the messy middle.”

How do you get through that messy middle, though?

Endure the lows. Build a muscle memory for your team. Leverage the friction to come closer to one another. Stick to it long enough to figure it out.

Once you figure out what does work, optimize it -- no matter what it is. Teams, processes, and products -- those are all things that can and should be optimized.

When your product ends up in the hands of users, keep in mind that your final mile with your product is your customer’s first mile using the product. If you accommodate first mile desires, you engage more fully and have a better chance at retaining those customers over time. Three principles that lead to an incredible first mile customer experience:

1. In the first 15 seconds, we are all lazy, vain, and selfish.
2. The newest cohort of customers can help us stay grounded.
3. We favor novelty yet cling to familiarity.

People need to be able to navigate and use your product. Adopt familiar patterns, but remember that familiarity is the enemy of innovation. Transformational products are 90% accommodating and 10% retraining. But do have faith in your customers. Scrutinize the defaults. Be innovative, but keep the core mechanics and language familiar. And remember, you’re creating for people that have real problems.

And remember -- nothing extraordinary is ever achieved through ordinary means. Don’t be afraid to be extraordinary.

To view Scott’s presentation about The Messy Middle at Adobe’s 99U conference, visit:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bN7E44j7Xl8>

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PRODUCT MANAGEMENT  
**TACTICS**

VOLUME 2

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# ✓ TACTICS: VOLUME 2

**This book contains a comprehensive look at** the latest Product Management tactics for you and your team. You will find contributions gleaned from live presentations from renowned product leaders given at the 2019 European edition of INDUSTRY: The Product Conference. We've captured the highlights here, dissecting the most critical points just for you. In most cases, we even include links to the live presentations so you can continue the learning.

This edition of TACTICS is brought to you by Product Collective, an online community of 20,000+ Product Managers from around the world.

Join the Product Collective community for free to gain access to helpful resources and connect with other product people at [productcollective.com](https://productcollective.com).

# ✓ A NOTE FROM



## **Like Product Collective, Pragmatic Institute is**

passionate about the product management profession.

We're also just as dedicated to supporting individuals' efforts to stay on the leading edge of product management through both ongoing education and networking among a community of peers. Our combined commitment to delivering useful, topical information and helping product professionals learn in both classroom and conference settings is what makes the Product Collective/Pragmatic Institute partnership a perfect match. This edition of TACTICS is a great example of this collaboration: It's an outstanding showcase of some of the top thought leaders in the profession who share everything from basic product principles through ways to effectively and sensibly leverage customer data to compete in a rapidly changing world.

We encourage you to continue the conversation started at INDUSTRY: The Product Conference online at [LinkedIn](#), [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) and Slack.

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# ✓ PRODUCT PRINCIPLES



## ✓ KEY PRODUCT PRINCIPLES

The following insights are from a presentation at INDUSTRY given by Paul Adams, VP of Product at Intercom  
[@Padday](#)

Before you can understand key product principles, it's important to understand what a "principle" is. A principle is a fundamental truth or proposition that serves as the foundation for behavior that gives you the results you want. Understanding this, how do we instill true principles that help guide us to build better products?

In order to figure this out, it may be helpful first to determine why products and projects fail. There are many reasons why products and projects fail -- including political decision-making, a re-steer of the product or project itself, tactical mistakes made along the way, and a lack of accountability and transparency. Any product or project comes with a risk that these failure points bleed through. Being principle-driven helps to avoid these risks.

Principles should be internally motivated, acting as a coach of the individual's behavior. They are not "rules" for behavior applied due to external factors. As companies and teams grow, living through principles help repeat successes and avoid mistakes. People learn from each other and must stay aligned with one another as well as the mission of the organization. Misalignment can be a significant risk for products and businesses as a whole.

Intercom works to keep this alignment, in part, by having three clear product principles. These principles had one common thread -- that's the spirit of fighting to keep the company alive.

### **Principle One: Start with the problem**

Begin with understanding the problem in-depth. When you try to solve a problem, you also continually evolve your understanding of the problem. The solution -- your product -- is really only as good as your understanding of the problem. However, many product people don't spend enough time prioritizing or refining the problem. It's important to remember that the core problem you're working on solving can evolve with time. You may very well put the work into developing a solid initial understanding of the problem. However, if you don't put your efforts in learning the problems, then it's likely that your knowledge will be outdated quickly.

People often default to solution-thinking because defining the core problem is hard work that may require conversations with customers, analysis, and buy-in from the company. It's not glamorous, and the visible output may not reflect the work put in. So, obsessing about the problem helps decrease the risk of failure.

## ✓ Principle Two: Think Big, Start Small

Believe in the power of thinking big and having a vision, but always try to find the smallest coherent solution to the problem. Minimize the effort and time spent to deliver value and learnings without over-optimization. It's not about starting small because it's easy or fast. It's about simplifying the solution itself and making things easier for the customer. Often, solutions are more robust than they need to be, and as a result, the experience for the end user is over-complicated.

## Principle Three: Ship to learn

Often, most product managers move on once a project has been completed. However, in the world of tech products, "Shipping" is really just the beginning, not the end. Once a product has been shipped, the new learning opportunities arise. Assumptions inherently come with the risk that our opinions are wrong. Once a product has been shipped, we can de-risk our products by proving or disproving those assumptions. Always ask yourself questions like: Has the problem been solved? Will people purchase and use our product? Will they happily pay for it?

Shipping is an act of confidence and humility: Confidence that the first two principles have been applied, but also humility because we may need to acknowledge that there were faults too.

Even though these are the principles that Intercom lives by, it's important to keep in mind that principles are not truisms. Each organization should develop their own based on past lessons learned by the organization. Because these are to be adopted collectively, they should also be developed collectively and with input from everyone and not imposed from the top down.

To view Paul's full presentation, visit:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EqnEN1NQa7Q>



## ▼ DEFINING AN INITIAL SET OF PRODUCT PRINCIPLES

The following insights are from a presentation at INDUSTRY given by Paul Campbell, Founder of Tito

@Paulca

There is a lot of discussion about how to build products, encouraging growth, and improving the user experience. But often what's missing is the "why?" of what we build. Core values and principles that emphasize our product development should be talked about more... not less. At Tito, the development of product principles was an evolving, iterative process that took time.

In 2013, the guiding principle of the company was initially simple, "Don't be icky". The intention was to treat customers with respect and make the product simple and easy to use. However, the product was originally built without true, defining principles. When the organization is small, it can feel that everyone is on the same wavelength and shares similar values -- even when there aren't defined product principles. However, companies quickly grow out of this phase. When they do, there is great potential for miscommunication, which can cause unintended negative consequences.

In 2018, Tito decided that it was the right time for the founders to sit down and define its product principles. Initially, the overarching principle was defined as "Tito brings delight to event experiences." This improved alignment but it was clear that this alone wasn't enough. A more cohesive set of principles was required for true alignment.

Developing true product principles was so important to them that they decided to work with a consultant to help them with the process. The first step in that process was visualization. The founders described their "Perfect Tito" -- what it could be in terms of product and what it could do for customers. Within these visions, there were practical requirements of the product that could be improved and made better. The next step was a prioritization of these ideas and identifying common themes to be combined and included in core principles.

Ultimately, Tito's three overarching principles were: Integrity, Excellence, Delight.

**Integrity:** This helps build trust between team members and users. However, integrity can also often become compromised during product development due to pressures within the process. For Tito, it's essential to put people and users first. Often, the product developers have to remind themselves of this, which helps to make certain decisions easier.

**Excellence:** This is not about attaining momentary greatness, but developing lasting positive habits. Therefore, excellence is both a method and a call to creativity to develop a quality product consistently. This principle means we must say "no" often because even when we decide that something is

✓ the right thing to do, we refuse to do it unless it can be done flawlessly.

Delight: This is a bonus layer to build upon the first two principles. Tito tries to give users something extra - a feeling of delight, specialness, or an unforgettable element. Software ultimately serves a function and is judged by how well it does the job. But, at its best, software should also leave users with a sense of undefinable experience.

In the end, the product principles developed by Tito are meant to call its product users to do good work for a good reason and try to add some meaning to people's lives. Software is by its nature is ephemeral and incomplete. There are, and always will be, new problems that need to be solved. The process is continuous. However, principles are meant to endure and can have a lasting impact on your users.

To view Paul's full presentation, visit:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SjU78BL4ps4>



# USING CUSTOMER DATA



## ✓ OPTIMIZING YOUR PRODUCT WITH ANALYTICS

The following insights are from a presentation at INDUSTRY given by Dan Olsen, Author of *The Lean Product Playbook*  
[@DanOlsen](#)

Using analytics to make decisions separates great product teams from the rest. Product teams live in a data-driven world, and analytics increasingly offers greater transparency into understanding. You will learn how customers use your product and understand which features work, and which do not.

During the startup phase of a product, a Product Manager can be overwhelmed with many required tasks and activities. But once the product is launched and customers begin using it, then what? Of course, it's important for product people to continue to evolve and iterate the product to meet their customers' needs better. But how well can we do this? One way to help ensure this happens is by using product analytics accurately.

At a global level, the process breaks down into four parts:

1. Identify what your metrics are.
2. Measure your baseline metrics.
3. Evaluate the upside potential of each metric.
4. Finally, select your top metric (the one that offers the highest ROI).

Once you've identified your top metric, then you focus on improving that metric with the following iterative loop:

5. Brainstorm ideas to improve the metric
6. Identify the highest ROI improvement idea
7. Design and implement the improvement idea
8. Analyze How the Metric Changes

At some point, after you've improved the top metric enough, it will make sense to stop focusing on that metric, return to Step 4, and select a different metric that now offers the highest ROI.

Identify which metric actually matters the most. What's the right order to optimize the metrics of acquisition, conversion, and retention? Every organization orders metrics in their own unique ways. However, the retention rate is a behavioral metric that shows what percentage of customers stay active over time. This can be further examined using cohort analysis to segment customer data by time, or date they downloaded the app, etc. If the retention rate goes to zero, then it's a clear sign that you haven't achieved product-market fit. Instead, the goal should be to increase the retention rate over time to demonstrate an improving product-market fit.

Every organization has retention issues. So if retention is decreasing, all hope is not lost. What's more

✓ useful is to understand how fast the retention rate is dropping. If it's dropping at an increased rate, unquestionably retention should be an essential metric — with the goal to stabilize and ultimately increase retention. Once the retention goal is achieved, you must focus on conversion or acquisition.

Each metric can be viewed as a gauge with a minimum and maximum possible value. But, there are only 'critical few' metrics. From these, identify the upside potential of each metric and how much you can actually impact and improve the current value. Prioritize product ideas by ROI -- understanding that with a smaller scope, you can likely get to market faster.

Good Product Managers must identify the ideas and have a high ROI. Then rank these ideas in order based on the potential for diminishing ROI. An idea with a good ROI will give a good return with a little investment.

Dan recounted a case study of Friendster -- a social media website that pre-dated Facebook, where he served as a product leader. An effort was made to encourage users to invite their friends to sign up and become new users. When the Friendster team was identifying which metrics to use, they thought of including the percentage of active users, percentage of users sending invites, how many invites each speaker sent, the invite click-through rate, and conversion rate. Then, the upside potential of each metric was calculated. The analysis concentrated on increasing the number of invites sent per user as this had the highest ROI. By adopting an address book importer, this metric increased substantially.

Similar to Friendster's team effort and planning, try to calculate room for improvement while thinking about the minimum and maximum possible values. It may be possible to increase a metric, but if the maximum possible value is really just a nominal impact, it really isn't a metric to spend much effort on. More examples and case studies can be found in Dan's book, *The Lean Product Playbook*, [The Lean Product Playbook](#).

To view Dan's full presentation, visit:  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=\\_YDaNCGiH6k](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_YDaNCGiH6k)

## ✓ WHEN CUSTOMERS LIE

The following insights are from a presentation at INDUSTRY given by Jimena Almendares, VP of Global Expansion at Intuit [@jalmendares](#)

Sometimes, customers and users aren't always consistent with what they say and do. As product people, how are we to balance this fact with the need to cultivate user insights? How can we actually use data to build products that people will approve?

First, it's important to remember that 'customer insights' come from observing patterns in data and from understanding human behavior. There can be differences between what people say they want and how they really behave. Data can make their motivations more explicit and allow you to build a product that will solve their real problem.

One example comes from using open source data from OkCupid about dating preferences. Women's preferences skew towards older men, but the message data shows that women are generally just as open to connect with men in the same or even lower age range than theirs. Men express a preference for a lower age range, but the message data shows that they are willing to connect with women who are younger, older, and within the same age range. Through this example, one can see how it is limiting to work only from what people say because their real, observable behavior may be different. As such, explicit data itself can be misleading.

OkCupid ultimately redesigned their onboarding flow based on the actual data by asking questions about users' preferences earlier in the process. They reformatted and changed the questions so that users weren't exposed to multiple tasks at the same time. The rebranded process was designed to be easy and enjoyable yet skippable. The product can be enjoyed even if tasks are not completed, but there is a call to action to remind users of outstanding tasks. These changes positively impacted retention.

Keep in mind that big wins might not come after one experiment. It's important to learn from experiments that fail and be aware of how human behavior may affect the results. Instead, emphasize your experiments, and this will have a greater impact on your critical metrics. At OkCupid, experiments were meant to help solve problems. Product Managers should keep core problems in mind when they build and launch their own experiments. If an experiment isn't solving the user's core problem, it may not be the right type of experiment to prioritize.

## ✓ THE MARRIAGE OF QUALITATIVE USER RESEARCH AND QUANTITATIVE DATA

The following insights are from a presentation at INDUSTRY given by Chris Abad, former VP of Product and Design at UserTesting [@ChrisAbad](#)

There is often debate between choosing qualitative research or quantitative data analysis. According to Chris Abad, there is no easy answer. One isn't necessarily more important than the other, but when done in tandem the right way, product people can become much more informed when making product decisions.

Product people strive to be data-driven. They are always looking for the right data from the right source to get the right answer. However, if product managers solely rely on quantitative data and don't use qualitative data, they could be missing out important information. On occasion, there can be too much emphasis on the value of quantitative data without recognizing that it might provide an incomplete picture.

Why should product managers incorporate qualitative data into their models and decision-making?

Firstly, they'll have better and more informed insights. Quantitative data alone doesn't give a full picture. It can only explain what customers are doing, but it can't explain why. As such, the product manager is working with partial and incomplete information with usage data alone.

Adding qualitative data can lead to better innovation. Eventually, this happens because it enables the Product Manager to have a deeper understanding of the problem and have greater empathy with the customer. There are valuable and essential insights into qualitative data that will be missed if the Product Manager relies solely on quantitative data.

Qualitative data can help the Product Manager become a better storyteller, too. With quantitative data alone, a Product Manager can't tell a compelling story about the customer and their problems. They may be able to talk about the "what", but they won't have enough information to talk about the "why." Qualitative data provides richer detail and more nuanced insights, which can paint a better picture of the customer. There's a common saying that "Data wins all arguments." While data can undoubtedly be more compelling than mere opinion, it's essential to understand that data includes both quantitative and qualitative insights. You cannot convince people with quantitative data alone because qualitative insights allow you to see more of an emotional reaction of your customers.

In conclusion, qualitative and quantitative data should be used by Product Managers in tandem as neither form of data is beneficial when used as a single source to gather the required data. There are many examples to illustrate this in practice:

**Example 1:** A Jobs-to-be-Done survey could be paired with a usability study. The product manager identifies a market with an underserved need using the JTBD survey. The usability study then gives

✓ the customer space to share stories and information that will be absent from the quantitative study but could still be useful to the product manager.

**Example 2:** A pricing survey can be paired with a concept test. Carry out the survey and prepare a prototype version of the concept. Then, sit down with your potential customer and share your concept with them. In return, the customer may give you information about their buying process, which can then be fed back into your pricing for the new product.

**Example 3:** Pair a Net Promoter Score with live customer interviews. Ask your customers about their experiences. People could share stories about what delights or disappoints them when they are using your product or any product or service. The participants may even share what motivates them to promote an organization or the reasons why they decided against this.

Product people must be data-driven and develop a deep and rich understanding of the customer. Just remember that qualitative data is data, too, and when paired with quantitative data, product managers have a better understanding of their customers.

To view Chris's full presentation, visit:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vBTkssMciqA>



# ✓ PRODUCT ROADMAPS



## ▼ PRACTICING AGILE IN A ROADMAP CULTURE

The following insights are from a presentation at INDUSTRY given by Arielle Kilroy, Senior Product Manager at Mozilla

Operating without long-term plans can feel risky to some executive teams, preventing the adoption of agile practices and not enabling an agile-culture to thrive within an organization. However, it is possible to adopt agile principles while still giving your executives the roadmap they want.

In many organizations, there is a perceived tension between the concept of product roadmaps and practicing agile methodologies. Using an example outside of technology, a chef might ask a waiter for everything that will be ordered that day. But, how would it be possible to know all of the details of everything that's needed? The chef needs this information to understand how many staff to schedule or what ingredients (and quantities) she/he should buy and prepare. Executives may often find themselves in a similar position as the chef, with product managers acting as the waiter. So, is adopting a roadmap a solution to this challenge?

Roadmaps are linear, time-bounded, and output focused so it can be out of date almost as soon as they are written. They may also imply a 'finished' state that doesn't really exist. However, they are an important tool for communication among Product Managers, their team members, and leadership teams. In comparison, agile practices are iterative, goal or outcome focused, and reactive.

There are several options as inspiration for Product Managers to communicate with executives and give them the information while remaining agile. Each option is a flexible template for outlining priorities. Each template can be adapted and refined to the work practices within your organization.

User story map: The advantage of this is it can fit well into an existing workflow and doesn't come with the long term commitment of a proper roadmap. Also, the map can communicate what you're working on to the leadership team.

Next Roadmap: The advantage of this is that it outlines what you're working on now, what you plan to work on next, and what you may be working on after that. This type of roadmap appears more time-bound and outcome focused, although the only real time commitment is what's being worked on right now and next.

Themes: The advantage of establishing themes is its focus on OKR goals, which means it can work well within organizations that plan quarterly. The organizations can include strategic ideas, well-defined objectives, and more general problems in these themes.

Goals/Outcomes Document: The advantage here is that this is not only time focused but also acts as a reminder of the "why" and reveal the organization's success metrics.

In any case, it's critical for Product Managers to get feedback from their team as well as executives about the process. It's easy to neglect the act of getting feedback on the process itself because often,

- ✓ Product Managers are very much focused on the product. Sometimes, they can forget to ask, “Can this process get better?”

Product Managers are also internal Marketing Managers who must communicate transparently within the organization. So, carry out regular retrospectives and review the roadmap quarterly. Ask for feedback. Write informative and engaging recaps and send them to people who read them.

To view Arielle’s full presentation, visit:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P3ZfJrXEEKY>

## ✓ THE ORGANIZATIONAL CHALLENGE OF ENTERPRISE ROADMAPPING

The following insights are from a presentation at INDUSTRY given by Rich Mironov, Smokejumper Product Executive and Product Author  
[@RichMironov](#)

There are some inherent misalignments among internal stakeholders at enterprise software companies which can complicate product planning. There will always be conflict about prioritization within organizations as there are always competing goals among stakeholders. It's not a matter of personalities of individuals, but more of a systemic organizational issue.

Within software companies, most team members within the organization often present the product manager with good ideas. They keep asking, "... and can we have this thing too?" Of course, the product manager knows that to do that "one more thing", something similar has to be removed from the overall plan. Therefore, there is a need to validate the new idea to decide if it is sufficiently better. If so, something else has to be selected to put aside, and likely might have another stakeholder lobbying for it to be created as well.

Every stakeholder has its own biases and motivations. The tech support team is likely focused on users with high-irritation bugs. The onboarding team is focused on new customers and helping them get acclimated. Enterprise sales teams have single customer outlier feature requests - and the executive team is interested in upselling features, innovation and often, "shiny objects". Meanwhile, engineering is interested in technical debt, infrastructure, and roadmap instability. All of these aims conflict with each other. Their different priorities are independently important. However, they are also irreconcilable, and some of these requests will have to be turned down by the product team.

The Product Lead will help to define the product investment portfolio and how resources will be allocated. However, at the enterprise level - keep in mind that each customer often wants something special. From their perspective, no product is ever a perfect fit, and the roadmap is simply a starting point for negotiation.

The sales team is skilled at persuasion and escalating to decision-makers who can say yes. At times, it is in their interest to subvert the product plan to get what their customer wants. The Product Manager must recognize this and human behavior, in general, to understand how their company's different divisions operate. Sales and engineering teams have different motivations, and they may speak different 'languages'.

Remember that one change made for a single client can have a real and unintended impact on the overall product plan. Sales-driven special projects have a cumulative effect that could come to dominate the product plan affecting every other objective. The Product Lead has an essential role in trying to manage special projects/one-offs. A few ways that an organization can manage these include:



- Keep a running list of previous changes in the product plan and the ideas that were kicked out for these special projects. This can make sales-driven changes and subsequent consequences more visible to the executive team.
- Develop a strong working relationship with the VP of Sales for a better alignment. If the alignment is strong, there can be an even deeper understanding from the sales team on what fulfilling their special requests means in terms of tradeoffs.
- The organization must also consider how it compensates sales teams and whether it is creating a perverse incentive to prioritize change requests from customers.

For more on this topic and others, consider reading [The Art of Product Management](#) by Rich Mironov.

To view Rich's full presentation, visit:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jh9D3ej4nuQ>



# AVOID BECOMING A FEATURE FACTORY



## ▼ ESCAPING THE BUILD TRAP

The following insights are from a presentation at INDUSTRY given by Melissa Perri, CEO of ProdUX Labs and Product Author [@lissijean](#)

Many large companies that have been around for decades, or even newer startups with some stability, fall into a dangerous place called “The Build Trap” — building feature after feature, without stopping to validate if that’s what their customers truly want and need. But product teams that find themselves in “The Build Trap” can restructure their thinking to focus on finding value for the user through experimentation to achieve business goals and ultimately escape.

Product Managers need to consider their purpose. This means not only focusing on writing specifications documents or building products but also thinking deeply about the role that they’re serving in. And leaders within those organizations should think about this, too. Many leaders can suffer from a disconnect about the value associated with product-specific activities. Some may think that more coding and more optimization will lead to more profits. But there’s a chance that it ultimately only results in a never-ending backlog.

The Product Manager’s primary purpose is to optimize the value exchange between customers and the business. Customers have problems, wants, and needs. The business has products and services - which aren’t necessarily valuable in themselves. The products and services are only valuable if they solve a problem. So, instead of creating just to create, it is essential to take a step back to understand whether the products are solving the customers’ core problems. Product Managers can do this by focusing on the following:

**Strategy:** Aligning the team around the product vision is essential. Most companies think a product strategy is a plan or a wishlist of features. But as product people know, creating a product is full of uncertainty. Therefore, a product strategy is a framework describing where you are now and where you want to go. The Product Leader is providing the vision, goal, and guardrails for the product team to build. The alignment must reach from the top to the bottom of the organization. If it doesn’t, then teams are in motion without going anywhere and achieving anything. To escape “The Build Trap”, begin high alignment through strategy frameworks that emerge from experimentation and testing.

**Process:** See the problem from the customer’s perspective. This means examining the data and establishing where the pain points are. These are your obstacles, and as you solve one, another will emerge. This allows you to improve your product and feed your learnings back into the process. You need to use the right processes and tools at the right time. Some tools may be appropriate in certain times, but may not be the right tool in another instance - so don’t fall into the trap of relying on the same tools or processes over and over again.

**Organization:** The organization must bake in time for the discovery process. The first principle of agile is to satisfy the customer through early and continuous delivery of valuable software. Therefore, create a product-led organization that has policies and practices in place to navigate uncertainty. Set up product operations. Use your data and have systems in place to pull it together. The data will tell

✓ you where to go and help you make informed decisions. Leadership enables empowered decision-making in the organization - which is ultimately critical for teams to build great products that their customers care about.

For more on this topic and others, consider reading [Escaping the Build Trap](#) by Melissa Perri.

To view Melissa's full presentation, visit:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zZcsvXYDPng>



## ✓ LEAN STRATEGIES FOR MATURING PRODUCTS

The following insights are from a presentation at INDUSTRY given by Janna Bastow, Co-Founder of ProdPad

[@simplybastow](#)

Building a Minimum Viable Product (MVP) and launching is actually the easy part of the entire product development process. Once a product has reached the maturity or decline stages, things become a bit more difficult.

Most Product Managers are at least familiar with getting to the product-market-fit stage. MVP and growth are a small part of the product life cycle, but often, they get the most attention. Most product managers today actually work in businesses whose products aren't at those stages. Instead, they have mainstay products which have already matured - and may even be starting to decline. In those stages, managing product becomes trickier.

In the mature product stage, there are more constraints. Both new users and existing users are critically important but have different needs. Politics and other organizational problems can turn a product organization into a "Feature Factory" because earlier habits aren't discarded.

So, what to do? First, it's important to think about objectives instead of simple features or product requests. Be willing to give up the timeline roadmap as a chart of communicating progress. Time-based roadmaps are a risk. The further ahead you plan, the harder it becomes to manage, and the more uncertain things may get. You may never know if your customer needs will be the same as they are today throughout the year. It's nearly impossible to predict. The dates, deadlines, and assumptions that come along with time-based roadmaps become baked in and challenging to control or change because they're assumed to be promises.

Should roadmaps even exist? First, it's important to understand what having a roadmap implies:

1. You know how much work and how long each task will take.
2. Nothing will disrupt the timeline.
3. Each feature will work once launched.
4. Each feature deserves to be produced.

These time-based roadmaps, when present, often encourage the product organization to essentially become a "Feature Factory" -- releasing feature after feature that was on the roadmap regardless of whether or not they are relevant. After all, if the roadmap is deviated from, it's viewed as "breaking a promise."

How does one get out of this mindset and break away from being a "Feature Factory"?

1. Focus on setting a true Product vision: Define the core problem, target customer, the reason the customer buys, and why the ultimate solution is better than anything that the competition can offer.



Then, communicate this vision internally and share the message broadly within the organization.

2. Set clear objectives: Define how you plan to manage success. To do this, focus on the outcome, not on the outputs.
3. Favor horizons over hard dates: Break your objectives down. Current objectives are less flexible and described in granular detail, while near-term objectives are a little more flexible and broad. Future problems must still be validated.

This way, your roadmap becomes the prototype for your strategy. The result is a lean roadmap that takes the focus from features and delivery dates to solving problems. Hard dates go away, but the executive team can still understand the timing of delivery to at least some degree - especially in the near term.

When executing this, keep in mind that the Product Manager doesn't need to have all the answers. The job is about asking better questions and remaining curious. So just as building product should be iterative - the process should be as well. However, remember that for mature products, disruption is inevitable. Hence, rather than resting on laurels and giving in to the "feature factory" mindset, the business needs to diversify and disrupt itself before a competing startup does it. So, always be curious about what new problems your customers might experience instead of focusing on delivering that next new feature.

To view Janna's full presentation, visit:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SYhLK10dAEA>

# ✓ WHEN MOVING FAST HELPS



## ✓ WHY CONTINUOUS DELIVERY IS A PRODUCT MANAGEMENT SUPERPOWER

The following insights are from a presentation at INDUSTRY given by Suzie Prince, Managing Director of ThoughtWorks Products

[@pm\\_suzie](#)

Don't assume that Continuous Delivery is only related to technical software developers who are constantly concerned about it. In fact, Continuous Delivery should matter to product people too. Even if you haven't tried to understand it in the past, you can get acclimated right away.

Continuous Delivery is the secret Product Manager superpower. While many Product Managers know about it, many haven't thought about what it is and what it could mean for them. Continuous Delivery can get changes of all types -- including new features, configuration changes, bug fixes, and experiments -- into production and, ultimately, into the hands of users safely, quickly and sustainably.

One of the advantages of Continuous Delivery is that the feedback cycles operate within your production pipeline. There is continuous testing until you are satisfied with the product. The process is automated and can be run in parallel with other processes. Therefore, it is quick and gives the Product Manager some reassurance that software can get into the hands of the user much faster. Additionally, they gain peace of mind that the product will work since it has been tested multiple times.

The process enables a business to decide when to put something into the hands of its customers. A manual stage can be added before the push to production, or the process can be entirely automated. Organizations should make the choice that works best for them. But, regardless, the Product Manager should be empowered to make or heavily influence this decision.

Another advantage of Continuous Delivery is that it enables experimentation and lean product management. This can be another tool to help you to fight the "Feature Factory" or "Build Trap" by working in small batches, frequently delivering, experimenting, and getting customer feedback. This can help, as many organizations simply don't experiment enough. In one recent survey, 62% of Product Managers admitted they were prioritizing features without market feedback.

Continuous Delivery can also help foster a better overall organizational culture and lead to happier teams because they have an increased capacity to deliver a product. There is also time to have conversations about whether a product brings value to users. Having these debates more often can help us ensure that we're building products that our customers really want and need. Overall, the culture or the product organization become more performance-oriented, and teams ask better questions about strategy. People also have the time to think about the bigger picture and whether they're solving problems for their customers.

Where to start with Continuous Delivery? First, map your value stream and work in small batches so you can measure progress and build trust with the rest of your team members. Building trust is

✓ important, as a team can only thrive with Continuous Delivery once they've believed that it is right for the organization.

To learn more about the topic of Continuous Delivery, consider checking out Accelerate: [The Science of Lean Software and DevOps: Building and Scaling High Performance Technology Organizations](#) by Nicole Forsgren

To view Suzie's full presentation, visit:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t5vhLBvJzgc>

## ✓ DESIGN SPRINTS

The following insights are from a presentation at INDUSTRY given by Jonathan Courtney, Co-Founder of AJ & Smart  
[@jicecream](#)

Some of today's fastest growing tech companies have adopted the "Design Sprint" to help prototype and validate new products quickly. The Design Sprint was introduced by Jake Knapp and John Zeratsky of GV, but AJ & Smart reformed their agency to focus on Design Sprints completely, mostly helping larger organizations. At AJ & Smart, their Design Sprint is a 4-week process from beginning to end.

**Week One** is about preparation. This is particularly essential for AJ & Smart when working with a corporate client who may have different processes, typically, than startup technology companies.

**Week Two** is phase one of the actual Design Sprint. This is where the actual activities of the sprint take place.

**Week Three** is an integration sprint where the aim is to polish the prototype generated from the first Design Sprint based on user test results. Once polished, new insights can then be translated into action items and executed.

**Week Four** is about delivering the results back to the development team in-house and figuring out how to integrate the product into the organization, both technically and culturally.

One can think of a Design Sprint as a somewhat simplified step-by-step process for finding initial product-market-fit. The overall principles of a design sprint are essential to keep in mind:

**Getting started is more important than getting it right.** It's important to start the sprint process even without a deep understanding of the customer from the onset. Use brute force to move from step to step, if need be. It's not about finding the right direction or worrying about getting it wrong - it is about you being determined to start.

**Together alone.** There may be many people involved in a Design Sprint, but that doesn't mean it's one constant "brainstorm." Often in group meetings, there can be an extreme bias towards the loudest person in the room. Their ideas are more likely to be adopted, even if other ideas are better. In a Design Sprint, participants work autonomously and silently most of the time. The result is a greater spread of ideas and more motivation for everyone to contribute -- especially those who may be less comfortable in typical brainstorming sessions. Conversations still take place within a Design Sprint, but they are facilitated within a more structured format.

A Design Sprint isn't just for new technology startups. Design Sprints can work in most types of companies. But they're not necessarily ideal for all issues and all teams. You don't have to adopt Design Sprints as a tool for the entire company. It can work better with one team, and the Design Sprint could be an experiment and show that this can increase the efficiency of the process.

- ✓ The selected team should be working on an important project and review the results after one year. After that, other teams may decide to adopt Design Sprints once they see the results.

One misnomer about Design Sprints is that once adopted they can take over the life of an organization. However, this isn't true. A Design Sprint doesn't require much in terms of commitment. There are no additional resources that need to be hired, and the team can incorporate the practices into their day-to-day activity, once they're acclimated with the process.

If you do test the concept, don't skimp on the actual process. Some people think that starting with a "mini sprint" of just two or three days can be useful in determining whether the Design Sprint concept works for their team, but the reality is that you won't be able to prove this in such a short period. So commit to the process if you really want to test it truly. And once you do, you can plan one Design Sprint every quarter. Otherwise, the process of too many Design Sprints in short periods can be overbearing.

To view Jonathan's full presentation, visit:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U8Vxe2yzwts>



# MANAGING PRODUCTS AT SCALE





## ✓ HOW GDPR TAUGHT US EFFECTIVE WAYS OF OPERATING AT SCALE

The following insights are from a presentation at INDUSTRY given by Pooja Naidu, Director of Product for Financial Times Group Products at Financial Times  
[LinkedIn/PoojaTanna](#)

Large-scale organizations can often work in silos. These organizations often have many product teams with different motivations, siloed prioritization processes, and conflicting dependencies. So, how can a product person embedded into an organization like this perform effectively?

The ethos of a product organization should create great user experiences. They must be able to allow the creators of these experiences to make the right connections in a cross-collaborative environment. As a result, the core value of the organization should be “team before the individual.” Product Development is outcome-driven, and these outcomes are shared throughout the whole organization.

Decisions made in larger organizations tend to be much more data-informed, but not necessarily data-driven. Hypotheses are created based on what’s learned from qualitative and quantitative data, including customer research, feedback, and other sources of information. In larger organizations, though, it’s critical not just to collect this data, but find a way to share it with the rest of the organization.

Empowerment is a fundamental value. Don’t tell your team what to do, instead give them an outcome and let them figure out how to get there. Create teams that are cross-functional and collaborative to allow space for different ideas from different disciplines to interact. When this is done, the solutions your teams come up with will be much more creative.

Of course, large organizations present product people with quite a few pain points.

For example, one of the issues you particularly see in organizations are teams that are siloed. Different teams may be working on various solutions to solve the same problem. A stakeholder may have to talk to different parts of the organization, each of which may have conflicting strategies and competing demands. The stakeholder is forced to talk to many product managers when they’d rather have one who understands their project from start to finish. The result is confused, unhappy stakeholders, and decreased trust in Product Managers.

There are competing investment demands, which is an additional problem. As a result, the organization finds itself working at initiative-level and not as much on strategic and larger issues. The relationship between stakeholders and Product Managers shouldn’t be viewed as them vs. us even when diverging interests separate them slightly. Again, there must be a “team over individual” mindset.



Often, it takes a major, company-wide project for people to band together, and work together as a team by getting away from this siloed approach. At the Financial Times, GDPR helped bring the entire product organization together around a shared outcome. It forced the team to prioritize together and truly work as one, cohesive team - despite operating within a large organization. They were able to accomplish this by doing many things:

1. There was a single prioritized backlog with cross-functional themes and streams led by a single Project Manager from end to end. The result was clarity around the problem to be solved. There was no need to approach different teams with different solutions.
2. The entire team was bought into a common prioritization process. For the Financial Times, it was a RICE score (Reach x Impact x Confidence Effort). But no matter what the prioritization process is, it's important that there is wide buy-in.
3. Got rid of a territorial mentality and became open to one individual managing a specific outcome. It's hard, but when you force your team to adopt this mentality, it becomes possible.

While GDPR was the driving force behind making these changes, the reality is large organizations don't need a "crisis" or mission critical project in order to make these changes. When there is no crisis, it gives the organization more time to experiment and adapt, which can furthermore help an organization to find the right structure.

To view Pooja's full presentation, visit:

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4wV2N\\_Yiyro](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4wV2N_Yiyro)

## ✓ MANAGING A PRODUCT AFTER IT'S REACHED MAJOR SCALE

The following insights are from a presentation at INDUSTRY given by Brian Norgard, former Chief Product Officer at Tinder  
[@BrianNorgard](#)

Not many mobile applications have ever reached the scale that Tinder has. It remains top in the market with 10 million active users each day, continued revenue growth, and has changed the modern dating world entirely. A lot can be learned about mobile products at scale when focusing on the work done by Brian Norgard and his team at Tinder.

One of the philosophies that Brian has lived by, especially in his work at Tinder, is that “Product is a promise to a customer.” A customer uses your product because they believe that there is a solution for a problem, or that it brings joy or pleasure into their lives. As product people, we have a responsibility to make sure that the products we build fulfill that promise.

There is a constant search for ultimate simplicity in a product, but sometimes the hardest thing to do in the universe is to make things simple, yet complete. There are many distractions and opportunities along the way to complicate the product with features that just don't matter. Core simplicity is achievable, but it requires hard work and significant effort from product people to focus only on what truly matters to customers. This can only be achieved if the product person knows all the private details of their customers' need. So continuous customer research is a must. Some of today's most popular consumer products such as Snapchat, Tinder, Instagram, and others are known for their ultimate simplicity.

While Tinder is a consumer app, the reality is many enterprise products are also expected to offer ultimate simplicity too. This simplicity is often not assumed as a critical feature in the enterprise world because the buyers aren't evaluating it as a core need. The newer classes of enterprise products, including Slack, Zoom, and others are often championed by users within an organization and sold up as opposed to the decision made as top down. Product Managers building enterprise products should remember there are humans involved in the process and not just technology. When possible, deliver inspiration and delight to motivate them, the same way that some of your favorite consumer apps do today. However, it could be difficult for some in the industry to keep up with the pace of change. The entire world is coming online as tech diffuses outwards. The lessons of Silicon Valley are moving to new centers as the tech entrepreneurial culture goes transnational. London, Dublin, Berlin, etc. represent a new global talent pool. Product people can also access this through remote working and other flexible work arrangements. Greater scope to build and interact with one another exists as entire industries change in response to innovation.

Great product, whether at the enterprise or consumer level, comes from different directions. Product people must stay open and curious about that sense of excitement. When you get that feeling, pause and spend some time with it. Figure out how you can embrace that moment and pour it into your product.

## ✓ THE STRUGGLE OF ORGANIZATIONS TO FIND PRODUCT-MARKET-FIT AND SCALE

The following insights are from a presentation at INDUSTRY given by Supriya Uchil, CEO of Accelerate Product [LinkedIn/supriya-uchil](https://www.linkedin.com/in/supriya-uchil)

There is so much to learn in all the different phases that a Product Manager goes through when managing a product - from launch to scale. Many Product Managers never get the opportunity to see a product through each of these stages. However, for those that do, it's important to think through each phase carefully in terms of what to expect.

**Early phase:** The product is not quite defined at this stage. Even if there is an initial hypothesis on how to solve a specific problem, the reality is that the team is still trying to figure it all out. Product teams should be open to considering all sorts of ideas and iterate quite often. It's still unsure if this product will be successful until product-market fit is defined and achieved.

**Growth phase:** The business has now reached some level of critical mass and achieved product-market fit. At this stage, the emphasis should be on scaling and expansion. Should you expand the product to new categories altogether? Should you consider building new products that solve the next problems? Should you scale internationally? These are all critical questions to be considered.

**Hyper-growth phase:** The business thought it had achieved product-market fit, and it has to some degree. But now, new scaling problems are likely to rise. To some, this may seem like a good problem to have as these problems only exist when there has been wide adoption of the product. But a critical decision will need to be made on how to address these scale-related problems. A company may dedicate all resources to resolve these issues, but at the hyper-growth phase, it's also important to scale further into new markets and categories.

**Maturity phase:** The business has become an incumbent but growth is slow, and the focus is turning to optimization. There may be a renewed interest in developing new products. However, process agility can be affected by changes within the business. In earlier stages, Product Managers were generalists, but at the maturity phase, they are more likely to have a specialist role within the organization -- focusing on a specific slice of the problem that the company is trying to solve. At this phase, it's important to stay open-minded and avoid the mantra of, "But it's always been done this way."

**Decline phase:** The strategic inflection point has been missed. In a sense, it is too late, and the business now needs to reposition or refocus itself altogether. Stakeholders have to recognize change and notice when things stop working. However, this realization may come too late in the process. There may be a period of shock and mourning within the organization as it adapts and accepts the reality before integration and the new situation can begin. The leadership team is going to experience a similar process, and its accompanying emotions may not be processed



quickly. Here, the Product Manager needs understanding and empathy to help their peers through the complicated process of change management.

Ultimately, Product Managers must have an awareness of people scaling, organizational design, and extensibility their business goes through each phase.

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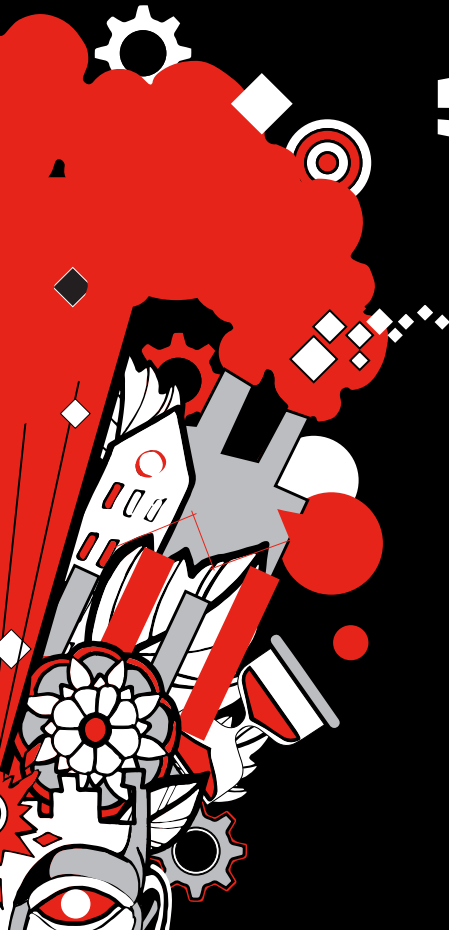
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# ✓ TACTICS: VOLUME 3

**This eBook is a comprehensive look at** the latest product management tactics for you and your team. In this collection, you will find thoughts and contributions gleaned from live presentations by renowned product leaders from across the globe.

The insights captured in this eBook are from the 2019 global gathering of INDUSTRY: The Product Conference in Cleveland, Ohio. Product Collective captured the highlights here and dissected the most critical points just for you to take and implement in your own organizations.

This edition of TACTICS is brought to you by Product Collective, an online community of 25,000+ product managers from around the world.

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# ✓ A NOTE FROM



**Like Product Collective, Pragmatic Institute** is passionate about the product management profession. We're also just as dedicated to supporting individuals' efforts to stay on the leading edge of product management through both ongoing education and networking among a community of peers.

Our combined commitment to delivering useful, topical information and helping product professionals learn in both classroom and conference settings is what makes the Product Collective/Pragmatic Institute partnership a perfect match.

This edition of TACTICS is a great example of this collaboration: It's an outstanding showcase of some of the top thought leaders in the profession who share everything from basic product principles through ways to effectively and sensibly leverage customer data to compete in a rapidly changing world.

We encourage you to continue the conversation started at INDUSTRY: The Product Conference online at [LinkedIn](#), [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) as well as in Product Collective's dedicated Slack channel.

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# ✓ YOU AND YOUR TEAM

## ✓ MAKING TIME FOR WHAT MATTERS

**JOHN ZERATSKY**

CO-ARCHITECT OF DESIGN SPRINT FRAMEWORK

@jazer

*The following insights are from a presentation at INDUSTRY given by John Zeratsky, Co-Architect of Design Sprint Framework.*

Most of your time is spent by default. Whether you are at work or at home, the hours and days slip away as you react to your smartphones, calendars, and requests from other people. But what is it that you want? What's important to you? Sometimes what's important doesn't match up with how your time is actually spent.

We are living in a fast-paced, chaotic kind of world — with back-to-back meetings all of the time. Many of us are reliant on the devices in our pockets, which are capable of doing all of these amazing things. But, when you are looking back on the busy week you just had, can you recall what happened? Of course, you know that you were busy... but what did you do? While you try not to get distracted by the stuff in your life that doesn't matter, you may not have enough willpower to overcome it.

Take a typical smartphone, for example. You are signed into your email accounts and by default, you check for new messages and get notifications for every new email. But these “convenient” notifications are really more like reminders on how far behind you are on your to-do list.

Defaults don't only apply to products, but also behavior at work. By default, meetings are kind of scattered throughout the week, which means other people can add things to your calendar. By default, many people simply accept any meetings they're invited to.

If these defaults resonate with the way you're currently living your life, it may be time to take a more proactive approach.

Before becoming proactive, a typical day may have run more like this: You would wake up, go to your office, check emails, attend meetings, eat lunch, check emails, attend more meetings, check emails once more, and go home. Hopefully, somewhere in between those spaces, you can also find time to slot in doing actual work -- like completing an important presentation or conducting customer calls.

A proactive approach would start the day with a highlight or something important — like finishing that presentation. By starting this way, you can get the bigger hurdle and more important task out of the way. Taking a real lunch break (with a friend or coworker) away from your work can give you more energy to allow you to do better at your work. Then, you can end the day by attending meetings and answering any unread emails.



- Beat distraction in order to be focused and present: Create barriers to distraction (by uninstalling apps, logging out, etc) so you don't have to avoid them.
- Use your body to energize your brain: Find ways to rejuvenate your body throughout the day with light exercise and even meditation.
- Reflect to improve your system every day: Each person's productivity system is specific to them. It should be an iterative process that you personally continue to make better each day. Take it one day at a time. Keep a simple daily notes sheet to help you track your progress.

Try all of these for three days in a row. Did it help you make time for the things that matter to you? What would you do if we could redesign every day? Remember to make time for what matters to you in your personal and work life.

To view John's full presentation, visit:

<https://blog.industryconference.com/making-time-matters/>



## ✓ THE SECRET TO MAKING YOUR MARKETING TEAM LOVE YOU (AND DRIVE MORE USERS TO YOUR PRODUCT)

**CLAIRE SUELLENTROP**

CUSTOMER INSIGHTS & GROWTH CONSULTANT  
FOR SAAS COMPANIES

@clairesuellen

*The following insights are from a presentation at INDUSTRY given by Claire Suellentrop, Customer Insights & Growth Consult for SaaS companies.*

Why is it that when product and marketing both want the same things, the two often run into friction or even conflict? Bringing a new feature or product to market is like planning a trip with a group. Everyone has a different view on how to get there and what the best route to take is. When everyone is approaching the trip (or in this case, product launch) each person lets their past experiences guide how the actual event should play out. Of course, because each person has their own experiences, these expectations of the ideal plan often conflict with one another.

Here's how you can get to your ultimate destination of a successful product launch:

First, figure out the timing and broadcasting of information. If the scope changes, or if things are added, when should the marketing team be informed? The answer to this should be discussed and mutually agreed-upon upfront. There is always an expectation that change can happen. But the communication about the change shouldn't come as a surprise. This shared understanding can prevent false starts and marketing campaigns from going live before they're ready, and also results in the marketing team checking in less throughout the process.

Avoid the "Red Ocean" and "Blue Ocean." Many product launches are treated like "Red Ocean" launches -- where it's a known product in a known industry. In these cases, the launch is treated like most traditional product launches, often using language that's similar to how other products are launched (even if it's not the language that doesn't resonate with customers). On the other hand, the "Blue Ocean" is when a product is entering a brand new market and is trying to create demand. In these cases, sometimes phrases are used which don't at all resonate with customers because it's such a new product and market. One solution to combat the problem faced here is to conduct "jobs to be done" interviews and to find language that the customers are actually using.

Think about using a RACI chart to avoid messiness around ownership. RACI stands for Responsible, Accountable, Consulted, Informed. This gives you a better idea of workload distribution. RACI is defined as:



- Responsible — team or team member that's getting the day-to-day work done
- Accountable — team or team member responsible for making sure the work gets done
- Consulted — team or team member who may not be directly involved but you want their opinions
- Informed — team or team member who doesn't need daily involvement but wants to be in the loop

In order to define ownership of work, try establishing regular opportunities to connect for sharing knowledge. These touchpoints are often even better out of the office -- perhaps taking place over coffee or at breakfast/lunch. Sometimes, these new settings can help you get a better understanding of what they're doing and allow you to share more about your work -- allowing everybody to get better clarity on the project. It also helps build rapport with all.

When conducting an all-hands team standup, be sure to keep the focus only on projects/tasks that affect members of the team. These should take place no more than once a week, every other week, or once a month depending on the size of the organization.

To view Claire's full presentation, visit:

<https://blog.industryconference.com/secret-making-marketing-team-love/>

## ✓ BUILDING & SCALING PRODUCTS WITH A DISTRIBUTED TEAM

**JESSICA TIWARI**

VP OF PRODUCT MANAGEMENT AT UPWORK

Jessica Tiwari

*The following insights are from a presentation at INDUSTRY given by Jessica Tiwari, VP of Product Management at Upwork.*

Given the workforce preferences and economic trends, it's now the norm that the talent needed to design, build, and scale products is distributed. Because of this, it's important to begin to think about what works best to build and scale distributed product teams.

A good hire is someone who is responsive and provides the best quality and quantity of work output they can do. Companies that employ a remote talent force are often able to field very competitive offers to attract top talent because many find the ability to work remotely to be attractive. This is important, because competition for talent is only intensifying. Right now, there is a 3.7% unemployment rate, and on average, it takes 40 days to bring a new employee on board. In a recent survey about workplace trends, 40% of respondents said they would not consider on-premise work for any amount of money. This makes a remote workforce quite a competitive advantage.

Three important factors for a successful distributed team are:

- Hiring
- Technology
- Culture

If you are thinking about hiring remote talent, look for people that are precisely skilled, self-disciplined, accountable, collaborate, and flexible. Remote culture may be nuanced, but a thriving one can exist if you're thoughtful about the environment of your remote team. Tools such as Slack, Google Hangouts, G-Suite, Zoom and others can certainly help teams stay connected.

Traits of a remote-friendly culture include transparency, being metrics-driven, and being egalitarian. Some of the best remote teams conduct Quarterly Business Reviews (QBR's) and set Objectives and Key Results (OKR's). QBR's and OKR's help teams stay accountable with metrics and are empowered to determine how to evolve them. Managers of remote product teams constantly review problem definition and success criteria -- while celebrating impact and exceptional work. An egalitarian, remote-friendly culture means that there is equal access to information, helping everyone to remain informed.

At some point, though, remote teams should converge in person. Some may be put off by the expense of this, but semi-regular in-person gatherings (even if annual) can boost camaraderie and morale, overall.



To view Jessica's full presentation, visit:

<https://blog.industryconference.com/building-scaling-products-distributed-team/>

## ✓ BUILDING PRODUCT TEAMS THE BASECAMP WAY

**JASON FRIED**

CEO & CO-FOUNDER OF BASECAMP

@jasonfried

*The following insights are from a presentation at INDUSTRY given by Jason Fried, CEO & Co-Founder of Basecamp.*

How do you land top talent when there are so many other companies out there vying for the same pool of prospective employees? Finding the right people for your team isn't easy -- but Basecamp's recent hires have helped them identify what works well when hiring.

First, job descriptions should be treated seriously. They aren't mere descriptions of the tasks that an eventual hire will be completing. They should go further and describe what it's actually like to work at the company. What does that day in the life of an employee look like? How might they feel when they're doing their work? What might their challenges be? All of these questions should be answered in a job description.

Job descriptions shouldn't be written by a specific department (like Human Resources). Instead, the people who are hiring the new employee should be the ones writing the job description. This helps ensure that the description is as real and authentic as it can be when describing the work that needs to be done.

When you are looking for top talent, focus on the work of the person, not the resume they submit. Resumes are easy to build up. But a degree from a top university and stints at name-brand companies don't always mean that a candidate is set up for success at this specific position. When reviewing candidates, look past the resume and try to understand the actual work that the candidates have done and can do. During the hiring process, assign top candidates to a week-long project and pay them to do it. Have a conversation about how they approach the work, and not so much about what they do. By doing this, you also get to know what it will be like to work with them.

Remember that your hiring process isn't just an opportunity to find new employees. But it's also an opportunity to showcase the work of your company to the world. People who may have otherwise been unfamiliar may now be introduced to your products and company for the first time. So, consider the hiring process a showcase of you and your company just as much as it is for candidates to showcase themselves to you.

To view Jason's full presentation, visit:

<https://blog.industryconference.com/building-products-basecamp-way/>

# ✓ IN THE TRENCHES

## ✓ POWERFUL PRODUCT POSITIONING: HOW TO MAKE YOUR MARKET WORK FOR YOU

**APRIL DUNFORD**  
CEO AT AMBIENT STRATEGY  
[@aprildunford](#)

*The following insights are from a presentation at INDUSTRY given by April Dunford, CEO at Ambient Strategy.*

Product positioning should not be a tagline, point of view, vision, brand, messaging, marketing, or GTM strategy. Instead, positioning defines how your product is the best in the world at providing something that a well-defined set of customers cares a lot about.

These are product positioning fundamental questions you should be asking -- “What is this?” and “Why should I care?” Even a hint of context can completely change the way you think about a product and the way it’s positioned.

A shift in positioning can completely transform the way you see a problem. Customers use what they know to make sense of what they don’t understand. Customers also use market categories as context to make purchase decisions. They use what they know about the market to find solutions. For instance, if a customer assumes that a product is aligned with a competitive product -- customers will assume that the features, benefits, pricing, etc will be similar to that of the competitor. If a product is much different than the competitive product (in terms of features/benefits or price), it’s important to position it to be much different than that competitive product, to the point that people will not make those competitive assumptions.

A traditional marketing positioning statement usually goes something like this:

For \_\_\_\_ (target market)  
Our \_\_\_\_ (offering) is a \_\_\_\_ (market category)  
Which provides \_\_\_\_ (benefit)  
Unlike \_\_\_\_ (competitor)

But that traditional marketing positioning statement can actually be harmful to a new product. The blanks in the statement above are related to each other. For instance, the benefit is directly related to the market category. If the market category changes -- the benefit could change, too.

Instead of the traditional marketing positioning statement approach, consider a customer-centric positioning approach:

- Competitive Alternatives: If you didn’t exist, what would your customers use?
- Key Unique Attributes: What features/capabilities do you have that others do not?



- Value: What value do the attributes enable for the customers?
- Customers Who Care: Who cares a lot about that value?
- Market You Win: What context makes the value obvious to your target segments?

The above approach is detailed thoroughly in April Dunford's book, *Obviously Awesome*.

To view April's full presentation, visit:

<https://blog.industryconference.com/powerful-product-positioning/>



## ✓ LET'S PUT THE USER BACK IN UX

**SARAH DOODY**

USER EXPERIENCE DESIGN CONSULTANT  
& FOUNDER OF THE UX PORTFOLIO FORMULA

@sarahdoody

*The following insights are from a presentation at INDUSTRY given by Sarah Doody, Founder of Thrive UX Career Coaching.*

The best competitive advantage you can have is how well you know your users. That's why it's important to put the user back in User Experience (UX). UX isn't simply about design -- it's about people. Is your team solving real problems for real people? Did you look beyond your team to confirm that a problem does exist?

Sometimes you rush into a solution and don't truly validate it. Companies often rush to build a product in order to satisfy stakeholders and meet deadlines. This may also happen when you want to go with your gut, attract investors, or simply elicit a feeling of progress. But it's important to not rush a product through and take the time to actually validate it in order to ensure you're creating something that your users want or need -- not something you think they want or need. To do this, there are four distinct steps to understand your customers better:

1. Asking your customers the right questions
2. Gain a thorough understanding of the problem you're solving with your product
3. Build products that solve those problems which you've validated
4. Launch and repeat

Asking the right questions to your customers can often be the hardest step because it's sometimes difficult to know what's right. Focus on what your users are experiencing today and what their current reality is instead of asking questions about what they might do if faced with a hypothetical situation.

To gain a thorough understanding of the problem you're solving for -- you have to be talking to the right customers and users. You can connect with customers and users (or potential users) in a variety of ways, including online groups, message boards, and in-person meetups and clubs. When customers are searching for answers, they turn to popular and related searches and comments on articles and blogs. This ultimately leads to leaving reviews for products. These reviews could be another great source for finding people to interview.

Plenty of other talks may focus on how to build, launch, and repeat -- but it's critical to first have a better understanding of your users and the problems they're experiencing. Otherwise, it won't matter what you build because you may be building it for the wrong person to address the wrong problem.

To view Sarah's full presentation, visit:

<https://blog.industryconference.com/lets-put-user-back-ux/>

## ✓ A/B TESTING PITFALLS & LESSONS LEARNED

### LINDSAY BROTHERS PRODUCT MANAGER AT INDEED

@lindsaybro

*The following insights are from a presentation at INDUSTRY given by Lindsay Brothers, Product Manager at Indeed.*

A/B testing is a randomized experience that is tested against a control group. There are all sorts of different A/B test examples. One common example is two variations of a webpage that a visitor of a website could potentially see -- with one variable (perhaps copy) being different. Many product people are proponents of A/B testing because it allows us to use data to refine and iterate our products. However, there can also be mistakes and pitfalls to watch out for.

The first pitfall to know is sometimes, your metrics don't matter. Of course, metrics should matter. But if you're tracking the wrong things, optimizing won't help you. Make sure you're tracking metrics that actually matter and that you understand downstream impact can take longer but will prove to be much more valuable.

The second pitfall is that big tests can lead to big failures. Avoid this by breaking up tests so you can see more clearly their more specific impacts. Once you understand the impact that these tests have, you can take what you've learned and use those insights to create bigger tests (to hopefully uncover even bigger insights). When testing, remember to not include so many variables -- otherwise, it may be difficult to understand which changes are actually generating results.

The third pitfall is that most tests fail. Tests can fail as much as 70% of the time. This can be demoralizing because ultimately, tests take time, which is an investment in resources. But what is a "win" when conducting a test, really? A failed test could mean there is a lack of flexibility around a feature/design. Even still, this is still learning. So don't focus so much on "winning" a test -- but instead, focus on the learning.

The fourth and final pitfall is not truly knowing where in vision fits. Sometimes, our design vision can be so strong that we lead with it and don't stray much. But A/B testing -- even the failures -- should inform this design vision. When your original design vision was off, but you evolve to the right place -- the end result is not just a design win, but a business win.

To view Lindsay's full presentation, visit:

<https://blog.industryconference.com/b-testing-pitfalls-lessons-learned/>

## ✓ THE PRODUCT-MARKET-FIT ENGINE

**RAHUL VOHRA**  
FOUNDER & CEO OF SUPERHUMAN  
[@rahulvohra](#)

*The following insights are from a presentation at INDUSTRY given by Rahul Vohra, Founder & CEO of Superhuman.*

One of the most difficult parts of the process of launching a new product can be finding true product-market-fit. Paul Graham defines product-market-fit most simply as “building something people want.” Sam Altman goes further to add that product-market-fit is when “users love your product so much that they spontaneously tell other people to go and use it.” And Marc Andreessen’s definition, which may be most compelling, is that product-market-fit happens when “customers are buying as fast as you add servers, sales and support employees are being hired as fast as you can hire them, reporters are constantly calling you about your hot new thing, investors are camping outside your house and money is piling up in your checking account.”

Beyond a definition for product-market-fit, you can use certain metrics to actually track it as well. One such metric is simply asking your customers, “How would you feel if you could no longer use the product?” If 40% or more of users would be very disappointed if they could no longer use their product, it’s a sign that you may have found product-market-fit.

But even if you’ve found product-market-fit, optimizing it through “The Product-Market-Fit Engine” can be the difference between a good product and an ultra-successful one. The Product-Market-Fit Engine covers five areas:

### The Product-Market Fit Engine

1. **Survey:** Ask your users the following questions:
  - How would you feel if you could no longer use this product?
  - What type of people do you think will get the most benefit?
  - What is the main benefit you receive?
  - How can the product be improved for you?
2. **Segment:** Who are the people who really love the product?
3. **Analyze:** Why do people love the product?
4. **Implement:** Spend half the time doubling down on what people love. Spend half the time addressing objections brought up by users who said they would have some level of disappointment if your product didn’t exist. To this end, there are different levels of disappointment -- those who are very disappointed or just somewhat disappointed.



5. **Track:** Double down on what's loved about the product and overcome objections. You need to constantly survey users so you can evolve.

You can increase your product-market fit in a few ways. First, seek insights. Users who love your product will always describe themselves in their answers to the second question in the survey. Take this information to create a detailed expectation of the customer. Assign a persona to each group -- particularly those that would be very disappointed and somewhat disappointed if they could no longer use your product.

Next, you must convert the group who would be somewhat disappointed if they couldn't use your product to being very disappointed if they couldn't use your product. Politely disregard those who wouldn't be disappointed at all if they couldn't use your product. There's nothing you can do to make them love the product. But it's more important to figure out what separates the "Somewhat Disappointed" crowd from the "Very Disappointed" crowd.

Continue to repeat the steps in the "The Product-Market-Fit Engine" to refine your product and determine which audience your product is actually serving well. By doing this, you'll be able to optimize and continue to hone in on finding true product-market-fit.

To view Rahul's full presentation, visit:

<https://blog.industryconference.com/product-market-fit-engine/>

# ✓ ZOOMING OUT

## ✓ MOVING UP INTO PRODUCT LEADERSHIP

**RICH MIRONOV**

SMOKEJUMPER PRODUCT EXECUTIVE & CPO MENTOR

@richmironov

*The following insights are from a presentation at INDUSTRY given by Rich Mironov, Smokejumper Product Executive & CPO Mentor.*

A product leader is someone managing a team of product managers, which also might include designers or others who work on building product. Product leaders can have many titles -- including Group Product Manager, Director of Product, VP of Product, Head of Product, Chief Product Officer, and others. Typically those with titles of VP of engineering/development, CIO, CRO, or General Manager aren't considered to be "product leaders."

### **Four Key Responsibilities For Product Leaders**

- Designing/Building/Nurturing a product team
- Driving product strategy and processes
- Growing cross-functional collaboration and trust
- Working with C-level execs on strategy, goals, and alignment

When you are designing, building, and nurturing a product team, you need a strong point of view and a plan. You need to think about how many product managers you will need to accomplish your team goals. When hiring product managers, look for experience. Other than experience, a new product manager with enthusiasm could make a great hire with a good coaching and mentoring plan. Learn to champion long-term customer value with your team, especially in OKRs/KPIs. The design of teams and task forces will help create cross-functional trust and psychological safety. When the product team is aligned well and focused on creating value for customers, it gives everybody a guiding "north star" to work towards that is in line with the company's overall strategies.

Push for business coherence and ruthless C-level prioritization. The best product leaders "manage up" well -- and are constantly reminding the C-suite that priorities cannot be shifted often. Product leaders do this best when they have a relentless focus on end-customer value and company-wide success. When this is clearly seen by the C-Suite, there is more trust with the product team as a whole and fewer distracting priority-shifts. This helps the entire product team effectively have more power within the organization.

Learn to network with outside product leaders. Use your personal contacts, and connect externally through speaking, writing, and mentoring. Doing these things can help you take in additional

perspectives from other product leaders and use those to continue to evolve your own product team and internal product processes.

To view Rich's full presentation, visit:

<https://blog.industryconference.com/moving-intro-product-leadership/>

## ✓ BECOMING A MASTER INNOVATOR: THE 5 HIDDEN SKILLS OF GREAT INNOVATORS

### BOB MOESTA

CEO AT THE REWIRED GROUP,  
CO-ARCHITECT OF JOBS-TO-BE-DONE

@bmoesta

*The following insights are from a presentation at INDUSTRY given by Bob Moesta, CEO at The Rewired Group, Co-architect of Jobs-to-be-Done.*

Ryan Singer, Chief Strategy Officer at Basecamp, recently wrote the book Shape Up. But he approached the book with the mindset of an innovator. First, he tested writing parts of his book on the Basecamp blog to track interest and demand. After that, he invited people to a workshop to test interest in the concepts discussed within the book. Then, he tested a PDF download of the book to see if it should be published. As a result, in less than 90 days, Singer had 345,000 unique visitors. In a 30 day period, there were 10,000 downloads of the book -- all without any real marketing.

Ryan Singer isn't alone. There are many true innovators in today's business world. Here are five characteristics of those very innovators:

1. Empathetic Perspective — How you see the world.
2. Causal Structures — Understanding how things work.
3. Uncovering Demand — Understanding the needs of people.
4. Prototyping to Learn — Conducting experiments and letting data inform decisions.
5. Making Trade-Offs — Prioritizing appropriately.

The first skill of an innovator is someone who has an empathetic perspective -- someone who views the world in different ways. Ultimately, many innovations fail because they only see things from one perspective. But innovators who have empathetic perspective can put themselves in the shoes of all sorts of different people.

The second skill of an innovator is someone who understands causal structures and can easily understand how things work. People with this skill are often described as being curious and often ask questions to help them discover how things work -- the actual understanding of how things work isn't necessarily innate.

The third skill of an innovator is having the ability to uncover demand and understand consumer progress, context and value. The value that's uncovered is typically something that solves a pain point or addresses a "struggling moment." These struggling moments are the seeds for all innovation.

The fourth skill of an innovator is the ability to prototype to learn. The prototyping in itself isn't the skill -- but it's understanding how to learn and make decisions from experiments. Most innovators have their own process, but many don't study how others do it. You don't know why A or B is better



✓ in A/B testing unless you plan it out. By exploring the possibilities, this creates divergent thinking. Deciding what to do creates convergent thinking.

The fifth and final skill of an innovator is knowing how to properly prioritize and make trade-offs, designing products to do the “job” they were hired to do profitably. This is a particularly difficult skill to master, but those that do are often able to find product-market-fit and scale much more quickly than others who have not mastered this skill.

To view Bob’s full presentation, visit:

<https://blog.industryconference.com/jobs-done-innovation/>

## ✓ APPLYING A CREATIVE MINDSET TO YOUR PRODUCT PROFESSION

### COMMON

#### GRAMMY & ACADEMY AWARD-WINNING ARTIST & ACTIVIST

@common

*The following insights are from a presentation at INDUSTRY given by Common, Grammy and Academy Award-winning Artist, and Activist.*

When you are creating something, you need to be able to do so from a sincere, pure place that has integrity. So, getting feedback is crucial. Whether it's music or a product, share it with a diverse, honest and intelligent group.

If during feedback you receive negative comments about your creation, but you still think it resonates with what kind of brand or product you want it to be, you can take a piece of what they're saying and apply it. But don't underestimate trusting your gut in situations where you truly believe in the product you're building.

When working with teams, it's important to utilize people in the best way possible. Everybody has their strong points and weaknesses and it's important to recognize both. Try to work with people that are passionate about what they're doing and have the skills, talents, and gifts to elevate those around you. Sometimes, passion can outweigh the skills. But if there is somebody on the team that is bringing the rest of the group down because of their negativity, it must be addressed sooner rather than later. Direct and honest conversations are always the best in these cases.

Hire people that will bring an energy that permeates to the rest of the team and allows them to function at their best. It's also important to hire for integrity -- the best hires are those that are always thinking, "We can do better than this." Also remember -- sometimes doing better has just as much to do with doing things for good as they do with doing good work.

When you're trying to find your own inspiration, consider going into different environments to connect and listen to people. Go to places where you normally wouldn't go in order to find that inspiration. Sometimes, it is in these unexpected places where true inspiration is found.

Remember that aside from doing great work, people should set out to do good in the world and make it a better place. You can do this through positivity and by finding the things you are passionate about. Find your purpose. Don't be afraid of failure. Oftentimes, failure makes one stronger and is really just the path to eventual success.

## ✓ CREATING PRODUCT MEMOIRS

**NIKITA MILLER**

GROUP PRODUCT MANAGER, TRELLO AT ATLISSIAN

@nikitadyer

*The following insights are from a presentation at INDUSTRY given by Nikita Miller, Group Product Manager at Trello at Atlassian.*

Nikita Miller was one of the first product people at Trello -- which became a fast-growing product used by millions of professionals. Particularly when a product is so new, it may not quite have a true identity yet. As a product person, it can be difficult to evolve a product without an identity. The process of creating a product memoir can help us create just that.

To get started in writing a Product Memoir, take the following steps:

1. Conduct a series of at least 10 internal product interviews: These interviews will allow you to get a sense of varying internal perspectives about your product -- from management, engineering, customer success, and others. When meeting with these groups, ask the following questions:
  - What is the product's origin story?
  - What excites you most about our product?
  - Where have we lost our way with our product?
2. Begin to distill the answers: Make a list of the top commonalities, outliers, and disagreements that surfaced throughout your interviews. Put these in front of the groups that you interviewed and get a sense of whether they seem to resonate or not. The list might be long at first. But what's most important at this stage is making sure that you've distilled the answers and aren't missing things.
3. Narrow down your answers to the most important principles: At first, start with 7-10 principles based on the range of answers you have. Then, work to narrow this down even further to just 3-5. These principles should resonate with each of the internal groups that you met with.
4. Write a narrative based on these principles: At this stage, those key principles turn into stories that show how your principles are lived by your product. This narrative should be short and easily digested -- perhaps just one page. But this single page document is meant to be reverted back to each time anybody needs a reminder of why your product exists and what your team is working to evolve.



1. Onboarding becomes easier: When bringing on new team members, having a single document to hand to somebody which defines your product's key principles and will reduce confusing conversations with early employees.
2. A common language: Team members can spend their energy on improving the product instead of trying to articulate and define various terms that people may be using when talking about the product.
3. Buy-in and accountability: Sometimes, it can be difficult to say “no” to features and products. By having a product memoir with clearly defined product principles, it becomes much easier to avoid going off-course when ideas for initiatives are introduced which may be off-principle.

To view Nikita's full presentation, visit:

<https://blog.industryconference.com/working-product-teams-scale/>

# ✓ ON BUILDING PRODUCTS

## ✓ BUILDING PRODUCTS FOR HUMANS

**SHIREN VIJIASINGAM**

CHIEF PRODUCT OFFICER AT NEWSLEA

@shirenv

*The following insights are from a presentation at INDUSTRY given by Shiren Vijiasingam, Chief Product Officer at Newsela.*

What happens when an amazing experience takes a turn for the worse? This might happen when Uber says your ride is here, but they have yet to arrive. Or, when you're ordering groceries online and you are given a timeframe for arrival, but instead receive a very late delivery. In these cases, "Mode Shift Friction" gets in the way of what would otherwise be an amazing experience.

Mode Shift Friction exists when shifting from one mode of the product to the next. In the above cases, the human element caused this friction. But in other products, automated elements of a product can cause this type of friction, too.

How can you solve Mode Shift Friction? Consider starting with your customer experience loop. One such customer experience loop -- the various touchpoints that a customer has with your product -- may look like this:

- A/B testing (Geo-targeting) - They experience a specific landing page for your product.
- Email services - They receive marketing messages about your product.
- External review sites - They review what other customers say about your product.
- Chatbot/SMS - They chat with somebody in your organization (or an AI) about your product.
- Retail/delivery - They interact with associates who talk about your product.
- App stores - They experience your product in other platforms.

Ease the friction for your users by finding and tracking your product gaps. Look for these gaps by mapping out your customer data flow to see where customers are interacting with your product today -- and find places where friction could likely exist. These are known as "shift triggers" -- which cause those friction-moments.

Your solutions may not actually live within your product. You don't need to launch new features to eliminate these friction points. It could simply be a process change -- or messaging change. This takes working collaboratively with other teams outside of product. But changes outside of your product can close these friction gaps. Think of ways you can close this gap within 30 days. Some of these "quick fix" changes can make a big, noticeable difference.

To view Shiren's full presentation, visit:

<https://blog.industryconference.com/building-products-humans/>

## ✓ THE THREE C'S AT THE WORLD'S LARGEST RETAILER

**VANATHY LAKSHMI**

SENIOR DIRECTOR, DIGITAL PRODUCT MANAGEMENT —  
MERCHANDISING AT WALMART

Vanathy Lakshmi

*The following insights are from a presentation at INDUSTRY given by Vanathy Lakshmi, Senior Director, Digital Product Management at Walmart.*

Learning how to identify problems and outcomes in order to develop successful products within a massive organization is no small task. At Walmart, the world's largest retailer, the problems and outcomes aren't just limited to external customers. In fact, internal "customers" have their own set of problems to be solved for -- many of which are critical in order to adequately serve external customers.

Both internal and external customers require you to focus on "the three C's": customer, culture, and communication.

A customer may be searching for new apparel, seasonal items, groceries, electronics, food, or consumables. This creates a very complex and diverse scope. If you were to create a persona, 55% of shopping carts would contain highly replenishable and highly predictable items. Another persona would have 20% of shopping carts with not-easily replenishable goods. These trends change every year and are highly unpredictable. So sometimes, focusing on understanding your customers can be quite difficult because you never really are finished. Customers always evolve.

A product manager can make a big impact on the culture. An I-shaped product manager is one that is very passionate about a single problem and will dive into it to solve it themselves. A T-shaped product manager is a person that will go across the board and solve a problem end-to-end. Build the culture to drive the vision you have.

Finally, think about how you are communicating with your team. Evaluate each person on your team to learn their priorities and how they wish to be empowered. And don't treat all of your product team members the same way. Instead, communicate with them in the way to which they react best.

To view Vanathy's full presentation, visit:

<https://blog.industryconference.com/building-scaling-products-internal-customers/>

## ✓ FEED SUCCESS, STARVE FAILURE: CONTINUOUS PRODUCT MANAGEMENT

**ELIZABETH AYER**  
PRODUCT MANAGER AT 18F

@elizayer

*The following insights are from a presentation at INDUSTRY given by Elizabeth Ayer, Product Manager at 18F.*

Inside a business, nobody wants big lurches or major surprises. Disruption is, well, disruptive. As a discipline, software engineering has learned to smooth out releases through continuous delivery, but those on the business side still find themselves mired in strategy and process.

In government, the situation is even more sobering. 13% of large government software projects are considered to be successes. This means the other 87% are big failures. But, when you receive lagged feedback, it makes you oversteer.

The two main things you can change as a product manager are practices and culture.

Changing practices requires user research. User research will elaborate more on the features the customers want. This will allow you to figure out which features should be prioritized on the roadmap and how to measure results.

Changing culture is something where product people consistently underestimate their impact. Sometimes, this is best done, at first, by changing focus. Instead of focusing on delivery of features, focus on delivering outcomes. The outcomes live beyond any individual feature you may launch -- and can be something to rally your colleagues and team around.

To view Elizabeth's full presentation, visit:

<https://blog.industryconference.com/feed-success-starve-failure-product-management/>



## ✓ OVERCOMING COGNITIVE BIASES (PRODUCT MANAGERS ARE PEOPLE, TOO!)

### KENNETH SANDY

LECTURER AND INDUSTRY FELLOW,  
UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, BERKELEY

Ken Sandy

*The following insights are from a presentation at INDUSTRY given by Kenneth Sandy, VP of Product Management at Masterclass and University of California.*

Authority bias is an internal and external stakeholder in a position of power or expertise. When you are asserting something to be true, you are effectively exerting authority bias. Here are some statistics on authority bias as it relates to the product management function:

Around 60% of product managers often exert authority bias.

A third of product managers believe their company handles authority bias poorly.

About 95% agreed that they have fast-tracked a feature.

Half of product managers have said they accommodated 50% of ad-hoc requests without believing they were necessary.

Something somewhat similar to authority bias is survivor bias. Survivor bias is when you are concentrating on customers that are most active with your product. These customers are more likely to be positive about your product or simply more vocal. These customers often get requests filled frequently, but may only represent a small slice of your actual customer base.

As product people, we must try to overcome these biases -- as they have a strong chance of weighing down our products with features that only apply to a small minority.

Remember to structure how incoming stakeholder and customer requests are prioritized and balanced alongside everything else. Identify and explicitly seek out those underrepresented in your analysis and research, as their needs are otherwise most likely to be ignored.

To view Ken's full presentation, visit:

<https://blog.industryconference.com/overcoming-cognitive-biases/>

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