PRODUCT PHASES

How to Launch Your Product Like a Pro

userguiding

PRODUCT SCHOOL

WHAT IT TAKES TO LAUNCH YOUR PRODUCT LIKE A PRO.

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PHASE 1
DISCOVERY & DEFINITION

Objective: *Find a problem to solve & determine MVP*

WHAT IS PRODUCT DISCOVERY?

Product discovery is the initiation phase, where the Product Manager talks to potential customers, listens to their feedback and pays attention to customers using competing products. Once you know which features are most valued by customers, the main goal is to obtain, validate and implement customer feedback.

HOW CAN I SET UP THE DISCOVERY PROCESS?

There are two key methods: an inductive one; and a deductive one. How are they different?

With regards to inductive reasoning, this type of process seeks to develop a line of inquiry by looking at different sources of qualitative and (mostly) quantitative data. Thus, the starting point are usually surveys, documentation from previous projects, competition research, focus groups, semi-structured interviews and consultancy reports. These sources of information are based on processing large quantities of information to identify a gap in the market.

Remember, this gap must not always be profitable from day 1: we can think about monetization later if the project is interesting enough.

There are certain problems with this method. Largely, that it merely seeks to extract what is already "out there". It can be a long time before the different pieces assemble together into something truly original. In the meantime, a whole team of researchers has to be maintained and oriented. That is, **only large organizations or financiers can really afford leading this kind of initiatives** with a modicum of success. We are talking about the Apples and Googles of the world.

SO… WHAT ABOUT DEDUCTIVE REASONING?

Deductive reasoning, on the other hand, rely much more on small-team creative sessions. They attempt to come up with an original idea; truly something that has never been thought of before. Here, methodologies are much more diverse: from intensive team-building experiences to internal company experiments; anything goes.

The point is to amplify your sources of innovation: customers, partners or international markets can be integrated to the product ideation process and provide unexpectedly exciting ideas.

This makes it particularly attractive for startups, as the number of resources you have is not necessarily what will determine your product's success. It is all about ideas!

WHAT ARE SOME EXAMPLES OF THESE REASONING METHODS?

Example of inductive reasoning: when applied to customer persona development, for example, you have to come up with an observation such as "because of their age, my target market are highly likely to be comfortable making purchases on their mobile phones." But without backing up this observation with data, it's just an educated guess. You would then use the inductive method to perform research exploring the observation.
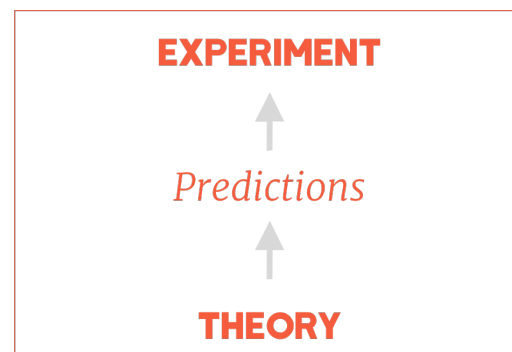
INDUCTIVE

OBSERVATION

↓

Generalizations

↓

PARADIGM

3
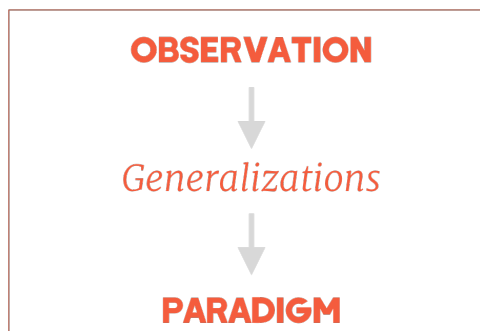
- **Example of deductive reasoning**: Jobs-To-Be-Done method (JTBD) rather than thinking in terms of "solutions", thinks in terms of jobs or tasks. That is, while developers might have an established conception of why they are building and upgrading the product; possibly customers will think otherwise. Your external stakeholders could be employing your task management application as a sales call solution, for example. Or your developers could work hard at expanding your solution horizontally, moving towards those areas where your product is already providing a service.

DEDUCTIVE

EXPERIMENT

↑

Predictions

↑

THEORY

That said, both inductive and deductive reasoning are often employed in tandem. Any seasoned Product Manager should be able to know when to use one or the other.

OK BUT WHAT'S THE GOAL OF THIS PROCESS?

The goal is to have a product that has the **minimum set of features to test key assumptions**. In this phase, it is important to not waste valuable resources where they are not necessary. Work until you get a solid understanding of the problem to solve and the needed features.

IS IT WHAT THE MVP IS ABOUT?

Yes, an MVP is the Minimum Viable Product. This means the bare-bones version of a product, with just enough functionality to fill the need it was created for, with the hope of attracting early adopters. A successful MVP demonstrates enough promise to retain these adopters. It will also serve as a tool for receiving more informed feedback in this early stage of the development process. The practical experience of developing an MVP is incredibly valuable to a product team, as it can show you what potential challenges may arise further down the road.

OK, GIVE ME SPECIFIC EXAMPLES OF HOW TO DO IT.

For example, Sprints provide a quick-fire working model that forces teams to think on their feet. Over a short period of days, the different functions meet together.

First, they determine their own contribution to the overall effort: how much and for how long can they get closer to the desired objective? Then, they share their impressions with the group and, through open discussions, they **come up with an achievable set of OKRs** (Objectives and Key Results.)

BUT WAIT… WHAT ARE OKRS?

OKR is a system of creating measurable goals. They are also known as 'moonshots'. The premise of a moonshot is that although your teams will not reach the purposefully high targets, they'll go further than they would have without them.

So, how can you define an MVP by setting OKRs? First you decide on your **Objective** (*short, snappy, and inspirational to the team*) and then on **Key Results** (*metrics by which you will measure progress towards your objective*). So the OKRs could be:

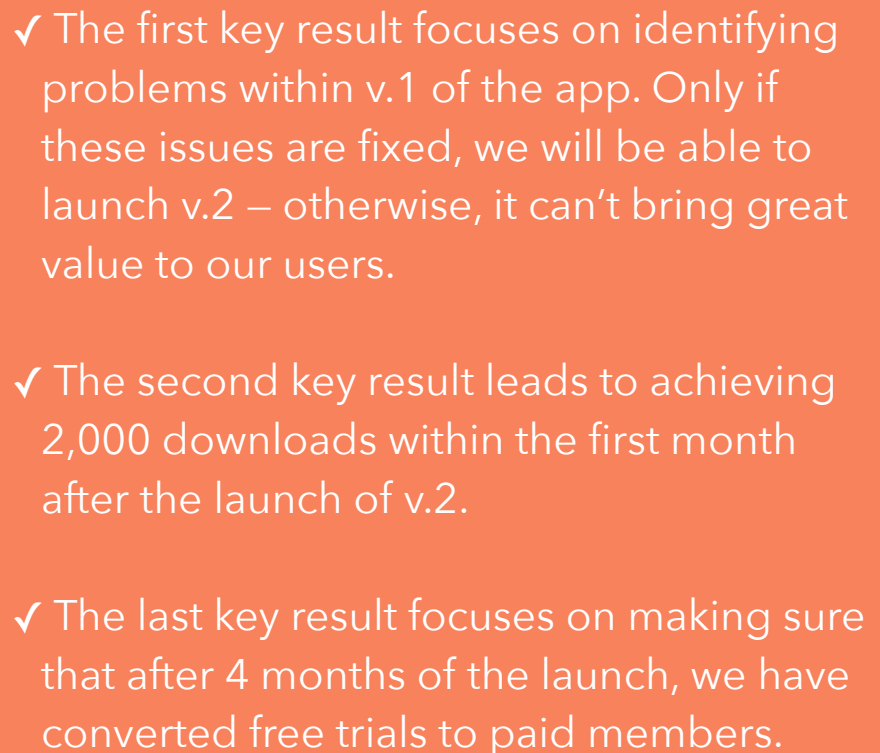- **Objective:** 'Successfully launch v.2 of our app by September 1st.'
Key Results:
- Identify problems with current app v.1
- Get 2,000 downloads by October 1st'
- 'Achieve minimum 50% trial to paid within 4 months after launch'.

Having your OKRs defined with clarity, allows you to build a clear-cut MVP. As you can see in the above example, each key result covers the features that you need to concentrate on:

✓ The first key result focuses on identifying problems within v.1 of the app. Only if these issues are fixed, we will be able to launch v.2 – otherwise, it can't bring great value to our users.

✓ The second key result leads to achieving 2,000 downloads within the first month after the launch of v.2.

✓ The last key result focuses on making sure that after 4 months of the launch, we have converted free trials to paid members.

Simply put, this framework will help you define the MVP by prioritizing on the important things, because, remember, no company has unlimited resources, so y**ou must prioritize.**

What now? Build-measure-learn AND iterate.

GREAT. IS THE MVP FINISHED AFTER THIS?

Product Managers understand that a product is never really finished. The day after they release anything, they are again thinking about how to add or remove features. Thus, the whole MVP process should be more dependent on the availability of resources, as defined by internal stakeholders, than the real product "needs" (which are always changing).

OK, I'M READY TO MOVE FORWARD. WHAT'S THE NEXT STEP?

Every product person has heard enough about 'the why' and 'the north star to last a lifetime. And yet it bears repeating. **You have to start with your product vision.** The simplest way of communicating the vision across your teams is with a good old fashioned Vision Statement.

You should collaborate with stakeholders, teammates, and customers, and don't be afraid to rework your product vision as times goes on. While you are the owner of the Vision Statement, don't forget that it should also align with the values and visions of the company as a whole.

WHAT ABOUT CUSTOMER INSIGHTS?

One of the most dangerous things you could do for your product is to use assumptions about customer needs and behavior without testing. Even if you and your teams have worked in the same space before, test your assumptions with data. This will help you create better informed customer insights. Having fresh perspectives going into a new product will save you a lot of pain when it comes to the feedback loop, as you've already anticipated what your users want from you.

WHAT SHOULD I DO WITH THIS DATA?

There are 3 different things you can do with this data to make sure it stays at the forefront of your teams' minds.

Personas: Create segments of your potential customers with lists of behaviors and characteristics. Similar to the personas used by marketers to understand how and when to post something to Facebook, your personas will help you know who you are building your product for, and inform decision making.

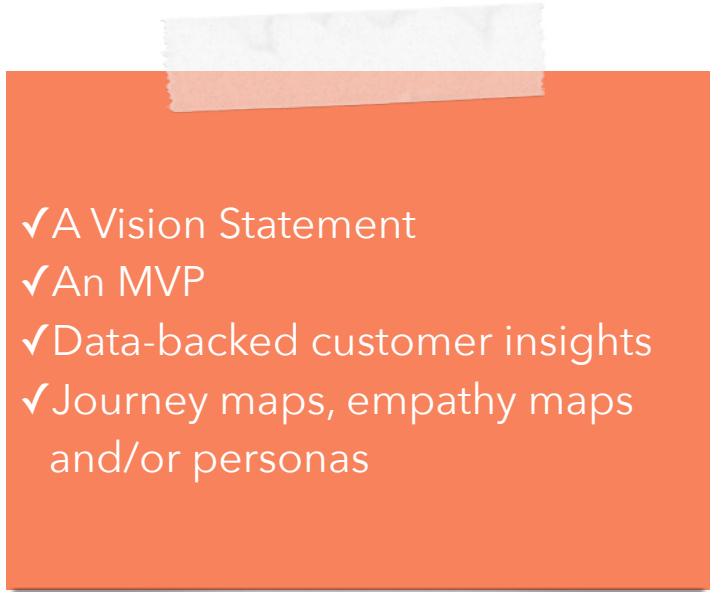**Journey map:** These will be maps of your user's journey from discovering your product to being a regular user. Accurately predicting how your customer will move through your product will help UX designers build it in a more informed way.

Empathy maps: Similar to a persona, but this time with the focus on how your customer feels. You can ask yourself things like "is the user concerned about global warming?" or "what might worry the user about using our product?"

SO, IN SHORT, WHAT EXACTLY SHOULD I HAVE AT THE END OF DISCOVERY?

You'll know that you have finished the Product Discovery stage of development, and are ready to move on to the next when you have achieved the following:

✓A Vision Statement
✓An MVP
✓Data-backed customer insights
✓Journey maps, empathy maps and/or personas

PHASE 2

DESIGN & IMPLEMENTATION

Objective: *Get in-sync with all the teams*

NOW THAT I HAVE THE SOLUTION TO A PROVEN PROBLEM. WHAT DO I NEED TO DO?

Now it's time to design it! First you'll be working with designers to create mockups, which are then tested with customers to see what works and what doesn't. The designers will keep making amendments and re-testing until there is a well-defined product which solves key problems for customers. While the designers will be the ones taking point on this task, the product manager will be the one organizing and overseeing the whole process.

GREAT! HOW CAN I ORGANIZE ALL THESE TASKS?

At this stage you'll be coming up with the roadmap, an important strategic tool for product teams.

Essentially a roadmap:

- Is the journey plan for a product, from drafting to releasing
- Reflects the product vision and plots out certain goals and targets
- Helps to plan what resources and tools will be needed, and when
- Is a tool for cross-team communication, keeping everyone on the same path
- Provides a way of communication with stakeholders and users

It's important not to create the roadmap in a vacuum, but in partnership with designers, marketers, and engineers. Not only do they hold key information which should inform the roadmap, but it's very important to have everyone on the same page from the very beginning. Bad design happens where teams diverge, which is usually a result of bad planning or a lack of communication.

OK, SO HOW SHOULD I AVOID BAD PLANNING?

Your mindset as product manager will play a huge part in planning well across teams. Leading without authority is all part of the fine art of product management, and it's easy to get wrong. Too loose a handle on things leads to chaos, but too firm leads to resentment. Without authority, a product manager needs the art of influence.

1. **Make your teams problems your problems.** Empathy is a huge asset and does wonders for colleague relationships. Not only that, but helping them solve their problems to reach their own objectives will invariably help with reaching your collective objectives.

2. **Share the vision.** You don't need your teams to get behind you as a leader, you need them to unite behind the product vision. Be honest about the impact the product will have on the company. If you all share the same vision, you'll share the same motivation.

3. **Communicate openly.** Openness is vital to achieving alignment. While you want to be likeable, you'll still have to learn how to say 'no'. For example, a UI designer might think that a certain feature looks clunky and could easily be discarded, but as a Product Manager you're the professional who knows exactly how that feature connects to the larger project. It's up to you to communicate how it doesn't make sense to remove it.

WHO HANDLES WHAT IN THE IMPLEMENTATION PHASE?

The implementation phase varies from company to company, but generally speaking this phase is where the actual product is built. While the product manager will still be overseeing everything, this is the time when the designers and engineers really shine.

During this phase the product manager will work closely with the tech teams and the project manager, who will be ensuring that everything runs on time. The project manager will also be focusing on economic constraints (i.e. if another designer has to be brought in to share the workload.) It's important for the product manager to have a strong working relationship with the project manager at this stage, as they'll often be working in tandem.

I HEAR PRODUCT MANAGERS ARE ALWAYS IN MEETINGS, IS THAT TRUE?

Yes and no. You'll be kept busy with plenty of things, but meetings are always a key part of every PMs week. It's good during the implementation phase to hold regular meetings at the beginning or end of every day with the different teams. While this can seem time-consuming when you're already very busy, if you only realise down the line that the teams have diverged you'll have wasted much more time. A timely intervention before a big problem hits can save you a lot of work.

HOW DO I HOLD MEETINGS WITH TECH TEAMS IF I'M NOT TECHY?

This is a struggle for many PMs who don't have backgrounds in engineering or degrees in computer science. Part of the job is being able to find common ground in communicating with various teams. Some Product Managers struggle to discuss technical aspects of the product, and some are a bit baffled by design.

Whatever your Achilles heel, you have to work with your teams to **find common ground in communication.** (This is where the seemingly absurd amount of meetings comes in handy!)

If there is an area you continuously struggle with, coding for example, it's a good idea to educate yourself in this area. If you are dedicated to a career in building digital products, **investing in understanding them more fully** can only be a positive thing.

ANY LAST PIECES OF ADVICE?

Being a Product Manager is all about being adaptable. The design phase is arguably the most hectic stage of development, and prioritization is key. While it might sound pessimistic, plan for things to go wrong from time to time!

Failure is just part of product, so long as your whole team are focused on the right goals and working in cohesion with each other, you'll keep your losses to a minimum and learn from your mistakes.

It's also important to note that while you should try to stick to your original plan as much as possible to keep from going off-track, unexpected things happen during implementation. If problems arise or you gain new insights, and the finished product does not look 100% exactly as originally intended, that's all part of building products!

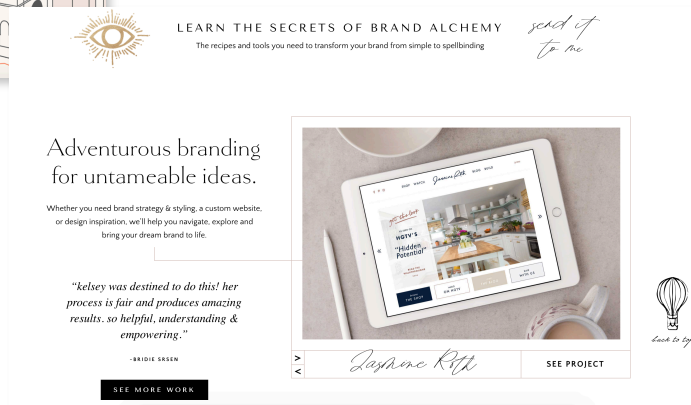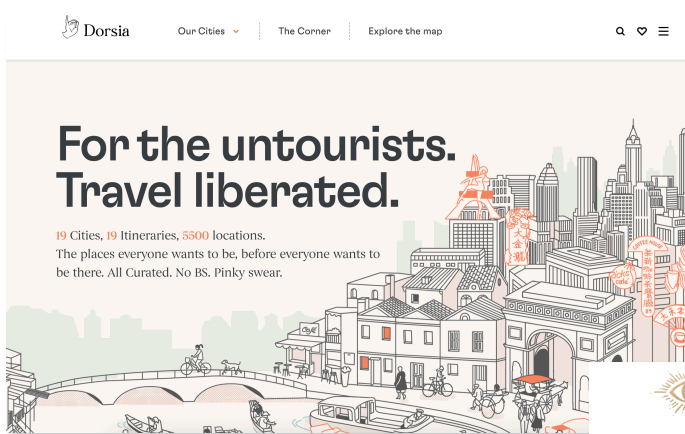## BONUS — GREAT DESIGNED PRODUCTS

stripe.com

lattice.com

dorsia.io

mowellens.com

wildsidedesign.co

slack.com

PHASE 3

PRODUCT
MARKETING

Objective: *Define marketing goals*

LET'S GET READY TO BUILD SOME BUZZ FOR THE LAUNCH. BUT WHOSE MAIN RESPONSIBILITY IS IT?

Product Managers guide the future of a product and lead the product team. They own the problem the product solves and the technical ins and outs of it. But for creative executions, product launches, etc, PMs rely on their perfect duos: Product Marketing Managers.

SO WHAT ARE THE MAIN RESPONSIBILITIES OF A PRODUCT MARKETING MANAGER?

Product Marketing Managers (PMMs) coordinate the launch period and act as a bridge between technical product knowledge and the messaging, while PMs coordinate technical rollout and make sure everything goes according to the PMMs' plan.

Apart from the launch, PMMs have two main responsibilities:

Drive Demand with Positioning:
- Product Marketing, unlike generic marketing, focuses on more strategic domains, such as positioning and key messaging.

- A Product Marketing Manager should work on positioning the product as a solution to the pain points of the target audience. To achieve that, a PMM has to understand the market, competition, target audience. Then they must adapt and translate the upcoming feature and product launches to customer-facing marketing content with their storytelling skills.

- Finally, PMMs analyze the data gathered to invest in new strategies and align design, customer support, sales and marketing teams on appropriate messaging.

Drive Usage with User Education:

- PMMs ensure that potential customers are educated on the value of the product and the vision of the PM, by working on in-app messages, email campaigns, and creating user onboarding materials to increase product adoption.

WHAT DO PMS AND PMMS WORK ON IN A PRODUCT LIFE CYCLE BEFORE THE LAUNCH?

The product manager is the main keeper of customer insights. They know who they are, what their online habits are, and therefore can help the PMM to come up with a marketing strategy. It's not often as simple as 'which social media channels shall we invest advertising budget in?' Much of what a PMM does is influenced by the work a PM does.

At the stage, the PMM uses the product strategy created by the PM to **create a go-to-market strategy.** This lays out the overall plan for who the product needs to reach and how, and usually comes in the form of a go-to-market roadmap. Naturally, this is informed by the product roadmap, created by the PM, as what's being marketed needs to reflect the final product even before launch.

A PM creates user personas in the Discovery phase of product development, and from those **a PMM can create buyer personas**, which focuses more on the buying habits of the target users. Another thing the PMM will be working on is **preparing a press kit** and liaising with relevant bloggers, influencers, and publications.

Getting a positive third-party review on the right platform can be a significant asset for early sales. Your product can also be opened up to a select group of users in a **beta-testing programme**, which works both as a marketing tool and as another way to get user feedback. Some users will only be interested in the functionality of the product, and other publications will be more interested in the technology behind it. For example, an average consumer for Apple just wants to know "is the camera good?" but Wired probably want something more specific! This means working closely with the PM to communicate the tech specs and capabilities of the product to publications.

As the work that these two managers do is so closely linked, it's vital that they work together well. **The best way to achieve this is regular communication**. Strong communication between the marketing teams and the product team is hugely influential on the success of a product.

PHASE 4

THE
LAUNCH

Objective: *Send product to market*

WHY PREPARING FOR LAUNCH IS SO IMPORTANT?

Launch has the potential to be one of the most embarrassing moments for a company if things start to fall apart, as more of the public eye is turned to your product. That is why we'll help you be prepared to do things the right way.

As a Product Manager, you are the conductor of an orchestra at this stage, and checklists are similar to making sure the instruments (read as departments) are all going to play in the same key.

WHAT IS A GOOD PRODUCT LAUNCH CHECKLIST?

There is no guaranteed method of success for the perfect product launch, because every product is unique and has a different target audience of its own.

However, having a well-crafted plan to follow for launching a product can help avoid failure.

THE LAUNCH CHECKLIST

✓ MARKET RESEARCH & POSITIONING

The fundamental, and maybe most important, step to start with. Because positioning in the market will be the decision-making factor of the entire marketing strategy: Defining the target audience and where to reach them, the copy of the website, onboarding materials, messaging…

✓ DEFINING BUYER PERSONAS

Research your target audience and find their pain points. Then, divide them into segments with relevant data based on demographics, what they want to achieve with such a product, etc.

✓ GET IN-SYNC WITH OTHER TEAMS

Once your launch is live, your sales team are your front line troops. Make sure they have been trained to use the product, give demonstrations, answer questions, and make the sale with your various buyer personas. On the other hand, to deliver a great customer experience, run over the FAQs to ensure these are accurate, go over protocol for problematic cases and test product tutorials with the customer service team.

✓ BETA STAGE

Find people that will be really interested in the product you've built, and ask if they'd like to join the beta testing. Analyze their behavior and keep talking to them. They might be your most loyal customers, and you'll get tons of valuable feedback.

✓ PREPARE A PRESS KIT

On the launch day, you should announce your product on various product listing websites (such as Product Hunt, Indie Hackers, BetaList, Capterra, G2, etc) and they should all send the same message. That's why it's important to have your copy and visuals ready before the launch.

✓ BUILD THE INFRASTRUCTURE TO GAIN INSIGHTS

Get your tools ready before launch, so that you have everything recorded for later analysis. Use FullStory to watch how your first users are using your product, Amplitude to track and analyze user actions, and Google Analytics to observe the traffic source and track goals.

✓ PREPARE A FOLLOW UP PLAN

The product is ready to launch, but your work is not done yet. Remember to prepare a market strategy to follow after you have launched the product, saying how the product is going to be updated going forwards. Making these plans beforehand will help you in times of crisis.

WHAT COULD GO WRONG?

There is nothing worse than an over-hyped product; there are plenty of cases of Silicon Valley enthusiasm that melted into nothingness. Product Managers, since they have undertaken all the previous necessary steps, are aware of their potential and their limitations. **Often, a truthful, simple and direct campaign works better** than the big announcements associated with the tech industry.

To prevent failure at launch, Product Marketing Managers should actually be involved from the very start of the development. Their particular knowledge of your target customers, the market, and the sector is fundamental. **Above all, your product itself and the narrative to sell it must be coherent.** It is not about them having a head-start so they can work on their copy for a longer time: it is about both the product and its marketing strategies cheering the same messages.

Case Study: No Man's Sky

The video game industry is full of overhyped products. Hello Games, a developer company, claimed they created a space simulator with infinite planets that players could go visit, and when asked if the game was going to have a multiplayer option, constantly replied yes. Hello Games and No Man's Sky increasingly gained popularity in the months before launch and the audience was ultimately hyped.

The game was released on August 2016 and it lacked so many promised features it set a record number of refunds in the few days after launch. Impartial critics decided the game was above average in terms of quality, but because of their marketing strategy Hello Games and their product was flooded with negative reviews. Even though Hello Games didn't let No Man's Sky go down as the biggest fail of the gaming industry, and kept improving it and started delivering the promised features, they will always be remembered as the company which released the most overhyped product in gaming history.

SO...DOES THAT MEAN I'M DONE?

It might seem like that! Everything seems to be running smoothly, with clicks and open rates flying in from the marketing team, the customer service team is busy answering queries, media coverage has started trickling in, everyone is off to present at conferences... now you can relax.

It's a lovely dream, but the reality is that now it's time to look back at the goals you set at the beginning of the journey. How do they compare to the end results? **If you have targets you didn't meet, it's important to take a look at why.** Alternatively you may have surpassed your goals, in which case you can look at what went right, so the process can be replicated for future products. At this stage you should also be reviewing user feedback and gathering data which will influence how you plan development iterations.

After all, a product is never really finished! "Build, measure, learn and iterate, always with the user in mind".

PHASE 5
TRAIN YOUR USERS

Objective: *Inform your user about the product*

WHAT IS USER ONBOARDING?

User Onboarding is a **crucial process that starts when a user acquires a product** or a service and ends when the user gets fully acquainted and integrated with it. A successful User Onboarding process helps users gradually and solidly understand all a product can offer and give a positive first impression.

Used in a huge variety of products, especially for SaaS (Software as a Service), User Onboarding does not just mean teaching a customer how to use your product. It means walking them through their first experience and establishing a positive bond with them, making sure next time they have related needs, they will come back to your product.

A rich User Onboarding experience could include an easy to use design, an interactive in-depth tutorial, and a brief explanation of the product, with just enough detail to cover all of its uses.

At the end of this process, if all went according to plan, the user should experience an "Aha!" moment where they figure out exactly what the product is and how to use it in the most efficient way according to their needs.

WHY DOES USER ONBOARDING MATTER?

Every company wants their product to be successful and their users to be loyal to them. But that is easier said than done. Both acquiring and keeping users loyal is a challenge that can only be achieved if you do everything correctly when engaging with your users.

The period of time which matters the most in terms of user retention, is between when they first acquire your product, and before they are well acquainted with it. In other words, the whole User Onboarding process. If you keep your users satisfied with their initial experience, the number of loyal and active users will definitely increase.

User Onboarding makes up one of the biggest parts of a product's success. A successful User Onboarding process helps

users familiarize with your brand and become a lifetime customer of your product. But most importantly, satisfied users will spread their positive reviews through social networks, review sites, and word of mouth. A high percentage of positive reviews encourage new customers to try your product or service with minimal doubt and eventually it will climax the number of new users your company receives and even attract new investors and satisfy stakeholders

DOES HAVING A GREAT UX MEAN HAVING A GREAT ONBOARDING TOO?

User Experience (UX) does not have a strict definition, but it covers every aspect of a product design that users interact with. The goal of working on **UX design is satisfying customers through utility and visuals**. Any product that has a well designed User Onboarding process probably also has a fantastic UX design. But that doesn't mean the same can be said the other way around.

A great UX design has a big hold over the success of an onboarding process, but it is not enough alone. A product could have the best UX design but might still struggle with its User Onboarding process. There are different aspects of a great User Onboarding process that are not directly related to

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interactive features. For example, sincerity and efficiency play a very important role:

✓ **Sincerity:** In the last few decades, especially in the digital sphere, companies have started to spend more and more of their resources on customer relations. Sincerity is an aspect of the onboarding process requires a company to be honest and transparent toward their customers and their investors. Users will be more inclined to work with a company that will not hesitate to share their vision. In addition to having a great UX design, being sincere with your customers during the onboarding process is a must.

✓ **Efficiency:** Efficiency here could be described as the value of your product, how much your product can do, how efficient it is as opposed to the other products that do the same thing. A product could have the greatest UX design and the users could easily manage around the product thanks to that design, but if the users feel like they could achieve more in the time they invest using your product, the onboarding process is likely to fail. Those users will opt for products that do the same thing in less time.

WHAT'S THE FUTURE OF USER ONBOARDING?

It's better to answer this by looking at some current trends. For example:

- **Personalized onboarding:** it has an overwhelmingly positive effect on building strong relationship with users. Right now we are able to do it by grouping users under different segments, but in the future every single user will have their unique onboarding experience based on the purpose of their visit, needs or knowledge level. AI will help to enhance this scope and shorten the time-to-value for the user.

- **Gamification:** it will continue to play a crucial role in helping users understand how to navigate a product. A structure of rewards and achievements are an efficient way of helping users understand the value of a product, and encourages them to keep using it.

- **Voice User Interface (VUI)**: thanks to the rising popularity of VUI we'll probably see many more devices that we can interact with through speech. How precisely this will be used in User Onboarding remains unclear,

but we're sure to see a surge in VUI user-onboarding in the next generation of products.

EVERYONE'S TALKING ABOUT USER JOURNEY. WHAT IS IT?

User Journey encapsulates the users' experience of a product, and how they progress through the various stages of using it. It helps in the design of the product where your priority is providing users with a smooth and satisfying experience. It also helps show stakeholders and possible investors what the product or the service will provide for users and how it will achieve it.

The User Journey is particularly helpful to the UI and UX teams, and is absolutely key for building the final deliverables. Knowing what Point A and Point B are is crucial for understanding how to get the user from one to the other.

OK SO HOW DOES IT WORK?

Designing the User Journey starts with researching and creating user personas. After figuring out an overview of your target users (buying habits, etc) understanding their needs and motives is the next step. To achieve the best User Journey possible, the goals of the users must be defined.

Once you have a clear set of defined user needs, you can create a narrative of the period starting from a user's first interaction with the product all the way to their becoming a loyal customer and regular user of the product. A good User Journey map takes each step the user takes along this path into consideration, making sure that there are no pitfalls.

However, the original User Journey map may look very different to what users actually experience after launch. Once you start receiving feedback, or new technologies become more mainstream, the User Journey will need to be adapted accordingly. Updating the User Journey based on feedback and data is the best way to keep long-term users happy.

WHY DOES MAPPING THE USER JOURNEY MATTER?

A User Journey map has different benefits for the different groups involved in the product's development.

For the product team, mapping User Journey is ideal for figuring out user behavior and how they'll interact with the product.

Having this data helps to create a positive and more seamless experience. The layout and design of your product should help your users to satisfy their needs as quickly as possible, and a map helps you work out how best to achieve that.

A product that hasn't yet been built can feel like an abstract concept, and can be difficult to explain. Stakeholders greatly benefit from having a narrative that breaks down exactly what a product does and how it benefits the user, as it helps to inform their decisions.

The marketing teams will also need to have an understanding of how the product actually works. The narrative that the User Journey creates will help greatly with the storytelling aspect of marketing.

To summarise, without a User Journey map, you risk some people involved in the product lifecycle not fully understanding, or misunderstanding, vital information about what users will get out of the product.

You also risk losing important data on how customers will interact and what their experience of the product will be.

WHY IS USER ONBOARDING SO IMPORTANT FOR PMS?

Products succeed by solving customers' problems, and it is the PMs responsibility to make sure that customers find what they're looking for when they come to our products. Successful onboarding is the very first step in solving users' problems.

Product managers carry a lot of information between the actual users and the product team. In other words, they act as a bridge between the two. User onboarding is nothing without a PMs deep understanding of who the user is and what they expect from a product.

Onboarding process directly affects the AARRR metrics, especially Activation and Retention. As these metrics are key for measuring the success of the product overall, it's clear that a PM should take a keen interest in the onboarding process.

WHAT HAPPENS IF I DON'T ONBOARD MY USERS?

You will have to struggle with the low retention rates! The hardest decline on the retention graph of an average SaaS Business mostly takes place during the first week. When users are not able to experience the value offered by a product, they start to look for alternatives. The more time they have to invest before finding any value, the more likely they are to abandon the ship and look somewhere else.

HOW CAN A PM ENSURE A GREAT ONBOARDING EXPERIENCE?

Efficiency is the key here. Ask yourself, how quickly can we provide value to our users? While creating onboarding content such as interactive walkthroughs or e-mail sequences; you can use a set of questions to make sure that they serve the right purpose, for example:

Do the onboarding materials always imply the benefit that my users will obtain and their overall progress?
- Is my onboarding content permanently accessible, can my users find it again whenever they want to?
- Does my onboarding content block the free discovery process or distract the user?

DID YOU ENJOY THE GUIDE?

More curated resources:

- Product Mindset: How to Get Inside Your Customer's Mind
- The Definitive Guide to NPS
- The Product Book

MORE ABOUT USER ONBOARDING?

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