

Product Myopia

Get Past the Roadmap and Broaden Your Perspective

By Steven Haines

In 1960, Theodore Levitt published “Marketing Myopia,” an article appearing in the *Harvard Business Review*. The subtitle, “Sustained growth depends on how broadly you define your business – and how carefully you gauge your customers’ needs,” is as important today as it was 40 years ago. I’ll start with a quote from page 12 of the article: “If

you had told them 60 years ago that in 30 years they would be flat on their backs, broke, and pleading for government subsidies, they would have thought you totally demented.” This was what Levitt said of the railroad tycoons circa 1920. Hmmm...

Fast forward to today: I had an epiphany. I was recently facilitating a workshop. One of the exercises involved a fictitious situation about reprioritizing work for a series of product features being developed. We talked a lot about cost, schedule, resources, complexity, must have’s/should have’s, and a host of other fun stuff. I must have been having an out of body experience. I have done this exercise hundreds of times and debriefed in a similar fashion. But this day was different. On this day, I felt an incredible sense of concern.

Here’s why:

- Product managers are being inundated by the urgent needs of the moment and the demands of hungry developers waiting to be fed.
- Product managers and their managers are paying lip service to the “market” and pandering to development instead of having a balanced view of their universe.
- Being agile is creating a black hole, with engineering as the energy source, and product managers are losing market perspective while trying to prioritize a backlog of work activities.
- The intent of having a business oriented product manager often is being marginalized because other functions are stepping in and asserting their agendas.
- Product roadmaps seem to be magnified as the only true evidence of what’s in a product manager’s agenda because of the needs of people in other functions. These views tend to offer a singular perspective on product direction without regard for other organizational impacts.
- The product roadmap appears to be the single manifestation of the strategy for a product or product line.

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May Event Review: “Why Have a Strategy? We’re finally getting something done!” with Barbara Nelson of Pragmatic Marketing

By Cindy F. Solomon

At the May meeting of the SVPMA, Barbara Nelson presented an interactive session demonstrating the vital necessity of developing and executing on a product strategy even in a climate of rapidly changing market influences and survival mode conditions. Drawing upon more than 20 years of experience in the software industry, Ms. Nelson speaks as an evangelist for market-driven products. Prior to joining Pragmatic

Marketing as an instructor in 2000, Barbara served in product management and marketing positions for an enterprise accounting and finance software company. As vice president of product marketing, she worked closely with product managers, marketers and developers, showing the value of using market facts over opinions. She attributes her success to actively listening to the market in order to build products people want to buy.

Refreshingly, Barbara began with an allegory about a friend returning from their uncle’s funeral with boxes of pictures from his life. Her friend was in a quandary about what to do with the pictures. None of the pictures were labeled. The friend tossed all the boxes of pictures as they had no meaning to her and no one in the family could identify the people photographed.

Ms. Nelson suggested that the issue of organizing photographs from a lifetime has not gotten simpler with the availability of new software and technology – rather it has gotten easier to capture photos in an unwieldy fashion and store them in a myriad of digital locations. She suggested that solving the problem of organizing pictures is a real life dilemma requiring product management skills. Start with identifying themes in the pictures. You could take a waterfall approach to proceed in a sequential manner from the bigger “picture” assuming that all the pictures are quality and worth keeping, then break down the problem into smaller projects, identify the method for determining where the pictures will be filed, the file names, and then proceed to label and place the pictures appropriately. Or take an Agile approach by organically sorting pictures based on the themes and subject matter, quality, sentimental value, frequently adapting filenames and organization choices as more pictures are reviewed and recurring patterns are recognized.

Transitioning from this universal issue, Ms. Nelson inquired “What is your personal strategy?” Is it “I have a vision: our product is for anybody, anywhere, anytime.”? She stated emphatically that product management requires both strategies and tactics. But faced with deadlines, what is the need for strategy if progress is being made? The market changes so rapidly it’s impossible to execute on a strategy. We’re in survival mode. We take every deal that comes along. The executives don’t agree on a strategy so how can

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- To provide a forum to share day-to-day experiences and insights in Product Management
- To create a safe network of peers
- To promote research and education in Product Management

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we execute one? Our developers think the strategy is flawed so they have stealth projects. Strategy takes time that we don't have. Connecting the detailed tasks to the strategy slows down execution. We can't afford to stop executing for a minute because we have limited time, money, and resources. During these tough economic times, our philosophy is to just do it!

Ms. Nelson's overall message is that PMs don't have the luxury of working on the wrong tactics. Good strategy helps you filter out bad tactics so you can focus on what is most important to your long-term viability in the market. The PM is the President of the Product, although in reality a PM may experience being the janitor of the product. A company's original vision created income for the founders, who solved a problem that they experienced firsthand. The challenge is to figure out how to get to the next product, and the CEO has to transition to strategizing for the

company and away from tactical details.

Strategy helps you figure out what NOT to do. Research into companies identifies that only 5% of employees are familiar with the company's strategy. How do they know what to do to move the company forward? Things change when you move from strategy to execution. You must determine where you are trying to go, what mountain you are trying to climb. The work being done is the defacto strategy – does it connect to the vision? Every level of planning MUST connect to the strategy: Vision, Product, Release, Tasks. Find a problem in the market for which there is no solution and make sure it fits with the overall company direction.

A good PM is involved in the release and feature set of a product. Prioritizing backlog is tactical. Priori-

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Every Product Manager Should be able to answer these simple questions about their product:

- Where are you now?
- How did you get here?
- Where do you want to go?
- How will you get there?
- How will you know?

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tizing themes is strategic and guides tactics. Do the detailed tasks connect all the way back to higher management? PM requires communication at the executive level and trust between layers of management. You must identify if there is a gap between strategy and execution, or worse between the executives and the sales, marketing and development functions. Product Management falls between strategy and execution and must provide simultaneous interpretation within that gap or risk becoming “demo boy”.

At this point, Ms. Nelson broke the audience into groups to do a “Force Field Analysis”. The instructions were to come up with two to three driving forces that have positive impact in closing the gap as a product manager, and two to three constraining forces that prevent product management from operating successfully. The product managers, product marketers, engineers, entrepreneurs and other interested parties in attendance were quite vocal and animated in this discussion. The small groups came back together to share results of the discussion. A list of what works included:

1. Involving the team with users and use cases including UI and QA for buy-in from the beginning
2. Providing rewards and incentives to the developers to acknowledge and reinforce desired contributions
3. Ongoing market sensing activities
4. Clear goals and milestones that the entire team understands

Other positive driving forces were:

- a culture of honesty, integrity, transparency and trust
- good executive leadership, internal communication and technical skill set
- clear understanding of market trends and opportunities
- customer input without intermediaries
- The list of Constraining forces included;
- Not having a common language in the vernacular of doing business
- Outsourcing challenges that don't always save money – even if it appears that it does on paper
- Customer requirements confused between key customers versus markets of customers

Ms. Nelson was adept at reframing the constraints into the constructive opportunities for the product manager to provide given pervasive problems, such as:

- Identify patterns that are repeatable for customized features
- Distill down commonalities to figure out how to deal with nuances
- Challenge engineers to build tools, APIs



Regarding constraints on time:

- Cut features
- Present value calculations, tradeoffs
- Utilize conjoint analysis

Recognize that the product manager is the messenger for the market and must bring market data to enable the executives to make the right decisions. The PM must consistently stay on course and communicate often with management. “You can't do everything. You can't even do the compelling many.” Therefore the PM must focus on the vital few. The closer you are to the sales process, the more difficult it is to make product tradeoffs. Sales depend on individual deals and ultimately want products the market wants to buy, so the PM must provide a higher view of sales to many. The PM must assess the market as big enough and teach sales to recognize the right fits to stuff their pipeline.

The PM articulates the distinctive competence of the company's unique, sustainable value. PMs figure out drivers in market segments using data, not opinions. “Your opinion, although interesting, is irrelevant.” PMs identify the market segment that values what you do that the competitors don't do well. Delight user personas by solving their problems – figure out why the customer wants to buy. Regularly use Win/Loss

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Analysis to validate why your product is winning and losing. Continuously connect strategy to execution with post mortem corrections and quarterly road map reviews.

Perform Agile retrospectives by questioning:

- What did we say we would do?
- What did we do?
- What's next?
- What are the barriers?

Ms. Nelson's bottom line education for a PM is to be consistently immersed in high value activities that

- Provide market feedback to help you adapt and improve along the way
- Drive alignment between executives and workers
- Communicate the strategic vision to marketing, sales, development

- Show leadership by bringing market expertise to the strategic planning process.
- Align your team around a strategic vision to drive execution towards building products people want to buy.

"Management is doing things right. Leadership is doing the right things." Peter Drucker ☞

Cindy F. Solomon founded her first company in NYC before the age of 30 after holding positions with Radio Shack, American Express and Boardroom, Inc. Cindy has held technology marketing management positions with Apple, Vadem, NetObjects and several start-ups. Cindy is a Certified Product Manager and Certified Product Marketing Manager.



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“A Report from PMEC West”

By Cindy F. Solomon

The Product Management Education & Certification Conference (PMEC) is an annual event that debuted in San Francisco in 2004 providing the only certification for product managers that covers the entire product life cycle. Because products are the life blood of companies, and the proper management of the company's goods and services determines the profitability of the company, innovative product managers must always be taking advantage of educational opportunities that increase their competitive edge and enable them to hone their product management skills.

The theme for the 2010 conference was Customer Insights: The Road Less Traveled. Understanding your customer is at the heart of excellent product management, brand management and marketing. However, it is far more common to see companies focusing on the innovation, development and marketing of products they feel compelled to create. The result is a market full of mediocrity. It is a popular strategy though. We see it continually executed across industries, platforms, markets, economies, countries. Conference speakers and presentations spoke to the road less traveled: the journey of customer center innovation. Putting your customer at the center of your business is not separate from what you already do; it is a more effective way of doing it.

The Conference opened with an entertaining and provocative keynote address given by Dean Holmes of Dean Holmes LIVE! Dean also gave a 2 part workshop for the Insights track entitled Social Media – What's Working Now in Social Media: How to Sell NEW Products Online.

Participants could choose from two different tracks to attend over the course of the conference – Methods and Insights. The first day of the Methods track consisted of Agile Product Management training. The Agile Product Management Track incorporated a 10 part training that taught the necessary practices for working in an Agile environment. The course, taught by Greg Cohen, covered multiple Agile development methods (Scrum, XP and Lean) and focused on practical applications to make participants more effective the moment they returned to their desks. Cohen is a 15 year Product Management veteran with extensive experience and knowledge of Agile development, a member of the Agile Alliance and former President of the Silicon Valley Product Management Association. He has worked and consulted to venture start-ups and large companies alike and has trained product manag-

ers on Agile development methods across the country. As a practitioner and frequent commentator on product management issues, he has written and spoken on varied topics such as embracing Agile development, the benefits of open sourcing your product, and recession proofing your product management career. Cohen also signed copies of his book, “Agile Excellence for Product Managers” at the Monday evening dinner reception.

The second part of the Methods track incorporated a full day and a half of certification exam review followed by an opportunity to sit for the certification exam, presented by Leland Shaeffer. Shaeffer, founder and managing director of PLM Associates, helps companies bring better products to market faster, using fewer resources, by helping them implement or improve development and product lifecycle management processes. He brings a strong combination of analytical skills and practical experience to the problems of shortening development cycles and managing product lifecycles. For over 20 years, Mr. Shaeffer has been involved in product management and development for high-technology companies. He has held senior positions in product management, engineering and marketing at companies ranging from venture capital backed start-ups to Apple Computer, Convergent Technologies/Unisys, Imagery/Eastman Kodak, and Siliconix/Vishay. Mr. Shaeffer also was a consultant at McKinsey & Company, where he specialized in product/market strategy. Lee currently is Vice President of New Services and Alliances and board member of the Product Development and Management Association (PDMA). He founded and served as the first president of the Los Angeles Chapter of the PDMA (PDMA-Los Angeles). He is an Authorized Testing Partner for the Association of International Product Marketing and Management (AIPMM) and serves on its advisory board. He also is active in the Technology Council of Southern California and the Project Management Institute. Mr. Shaeffer holds a BS in electrical engineering from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and an MBA from Stanford University.

The Insights track was taught by a multidisciplinary team of experts who offered relevant tools, methodologies, strategies and insights into creating and selling products that customers want. The experts included product management and marketing practitioners, consumer anthropologists, ethnographers and career coaches. All presenters understood the chal-

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allenges of product management professionals as well as those of brand and marketing managers including those looking to make a career move and get a leg up on the competition.

Sessions included interactive multimedia presentations and actual field work that taught participants:

- How to go from noticing, to real insights
- The science behind what motivates and drives your customer
- How to go beyond “voice of the customer” -the life of the customer and your product in context
- How to get out of the office and into your customer’s head
- How to work synergistically with your cross-functional team
- Incorporate the customer in product innovation
- How to speak the customer’s language
- How to market to your customers, not at them

An example of the quality of information provided in the Insights track was the session entitled: Consumer Insights; Fundamental To Building Your Business presented by Jon Hanley, lead member of Procter & Gamble’s newly formed Global Business Services innovation, research and development team. Prior to this role he was the marketing strategy leader in P&G’s shared services business where he led the application of brand and product management practices within the organization. His work focused on strategic counsel for shared services and their related initiatives, user research and concept development, global training delivery, and development of best practices. Mr. Hanley’s 11-year P&G career started in Information Technology with a focus on ERP systems and later expanded to leadership of shared services operations within various P&G production facilities. After finishing his MBA he completed a broadening assignment in marketing working on the IAMS brand and he most recently played a project management role for P&G’s 2010 Winter Olympics campaign. Originally from the United States his work includes two expatriate assignments in Mexico and Puerto Rico. As an advocate of continual learning and professional development, Jon received his Certified Product Marketing Manager credentials June of 2009.

“Obtaining consumer insights is fundamental to building your business. Contrary to popular belief, when done right, consumer research is actionable, inexpensive, and dare we say... fun?” In this session, John top-lined consumer research basics, shared some real-life Procter and Gamble examples, and worked through several straight-forward quantitative and qualitative techniques that are immediately applicable.

Hanley’s key themes were:

- The importance of consumer understanding
- You can be a great researcher
- Implementing practical research techniques

Four fundamentals of good research:

- Identify the challenge
- Develop the plan
- Execution: Consumer Conversations
- Take Action

Attendees at the PMEC were treated to a book signing reception and dinner keynote presentation by Brian Lawley, CEO and founder of the 280 Group, which provides Product Management consulting, contractors, training and templates. Brian’s speech was titled, Black Belt Product Management. He presented his view using examples from a variety of martial arts on how to go from being good to great in Product Management answering questions such as, What does it take to truly master the art and profession of Product Management? How do you become a phenomenal Product Manager? Lawley is also a former President of the Silicon Valley Product Management Association and a third degree black belt in Kung Fu. During the last twenty five years of his career he has shipped more than fifty successful products. He won the 2008 AIPMM award for Excellence in Thought Leadership for Product Management and is the author of the best-selling books, Expert Product Management and The Phenomenal Product Manager. Mr. Lawley has been featured on CNBC’s World Business Review and the Silicon Valley Business Report and writes articles for a variety of publications including the Product Management 2.0 newsletter and Blog.

Besides being jam packed with intense innovative educational information for product managers, the PMEC also proved to be entertaining and valuable as a networking opportunity for over 50 participants who traveled to the event from all parts of the bay area and from other states. ☘

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June Event Review with Dan Olsen, CEO of YourVersion: Best Practices in Product Management for V1 products

by Keith Rayner

Obviously very pleased to be addressing an audience well versed in Product Management, Dan delivered the goods with blistering speed, highlighting the essential difference between activities for a first release versus ongoing development post-launch. The main takeaway is that for the first release you're much more concerned with the quantitative aspects, namely "what it is", as opposed to the qualitative aspects of "what it does". And if we take Dan's expert advice, here's how it's done.

The first step is understanding customer needs, and it should be clear that this is primarily a qualitative exercise. There's so much uncertainty that at this point you need to establish a product/market fit rather than hard-baking anything. The quantitative comes later when you're pretty sure you're on the right track and you can start to look at refinements.

A successful product meets customer needs, does it better than the competition, with ease of use, and backed up with a good business model. Whether you're a product manager, typically inbound, directing development teams and dealing with specialist UI designers, or a product marketing perhaps focusing more on outbound aspects such as coordinating product release, then as a PM you're sitting between the market and developers. You have to be an expert on the market and customer, translate business objectives and customer needs into product requirements, be a clearing house for product ideas, and keep an eye on long term business strategy.

These is a real juggling act, but above all make sure you define the problem space first, and look at the solution space later. As a concrete example, let's say the problem is "we need to book tickets online". The solution is then a specific implementation to address that need.

Essentially it's up to the PM to define the problem space. If you're clear on the problem space then you can better define the solutions, and have a framework for prioritization, to make sure the product features you implement support the high importance needs.

But understanding the problem space and customer needs does mean talking to your target audience and establishing how that need is currently met, and importantly what satisfaction level is currently out there in the market place. High need and low satisfaction with the competition means there's a good opportunity out there.

Dan introduced us to the Kano model, which maps out the performance benefits, must haves, and the delighter or wow! Factor. Delighter factors tend to be trend setters which then get adopted as must haves, so if you're first to market with a wow! Factor you're doing well.

One issue is where to draw the line for the first release. Scoping the critical requirements is a key skill as you're at the stage where you're creating something from nothing. Prioritize by ROI – the features that truly support customer value and get you the most return with the least investment (in time and effort) are the ones that survive, and this can a simple way of deciding between two possible features. If you've got 20 high priority items you're off track.

Even though the PM is defining the product, you do need to get some customer feedback on the initial concept in a usability test. Setting up focus groups, asking the right questions, and being open to feedback from usability tests are key skills at this point. The feedback from initial concept testing from outsiders can be sur-

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Upcoming Events:

- Jul 7th - Baruch Deutsch, Senior Director, Product Marketing, Cisco Systems
- Aug 4th - Dione Bailey, Executive Director of Product Management, Complete Genomics

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prising and the insiders have to learn to listen objectively and react appropriately. Dan gave us additional insights with a case study of this aspect – check out the presentation slides at http://www.slideshare.net/dan_o/best-practices-in-product-management-for-v1-web-products for additional details.

With your first release you haven't had daily customer usage feedback, so don't do too much work that you might have to undo later. Be precise about initial scope and keep it small. A key strategy to keep you focused is to decide what you're not doing – this can help narrow your goals.

Having said that you need a certain level of functionality and performance and UI design to satisfy basic needs, and build the features and functions on top of this. And the base level for the required functionality in up-time, response time (search for example) is pretty high these days. If you have a real differentiator, then that mitigates the impact of a bad interface, but if there are many products with similar user benefits in a competitive space, good UI design and ease of use might actually be the only real differentiator.

The less user effort is required, the higher the proportion of people that will use it. In small companies there's often a gap in user design, especially when people are throwing stuff over the wall and expect the finished product to look good and work well. A product manager that collaborates well on information architecture (site structure and layout) interaction de-

sign (how the user interacts with the product) and the visual design layer (how it looks rather than what is) will definitely have an advantage in creating a harmonized product set that has high customer acceptance.

Once you've launched, then you transition to persevere or pivot mode: With more extensive user and market feedback you can determine whether you're climbing up the mountain and perseverance will pay off; or you need to pivot, namely take a major change in direction and start to climb a different mountain. As this is a new product hopefully you've still got the flexibility to do this, if absolutely necessary, but it becomes more difficult when you're further down the road. If you're pivoting more than a couple of times after launch you're probably in trouble.

To get from the void of a market gap through the fuzzy stages of matching the problem to the solution, designing a great user experience and finally getting customer feedback, should be done precisely and quickly. With so many companies rushing in to fill a market vacuum, the PM is a central figure in making sure you have a lean and mean product that reaches the point of revenue quickly, and keeps you on the right path to future optimization through feedback and continuous improvement. ☘

Keith Rayner is CEO of [Kemarra Inc](http://www.kemarra.com), a marketing and business development consultancy focused on high-tech in Silicon Valley. Keith can be contacted at info@kemarra.com



and



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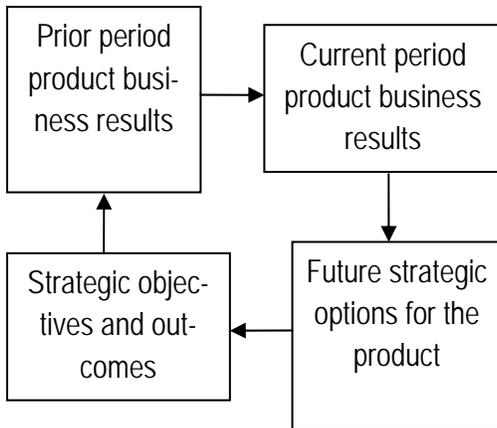
Product Myopia then is a malady afflicting an increasing number of product managers and business leaders – not all. It is forcing many product managers, and the organizations in which they work, into a narrowly defined spectrum of work. This narrow focus ties them to the office and limits their ability to consider a broad array of influences on the direction of the product (as a business).

As I thought more about these signals, I pondered the definition of myopia. If myopia is basically a visual defect, then how do we put on a set of corrective lenses that helps us see more clearly?

Gaining Focus

Solving the myopia problem could be easier than you think. It’s easier because you can take a fairly structured, yet common sense approach. Myopia can be cured when you have a clear perspective on where you’ve been, where you are, and where you’re going. Simply stated, these are the generic steps that you would take if you were putting a strategic plan together for your product or product line.

Here’s a visual:

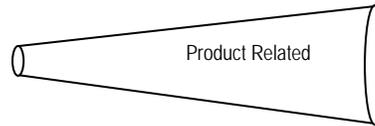


Now, let’s take a look at both *prior* and *current business results* (the two boxes on the left of the diagram above) and how to best organize them into a product retrospective. First, we’ll take a look at a grouping of data attributes related to the product. Note here that these particular data elements may also be gleaned from the categories used within your product requirements documentation.

These all become clear as you review the table below:

Data element	Two years ago	Last year	This year
Functionality			
Features			
Performance			
Platforms			
Designs			
Technologies			
Versions			

The attributes in this table are probably very familiar to you. Of course, each ‘cell’ of this matrix would contain a significant amount of content such as flow-charts, diagrams, etc. Another way of visualizing this would be to use the shape of a funnel where you can only see based on the width of the opening at either end (like a telescope).



If you’re saying to yourself “that’s pretty good, I get it,” you may have some myopia. If you’re saying to yourself “there’s some information missing here,” you may be on to something!

Now, let’s take a look at some additional dimensions. Attributes like pricing, promotion, and channel add to our perspective (these are the other marketing mix categories, for the Marketing 101 overlay)

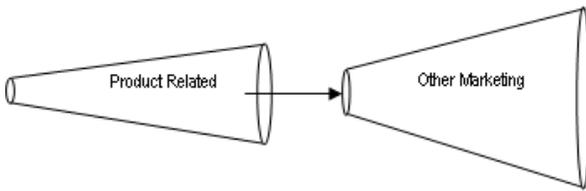
Data element	Two years ago	Last year	This year
Pricing programs			
Advertising and promotional programs			
Channel programs			

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By viewing these other attributes more completely, you may start to identify some important linkages between what actually happened with the product itself, and how other plans and programs influenced demand and overall product performance. For example, you may have combined a promotional program and a special pricing program to drive business for a major product update or enhancement. The product manager's job is to look at how these programs work together holistically, not myopically.

Using the funnel picture, now the funnel is a bit wider – you can see more broadly.



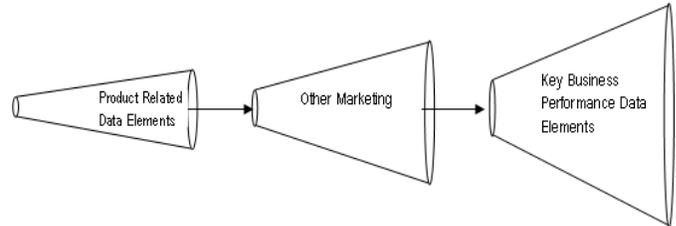
However, even a slightly wider field of vision doesn't cure the myopia completely. What other factors might we consider to see how well the product performed in the market?

How about some of the key business performance indicators (KPIs) that impact the products' contribution to the business?

Data element	Two years ago	Last year	This year
Financial performance			
Forecast accuracy and product volumes			
Customer satisfaction			
Market share			
Product quality			

Now we're getting somewhere. Not only do we see how a unique marketing mix plays out in delivering business results, we also see more clearly when we couple those data points with important business results.

In short, we can expand our field of vision, as represented in the progression of funnels in the following diagram.



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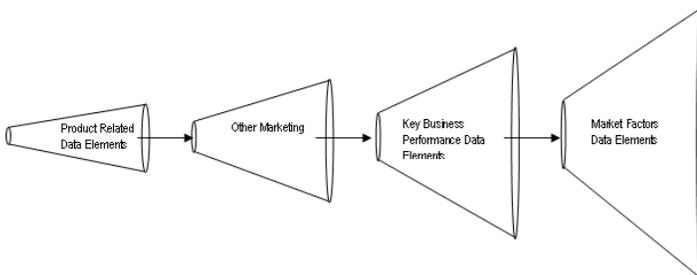
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There is one last grouping of data that will help you put a more realistic story together. Think about other aspects of the business and market environment itself. These data elements address some of the most important factors: the market factors. Market factors represent the most important connective tissue because they gives us the “who” and the “why” for our businesses. As you populate the cells with the data, you’ll begin to assemble a market story line for the product. Use this table as a way to structure your data and your story.

Data element	Two years	Last year	This year
Market seg-			
Customers			
Competitive			
Industry			

Or, to use the visual I’ve been cultivating, the market factors give us the biggest field of vision, which can do a great job at alerting us to future opportunities.



Now, let’s look at how this comes together.

When you look at all of these pieces together in one, table, here’s what it will look like:

Data element	Two years ago	Last year	This year
Functionality			
Features			
Performance			
Platforms			
Designs			
Technologies			
Versions			
Pricing programs			
Advertising and promotional programs			
Channel programs			
Financial performance			
Forecast accuracy and product volumes			
Customer satisfaction			
Market share			
Product quality			
Market segments			
Customers served			
Competitive activity			
Industry trends			

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All of these interconnected data elements give you the wherewithal to not only tell a market story, but also equip you with the ability to tell a story about your product as a complete business. You can even ascribe characteristics of your product as it evolved across its life cycle to its current point in the product portfolio and the markets within which it is sold.

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When we talk about a more holistic point of view for the product as a business, this is what we mean. This perspective is also very useful, especially as you try to build cross-functional advocacy for moving the product forward. Finally, this context provides you with comprehensive “clarity” when it comes to figuring out “where you are now,” so you can figure out where to go in the future.

This gets us to the point where we can really begin addressing the myopia I discussed earlier. But how?

We have to look forward. So let’s see what the forward looking view actually looks like.

Looking Forward

The forward looking view takes the product’s roadmap (indicated as the Roadmap Domain) and layers on all the other aspects of the business. The cells where data elements were placed in the retrospective profile become work activities that need to be knitted together.

In another context, think of this as a way to build a stronger cross-functional team. You are putting together a vision of a business and this is the game board you’ll use to put the puzzle together. When a team sees the same thing, they’re more likely to act together to work together to achieve a unified goal. They just need someone to lead them. That’s the job of the product manager.

Finally, here’s another way to think about this. If you were to craft a Business Case for an investment in a new product or enhancement, or a Marketing Plan for a product or product line, wouldn’t you want not only to include the basic “product” stuff, but also all the other aspects of the business that have to support the product as it makes its way to market and beyond?

You certainly would.

Concluding Thoughts

This article is entitled, “Product Myopia: Get Past the Roadmap and Broaden Your Perspective.” As I suggested early on, myopia is merely characterized by limited sight.

Product managers and their teams cannot afford to have a myopic view of their businesses. Rather, they need a broad perspective on all aspects of their business. This affords them the best view of the potential opportunities that lie ahead.

A broad view is also important because it establishes a realistic anchor. This anchor can provide a counterbalance to the other forces that often pull you in different directions and oblige you to deal with distracting details that cause you and your team members to lose focus – which can often derail your best efforts.

You will always have to help deal with priorities, trade-offs, and other decisions that result from unexpected complications. We’re all dealing with resource scarcity. So take the opportunity to pull back a bit. Then, you can reconsider the facts and data that contribute to your product’s business performance.

In time, you can use that context to look at your product’s future business from a more holistic perspective. Then, you can lead your team to greater market victories.☞

Steven Haines is the author of “The Product Manager’s Desk Reference” and the President of Sequent Learning Networks.

Current Situation	Data element	Next Year	Year After
	Functionality		
	Features		
	Performance		
	Platforms		
	Designs		
	Technologies		
	Versions		
	Pricing programs		

The Roadmap Domain



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