

The Cult of the Product

by Jesse Farmer

In the movies you can build a baseball stadium in an Iowa cornfield and get millions of people to show up. Who wouldn't want to see the ghost of Mickey Mantle play another game? In real life there are millions of details that go into constructing a baseball stadium, not the least of which are having a team and fans ready to fill it from day one.

The first scenario might be more romantic, but if you're looking to be a baseball mogul you'd better be operating in the second.

The same is true of your consumer internet venture. Most hackers and entrepreneurs spend their time thinking about just the product. "If we just build the most awesome widget possible," they think, "people will love it and give us money." Product first, everything else second.

The Cult of the Product

This is the sentiment that embodies what I call the "cult of the product." Like the Field of Dreams, people in this mindset believe that product is the most important thing and if they build it customers will come flocking.

It's hard to blame anyone — these signals are everywhere in the technology industry. If you take Apple's public image at

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...and more

February Event - How Product Management Must Change to Enable the Agile Enterprise with Catherine Connor, Product Manager, Rally Software

By Keith Rayner

Aided by her active roles as both a Product Manager and Product Marketer, Catherine Connor gave a very insightful presentation on Agile, as rather than just telling us the mechanics of Agile, she highlighted the all-important business value and, crucially for this particular audience, focused on what switching to Agile means in the day-to-day life of a Product Manager.

And surprisingly, even though Agile is now the hottest topic in town, from a show of hands in the audience, as many product managers were still exclusively using the waterfall process as were using purely Agile. In fact, most people were using a mix of both methodologies. So there's still a way to go, and Catherine's talk surely helped us along that path.

The Agile folks are so passionate about their approach that they've proclaimed an Agile Manifesto:

- Individuals and interactions over processes and tools

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The Big Company Survival Kit for Startup PM's

by Paul Young

There is so much territory to cover on this topic that this is probably the beginning of another series. This article focuses on differences and expectation setting between small and big companies, and lessons learned making the leap between the two.

I've always considered myself a startup kind of guy, and for the past two years I ran Product Management at a small company called NetStreams. However, two months ago an opportunity came up that I had to con-

sider, and ultimately took; to help Dell build out their SaaS business. Over these two months I've formed some new opinions about how Product Management is different at a small company vs. a large company. Now that I've bounced between small and large (NetSolve to Cisco to NetStreams to Dell), the contrasts are stark and important - especially if you are considering changing jobs.

Scope

Scope is very different between small and large companies - but not how you might think. My assumption was that coming into a large company, that roles would be very well defined and delineated, and that the scope of your role would be set. The reality is far from that - I've found that there are plenty of opportunities to define what Product Management means. This may differ depending on the part of the business you are in (legacy/sustaining vs. new/conquest).

In the startup world, very few people know what Product Management is or does. So there is a lot more education that you need to take on. Explaining to the Development team for the Nth time about what Product Management does can wear you down. Butting heads with Executives who believe that their experiences trump the data you're bringing back from the Market can wear you down. The excitement from seeing the decisions you make and the products you bring to Market gives you a boost. The energy/excitement level is much more boom/bust in a startup. Big companies want a steady hand on the wheel.

Business Opportunity

Who do we want to be (when we grow up)? In a small company you are constantly asking and answering this question. Often times, the answer changes and evolves over time. In a good Market you're faced with the question of "It's not what do we need to do to succeed, it's which of these excellent opportunities are the best?"

In the large company, you are already grown up. Now your job is to sustain, and not screw up the business. Even minor risks look much bigger. Do we want to push the envelope on a product? Maybe not if it means we'll end up on the front page of the NY Times for something bad. "The unknown" takes a much bigger place in planning and you devote a lot of

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effort to reducing the unknown variables. The good news is that you have a big team and lots of people to help. The bad news is that decision making can be infuriatingly slow and involve dozens of people with competing priorities.

Politics

When you're at a startup, you're all in the same "rowboat in the ocean." Everyone must contribute for survival, and it is pretty easy to see who is dead weight. This fosters tight teams and passionate arguments over everything, but there is always a family feel (or at least there was for me), meaning that everyone is doing what they genuinely believe is best to make the company succeed. There's just no room for ulterior motives.

Lots of people talk about the politics inside big companies, and some of that is true. However, at least in my experiences it isn't as bad as most people portray. So much of this has to do with how you carry yourself: are you "above the fray," and not interested in having political conversations? If yes, you can

avoid much of the mess. If you enjoy that kind of thing (why?), those conversations and people will seek you out.

Note that not proactively involving yourself in politics does not mean being politically unaware. You always need to know your manager's motivation and what drives the team around you, so you can pull those levers at the right time.

Context is very important in a larger company. For example, big companies have lots of semi-overlapping products and projects that are competing for scarce resources. Is the person you're talking to someone who owns a competing initiative? That may not be a bad thing, maybe you can find common ground between your projects and collaborate on requirements - but always keep your market justification for your product at the ready so you can pull it up when called upon.

Someone recently described large companies to me as "tribal." If you're in a company of 50,000 people, all searching for justification for their own jobs and their

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own products, thought patterns can change to “What’s best for me, What’s best for my group, What’s best for the company.” In that order; it’s survival.

Communications

Small companies meet face to face and in the hallways. Decisions are made informally and sometimes with little deliberation. If you’re not careful that can cause lots of flapping in the wind downstream, as individual contributors catch up with the “strategy of the week.” That problem is compounded because many executives in startups are in their first executive position and were great individual contributors or team leads but possibly poor department heads. Communication filters down through the organization as fast as Word of Mouth can take it.

Another aspect of startups is that most communication is verbal - there aren’t memos, Project Managers doing daily status updates, etc. If you miss a meeting, you need to seek out someone from that meeting and get a face to face update.

In the large company world, PowerPoint rules. I recently had to give a presentation to an Executive and I was shocked at the amount of time that my manager and I spent wordsmithing. The reason is that at a larger company, there are so many people vying for your time that you get overbooked for meetings, and can’t make all of them. So you ask people to send you the deck, and PowerPoint becomes a de facto memo. If you’re used to all of your slides coming with your voiceover, forget it. Your slides *must* stand on their own, and deliver your message clearly, concisely, and quickly. The good news is that it’s good practice to hone your message down to the key points, a skill I obviously need help with as evidenced by the length of my posts.

Another big difference in the big company is that you’re on a campus. There are multiple buildings and you’re working with people in different areas, cities, time zones and countries. Meeting face to face just isn’t practical every time. The result is conference calls. Lots and lots of conference calls. It’s a culture shock at first and you need to amp up your active listening skills to make them work.

Execution and Overlap

Small companies don’t have overlap because they can’t afford to. On the other hand, execution lags because you don’t have the resources to properly develop, QA, document, market, or sell. That problem is compounded because most startups (not all) don’t wish to set a target market, believing that they really can be all things to all people and are deathly afraid of turning down any business.

Big companies are execution oriented. They have formal measurement processes and you are judged every six months or every year on your performance. Measurement is a good thing, but it also fosters a culture of justification - you need to show why you exist and what you’re doing to advance the business.

Normally it is a good thing to have lots of execution minded people running around picking up dropped balls. The problem is that in a company with 50K employees, sometimes the right hand doesn’t know that the left hand exists, let alone what it is doing. There have been multiple times at both Cisco and Dell that I’ve been in meetings doing introductions and have given the standard “this is who I am this is what I’m doing” and had people approach me after the meeting saying “wait a minute...I’m working on the

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Mark your Calendars for these upcoming events:

- April 1st, 2009 - Michael Menard, Gensight Group
- May 6, 2009 - Luke Homann, Enthiosys
- June 3, 2009 - Josh Elman, Facebook

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exact same thing! What's your name again?" Just finding the right people can be half the battle.

Resources

Big companies have lots of resources, but you have to fight to get access to them. Big companies spend a lot of money on research, customer interviews, focus groups, product testing, etc. Unlike a small company, there aren't a lot of long shot bets in a large company. You need to be able to illustrate ROI and time to payoff, or you're dead in the water. If you can, you'll get access to what you need to make your product successful, and if it's not...it's on you.

You also have to leverage resources when you're at a larger company. You can negotiate better deals, you have multiple companies that want to tap into your sales force and installed base, and you can use these to put together partner solutions that may be superior to other offerings in the Market.

Benefits

My wife and I recently had a baby girl. I started at Dell on a Monday, and Addison came on Wednesday. One lesson learned is not to start a new job and have a baby in the same week. However, it enabled us to take advantage of the better benefits that a big company brings to the table. To cover the family at the startup would have been just short of \$1000/

month. Now I pay less than a fifth of that, for better coverage And 401k matching.

At the startup you get lots and lots of equity. Will it ever be worth anything? Part of that has to do with you and the work you put in, there is also luck and timing involved. I'd advise anyone going to a startup to understand the time frame to a liquidity event very clearly before making the leap. Are you willing to accept that standard of living for five+ years? What if your family situation changes? Something to consider...

Making it Work

Can someone with a small company, entrepreneurial heart be happy at a big company? Ask me again in a year. ☘

Paul Young is a product management professional with more than eight years of experience in technology hardware, software, and services product management and marketing. Currently, he serves as a Senior Product Manager for Software as a Service at Dell, Inc. Previously, he was the Director of Product Management at NetStreams. Paul has also held product management positions with NetSolve and Cisco Systems. You can read his blog at <http://productbeautiful.com/> and can contact him at pt.young@gmail.com.



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January Event - Social Software: Improved Collaboration for Effective Product Management with Ross Mayfield, Chairman, President & Co-Founder of Socialtext

By Helene Eichler

Ross was accompanied by Adina Levin, Vice President of Products & Co-founder, Socialtext & Tracy Ruggles, Director, Product Management at Socialtext.

Product managers are often the information hub acting as the go-to people required to provide status reports throughout the organization stated Ross Mayfield, CEO of Socialtext a collaboration platform that allows organizations of all sizes to collaborate fast, decide faster and change faster. Mayfield focused on the benefits of this Enterprise 2.0 platform. This free form social software structure is defined as you are using it. The more aware your people are of what colleagues are doing, the broader your people's participation in conversations, and the more easily new insights spread across your organization, the faster your business can respond to changing customer expectations and business conditions. He also stated this knowledge sharing is critical to product managers effectively executing their roles.

Then he further described the ideal social networking structure as a dense core and a dynamic periphery constantly providing new sources of information that accelerates the product, project cycle. He then discussed how Socialtext applies these principles to its **Distributed Agile** development methodology with a sprint every two weeks.

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Requirements

To capture requirements, Socialtext used stories. The User stories are used to capture the details or the dense core mentioned above. This starts with a brief description of how the product is going to work. By capturing stories in a wiki, not only is the information available to the organization for review and comment but interested parties can receive activity feeds to stay on top of changes to the story. The story has eight main elements:

Summary of the story. This is a high level description of what the user is trying to accomplish or their goals.

Dependent Stories – stories that are linked or are dependent to the story

Details - captures who is assigned to develop and QA the feature, a size estimate, a priority and the customer.

Questions that need answers – a section for open questions that need to be answered before development can start

UI/interaction design – UI and interaction requirements for the feature

Story Tests – high level test plan with areas for Dev and QA sign-off.

Conversation area – area for distributed team to discuss the feature as they would if everyone was in the same room with a white board.

Revision History – the wiki automatically captures revisions.

The benefits for product management to managing requirements in that the wiki always has the most up-to-date version, the wiki handles versioning automatically so the product manager does not have to deal with a cumbersome change control process, and, using feeds, interested constituents receive alerts of each, so the product manager does not have to email updated documents to a long distribution list for each new revision. Further constituents can easily chime and collaborate while the story is being developed rather than at the end of the project when it is too late to affect change.

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Product Management Manifesto

I am a product management professional.

I am dedicated to bringing great products to market. Products that delight my customers. Products that are massively profitable for my company. Products that help change the way people work and live.

In the course of managing my products there are thousands of small decisions that must be made and tasks that must be accomplished. The sum of these can add up to a phenomenal product. I choose to own the responsibility for making this happen.

I am an expert in all areas regarding my products: customers, the market, technology, competition, channels, press, analysts, trends and anything else that must be taken into account in order to win.

I have a strong vision for my products and develop winning strategies that align with my company's goals and ensure that our investments of time, money and energy are well-spent.

I am committed to using the best methodologies, tools, templates and techniques available to be more efficient and effective at my job.

I have a plan for my career and I will further my professional status by attending training courses, becoming certified and reading books, blogs and newsletters to learn best practices.

I am the voice of my customers and represent them in every critical decision that is made.

I am a leader. I develop strong alliances with everyone that I need to in order to ensure the success of my product. This includes sales people, engineers, support, marketing, customers, channel and business partners, management, the Board of Directors and anyone else necessary. Some of these people will be very difficult to work with, but I will find a way to make everyone successful as a team.

I refuse to settle for mediocrity and I will be tenacious and professional in my approach to getting the best possible results.

I believe that Product Management is one of the toughest, yet most rewarding jobs in the world. Though I will face great odds and challenges I refuse to become jaded or negative.

Though I have all of the responsibility, it is highly likely I have little or no formal authority. Therefore I will do whatever it takes to persuade others to do what is right for customers and my company.



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- Working software over comprehensive documentation
- Customer collaboration over contract negotiation

Responding to change over following a plan

But what do these statements really mean to the uninitiated?

The core business value of Agile is that it rapidly produces software responsive to customer demand, by incorporating **customer collaboration**, in short cycles. Customer and market feedback and requirements are prioritized into a list, formalized as “user stories”. Those stories are implemented in a series of iterations (sprints) of say two weeks each. With integrated testing and review, several sprints make up a **working software release**, perhaps every three months. If the functionality represented by a lower priority story doesn't get implemented within a given iteration or release, then tough. No moving out deadlines, no adding additional resources. So doesn't the customer risk seeing a reduced set of functionality on the release? They may, but they also get the essential functionality sooner, and that's the key business value. Going forward, the customer can now give feedback on that new release, which enables a product manager to **respond to changing priorities over following a plan**. The vision remains clear but the pathway to that vision is dictated by cycles of customer feedback on working software - development becomes value driven rather than plan driven.

So here's the big change for Product Managers. Gone are the days when all this took place within the ivory tower of the IT department, where months went into writing a huge spec, which was hauled away and interpreted by developers, and the users saw the end result at the end of a year (probably late and over budget), when business requirements had changed in the meantime, miscommunications had been locked in code and the users have to battle with contract negotiation if they change their minds.

Product Managers, instead of enforcing the dictates of a document written in stone, become much more active in defining what their product should be and how it evolves. They become owners of the product, keeping the vision of the product clearly in mind, but the old, rigid PRD is now replaced by a prioritized list of stories to be implemented. The Product Manager must decide, always driven by customer value, which sto-

ries are implemented, and which are dropped in a crunch. Short sprints of teamwork produce **working software, not documentation**, and testing is integrated within this. Daily status checks (“daily stand-ups”) on what was accomplished yesterday, what will be accomplished today, and any roadblocks, require **closer interaction with the individuals on a team**, resulting in a more disciplined and accountable team, greater project visibility, faster development of better software, and ultimately more satisfied stakeholders

But if a Product Manager has to work more intensely with your team, has more releases to manage and must also constantly assess customer requirements, isn't that a large workload for one person? Thankfully, Agile happily accommodates partnering with a Product Marketing Manager who focuses more on market research and launch management while still working closely with the team as a stakeholder.

Didn't RAD, DSDM and iterative development solve those issues years ago, and isn't Agile just a new set of buzzwords? Definitely not. The essential difference is that with Agile, you get a valuable release of the application much more rapidly, say every three months, whereas RAD iterations are typically within the development cycle itself and customer-facing new software still only sees the light of day after a year, so that main problem of the waterfall model is still there.

SaaS is certainly the ideal counterpart of Agile, as publishing an application as SaaS allows the incremental implementation of features much more easily than stand-alone apps that get distributed by CD or at best downloaded by each user. On the other side of the coin, a SaaS portal itself is ideal for capturing the user feedback which guides the next phase of the process, and interestingly, Rally integrates with Salesforce CRM so dollar value of lost contracts due to missing features can be assessed.

So how do you get Agile? 1) enroll in a Yoga class, 2) visit www.agilecommons.org, a forum for the Agile Community, and 3) check out Rally's tools and services at www.rallydev.com/personas/product_manager. ☘

Keith Rayner is CEO of [Kemarra Inc](http://kemarra.com), a marketing and business development consultancy focused on high-tech in Silicon Valley. Current clients include [ClickStream Technologies](http://clickstreamtechnologies.com), a leading research company providing software, internet and mobile usage analytics for improved software development and more targeted marketing. Keith can be contacted at info@kemarra.com

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Testing and QA Process

Release testing is a considered combination of automated and human testing with the goal of preventing unhappy experiences for the users. Story test cover expected behavior & corner cases- As stories are finished, QA validates and raises concerns during the iteration. Browser based testing with selenium UI tests run 24/7 just like unit tests. Automated tests are maintained and always exercise a majority of the functions exposed to the user. Exploratory testing and light-weight performance analysis are also conducted.

Challenges

Then he delved into some of the challenges of the Socialtext approach...

- **Design**
 - Harder to "whiteboard" ideas together
 - Design patterns – it could be made easier to add additional stories with design variants
 - Architecture – it helps to review stories in families and appoint an architecture steward

- **Organizational-** Started with multiple processes then changed to one process and one development group
- **Emotional** – Because the team is distributed, they can't fight and then play foosball and get beer.
- **Logistical** - Need to be sensitive to working with people in different time zones or people will be left out of the process.

Summarizing the advantages of using distributed agile for product/project development, Ross concluded by discussing how Socialtext does roadmap planning with agile. He highlighted that leadership team provides yearly and quarterly direction while stories need to fit into specific projects. Occasional focused planning is needed at the project level and the occasional face-to-face to keep the team aligned. ☘

Helene Eichler is principal of HRE Technical Marketing, a high tech partner and product marketing consultancy specializing in: identifying, building and managing revenue-generating partner programs and providing sales enablement tools for effective product positioning

How to Talk to Customers

By Ivan Chalif

I had a visit with one of my customers the other day. I call them MY customer, because they are using a product that I am responsible for. It's important to view yourself as one of the "owners" of the customer because as the Product Manager, you are responsible for their satisfaction, currently and in the future. If you are not getting out into the field to talk to your customers, both satisfied and frustrated ones, then you are missing out on valuable feedback on how to improve your product.

This particular visit was coordinated by our Account Executive at the request the VP of Engineering. He (the VP) wanted to talk to technology-savvy customers and invited me along, as I have been pestering just about everyone to go with them on customer and prospect calls.

The purpose of the discussion was two-fold:

1. A knowledge exchange about each of our product roadmaps and how the customer plans to use our product
2. The opportunity to hear first hand about some of the challenges (and successes) that the customer has had with the product

TALKING

Part 1 was pretty straightforward. They presented the overview of their operations and how they planned to integrate our product. I then gave them a view of our product roadmap.

I call it a view, because when I present the product roadmap to customers and prospects (under NDA, of

course), I don't show them the raw version that I use to prioritize and work with Engineering on. Not because I have something to hide from them, but because for folks who are not intimately involved in the roadmap process, there is a lot of noise in the document that would likely cause confusion and/or would not be useful. There is also some customer information in it that I use for tracking purposes that I don't feel comfortable sharing with other customers, even under NDA.

The view that I let them see is one that highlights features and capabilities with a long view. The goal is not to show them what is in any particular release, although I do share what is going in to the current and next major releases, but rather the long view.

The long view is a window into where the product is going. For an enterprise infrastructure product like mine, that means identifying how customers are going to be using the product over the next 4 years because unlike software or Web services, they are not likely to abandon the purchase without a truly significant reason.

Our customers don't say, "We like your product, but a competitor of yours has a new feature/lower price/new UI, so we are switching." Instead, they say things like, "We paid \$X for your product and we expect it to be able to do Y" or "We like the core feature set of the product, but we plan on doing X in the future and we want the product to enable/support that."

To answer inquiries like that, I have to be able to show them where my product is going in the future. I use the roadmap as a tool for communicating that with

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them. As part of that discussion, I can solicit the prospect or customer on what they view as important, which helps me understand their real-world needs.

LISTENING

Part 2 of the discussion involved listening to their problems with my product. As easy as it sounds, this is a challenge for many Product Managers. Product Managers are sensitive to criticism of their product (I'm as guilty of this as the next PM). We instantly try to frame any problems as "workable," by which I mean that we try to identify ways that the user could achieve their goal within the current product framework. This sometimes helps in the short-term, but it precludes you and the customer from thinking about the real solution.

Instead of trying to whitewash the situation, a technique that I use is one that I learned back in grad school when I was studying Counseling Psychology called Active Listening. This suite of listening skills allows you to be more engaged in hearing what the other person is saying rather than debating points back and forth. It is very validating for customers when you, as the Product Manager, just acknowledge the issue that they are having and listen to what they have to say about it.

Lack of defensiveness on the part of the Product Manager creates an environment where the customer is more likely to provide you with valuable input, because they don't have to waste time and effort in arguing their point.

I won't kid you, it's a LOT HARDER than it sounds and the first few times you try it, it's not only painful hearing all of that "feedback," but it takes a lot of effort not to respond. But, I promise that if you keep at it, you will get so much great information that you can use to improve your product that you'll wonder how you ever collected any useful user feedback without it.

For more information about Active Listening, check out these resources:

* <http://www.mindtools.com/CommSkill/ActiveListening.htm>

* "Are You Really Listening?: Keys to Successful Communication" by Paul J. Donoghue, Ph.D. and Mary E. Siegel

* "Listening Leaders: The Ten Golden Rules To Listen, Lead & Succeed" by Lyman K. Steil and Richard K. Bommelje ☞

This article was originally posted on Ivan Chalif's Product Management blog, The Productologist-- <http://theproductologist.com>. Ivan is an experienced Product Management and Product Marketing professional with over 10 years experience in technology marketing and Product Management. He has built successful web-based products and services at companies like StrongMail Systems, ValueClick, The Gale Group and Acxiom Digital.

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face value, for example, you'd believe that every product idea that comes out of the company, springs fully formed from the head of Steve Jobs himself.

This is a carefully crafted illusion. In reality Apple has one of the most refined (and most well-guarded) design processes in the industry. If Steve Jobs is the heart of the company their design process is the blood.

This process helps them identify market needs and build the product that best satisfies that need. The function of a design process is to increase the value of the end-product and reduce the risk of shipping it.

The Components of a Successful Product

In order to succeed every company needs three components: a market, a product, and a distribution channel.

Most aspiring internet entrepreneurs think a lot about product and a little about the market. Their distribution strategy, however, often amounts to little more than "get mentioned on TechCrunch a lot."

Think back to the most successful consumer internet startups: Google, Craigslist, MySpace, YouTube, Facebook, etc. How many of them needed TechCrunch-style press to drive growth? None. And that's not just "luck" — each had a distribution strategy built in from day one.

In fact, building a web product, like any product, requires you to think about all of these things. A product that fits a market is useless if you have no way to get it in front of customers, and even the best distribution model can't help if nobody wants to use the product you're distributing.

Vanquishing the Cult

Apple analyzes markets through a top-down, design-centric process, but we can flip this around and apply a bottom-up, data-driven approach.

In fact, we can use the same principles of scientific product development to reason about business strategy.

For example, we might start with the hypothesis that 1,000,000 people are willing to pay \$50/month for your product.

To test this you need to get real bullets in your gun as fast as possible. This means talking to potential customers and getting their feedback, implementing simple prototypes and measuring their performance, etc. Put your product and product ideas through the most

rigorous process, using a combination of qualitative and quantitative feedback.

Then, using the data you gathered from your measurements and tests, Iterate. It might turn out that nobody was willing to pay more than \$20/month for a simplified version of your product. This data lets you form new hypotheses.

Did you have the right product/market fit? Were you approaching the right customers? Should you lower your price? Should you improve the product? Should you have a different pricing scheme entirely? Each of these questions is itself a testable hypothesis and can be approached through an empirical, data-driven process.

The important point is to have a process, whether design-centric or data-driven, that helps you identify the key market, product, and distribution challenges of your business.

Sacrificing even a little bit of your business to the cult of the product is an unnecessary risk. ☹

This article is reprinted with permission from a blog written by Jesse Farmer, a data and coding junkie and author of <http://20bits.com>. He can be reached at: jesse@20bits.com

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Book Review of “Art of Product Management” by Rich Mironov

Reviewed by Shailesh Manjrekar

I would like to congratulate Rich Mironov on his new book the “Art of Product Management.” I just finished reading it and would like to share some of my thoughts on this book:

- This book sounds like a “local lad around the block” for product managers who have lived through startups groomed in the Silicon Valley. The book clearly focuses on challenges faced in startups (and primarily for emerging technology products) and why these breeds of product managers are repetitively willing to take on this challenge.

- The book has a human aspect to it. Rather than advocating product management as a science, he approaches it as an art, as the title suggests. Rich sticks to this philosophy where he compares PM’s to parents and products/companies to their children and advocates how PM’s need to be passionate and emotionally attached to their products.

- The book is divided in small chapters, and has many metaphors, which bring out the distinct message of each chapter. The ones which stand out are:

- Grocers and Chefs : Software Services model
- Sharks, Pilot Fish and the Product Food Chain
- Roadmap Less Traveled

The Pragmatic Marketing Framework defines a product manager as a culmination of four distinct disciplines: Business, Technical, Strategic and Tactical.

Though Rich has not divided the book in these disciplines, I thought the content covered all these disciplines and can be grossly arranged across these for e.g

- Business/ Philosophical
 - Section 1: Falling In Love
 - Section 2: Organizing your Organization
 - Gives a good overview of how PM’s should be committed (Burning the boats), should be willing to change the course, owning the gap is very insightful, which you will find more than often that organizational incentives are not

aligned to make the product a success. Defensive process is another good example of constructive process. Crowding Out Tech Support is another very important insight, we mostly tend to neglect Tech support.

- Technical
 - Section 3: The Almost New-New Things
 - Gives a very good overview of some of the emerging delivery and development models like SAAS and Agile respectively. “So your product wants to be a service and Null Service” provide a good checkpoint and product platform thinking respectively
- Strategic
 - Section 4: Getting Into Customer’s Head
 - This is my favorite section. In simple words it helps you formulate a very compelling business and product strategy, right from understanding requirements, to target markets to competitive and launch strategy.
- Sales
 - Section 5: What should Things Cost
 - This is my second favorite section. Again in very simple terms Rich ends up preaching a lot, right from market segmentation packaging to price lists

Call to Action

All-in-all a very good book, which can be used from time to time to guide you through your product management journey. This book makes the journey enjoyable, insightful and focused. ☸

Shailesh Manjrekar is a Senior Manager, Product Management at Adaptec Inc. He is involved in Identifying New Markets and business case development involving growth strategies through M&A, partnerships and organic models.