pm_book

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Preface

This is a Quarto book.

To learn more about Quarto books visit https://quarto.org/docs/books.

1 Introduction

This project originally started as a collection of product management links I would collect in transitioning from a data scientist to a product manager. Given my background, the implicit motivation was using these principles as a foundation toward building a product building machine. You will see throughout this book, it my view that there is a lot of overlap between being product manager and being a CEO. Therefore broader enterpereneurhisp and economic concpets are very helpful to product managers.

After working at Weights and Biases that stresses the value of good writing, or peraphs being an academic at heart, I decided to make these collection of links to a longer form e-book to refine the ideas and surface and gaps in my own knoweldge. I hope others embarking on a career in product management will find some of the ideas helpful. Steal and bring into their own game only the you find useful.

Principles, like assumptions, are meant to be challenged, discussed and debated and it through this refinement process that they are in fact strenghted. This is to say feel free to reach out discuss these more. To quote Hugo Ponte `"violent opposition"` is welcomed.

This wiki will also contain perspectives from some of the best people I have worked with in the respective domain.

Although i have learned so many tips and tricks from too many to list, a few people I have observed and worked with disproportionally influeced my thinking

1.0.1 Acknowledgements & Influences

- Jeremy Achin
  - The best entreprenuer & product manager I have ever worked with.
- Gourab De
  - The best people manager I have worked with.
- Ina Ko
  - Welcomed my to transition to her team as a PM and learned the most from when starting out as a PM. Also was the best boss I had within product management.
- Lukas Biewald (CEO of Weights and Biases and successful 2X entrepenuer)

– Thanks for emphasizing the value of writing. Ive taken some of my ideas through his public interviews on the Gradient Dissent Podcast and observing from afar.

1.0.1.1 Contact

1.0.1.2 Other Work

Do you find some of this interesting? Are you also interested in Artificial Intelligence? Check out my other educational wiki book on data science and artificial intelligence!

2 Economic Principles

It is good to learn about the economic theory & principles useful to an entreprenuer. These are likelier to stand the test of time rather than the latest product managment framework fad. Product Frameworks can't significantly depeart from these deeper economic principles. Adopting the mindset of thinking of oneself as an enterepreneur rather than just a "product manager" is a great heurestic that will align you with your company's c-suite and enable you to make a plethora of good decisions.

Companys Goal:

A company is a group of people that build a product or service that adds more value than the alternatives. (Including the status quo) This is the 'objective function' of capitalism in maximizing long term profit. Often times these fundamentals can be forgottedn as PM's get lost in the day to day work. The alternatives does imply competitors and is thus why good PMs are keenly aware of the landscape. One must constantly be benchmarking against the competitors. If this seems like a hyper-competitive viewpoint, put yourself on the other end as a consumer, if the widget you are building is not better on some dimension of price, quality, usability, etc. then you are not adding value and providing a benefit. This contanst state of improvement coupled with scientific advancements have led to a rise in the standard of living. (Cite) Jeff Bezos speaks about the need to be customer focused and invent, rather than be competitor focus. The reality is you will have to do *both*.

This outlook can have a beneficial effect in re-orientating your thinking in helping *others* improve. Note: To adopt this mindset you do not need to completely drink the libertarian cool aid as capitalism comes with tradeoffs. I.E. Your favorite restaurant you rave about is a product of somebody elses labor and exemplifies the win/win principle. However, if prior to construction, there was a small duck pondthat was the beloved home to a flock of ducks, to build the restaurant, the business will ruthlessly dispose of the pond to build the restaurant. Capitalism comes with tradeoffs and this is where I partially depart from the good profit book I cite.

Economic Decision Making Principles [1]

- Risk Appetite & Expected Value
  - Project A has a 90% chance of generating 100k while project B has a 50% chance of making 1M. While project B has a higher expected value, most employees will choose option A. (find citation)

- Opportunity Costs
  - Assuming the best choice is made, it is the "cost" incurred by not enjoying the benefit that would have been had by taking the second best available choice [2]
- Comparitive Advantage:
  - Comparative advantage is the ability to produce a good or service for a lower opportunity cost. [3] The power in comparitive advantage is understanding the difference with *absolute advantage* as each person can potentially make a contribution, even if others can do everything better. As an example, envision a Doctor opens a new clinic. That doctor is a renaissance man that is also a great at taxation and billing. Should the Doctor both treat patienets and do the billing or should they focus on treating patients and outsource the billing work? [4]
  - Comparative advantage can help inform how jobs can be constructed to play to the strenghts of the individual rather than fitting the individual into a pre-defined cookie cutter job.
- Sunk Costs
  - Unrecoverable past expenditure. To argue for decision many of us often say, "well we already invested so much up until this point".

Sources:

- [1] Good Profit - https://www.amazon.com/Good-Profit-Charles-G-Koch-audiobook/ - pg70
- [2] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Opportunity_cost
- [3] https://www.thebalancemoney.com/comparative-advantage-3305915
- [4] Good Profit - https://www.amazon.com/Good-Profit-Charles-G-Koch-audiobook/ - pg72

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> "Skate to where the puck is going, not where it has been." – Wayne Gretzky

As a product manager, you want to bet on product that have a tailwind. This provides a margin of safety where even if you don't get everying else right, more users will acrue over time and it increases the likelihood of success. One must ask themselves will this product feature stand the test of time? Will users care about this 5 years from now or am I building on top of the next hadoop?

According to Google Trends, we hit Peak Hadoop in June 2015. Spark crossed over Hadoop in search popularity one year later in June 2016, and for the last two years, Spark seems to have been at a plateau. pic.twitter.com/bvjRwBqZbL

— Peter Wang ((**pwang?**)) August 15, 2019

Heurestics & Tactics

One heueristic you can use is to focus on the things that will *not* change in the next 10 years. Jeff Bezos speaks this when building Amazon:

He knows that 10 years from now customers will still care about wide selection and fast delivery. No customer will every say "I love Amazon but I wish my packages were delivered slower". An investment in improving delivery time will pay of now and in the future.

If you want to exercise your forecasting muscle and take it to the next level you can attempt to forecast future events and keeping a record of your predictions to asses your track record. Observe what works and what doesn't. For the nerds, there are websites such as Metaculus that is home to a community of forecasters where you can compete and learn from others. In the tech industry where the term "visionary" is thrown around too losely, or worse yet, 'self labeled' visionaries, it is harder to show eveidence of this capability and develop a successful track record.

Study quantitative trends in your space

If you want to be very nerdy you can read up on good forecasting principles.

Examples of Good Forecasters
* Peter Wilderford (Best general forecaster I know) * Jeremy Achin
* Lukas Biewald
* Dan Becker

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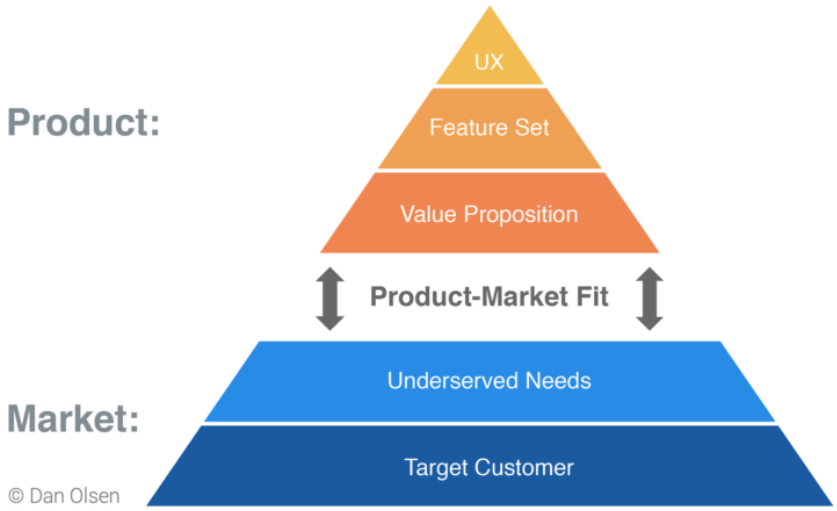
The Product-Market Fit Pyramid



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6

People Management Principles

- **Set clear expectations on roles, responsibilities and expectations**
- **Before delegating, one must demonstrate competence in the task at hand**
- **Comparative advantage and self selection**

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8 Design Principles

Before diving into design principles, a heurestic you can use as a PM is, is this UI something you would be proud to attach your name too?

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10 Not to do's

startup founder: "our target audience is everyone"the product: pic.twitter.com/gVx41bqDTN

— Jovian Gautama ((**jovvvian?**)) April 19, 2023

To be fair, the CEO's i have worked with are good in this respect, but I unaquivocally have seen this happen where a product tries to do too much and in trying to target and please multiple personas, it ends up pleasing none.

10.1 Case Studies

References