The Situation

Brief the Council on what you're facing.

As a PM starting in big tech what should I achieve in the first 90 days?

Run Simulation

The Visionary

Vision, Intuition, Culture, Founder Mode

In your first 90 days as a PM in big tech, focus on three key areas: deep understanding, relationship building, and strategic alignment.

1. **Deep Understanding**: As Brian Chesky emphasizes, the intersection of product and distribution is crucial. Dive into both the technical and non-technical aspects of your product. Understand customer needs and the story behind your product. "I think you should think of each release as a chapter of a story," Chesky notes. This storytelling helps align product vision with user experience.

2. **Relationship Building**: Your success hinges on collaboration. As Chesky suggests, minimize layers between you and decision-makers. Build strong relationships with cross-functional teams—engineering, marketing, and design—to ensure seamless communication. Cultivate a culture where everyone "rows in the same direction."

3. **Strategic Alignment**: Align your work with the company's long-term vision. Nikita Bier

advises synchronizing product and marketing efforts for a cohesive user journey, from acquisition to in-app experience. Evaluate analytics to identify and remove barriers to user activation.

Remember, your role is not just execution but also visionary. Challenge the status quo with bold, contrarian thinking. Consider Chesky's "add a zero" mindset to inspire innovation and think beyond incremental improvements.

In this journey, maintain a beginner's mindset. Stay curious, open to learning, and adaptable to change. As Chesky said, having a "beginner's mindset" keeps you agile and innovative in a dynamic environment.

🎯 High confidence

Referenced insights

Brian Chesky · Brian Chesky's new playbook · 00:34:53   ▶

Nikita Bier · Driving alignment within teams, work-life balance, and the changing PM landscape | Nikita Miller · 01:32:2

Brian Chesky · Brian Chesky's new playbook · 00:46:32   ▶

Nikita Bier · Driving alignment within teams, work-life balance, and the changing PM landscape | Nikita Miller · 00:46:

The Scaler

Strategy, Empowered Teams, Product Discovery

To excel in your first 90 days as a PM in big tech, focus on understanding, aligning, and contributing meaningfully to product strategy and discovery processes.

1. **Understand the Landscape**: Immerse yourself in the company's product strategy. As Marty Cagan points out, your role involves solving problems rather than delivering features. Familiarize yourself with the key problems the team is tackling and the outcomes they're aiming for.

2. **Build Relationships**: Cultivate strong relationships with cross-functional teams. Communication and collaboration are crucial in a big tech environment. As Shreyas Doshi observed, product management involves understanding and integrating various perspectives to create cohesive strategies.

3. **Engage in Product Discovery**: Dive into the discovery process to understand user needs and validate ideas. "You have to experiment. You have to embrace experimentation," says Marty Cagan. Use data and user feedback to refine product ideas and prioritize effectively.

4. **Set Clear Goals**: Define what success looks like for your first 90 days. Focus on learning, building trust, and delivering early wins. Ensure your goals align with the broader team and company objectives.

5. **Contribute to Strategy**: Begin contributing to strategic discussions. Use insights from product discovery to inform strategy, ensuring alignment with both user needs and business goals.

By the end of 90 days, aim to have a solid grasp of the product landscape, established key relationships, and delivered early contributions to product strategy and discovery.

🎯 High confidence

Referenced insights

Shreyas Doshi · The art of product management | Shreyas Doshi (Stripe, Twitter, Google, Yahoo) · 01:08:51 ▶

Noam

PM High Council

Deploy the world's best operators on your hardest problems.

The Scientist

Loops, Acquisition, Pricing, Retention

In your first 90 days as a PM in big tech, prioritize understanding and optimizing existing growth systems and metrics. Begin by identifying the company's North Star Metric, as it encapsulates the core value delivered to users, and aligns teams towards a common goal. As Sean Ellis emphasized, "figure out a metric that essentially captures units of that value being delivered."

Focus on understanding the current growth loops in place. These are self-reinforcing mechanisms that drive user acquisition, retention, and engagement. As Elena Verna noted, "introduce a new growth loop, or to introduce a new channel" while understanding that it might take time to see results.

Key metrics to monitor include:
- **Activation Metrics**: Measure the percentage of users reaching their "aha moment" within the product.
- **Retention Curves**: Analyze how many users continue to engage with the product over time
- **Engagement Metrics**: Track user interactions and frequency to gauge product stickiness.

Build a hypothesis-driven culture, as Sri Batchu suggested, "defining hypotheses that are data-driven and a culture where that can be executed quickly." Use data to inform decisions and iteratively test and optimize product features.

Lastly, ensure you are closely aligned with the product's must-have value, as Sean Ellis put it, aiming for users who would be "very disappointed" without the product. This alignment will guide your prioritization and help in scaling sustainably.

🎯 High confidence

Referenced insights

Elena Verna · 10 growth tactics that never work | Elena Verna (Amplitude, Miro, Dropbox, SurveyMonkey) · 00:56:20

Sean Ellis · The original growth hacker reveals his secrets | Sean Ellis (author of "Hacking Growth") · 00:08:33   ▶

Sri Batchu · Lessons from scaling Ramp | Sri Batchu (Ramp, Instacart, Opendoor) · 00:31:35   ▶

Brian Balfour · Why ChatGPT will be the next big growth channel (and how to capitalize on it) | Brian Balfour · 01:14:1!

The Architect

Systems, Technical Debt, Feasibility

As a Product Manager (PM) starting in big tech, your first 90 days are crucial for setting a strong foundation. Focus on the following technical considerations and feasibility concerns:

1. **Understanding the Product and Users**: Dive deep into your product's architecture and use base. As Geoff Charles said, understanding both the customer and the product is essential for impact. Familiarize yourself with the technical stack and any ongoing technical debt.

2. **Building Relationships**: Establish strong relationships with your engineering and design

counterparts. Camille Fournier highlights the importance of collaboration: "Focus on building a culture within the pod," emphasizing teamwork and protecting your team from external chaos.

3. **Assessing Current Systems**: Analyze the existing systems for any inefficiencies or bottlenecks. Recognize areas where centralized solutions could improve productivity. As Camille Fournier noted, "centralizing certain functions is essential for efficiency and cost-effectiveness."

4. **Setting Clear Goals**: Define measurable goals and OKRs that align with business objectives. Ensure they are impactful and achievable within the team's capabilities. Camille Fournier advises focusing on "impact-based, outcome-based approaches."

5. **Feasibility and Complexity**: Evaluate the feasibility of proposed initiatives by considering resource availability, technical challenges, and timeline constraints. Ensure innovations balance with maintainability.

6. **Feedback Loops**: Establish mechanisms for continuous feedback from both users and team members to iterate effectively.

Prioritize gaining mastery over your responsibilities and technical nuances, as Camille Fournier suggests, to build confidence and credibility. Your first 90 days should set the stage for delivering meaningful impact efficiently. 🎯 High confidence

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Referenced insights

Geoff
Charles · Velocity over everything: How Ramp became the fastest-growing SaaS startup ever | Geoff Charles ·

Camille
Fournier · The things engineers are desperate for PMs to understand | Camille Fournier ("The Manager's Path")

David Singleton · Building a culture of excellence | David Singleton (CTO of Stripe) · 01:09:41   ▶

Geoff
Charles · Velocity over everything: How Ramp became the fastest-growing SaaS startup ever | Geoff Charles

THE VERDICT
Your strategic options, distilled

THE CORE TENSION
The fundamental disagreement among the expert collectives revolves around whether to prioritize bold, visionary moves that potentially disrupt and innovate (prioritizing strategic alignment and growth) or adopt a structured, foundational approach focused on understanding

and optimizing existing systems and relationships (prioritizing feasibility and risk management). This trade-off is difficult because it pits the allure of transformative impact against the stability of incremental progress and risk mitigation.

PATH A: THE BOLD MOVE
- First, immerse yourself in understanding both the product and its strategic alignment with the company's long-term vision. Dive deep into customer needs and the product's story, while challenging the status quo with innovative thinking.
- Then, introduce a new growth loop or channel, leveraging insights from analytics to identify barriers to user activation and exploring bold strategies for scaling impact swiftly.
- Prepare for the consequence of potential resistance from established systems and processes. You may face initial friction or pushback from teams more comfortable with incremental improvements.

PATH B: THE MEASURED MOVE
- First, focus on building a comprehensive understanding of the current product landscape and technical architecture. Prioritize familiarizing yourself with the existing growth systems, technical stack, and key metrics.
- Then, cultivate strong relationships with cross-functional teams to ensure cohesive communication and collaboration. Engage in product discovery to validate user needs and align with business goals.
- Prepare for the consequence of slower momentum in achieving transformative change. The focus on stability and risk management may delay significant innovation but will likely lead to more sustainable growth.

THE TIE-BREAKER
I recommend Path B: The Measured Move. Starting with a structured approach allows you to build credibility, understand the landscape thoroughly, and lay a solid foundation for future innovation. This path sacrifices the potential for immediate disruptive impact but ensures that you establish strong relationships and a deep understanding of the product ecosystem. This foundation becomes invaluable for any future bold initiatives.

The one question to ask yourself: "Am I willing to trade the excitement of immediate disruptive change for the long-term benefits of sustainable growth and stability?" This reflection will help confirm whether this cautious yet solid approach aligns with your leadership philosophy and the organization's current needs.

Intelligence derived from the Lenny's Podcast Archive.