

Problem Statement

Describe your product challenge in detail

I am the Founder/CEO. My product team is shipping updates that feel 'average' and lack soul. I have decided to insert myself into the process and personally approve every single design and feature before it ships. My VP of Product says this will destroy morale and make me a bottleneck. I don't care about speed, I care about quality. Am I wrong?

Convene Council

Brian Chesky

Design & Experience

As I said on the podcast: "I basically got involved in every single detail and I basically told leaders that leaders are in the details." I believe it's essential for a founder to be

Marty Cagan

Process & Empowerment

As I said on the podcast: "A product manager is a creator, not a facilitator." Your approach of inserting yourself into every decision can indeed damage morale and turn

Elena Verna

Growth & Metrics

As I said on the podcast: "Velocity of shipping is our number one core value in the development team." While quality is crucial, you risk creating bottlenecks that could stifle

deeply involved, especially when the product lacks soul. The details make the product, and if shipping 'average' updates, it's time to reassess.

Your VP of Product might worry about morale, but clarity and a unified direction are more crucial. It's not about micromanagement; it's about ensuring every design and feature aligns with the vision. "What everyone really wants is to be able to row in the same direction really quickly."

If quality is the priority, then being in the details is necessary. We must create 11-star experiences, imagining the extraordinary and working backwards. Constraints, like time, breed creativity.

Remember, a founder's vision should guide the ship. Morale stems from shared purpose, not unchecked autonomy. By being involved, you ensure that the product resonates emotionally with the customer. ☀️

High confidence

 Sources

your team into a feature factory. This approach suggests a lack of trust in your team's ability to deliver value, which can stifle creativity and innovation.

Instead, I recommend structuring your team as an empowered product team. Give them real problems to solve, rather than features to build. "An empowered product team can do everything a feature team can do and more." Trust them to find solutions, and evaluate them based on outcomes, not just output. Allow your VP of Product to lead discovery efforts where the team experiments and iterates on potential solutions with user feedback.

Your role should be to set a compelling vision and strategy, ensuring alignment with business goals. Encourage your team to become experts on users and data, and let them propose ideas that resonate with your vision. This can increase both the quality of your product and the team's investment in their work.

Empowering your team, rather than

innovation and slow down growth. Instead of personally approving every feature, focus on empowering your team with clear quality guidelines and a strong vision.

Consider measuring your retention and activation metrics as leading indicators of product quality. Improved activation rates can signal that new features effectively engage users. Retention curves will help you understand if quality enhancements lead to sustained user engagement.

Think in terms of growth loops rather than isolated features. Encourage your team to develop loops that drive compounding growth. For instance, a "user-generated content" loop can both engage existing users and attract new ones. "At Miro, I saw how new features like Mirrorverse took time to evolve before driving acquisition and engagement."

Empower your team to iterate and innovate within a strategic framework. Trust them to align their output with your vision while maintaining speed and agility. This approach will foster a culture of

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



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Brian Chesky's new playbook · 00:05:56



controlling them, will likely lead to the soulful, high-quality products you desire. ⚡ High confidence.

Sources

Product management theater | Marty Cagan (Silicon Valley Product Group) · 00:42:20



"The other thing I'd argue, Lenny, is an empowered product team can do everything a feature team can do and more. And once in a while I do hear somebody say, why isn't it good enough to be a feature te..."

Product management theater | Marty Cagan (Silicon Valley Product Group) · 01:15:53



Product management theater | Marty Cagan (Silicon Valley Product



quality without sacrificing growth momentum. ⚡ High confidence

Sources

10 growth tactics that never work | Elena Verna (Amplitude, Miro, Dropbox, SurveyMonkey) · 00:27:27



10 growth tactics that never work | Elena Verna (Amplitude, Miro, Dropbox, SurveyMonkey) · 00:19:06



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



Synthesis

Strategic recommendations balancing all perspectives

Agreement

- All emphasize the importance of a strong, clear vision guiding product development.
- There is consensus on the need for alignment and shared purpose to boost morale and product quality.
- Empowerment and strategic frameworks are necessary to achieve both quality and velocity in development.

Tensions

- Brian Chesky advocates for deep founder involvement in details, while Marty Cagan and Elena Verna stress empowering teams to

drive outcomes and growth.

- While Brian focuses on creating extraordinary experiences through detailed oversight, Elena warns against potential bottlenecks that could slow growth and innovation.

Actions

- 1. Clarify Vision and Strategy:** Clearly communicate the vision and strategic goals to align teams and ensure everyone is rowing in the same direction.
- 2. Empower Teams:** Transition to an empowered product team structure where teams are responsible for solving real problems and are evaluated based on outcomes.
- 3. Set Quality Guidelines:** Develop and provide clear quality guidelines to the teams, allowing them the autonomy to innovate while adhering to the vision.
- 4. Monitor Key Metrics:** Focus on retention and activation metrics as indicators of both quality and growth, adjusting strategies based on these insights to maintain momentum.

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