

The journal for technology product management and marketing professionals • A Pragmatic Marketing® Publication

The Pragmatic Marketer™

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Formerly productmarketing.com™

The Art of Panels

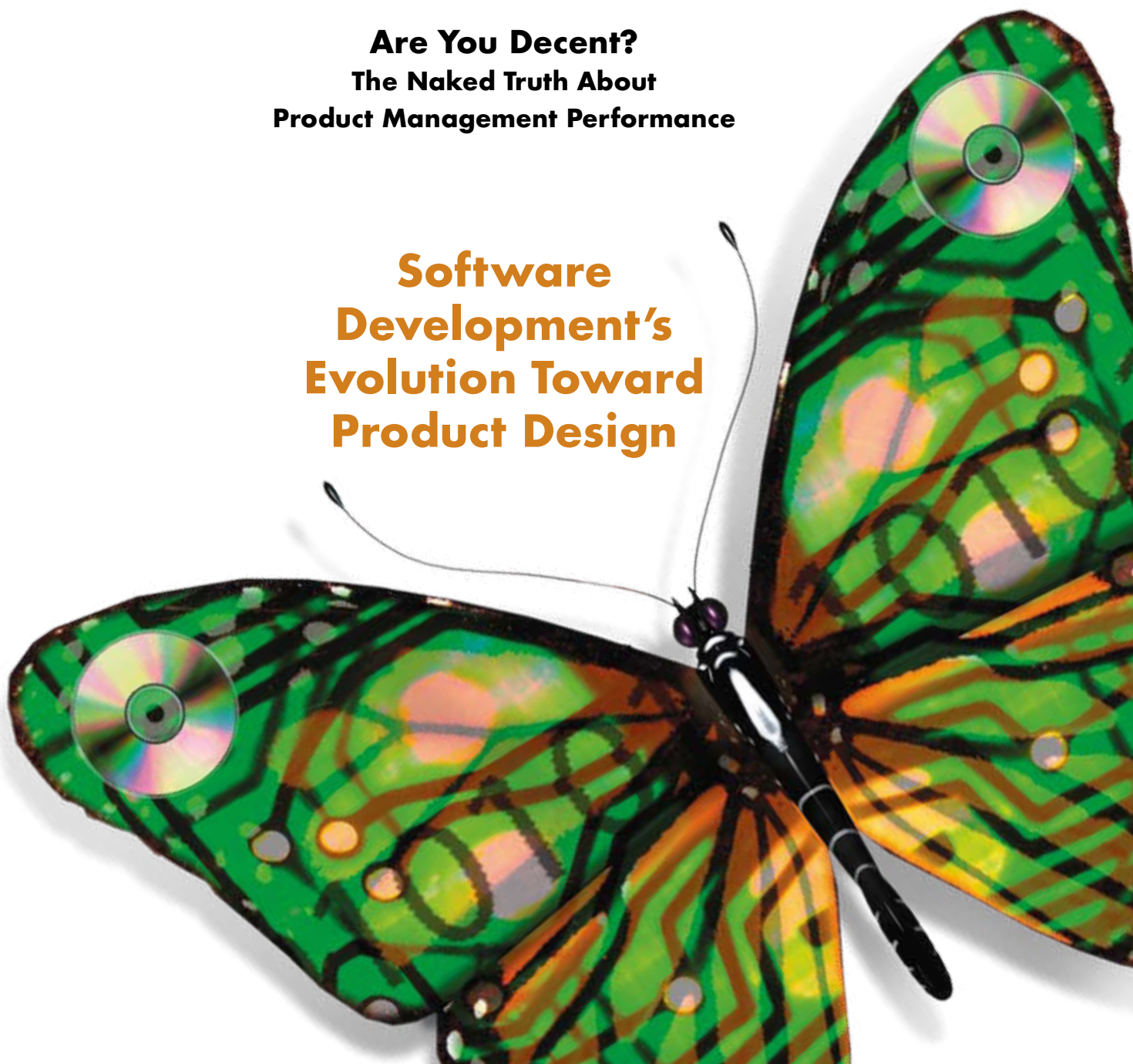
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Are You Decent?

**The Naked Truth About
Product Management Performance**

Software Development's Evolution Toward Product Design



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Building the roadmap

Communicating
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16035 N. 80th Street, Suite F
Scottsdale, AZ 85260

Pragmatic Marketing, Inc.

CEO

Craig Stull

President

Phil Myers

Managing Editor

Kristyn Benmoussa

Contributing Writers

Daniel Cook

Alyssa Dver

Steve Johnson

Guy Kawasaki

David Meerman Scott

Interested in
contributing an article?

Email submissions to

kbenmoussa@pragmaticmarketing.com

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About Pragmatic Marketing®

The industry standard for technology product management and marketing education, Pragmatic Marketing teaches a practical, market-driven approach to creating and delivering technology products. Founded in 1993, Pragmatic Marketing has trained over 40,000 product management and marketing professionals with more than 90% of alumni indicating the training as essential or very useful to their careers. Visit PragmaticMarketing.com or call (480) 515-1411 for more information.

What's new?

Pragmatic Marketing Announces Launch of Consulting Services Team

A growing demand for faster, market-driven success at technology companies drove the expansion of Pragmatic Marketing's service offerings. The creation of the Pragmatic Marketing Consulting Services team, led by industry veteran Jim Foxworthy, provides technology companies implementation support and custom services to enhance the training received at our public and on-site seminars.

Many companies request on-going interaction to ensure the Pragmatic Marketing Framework becomes part of their culture. The new Consulting Services team will work directly with these clients to ensure they get the maximum value from the concepts learned in training.

Services for all aspects of the Pragmatic Marketing Framework are available including assessment of the current environment, support for tactical or strategic initiatives, and on-going reinforcement of the fundamental principles of being market-driven.

All Consulting Services team members possess a wide range of experiences. First and foremost, they know the Pragmatic Marketing Framework, intimately. Second, and just as critical, they have multiple experiences using the Framework; whether to drive new products to market or more successfully selling those already built.

Please contact Pragmatic Marketing for more information at (480) 515-1411.

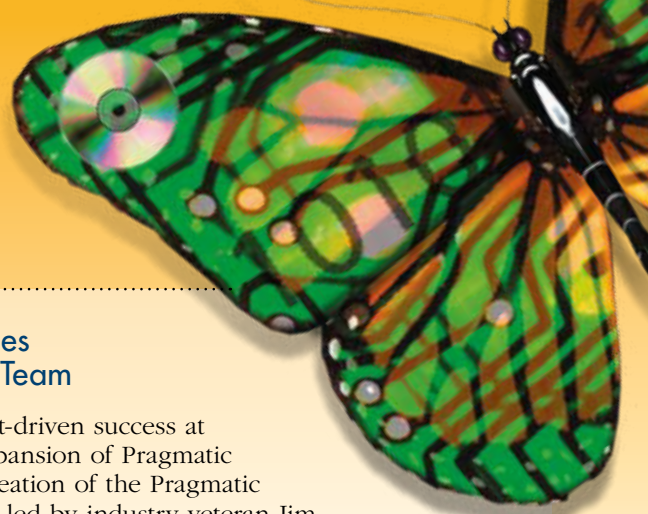
Pragmatic Marketing Announces New Online Community for Product Managers and Marketers

In May, Pragmatic Marketing will introduce a major upgrade to its web site. It will contain all of the features you have come to enjoy, like Steve Johnson's productmarketing.com blog, the entire contents of all *The Pragmatic Marketer* magazines, the monthly newsletter, reviews of product management and marketing books, links to local Product Management Associations and many articles on timely and useful topics for product managers and marketers.

It will also introduce several new features, the most important of which is your chance to participate in this online community. The blogs and articles will now allow comments and discussion, many times including the

author of the article, so you can make your opinion known. And read what others have to say on the subject. With visitors to the site from over 100 countries, there will be a lot of opinions to share. We will also introduce a job board for companies who are looking to hire market-driven product managers and marketers. With nearly 1 million unique visitors per year, this is a great opportunity to look for the perfect candidate.

So, visit www.PragmaticMarketing.com and see how the new site can help you in your goal to create products people want to buy, by speaking directly to your buyers, and ultimately, lead the market-driven culture of your organization.



Software Development's Evolution Toward Product Design

By Daniel Cook

Occasionally, some poor fellow at a dinner party makes the unfortunate mistake of asking what I do for a living. My initial (and quite subdued) response is that I help design software for artists.

Then the inevitable question comes, "Oh, so you are a programmer?" A gleam appears in my eye and I no longer feel obligated to blather on about the rainy weather. With a great flourish, I whip out my gold-nibbed pen and draw a little diagram on a napkin that explains concisely how modern software development works. In the grand finale, I circle one of the little scribbles buried deep in the entire convoluted process and proudly proclaim "And that is what I do!". This admittedly selfish exercise usually keeps everyone involved merrily entertained until dessert arrives.

After dozens of napkin defiling lectures, I've created a diagram that explains the:

- Evolution of software development over four distinct eras
- Key goals of software development and our saddest failures
- Future of software development

Much of what software developers create fails to serve the full spectrum of their customer's needs. The funny part is that the usually non-technical folks that I'm talking to laugh heartily at this point...they know exactly what I'm talking about.

The technocrat era: Programmers serving programmers

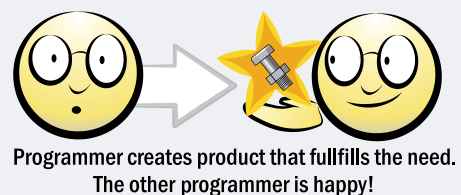
At the dawn of software history, programmers wrote software for other programmers. This was a golden era. Life was so simple. The programmers understood their own technical needs quite intimately and were able to produce software that served those needs. The act of software development was a closed circuit. A programmer could sit in a corner and write the

desired code. By default it also happened to apply to other programmers.

Programmers that grew up in these idyllic days still remember it fondly and some claim that all they need is EMACS and the latest version of GCC to make great software. They may well be right for software intended for a highly-technical audience.

I: Golden Age - The Technocrat Era

"We make stuff for ourselves. Whee!"



The early business era: Programmers attempt to serve others

The end of the Technocrat era came about due to a startling discovery: the vast majority of the world was composed of non-technical people. Unexpected consumers roamed the prehistoric landscape outside the hallowed engineering halls.

A new class of software entrepreneur called a “businessman” came into existence. This new creature realized that the hordes of non-technical people had their own needs that might be served by a well-written program running on one of these new fangled “personal computers.” The businessman

gathered programmers and told them to build software to solve things like balancing budgets or writing letters.

The software products that the programmers created were technical marvels, providing practical benefits far beyond what was available. VisiCalc revolutionized finance. WordStar and WordPerfect® forever changed the act of writing. Even the Quantel Paintbox changed the world of art.

And yet the recently converted users, who couldn't live without the efficient, powerful and technically-amazing new software, were curiously ambivalent.

They liked what these new products did from a practical standpoint, but found them to be confusing and often quite irritating.

You see, the programmers treated their customers just like programmers. Users had to memorize crazy expert keyboard conventions and learn dozens of obscure features. This is what the programmers wanted out of a piece of software, so they assumed that the customers must want the same.

Unfortunately, the customer needs were a different beast. Their needs could be divided into two categories:

- **Practical needs:** Products that work. For example, a product that saves time and money.
- **Emotional needs:** Products which possessed less tangible benefits. Applications that treated customers with kindness and understanding when a mistake was made. Products that were attractive and conferred status. Programs that appealed to the softer aspects of humanity.

Once emotional needs were raised, the programmers quickly determined that the customers must be crazy. The pure technocrats simply did not possess the broad skill set necessary to comprehend, never mind serve, the customer's unexpectedly important emotional needs. →



The late business era: Programmers and artists meet and do battle

The software market had become quite competitive at this point. Business folks, experienced in the Jedi wisdom of more mature markets, reasoned that perhaps serving emotional needs could give their companies an edge. A few companies experimentally hired non-programmers such as artists, marketing and usability dabblers. I use the term artist quite liberally here since it captures that charming, hand-waving vagueness of all classes of "people people."

Oh, the suffering that resulted. The inevitable culture clash was a bit like unleashing wild dogs upon one another and then watching them sulk afterwards.

None of the freshly introduced team members spoke the other's language. The artists talked about

fluff, like color and mood. The marketing people made outrageous requests with zero comprehension about technical feasibility. The programmers were suddenly enslaved by bizarre, conflicting feature demands that they did not understand. "Make it friendlier" translates poorly into C++ code.

Let's take something as simple as making an interface more appealing.

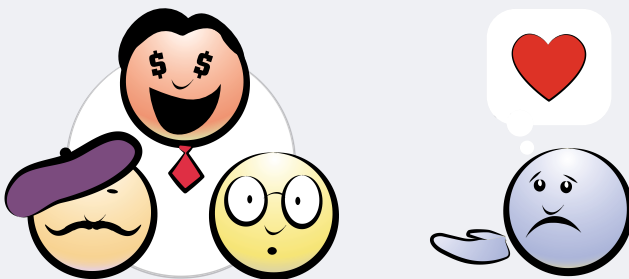
1. The artist would whip up a picture sporting rounded corners and more pleasing colors. They'd send it over to the programmer with a hand-scribbled note "Make this."
2. The programmer would either (a) State that an infinite number of programmers could never finish such a technical abomination or (b) Recreate the image using rectangles and the pre-existing color scheme.
3. Everyone would then rage at one another about the general incompetence.

In these battles for dominance, the winners lost horribly. If the programmers got the upper hand, they produced software that, despite great technical accomplishments, was ugly, difficult to use and no better than currently existing products. If the artists got the upper hand, you ended up with lovely products that didn't do anything worthwhile.

The best products came from those odd teams that managed to compromise. The technology was clumsy and the emotional benefits of the software was shaky. But it was better than what that customer had to put up with before. The original Mac OS® is a great example of this. Later versions of Microsoft® Windows® also managed to address a few emotional needs.

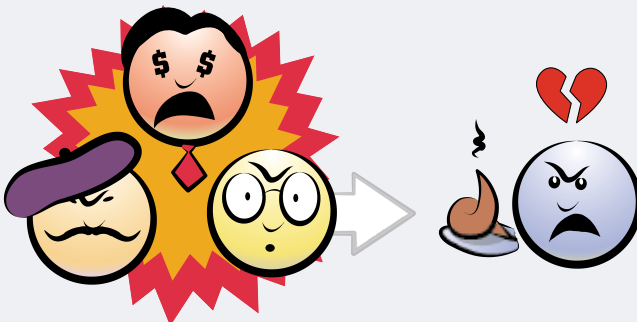
III: The Late Business Era

"I guess we need some of that touchy-feely junk. Should be easy."



A team of programmers and artists* comes together to solve a customer need

*Folks who understand the emotional needs of the customer. These may be designers, subject matter experts, etc.



Pain! Artists are insane and programmers stink.

Progress!! Together they produce a better pile of poo* for the customer.

*The product addresses some technical and some emotional needs. But it tends to be mangled in translation.

The product design era: Can programmers and artists learn to work together?

The clock of progress has moved forward once again. The competition ratcheted up one more notch, and it appeared evident that customers punished companies who failed to master the lessons of the last era. Battle-scarred software companies were left looking for a better way.

Obviously, designing for emotional needs in addition to technical needs was a winning evolutionary strategy. In the last era however, mixing multiple potent skill sets together left organizational and cultural wounds that often were difficult to heal.

Companies that survived the influx of designers and marketing folks often relegated the survivors to their own

separate silos. Marketing people got one org tree, developers got another. Artists and usability folks, in most cases, were shoved in random back corners to rot in black despair. Many groups were so busy protecting their domain that it was surprising that software got released at all. Release dates slipped by multiple years as the development talent stagnated in a cesspool of misplaced process.

What was needed was the most dramatic of transformations: a change in the core development process. What made it difficult was that original culture of technocratic software development would need to evolve to support a broadly humanistic approach to product design.

The lead users of the product design era

This change took root, as is the case for most dramatic transitions, from the most unlikely places.

There is a concept in product design known as the "lead user" [1]. This is a group of users that solves a difficult program far ahead of the mass market. Often, they'll cobble together their own tools and discover fundamental process and technology issues years in advance of mainstream users.

The old joke about writing Shakespeare with infinite monkeys randomly typing on typewriters got it all wrong. Instead, give me a million customers trying to do their job with broken tools and one of them will stumble upon a process that is truly better. By watching the edges of the marketplace, we gain great insight into the direction that the larger market will take in the future.

Lead users in software development came from several widely-divergent areas.

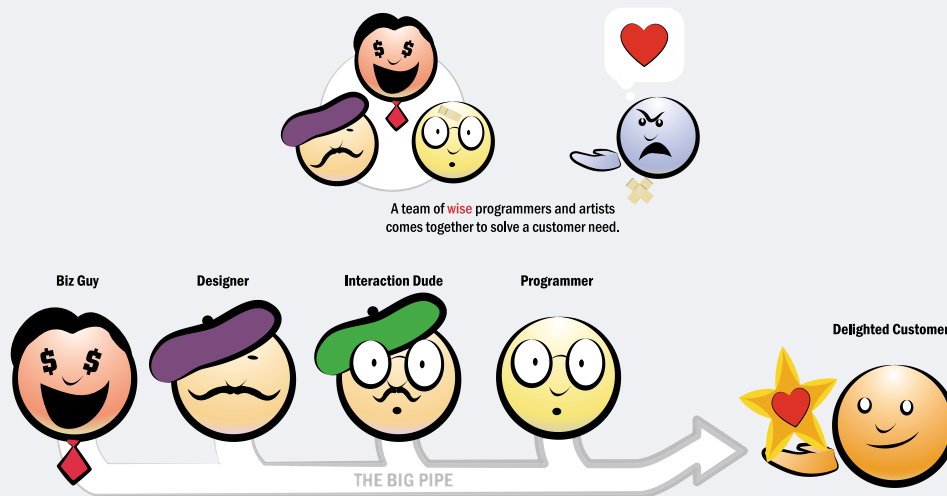
- **Game industry.** Here, small cross-functional teams built products focused entirely on serving emotional needs. Due to intense competition and vicious delivery cycles, many teams were forced to innovate far outside the traditional software development methodologies.

- **Companies like Apple®** that followed curious "design" philosophies more similar to those pursued by consumer-good companies rather than software companies. What do shampoo companies and software development have in common? A remarkable amount!

- **Web design companies.** Due to the low cost of entry and the early emphasis on the web as a marketing medium, the web design market is dominated by tiny, hungry graphic design firms. They brought with them a culture of small teams, close collaboration between artists and programmers, and a nearly slavish devotion to serving their customers.

IV: The Product Design Era

"The 'touchy-feely junk' is the main reason why people are buying our swag!"



- 1: Adopt **Design Tools** for software development.
- 2: Create a **Production Pipeline** for the whole team.
- 3: Work as a cross-functional team to create an amazing* product.

*The product addresses technical, economic and emotional needs. Wow!

(continued on page 10) →

[1] Lead user analysis

http://www.leaduser.com/documents/lu_perform_study_wp_entbusiast.pdf

Pragmatic Marketing Seminars for



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The recognized expert in technology product management and marketing, Pragmatic Marketing's common sense approach is built on years of experience and best practices. The Pragmatic Marketing seminars introduce a framework that gives technology marketers the tools necessary to deliver market-driven products that people want to buy. Our framework is the foundation for all our courses, from identifying markets and their problems to writing market requirements to creating a go-to-market strategy that meets your corporate and revenue goals. Since 1993, over 40,000 attendees have been trained to "think with the grid."



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- Definition of the role of product management
- Contrasting product management and product marketing
- Assigning ownership of responsibilities
- Identifying the “first steps” with gap analysis

II. Market Analysis

- Distinctive competence
- Market research
- Market problems
- Technology assessment
- Competitive analysis

III. Quantitative Analysis

- Market sizing
- Product performance
- Operational metrics
- Win/loss analysis

IV. Product Strategy

- Business case
- Pricing
- Buy, build, or partner?
- Thought leaders
- Innovation

V. Product Planning

- Positioning
- Sales process

VI. Case Study

VII. Delineating Responsibilities

- Communicating market facts to Development, Marketing Communications, and Sales
- Drawing the line between Product Management and the other departments

Requirements That Work™

Requirements That Work is an intensive one-day course that introduces a straightforward method for creating product plans that product managers can write, developers readily embrace, and that produce solutions the market wants to buy.

(this is day 3 of Practical Product Management)

VIII. Building the Market Requirements Document (MRD)

- Writing requirements
- Implementing use-case scenarios
- Programming for the “persona”
- Determining product feature sets
- Creating the MRD

IX. Analyzing Business and Technology Drivers

- Reviewing specifications
- Prioritizing the product feature set

X. Getting (and Keeping) Commitments

- Product contract
- Getting the product team in sync
- Getting executive support
- Communicating the plan in the company and in the market

Effective Product Marketing

Effective Product Marketing delivers practical tools and processes for product managers and product marketers who want to improve their strategic contribution and align with the sales organization. Learn how to build a repeatable process to develop, execute and measure go-to-market strategies that ensure product success.

I. Roles and Responsibilities

- Differentiate roles of product management and product marketing
- Distinguish sales support from product marketing
- Ensure effective hand-off between product management, marketing, and sales

II. Segmenting and Targeting Audiences

- Segmented marketing strategies
- Buying criteria and program influences
- Building market messages

III. Building a Strategic Product Marketing Program

- Communicating the business case for product marketing programs
- Supporting sales goals
- Metrics that build management support
- Creating the right marketing budget
- A strategic approach to the marketing program mix

IV. Align with Sales

- Responding to endless tactical requests
- Measuring and improving sales processes/productivity
- Optimizing web content and sales tools
- Working with Sales to sell new products and enter new markets

V. Goal-Oriented Program Execution

- Managing and measuring lead quality and throughput
- Integrating programs by market segment and target audience
- Measuring results with or without CRM
- Influencing customer retention and migration
- Building and measuring positioning awareness

VI. Start Where You Are

- Prioritizing next steps
- Implementing new ideas for current programs
- Continuously measure and improve

What the next era looks like

Each of these lead users follow a variant of what is broadly known in more mature industries as “product design.” They see software development not as a pure technical exercise, rather as an integrative process of building a new product that solves both their customer's combined emotional and practical needs. Even when forced to use a “technically inferior” platform, the religious devotion to rapidly and effectively serving customer's complete spectrum of needs make their product offerings more attractive than the competition.

Robert G. Cooper, a well-known researcher on new product development, states that there are several core factors [2] (listed in order of importance) for any successful new product design process:

1. A unique, superior and differentiated product with good value-for-money for the customer
2. A strong market orientation—voice of the customer is built in
3. Sharp, early, fact-based product definition before product development begins
4. Solid up-front homework—doing front end activities like market analysis well
5. True cross functional teams: empowered, resourced, accountable, dedicated leader
6. Leverage—Where the project builds on business's technology and marketing competencies
7. Market attractiveness—size, growth, margins
8. Quality of the launch effort: well planned, properly resourced
9. Technological competencies and quality of execution of technology activities.

Many companies in the Late Business era already emphasize a few of these factors. However, there are some differences. Notice how technical competencies are important, but last on the list, and how creating a solution to customer needs is first on the list.

Software companies that understand product design tend to pour their efforts into the following activities:

- **Focus on a unifying team goal built around customer needs.** Ensure that the product is always driven by customer needs, not internal whims.
- **Work together in cross-functional teams.** Build an organization that encourages the sharing of skills to promote problem solving. Discourage the formation of silos of individual “experts.”
- **Communicate clearly with a process that applies to all team members.** Build a commonly-followed process that includes both fuzzy front-end activities like design, and production activities like coding. This process forms the language that unifies disparate groups.
- **Work efficiently with design-friendly tools.** The team avoids custom coding and “tossing it over the fence” by adopting tools that work on common data format across all skill sets.

Benefits of a product design philosophy

Benefits of a product design process are well documented. New products that deliver superior, unique customer benefits have a commercial success rate of 98% compared to 18.4% for undifferentiated products. These products reach an outstanding 53.5% market share. [3]

Some of the highlights of a strong product design include:

- Highly-competitive products that achieve market dominance.

- Cost savings by focusing on the right features that bring customer value, not low-yield “nice-to-have” features.
- Passionate customers that accelerate the spread of your marketing message.

To the loser's surprise, the success of their rivals appears miraculous. They ask, “How is it that a slow web application can take away market share from our superior desktop application?”

The answer is simple. The successful company identified the correct emotional and practical needs of the customer and poured their efforts into serving those needs. The richer companies—flush with silos of “wise” experts—fought with one another and threw random features at the customer. It is rarely about doing more; it's about grokking customers and doing the small set of correct things necessary to succeed.

Dangers of the product design era

In any process transition, some groups adopt techniques slower than others.

- Even within game development, there are huge swaths of publishers and development teams that are ignorant of techniques used to incorporate market research, concept testing and new-to-the-world innovation into their process.
- Many web developers still create new products by following their “gut” without clearly identifying their ultimate customer.
- Most traditional desktop software developers are just barely escaping the Late Business era of functional silos and warring factions.

Most laggards who desperately hold onto their aging processes will die off in the face of advancing competition. Those with larger war chests merely buy a small period of additional learning time.

[2] Success factors in new product development
Winning at New Products, pg 58-59, Robert G. Cooper

[3] Benefits of a differentiated product
Winning at New Products, pg 60, Robert G. Cooper

Unfortunately, many companies that attempt to adopt a product design philosophy will also fail, despite their best efforts. Cultural change is hard work. To adopt product design, you must alter the most basic DNA of the company's values.

- It involves asking vice presidents to give up empires that they've fought decades to establish. What is the point of an organization of engineers when engineers are all just members of small cross-functional teams?
- It involves asking the men and women in the trenches to give up their dreams of building their own empires according to the old rules.
- If the ultimate reward of the old system is an isolated corner office with windows, try convincing people to work together in a common war room that has walls covered with whiteboards.

Such traumatic change is absolutely necessary. If you want to make great products for happy customers, you need to make the transition to a broader product design methodology. We may have once been a clique of technocrats, but now we must take our place in the broader society by providing human solutions to the very human customers that we serve.

Dessert


After I'm done drawing all this out on my little dinner-party napkin, I point to one of the designer fellows wearing a beret and say, "See that guy? That's me. I work on a team full of wildly-talented people trying to make the world a better place. We make products that you can love, not just products that you use."

Folks nod. They get it. They like the idea of software that not only works, but makes them feel good about using it. At one meal, I was sitting with an older woman who listened most politely to my wildly-gesticulating explanation of modern software development.

At the end she said, "Well, it is about time."

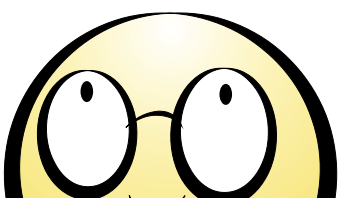
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- **The Apple design team work space**
"We have assembled a heavenly design team. By **keeping the core team small** and **investing significantly in tools and process** we can work with a level of collaboration that seems particularly rare. Our physical environment reflects and enables that collaborative approach. The **large open studio** and massive sound system support a number of communal design areas. We have little exclusively personal space. In fact, the memory of how we work will endure beyond the products of our work." – Jonathan Ive
- **Concept of total customer experience**
- **When worlds collide: Integrated development with business and design students**
- **When innovators stop innovating**
- **Rounded Rects at Apple: Benefits of cross-functional discussion**
- **A tech writer and a programmer prove the benefits of cross-functional teams**
- **Development of MacPaint®**
- **Use of cross-functional teams to improve game development** 



Daniel Cook is Program Manager on Microsoft Expression Design. He has designed numerous tools, games and other products during his 12 years in the software industry. He holds an MBA from University of Colorado at Boulder and a BA in Physics at Bowdoin College. His popular website, www.lostgarden.com, explores game design and its successful application to a broad range of product development issues. Email Daniel at danc@lostgarden.com



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The Art of Panels

By Guy Kawasaki

Most panels have audiences of 100 to 250 people; however, approximately 20,000 people watched Churchill Club's "Startup 2006" panel (watch it at <http://snipurl.com/1asij>). You could have knocked me over with a feather when I learned of this number. More people probably watched this panel than any other panel in the world in 2006!

Online audiences of this magnitude impact every panel in several ways:

- The size of the audience at the event is not nearly as important as whether it will be recorded and publicized. With online video, there's no such thing as a small audience anymore.
- No matter how small the physical audience and obscure the event, you'd better be on your toes and give a great performance because tens of thousands of people might see it. With online video, there's no such thing as a "small slip up."
- Best case: look at both the audience and the camera. Whatever you do, don't look at only the moderator unless you want 20,000 people to only see the side of your face.

http://snipurl.com/art_panel



How to kick butt on a panel

Superficially, a panel looks easy. There are four or five other people on it—all of whom you think you're smarter than—and it only lasts 60 minutes. How hard could it be? Herein lies the problem: everyone thinks a panel is easy so they don't take it seriously. A panel is actually a better opportunity to position yourself than a keynote because you are juxtaposed to four or five people in real time—whereas keynotes are sequential. If you want to stand head and shoulders above the other panelists, here's what to do:

1. Know the subject. I hope you're getting as tired of duhisms as I am, but this needs to be said. If you're invited to a panel on wireless security, and you don't know much about the subject, then you should decline. I don't care how wonderful the opportunity seems to be. If you can help it, never provide an audience the opportunity to truly know that you're clueless.

2. Control your introduction. The first mistake that most panelists make is that they assume the moderator has an up-to-date and accurate bio. Odds are that the moderator either knows nothing about you or has done a Google™ search and printed a bio that is inaccurate. Before the panel starts, hand the moderator a three sentence description of who you are and tell her to read it verbatim.

3. Speak up. The optimal distance between your lips and the microphone is one inch. You're sitting down. You're hunched over. You're not projecting. So get close to the mic and speak up. Assume there's a 51-year old geezer in the back with a hearing aid like me.

4. Entertain, don't just inform. As in keynotes, your goal is to entertain, not only inform. The funnier you are, the more people will think you're smart because it takes great intelligence to be funny. I'd go so far as to pick a friendly fight with the moderator or another panelist. Let it rip. Have fun. Think of a panel as friendly, though emotional, conversation in front of 500 of your closest friends.



5. **Tell the truth, especially when the truth is obvious.** If you're lucky, and there's a good moderator, that moderator will try to pin you to the wall with tough, embarrassing questions. This is a good thing because it provides an opportunity to (a) be funny and (b) show that you're a straight shooter. "The truth will get you glee." If everybody knows the truth, don't even try to fudge. It would be far better to say, "I plead the Fifth Amendment." That will get a laugh.
6. **Answer the question that's posed, but never limit yourself to the question that's posed.** When asked a question, answer the question (unless you have to plead the Fifth). Answer it as fast as possible, but then feel free to take the conversation in a direction that you want. For example, let's say that the moderator asks, "Do you think cell phones will get viruses soon?" It's perfectly okay to answer, "Yes, I think this is an issue, but the real issue that faces most of us is the lack of good cell phone coverage," if that's what you really want to talk about.
7. **Be plain, simple, and short.** Let's assume you are on a panel of experts. Let's further assume the moderator is an expert. The moderator asks a question. You think that you're answering her and the other panelists—all experts, so you launch into alphabet soup, acronym du jour. Big mistake. The audience is, well, the audience. Not the moderator nor the panelists. Reduce the most complex and technical issues to something plain, simple, and short, and you'll position yourself as (a) unselfish and (b) a star.
8. **Never look bored.** This may be one of the hardest aspects of a panel. Let's say the other panelists launch into a long, boring, jargon-filled response. The temptation is to whip out a Blackberry® at worst or to look bored at best. Don't do it. Fake rapt interest because the moment you look bored, a photographer is going to snap a picture or the cameraman is going to put your face on the 10-foot screen. You've got it made if you can fake sincerity!
9. **Never look at the moderator.** The moderator is asking the questions, but he is merely a proxy for the audience. When you answer, don't look at the moderator. Look at the audience because the audience doesn't want to see the side of your head. (FYI, a good moderator will not make eye contact with you—forcing you to look away from him and look at the audience).
10. **Never say, "I agree with (name of previous panelist)."** A moderator will often ask everyone to answer the same question. If you're not the first one to answer, there's the temptation to say, "I agree with what my colleague just said..." That's a dumb response. Come up with something different, and if you're not quick enough on your feet to do this, don't go on the panel. At the very least say, "I think that question has been answered. For the audience's sake, let's move on."

<http://snipurl.com/kickbutt>





How to be a great moderator

How many times have you watched a panel and thought that it was entertaining and informative? Your answer is probably a small number. Moderating a panel is deceptively hard—harder, in fact, than keynoting because the quality of the panelists is usually beyond your control. Here's how to be a great moderator.

- **Don't over-prepare the panelists.** The more panelists prepare in advance, the more likely they will be boring. If you provide all the questions in advance, many panelists will prepare carefully-crafted, devoid-of-content responses—in the worst case, even tapping PR people for help. The most you should provide is the first two or three questions to make panelists feel comfortable and “prepared.”
- **Do prepare yourself in advance.** Moderators need to prepare more than panelists because they need to be able to stir up the pot with questions about the latest industry controversies and hot issues. It's hard to do this in real time, so prepare the questions in advance using multiple research resources. If you don't have enough industry knowledge to stir up the pot, then decline the invitation to moderate the panel.
- **Never let panelists use PowerPoint®.** Even if the panelists are CEOs and Nobel Prize winners, never let them give a “brief” PowerPoint presentation. If one panelist uses PowerPoint, everyone else will want to. Then the session will encounter the technical difficulty of making multiple laptops work with the projector or the challenge of integrating presentations into one. Forget it.
- **Never let panelists use anything special.** Suppose everyone accepts the no-PowerPoint rule, but a panelist comes up with the clever idea of showing a “brief” corporate video. Again, the answer should be, “No can do.” Frankly, if a panelist needs either a PowerPoint presentation or a video, he's probably not articulate enough to be on the panel, so get rid of him if you can.

- **Make them introduce themselves in 30 seconds.** Give panelists 30 seconds to introduce themselves. The moderator shouldn't read each panelist's bio because he will inevitably (a) mispronounce something (I didn't know I was Polish until I was introduced as "Guy Kowalski"); (b) get some fact wrong "Oh, you didn't graduate from Harvard Business School, you just attended a one-week executive boondoggle there;" or (c) fail to highlight some crucial part of the panelist's background.
- **Break eye contact with the panelists.** Look at the panel, ask a question, and then look at the audience. Do not continue eye contact with the panelists because you want them to speak directly to the audience, not to the moderator. Also, don't hesitate to tell panelists to speak louder or get closer to the microphone.
- **Make everyone else look smart.** The goal of the moderator is to make the panelists look smart. It is not to make himself look smart—or grab the most attention. Moderators can make panelists look smart in two ways: first, give them a few softball questions that they can knock out of the park. For example, "What do you view as the most pressing issues of the industry?" Second, extract good information out of the panelists by rephrasing, summarizing, or clarifying what they said. A good moderator accounts for only 10% of the speaking time of a panel—she is the "invisible hand," not the star.
- **Stand up for the audience.** Making panelists look smart does not mean letting them bull shitake the audience. My theory is that the moderator is called the moderator because her role is to ensure that there is only a moderate level of bull shitake and sales pitches. A good moderator is the audience's advocate for truth, insight, and brevity—any two will do. When a panelist makes a sales pitch or tells lies, you are morally obligated to smack him around in front of the audience.
- **Involve the audience.** Moderators should allocate approximately 30% of the duration of the panel to questions from the audience. Any more, and the audience will run out of high-quality questions. Any less and the audience will feel like it did not participate. However, don't feel obligated to accept any stupid questions from the audience any more than you accept stupid answers from the panelists. Always have a few good questions in your hip pocket just in case no one in the audience has a question. Or, even better, you could "seed" the audience in advance.
- **Seize the day.** In my book, a moderator would get an A+ if he can catch a panelist "in the act." For example, many venture capitalists cop the attitude that "We knew that the dotcom bubble would burst, so we were very careful about what we invested in." The moderator should win a prize if he can come back with, "Then why did you invest in discountdogfood.com?" I realize this conflicts with "make everyone else look smart" but moderating is a complex activity—what can I say?

http://snipurl.com/great_moderator

TPM



Guy Kawasaki is a managing director of Garage Technology Ventures, an early-stage venture capital firm, and a columnist for Entrepreneur Magazine. Previously, he was an Apple Fellow at Apple Computer, Inc. Guy is the author of eight books including The Art of the Start, Rules for Revolutionaries, How to Drive Your Competition Crazy, Selling the Dream, and The Macintosh Way. He has a BA from Stanford University and an MBA from UCLA as well as an honorary doctorate from Babson College. To contact Guy, visit his How to Change the World blog at blog.guykawasaki.com



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Empowering the Product Manager

The third annual Software Marketing Perspectives Conference & Expo is the leading event for VPs and directors of technology product management to share experiences and network with one another. The program delivers on the theme of this year's conference—Empowering the Product Manager—by featuring speakers with deep technology product management experience who are in the trenches now. At the same time, working with our partners at AIPMM, we extend the program to include an appeal to product managers who may be new to the field. This year's program offers tracks in: Product Management, Market Management and Early Career Product Management.

Keynote Speakers Include:

Steve Johnson, Instructor with Pragmatic Marketing® and an expert in technology product management. Steve has personally trained more than 15,000 technology product managers; his quick wit adds an element of fun to his presentations.

Ann Marie Beasley, VP Office of Strategy Management, Symantec Corp., is responsible for developing the corporate level processes and content needed for informed decision making and for driving sustained strategic focus and alignment at Symantec, which is ranked at No. 25 on the 2006 Software 500, from *Software Magazine*.

Stacey Mentzel, Director of Product Management at Business Objects, has led efforts to increase market focus, improve roadmap planning and increase the effectiveness of requirements review with development teams.

Larry Weber, Chairman, W2 Group, a leader in social media marketing, is an entrepreneur and published author. Weber is currently working on his second book, *Marketing to the Social Web: How Digital Customer Communities Build Your Business*.



Mentzel

AIPMM Certification Offered at 2007 SMP Event

The Association of International Product Marketing & Management (AIPMM) Certification is a symbol of professionalism and a guide by which any product manager can shape his or her career. It is an ideal ladder for career advancement within any industry. Go to www.smpevent.com for more information and to register.

Session Speakers Include:

Alan Armstrong, VP of Product Management at Fortiva, Inc., has more than 12 years experience in product management for enterprise software. In that time, he has managed teams and executed new and existing products through all aspects of the lifecycle.

Jennifer Chang, Strategic Programs Consulting Service Offering Manager, Oracle USA, is a veteran in the software and management consulting industries with more than 10 years of experience, including management consulting with Deloitte Consulting, business development with Corio, and product management and marketing with Ariba. She now develops strategic service offering programs with Oracle USA.

Richard Heitmann, VP Product Management, EVault, with more than 15 years of experience in marketing, program management, and engineering roles in enterprise software, security, and data protection.

Steve Herlocher develops and executes product initiatives for Aspect Software, the world's largest company focused on the contact center. He has more than 15 years of experience in marketing, business development, engineering and operations with a range of companies.



Herlocher

Ruedi Klein, Product Portfolio Manager, Lucent Technologies, has been involved in new product development for more than a decade. In his current role he is using his experience to evaluate new product project proposals and provide recommendations covering resource allocation, pricing, and risk management.

Laureen Knudsen, Value Delivery Chain Lifecycle Manager, Hewlett-Packard Co., is an award-winning writer and business manager with 22 years of software industry experience. She is currently responsible for Process Improvement/Reengineering for the ITSM group (formerly Peregrine Systems). This Agile-based process includes best practices from Scrum, XP, Lean, and Iterative development methodologies.

James Morehead, VP Product Management and Marketing, SupportSoft, leads a team responsible for crafting and evangelizing SupportSoft's strategy and product direction for SupportSoft's target markets (including broadband, video and mobile service providers as well as large enterprises).

David Meerman Scott is a writer, consultant and Pragmatic Marketing® seminar leader. His book, *Cashing In With Content: How Innovative Marketers Use Digital Information to Turn Browsers Into Buyers*, is a riff on using Web content to drive revenue and other actions.

Gopal Shenoy is Strategic Marketing Manager for content solutions at SolidWorks, which is ranked at No. 127 on the 2006 Software 500 from *Software Magazine*. He manages the product direction for the content offerings from SolidWorks.

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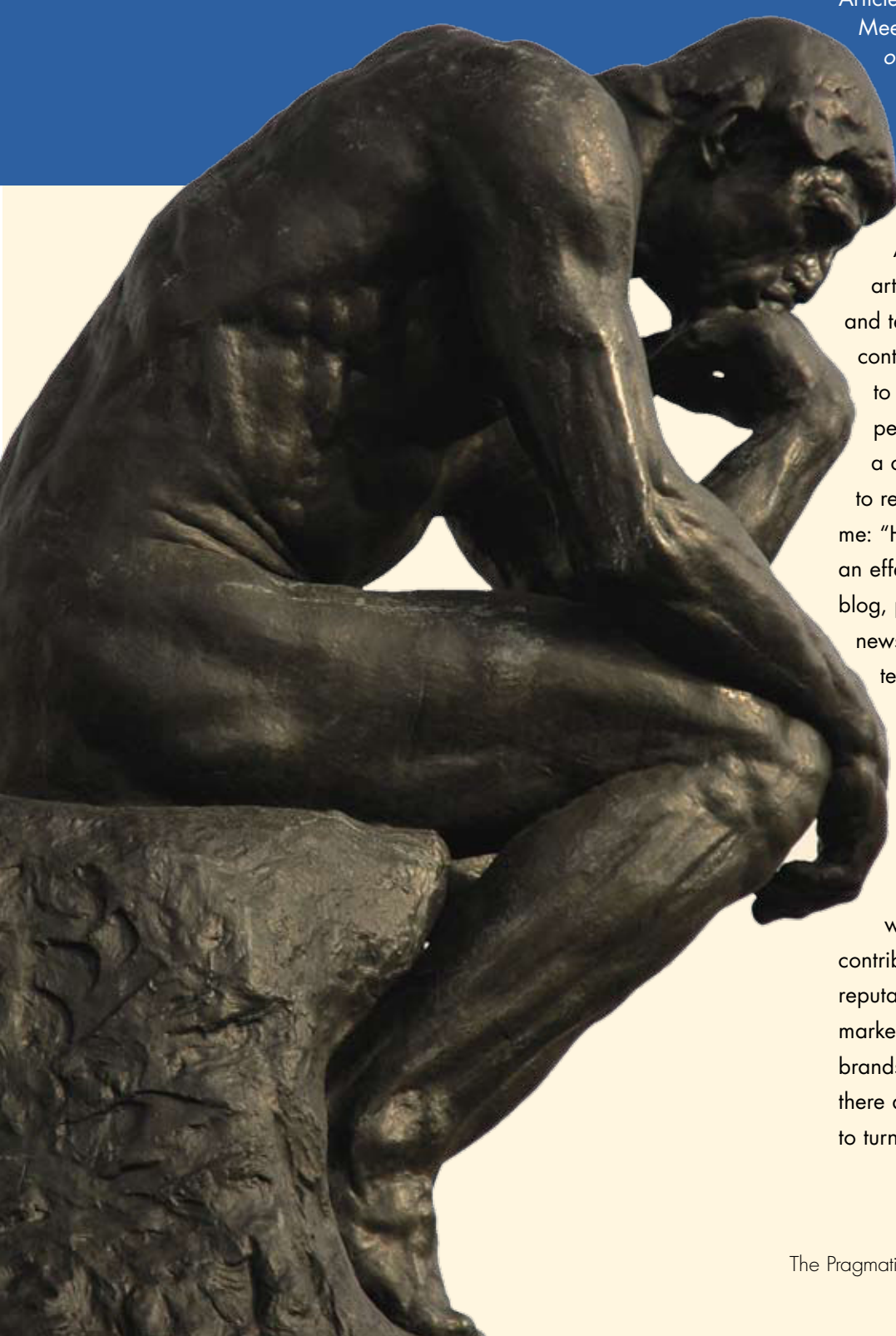
Telelogic

By David Meerman Scott

Online Thought Leadership

Transform Your Company Into a Trusted Resource for Your Buyers

Article based on content from David Meerman Scott's book *The New Rules of Marketing & PR: How to use news releases, blogs, podcasting, viral marketing & online media to reach buyers directly.*



An effective online content strategy, artfully executed, drives action. Software and technology companies that use online content well, have a clearly defined goal—to sell products, generate leads, or get people to join a community—and deploy a content strategy that directly contributes to reaching that goal. Often people ask me: “How do you recommend that I create an effective ____?” (fill in the blank with blog, podcast, white paper, e-book, e-mail newsletter, Webinar, etc.). While the technologies for each form of online content are a little different, the one common aspect is that through all of these media, your organization can exercise thought leadership rather than simple advertising and product promotion; a well crafted white paper, e-book, or Webinar contributes to an organization’s positive reputation by setting it apart in the marketplace of ideas. This form of content brands a company and the people that work there as experts and as a trusted resource to turn to again and again. →

Developing thought leadership content

OK, so what is thought leadership, and how do I do it?

First, put away your company hat for a moment and think like one of your buyer personas. The content that you create will be a solution to those people's problems and *will not mention your company or products at all!* Imagine for a moment that you are a marketer at a Sales Force Automation (SFA) provider. Rather than just peddling your SFA solution, you might write an e-book or shoot a video about shortening the sales cycle, and then promote it on your site and offer it for free to other organizations (such as industry associations) to put on their sites. Or perhaps one of the salespeople at your company could blog about the trials and tribulations of being a traveling salesperson. She could post her thoughts from around the world using photos and videos of the hotels she stays in, the coffee shops she meets people at, and the tradeshow she attends. Perhaps there is a humor angle to it (cool title for the blog: *Diary of a Road Warrior*). Since the target market for your SFA solution is other salespeople, you would build a following of readers of the blog who are also your target market. The SFA company with a blog like this educates and entertains buyers but does *not* sell the SFA services directly. Instead, the idea here is that people who enjoy the blog are more likely to buy that company's SFA product when the time comes.

Forms of thought leadership content

Here are some of the various forms of thought leadership content (there may be others in your niche market).

White papers The best white papers are *not product brochures*. A good white paper is written for a business audience, defines a problem, and offers a solution, but it does not pitch a particular product or company.

E-books are being used more and more by marketers as a fun and thoughtful way to get useful information to buyers. For the purposes of marketing using Web content, I define an e-book as a PDF-formatted document presented in a landscape format, rather than the white paper's portrait format.

E-mail newsletters have been around as long as e-mail, but still have tremendous value as a way to deliver a regular series of thought leadership content. However, the vast majority of e-mail newsletters that I see basically just serve as advertising for a company's products and services. You know the type I'm talking about—each month you get some lame product pitch and a 10 percent off coupon. But consider using a different type of e-mail newsletter, one that focuses not on your company's products and services, but on simply solving buyers' problems.

Webinars are online seminars that may include audio, video, or graphic images (typically in the form of PowerPoint slides) and are often used by technology companies as a primer about a specific problem that technology can solve.

Wikis are started by an organization as thought leadership content because it wants to be seen as an important player in a distinct marketplace. A Wiki allows anyone to post, so it could be used to organize information about a specific issue or problem in the market. The Wiki from Alacra is a good example <http://www.alacrawiki.com/>



Research and survey reports

are used by many companies that conduct research projects or surveys and publish the results for free. This can be an effective approach if the research or survey is *real and statistically significant* and the results are interesting to your buyers. Pragmatic Marketing's salary survey is a good example of this kind of thought leadership.

Blogs are personal Web sites written by someone passionate about a subject and wants the world to know about it with the benefits rubbing off on the company that he works for. Writing a blog is the easiest and simplest way to get your thought leadership ideas out and into the market.

Podcasts are an ongoing series of audio downloads available by subscription which are very popular as thought leadership content in some markets. Some people just prefer audio, and if your buyers do, then a podcast of your own might be the thing for you.

Video content, vodcasts, and vlogs

(three names, one medium) are regularly updating videos that offer a powerful opportunity to demonstrate your thought leadership, given most people's familiarity with the video medium.

How to create thoughtful content

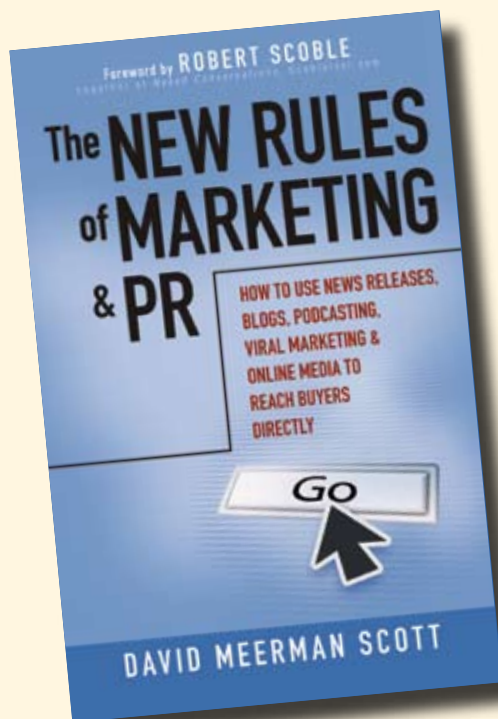
While each technique for getting your thought leadership content into the marketplace of ideas is different, they share some common considerations:

- Do not write about your company and your products! Thought leadership content is designed to solve buyer problems or answer questions and to show that you and your organization are smart and worth doing business with. This type of marketing and PR technique is *not* a brochure or sales pitch. Thought leadership is *not* advertising.
- Define your organizational goals first. Do you want to drive revenue? Encourage people to download something?
- Based on your goals, decide if you want to provide the content for free and without any registration (many more people will use the content, but you won't know who they are) or decide if you want to include some kind of registration mechanism (much lower response rates, but you build a contact list).
- Think like a publisher by understanding your audience. Consider what market problems your buyer personas are faced with and develop topics that appeal to them.
- Write for your audience. Use examples and stories. Make it interesting.
- Choose a great title that grabs attention. Use subtitles to describe what the content will deliver.
- Promote the effort like crazy. Offer the content on your site with easy-to-find links. Add a link to employees' e-mail signatures, and get partners to offer links as well.
- To drive the viral marketing effects, alert appropriate reporters, bloggers, and analysts that the content is available and send them a download link.

To embrace the power of the Web and the blogosphere requires a different kind of thinking on the part of marketers. We need to learn to give up our command-and-control mentality. It isn't about "the message." It's about being insightful. We need to stop thinking "advertising" and instead get our ideas out by understanding buyers and telling them the stories they want to hear. Done well, Web content that delivers authentic thought leadership also brands a software or technology company as one to do business with.



*David Meerman Scott is an online thought leadership strategist and the author of *The New Rules of Marketing & PR: How to use news releases, blogs, podcasting, viral marketing & online media to reach buyers directly*. He is currently at work developing a new course for Pragmatic Marketing based on his book. Check out his blog at www.WebInkNow.com*



Robert Scoble's Foreword to *The New Rules of Marketing & PR*

Excerpted from *The New Rules of Marketing & PR: How to use news releases, blogs, podcasting, viral marketing & online media to reach buyers directly* by David Meerman Scott. Used with permission. John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2007. ISBN: 0-470-11345-6 \$24.95

You're not supposed to be able to do what David Meerman Scott is about to tell you in this book. You're not supposed to be able to carry around a \$250 video camera, record what employees are working on and what they think of the products they built, and publish those videos on the Internet. But that's what I did at Microsoft, building an audience of more than four million unique visitors a month.

You're not supposed to be able to do what Stormhoek did. A winery in South Africa, it doubled sales in a year using the principles discussed here.

You're not supposed to be able to run a Presidential Campaign with just a blogger, a videographer, and a Flickr photographer. But that's what John Edwards did in December 2006 as he announced he was running for President.

Something has changed in the past 10 years. Well, for one, we have Google now, but that's only a part of the puzzle.

What really has happened is the word-of-mouth network has gotten more efficient. Much, much, more efficient.

Word-of-mouth has always been important to business. When I helped run a Silicon Valley camera store in the 1980s about 80% of my sales came from it. "Where should I buy a camera this weekend," you might have heard in a lunchroom back then. Today that conversation is happening online. But, instead of only being two people talking about your business, now thousands and sometimes millions (Engadget had 10 million page views in a single day during the Consumer Electronics and Macworld shows in January 2006) are either participating or listening in.

What does this mean? Well, now there's a new media to deal with. Your PR teams better understand what drives this new media (it's as influential as the *New York Times* or CNN now) and if you understand how to use it you can drive buzz, new product feedback, sales, and more.

But first you'll have to learn to break the rules.

Is your marketing department saying you need to spend \$80,000 to do a single video (not unusual, even in today's world, I just participated in such a video for a sponsor of mine)? If so, tell that department "thanks, but no thanks." Or, even better, search Google for "will it blend?" You'll find a Utah blender company that got six million downloads in less than 10 days. Oh, and 10,000 comments in the same period of time. All by spending a few hundred bucks, recording a one-minute long video, and uploading that to YouTube.

Or, study what I did at Microsoft with a blog and a video camera. Economist magazine said I put a human face on Microsoft. Imagine that. A 60,000-employee organization and I changed its image with very little expense and hardly a committee in sight.

This advice isn't for everyone, though. Most people don't like running fast in business. They feel more comfortable if there's lots of checks and balances. Er, committees to cover their asses. Or, they don't want to destroy the morale of PR and marketing departments due to the disintermediating effects of the Internet.

After all, we can type "OneNote Blog" into Google or Live.com, or Yahoo and you'll find Chris Pratley. He runs the OneNote team at Microsoft. Or, search for "Sun CEO." You'll find Jonathan Schwartz and his blog.

You can leave either a comment and tell them their product sucks and see what they do in response. Or, even better, tell them how to earn your sale. Do they snap into place?

It's a new world you're about to enter. One where relationships with influentials AND search engine optimization strategy are just as important as each other. One where your news will be passed around the world very quickly. Don't believe me?

Look at how the world found out I was leaving Microsoft for a Silicon Valley startup (PodTech.net).

I told 15 people at a videoblogging conference. Not "A listers" either. Just everyday videobloggers. I asked them not to tell anyone until Tuesday—this was on a Saturday afternoon and I still hadn't really told my boss.

Well, of course someone leaked that information. But, it didn't pop up in the New York Times. It wasn't discussed on CNN. No, it was a blogger I had never even heard of that posted the info first.

Within hours it was on hundreds of other blogs. Within two days it was on the Wall Street Journal, in the New York Times, on the front page of the BBC, in Business Week, Economist, in more than 140 newspapers around the world (friends called me from Australia, Germany, Israel, and England, among other countries) and other places. Waggener Edstrom, Microsoft's PR agency, was keeping track and said that about 50 million media impressions occurred on my name in the first week.

All due to 15 conversations.

Whoa, what's up here? Well, if you have a story worth repeating, bloggers, podcasters, and videobloggers (among other influentials) will repeat your story all over the world. Potentially bringing hundreds of thousands or millions of people your way. One link on a site like Digg alone could bring tens of thousands of visitors.

How did that happen?

Well, for one, lots of people knew me, knew my phone number, knew what kind of car I drove, knew my wife and son, knew my best friends, knew where I worked and had heard me in about 700 videos that I posted at <http://channel9.msdn.com> on behalf of Microsoft.

They also knew where I went to college (and high school, and middle school), and countless other details about me. How do you know they know all this? Well, they wrote a page on Wikipedia about me at http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Robert_Scoble—not a single thing on that page was authored by me.

What did all that knowledge of me turn into? Credibility and authority. Translation: people knew me, knew where I was coming from, knew I was passionate and authoritative about technology, and came to trust me where they wouldn't trust most corporate authorities.

By reading this book you'll understand how to gain the credibility you need to build your business. Enjoy! **TPM**

*Robert Scoble
Vice President Media Development, PodTech.net
co-author Naked Conversations
Scobleizer.com*

The New Rules of Marketing & PR by David Meerman Scott

Which is better? A blog mention or a quote in a magazine article? If you said the magazine quote, you need to read *The New Rules of Marketing and PR*.

Back in the old days, we hired agencies to create ads and PR firms to generate buzz. We used interrupt marketing. We communicated a simple message broadly. And measured results in the single digits; a campaign that generated 1% response was considered a success.

We've felt it for a long time: the old rules of marketing don't work.

David Meerman Scott introduces the new world of product marketing using new tools to direct-cast to those who are most interested: our buyers. Nowadays anyone with a Mac and a mic can create a podcast; anyone with a video camera can post on YouTube. And sending a news release to Google is now much more important than sending a news release to a journalist.

In the new world of marketing, having something to say matters more than ever. This book explains the reasons why the new media works and how to use the new rules. As always, marketers need to understand the product and its value to buyers, and also be able to articulate the value in buyer language. We just can't continue to offer vague product platitudes and expect to get anyone's attention. "Everyone everywhere" is no longer a valid market segment (and it never was!)

But perhaps the most important use for the book is to convince your management that blogging is better than advertising, that posting news to your web site is better than posting to prnewswire, and that participating in a small but interested community is better than blasting your message to everyone everywhere, hoping that someone will hear you.

The really interesting part of this book is that it reminds us that the old techniques really didn't work very well either. While the others spout jargon at you and vie to shout over each other, the new rules of marketing are a quiet conversation, using language both parties understand.

Ask the Expert

"I know I need to be listening to the market to make my product decisions but my company doesn't seem interested in market research. How can I justify spending big bucks for information they don't seem to value?"

Assuming that we want market information—and I'm convinced that most companies do—we have to explore the options for market research. Traditional B2C companies do market research all the time but B2B technology companies don't. The chief reason B2B avoids research is that it's perceived to be both time-consuming and expensive, but it doesn't have to be.

My friend Bob Martin uses the concept of Listening Posts to reveal the many research tools between gut instinct (low cost and fast) and comprehensive market research studies (high cost and slow). Many of these "listening posts" are already available; we just have to analyze the information they're telling us.

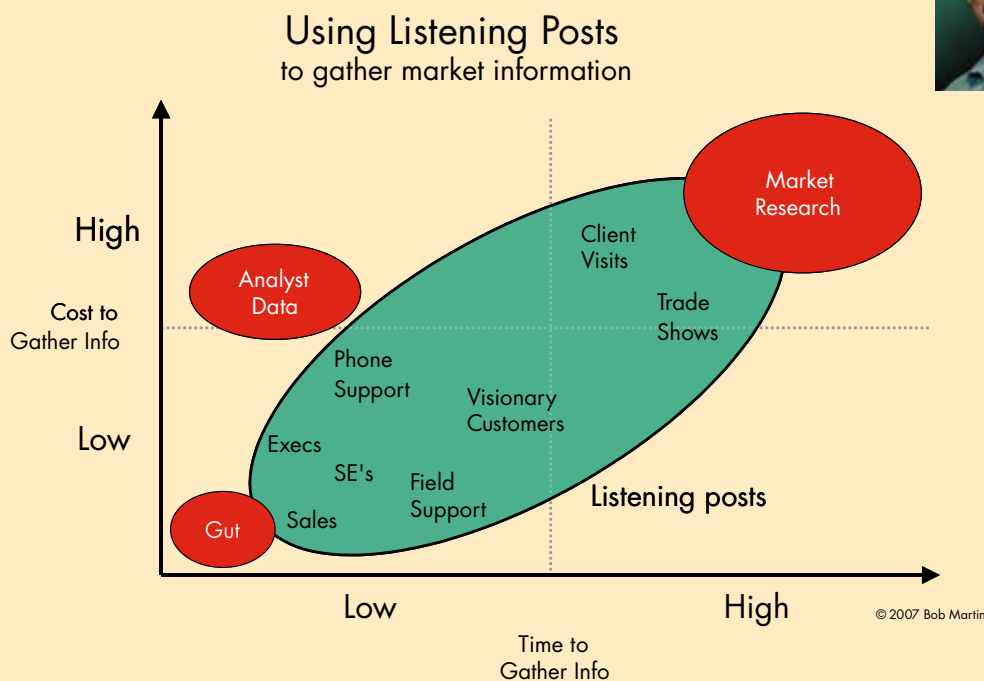
In the short run, the listening posts you can tap are right inside your company: Sales, SE's, executives, technical and customer support—anyone having customer contact. An extremely valuable listening post is on-going feedback from visionary customers; those who are perceived thought leaders. Imagine an inner-circle of customers and prospects that you can reach

when you need some quick feedback on an idea. If you haven't established these relationships, start building them now. The collective intelligence of all these touch-points must be collected, analyzed and acted upon.

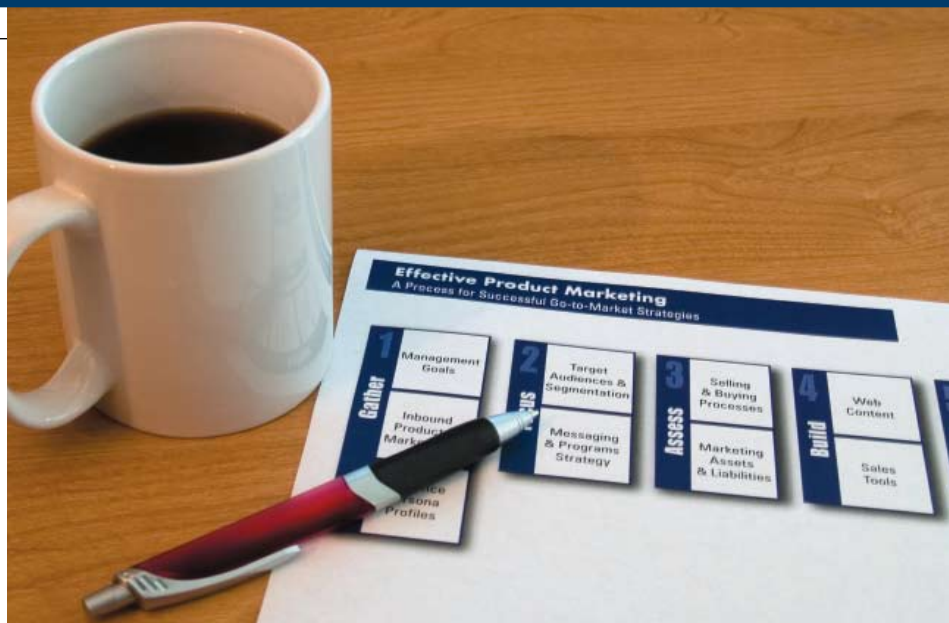
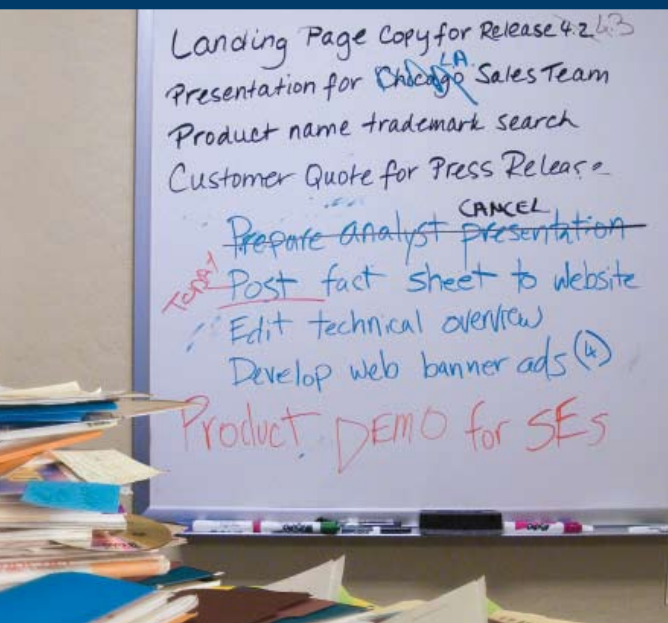
And the answers we get are powerful and direct: instant product feedback, competitor feedback, business issues our customers need to have addressed—literally a cornucopia of intelligence which gives you a competitive advantage. More than anything, listening posts are relatively inexpensive means to quickly gather information—which will help you make better business decisions.

Visit marketlisteningposts.com to learn more about listening posts. Contact Bob Martin at rsm@ifrconsulting.com for more information or for assistance with setting up listening posts in your company.

IPM



Steve Johnson is an expert in technology product management. He works for Pragmatic Marketing® as an instructor for the top-rated courses *Practical Product Management®* and *Requirements That Work™* as well as onsite courses. Contact Steve at sjohnson@PragmaticMarketing.com



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ARE YOU DECENT?

The naked truth about product management performance

By Alyssa Dver

Product management is typically thankless. A product manager (PM) is the first one called when there is a problem. When it is time to recognize team contributions, the PM usually does the recognizing and most people assume the PM is vicariously rewarded for his or her efforts. Sometimes Engineering snickers, "What does that PM do anyway?". Or perhaps you have had the invigorating reminder that as PM, you are ultimately responsible with little, if any, budget or staff to assist. Hmm... remind me again why we do it? Oh yeah, we make the big bucks. No seriously...





Perhaps the most compelling reason people are attracted to product management is that it is the center of the business. The PM is the go-to-person for all things important to the product and interacts with all sorts of people and functions. It takes an ambidextrous individual to be a great

product manager—someone who understands and explains technical and financial data while being creative and communicative to develop new product ideas, innovative marketing plans and better sales tools.

Not limited by one skill set but rather a “jack of all trades” or utility player, the risk to a PM is that they really aren’t an all-star, but a mediocre meddler. A PM may be viewed as someone who is not conversant, let alone a leader. The question is how do you know if you are a respected PM or simply a tolerated one? Do you know if your peers and managers think you do a good job? How do you compare with other PMs in other organizations?

Let’s first consider some facts. There are no college degrees in product management and few accredited classes. Up until recently, there were few professional certification programs or educational conferences which still may not be widely accessible for many existing or aspiring PMs. Obviously if you are reading this publication, you are already plugged into one of the biggest suppliers of product management information and benchmark data—Pragmatic Marketing®. In December 2006, Pragmatic Marketing released the results of its annual Product Management and Marketing survey. As usual, the survey was chock full of interesting data such as how a PM typically spends his/her time, how much they earn, and who they report to. Every year, the survey points out the fact that there is a lot of deviation between how organizations implement product management. In researching organizations for my book, *Software Product Management Essentials*, plus working with and presenting to hundreds of PMs, it is clear that no two PMs operate the same. In fact, two PMs within the same organization will prioritize and implement different

things that reflect their own experience and knowledge. For example, some PMs do pricing analysis multiple times per year, others rarely. The frequency is not tied to the type of product or market but rather the level of importance precise pricing is to the PM and the organization. Some PMs use packaged software tools to collect and manage requirements. Yet other PMs rely on Microsoft® Excel® or Microsoft® Word® to get the job done. This is not a measure of the organization’s size and budget, but a matter of the individual PM’s style and preference. Some organizations outsource product management (or at least parts of it). Other companies are completely against this idea. Indeed, it is difficult to say that there is a “correct” way to do product management.

Given the fuzzy job description, it is difficult to measure whether a particular PM is doing a good job. We all know that individual performance reviews can be biased by political and personal relationship issues. Don’t ignore reviews, but definitely factor in whether the person reviewing the PM has prior PM experience in order to really understand what a PM does. It isn’t like Engineering where the code gets done correctly, on time or not. It isn’t like Finance where the balance sheet balances. It isn’t Sales, Marketing, or Support, either. It’s a little of all of the above, yet never quite as quantifiable. PMs are not usually measured on anything tangible. Success is measured using subjective criteria tied to how well the PM was able to get the other groups to do their own jobs. ➔



However, if you are a PM, here are some very practical ways to measure your worth within an organization.

1. Tell me honestly, does this job make me look bad?

Sounds so obvious and easy but most people don't do it. Ask your colleagues outright how they feel about your work and contributions. Ask them what they think you do and if that effort is valuable to them personally. Have a face-to-face lunch meeting or coffee break—don't use email to do this! You need to see body language as much as hear verbal feedback. Talk with key people in all the functions you interact with: Engineering, Finance, Marketing, Support, and most importantly, Sales. Talk to your manager and other managers. Ask for honest feedback and let them know that you are interested in ensuring you are contributing valuable, priority product management services.

Be prepared for criticism and listen! Remember that you don't have to agree but you do need to listen with an open mind. You can respond to the comments with your own perspective but don't get defensive. Listen and learn what other people think. Again, you don't have to agree with them but like gathering product requirements, carefully note the feedback. Decide later what to accept and change.

Don't just ask what they think about your job performance, ask why. If someone says you should be more decisive, ask them why making more timely decisions is better. Ask what the impact of your lack of timeliness has been. You may not be aware of some critical things that may or may not be due to your own actions. If your colleague's feedback is that you are not a good communicator, ask why they feel that way. Hopefully they can offer examples of times when they felt that you didn't communicate well. Ask for suggestions. At worst, he/she may realize that being a good communicator is easier said than done. At best, they may have some great ideas or experiences that you can benefit from.

The magic in asking people about your product management performance is that you not only learn from the voice of your actual customers, you make them feel important by asking their opinion. This is a subtle way to gain and build relationships and the other person feels that you care enough about them to ask for such an intimate favor. Asking someone's opinion is a true form of flattery. Use it to your advantage to gain valuable information and allies.

2. Don't just look sharp, be sharp

Luckily, there are a finite number of product management organizations and companies. There are two national organizations: the Association of International Product Marketing and Management (www.AIPMM.com) and the Product Development & Management Association (www.PDMA.org). PDMA also has a number of regional chapters. There are regional chapters of the product management associations like Silicon Valley Product Management Association (www.SVPMA.org) and Boston Product Management Association (BPMA) (www.bostonproducts.org). A small number of schools, like University of Washington, also offer a product management program.

Now you know where to look, the next step is action. It's not so hard to do and the amount of information is not overwhelming. Sign up for association and vendor-sponsored newsletters and conferences. These groups also offer webinars and local seminars. Make time to attend one or two national events. Read the handful of books on product management and other related areas. Many product managers are writing blogs and most of the product management associations maintain discussion forums.

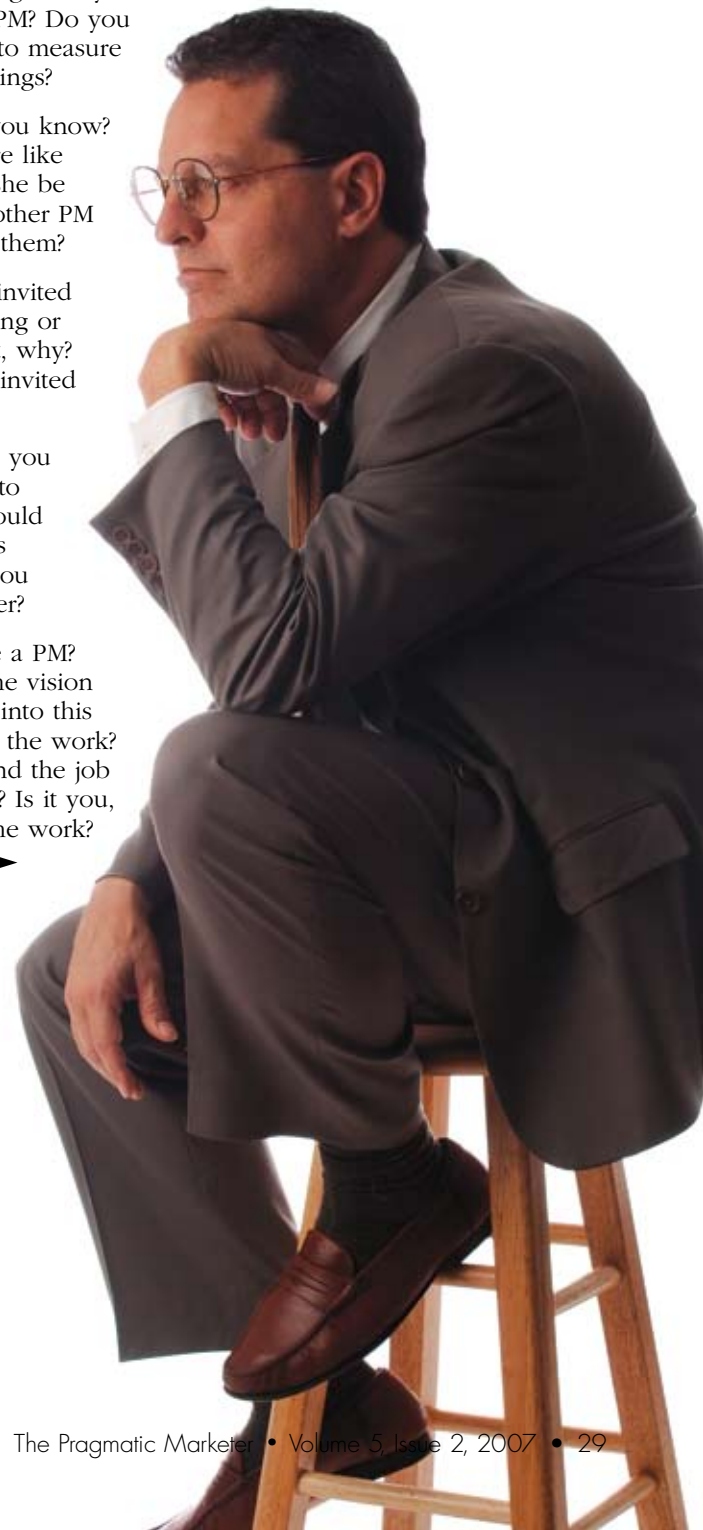
By doing these things, you become aware what other PMs are doing, what their concerns are, and which best practices are used in other organizations. Don't be bullied by the media or the marketing people trying to sell you new product management products or services. It's natural to assume that you aren't doing enough. The reality is that you may be doing as much as any other PM does. Don't be swayed by a non-PM, self-proclaimed industry expert to talk about the importance of market requirement documents and use cases. It's another to know that the vast majority of PMs rarely do any formal market research. Really! That's not a good thing but it is common. You might even find some PM buddies in or outside of your own company who want to compare notes and share ideas. Maybe you can start a small, informal product manager's cocktail club in your "spare" time... It's a wise investment to focus on your most important product—YOU!

3. Assess yourself in a measurable mirror

Ask yourself the following questions:

- How many sales calls have you been invited to attend? Is that too many or not enough? Do you decline invitations because you are double-booked? Why haven't you been invited to more? Is it because Sales has other people who are talented and know the product/market as well as you or is it because the salespeople see you as a liability, not an asset, with customers and prospects?

- Do you prioritize a customer meeting over an internal meeting or other diversion? Are you getting in front of as many customers as possible to get product input and better yourself as a PM?
- Of the sales presentations/meetings you've attended, how many have led to closed sales? You ask Sales to do win/loss reports—ever do one for your own performance?
- Can you list three things that you could do better as a PM? Do you have a plan for how to measure and improve those things?
- Who is the best PM you know? How can you be more like that person? Can he/she be your mentor? Has another PM asked you to mentor them?
- Have you ever been invited to an executive meeting or Board meeting? If not, why? If so, have you been invited back since?
- Would your boss hire you again if he/she went to another company? Would your colleagues act as good references for you with a future employer?
- Why did you become a PM? Have you achieved the vision that you had coming into this position? Do you like the work? Would you recommend the job to others? If not, why? Is it you, or the company, or the work?



4. Beauty is in the eye of the beholder

There are no standards for product management and expectations run the gamut. Some organizations want the PM to write technical specs. Others want PMs to write marketing plans. Find out what your organization expects...and if you didn't do it when you took the job (or got volunteered to do it), it's never too late to ask. The reality is there are many different expectations in an organization making it impossible to please everyone. Remember that the organizational tone is always set from the top down. Don't ignore the head as the body will follow! Talk to senior managers. You'll learn a lot, build rapport and help set the proper expectation for you and others who will someday fill your shoes.

Mirror, mirror on the wall, who's the best PM of them all?

Being a PM is no doubt tough. It requires you to prioritize, manage and change an overwhelming number of things. It is a constant challenge to stay informed about organizational issues, industry changes, new technologies, best practices and benchmark data. Not everyone is cut out to be a PM and those who are, aren't cut from the same cloth. Bare in mind that your product management career is one of your most important products. Manage it much like you would your other products. Gather honest feedback, be diligent, stay informed, and you'll see the reflection of a great product manager...even naked! **TPM**

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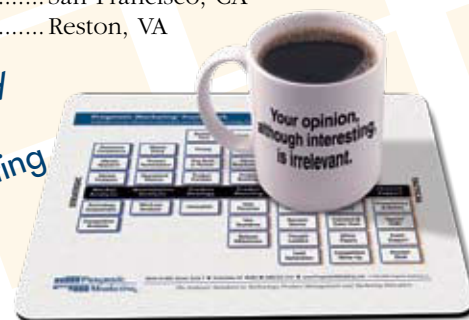
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