

Product Takeoff



The Art of Innovative
Product Management

Navjot Singh &
Kamal Manglani

HappyAbout

A really helpful guide to product management packed with examples to help bring the concepts to life. This book would be useful to someone new to product management or someone who's been in the role for 10+ years. Most importantly, the writing is accessible and engaging so it's an enjoyable read.—**Eric Enders, Product Management Leader**

Product Takeoff is an essential read for anyone looking to bring a new disruptive product to market. The book could have easily been called, *Listen*. Get something out into the world using all the latest thinking that popularizes process and methodology approaches (think Agile, Lean Startup, Design Thinking, etc.) and put it in the hands of customers and then . . . Listen! This approach may not guarantee immediate success, but it darn well will avoid slow, costly failure. Thank you, Kamal and Navjot, for sharing your insights and wisdom with a world hungry to give us the next big thing!—**Richard Sheridan, CEO, Co-founder, and Chief Storyteller, Menlo Innovations, Author of Joy, Inc. and Chief Joy Officer**

Product Takeoff demystifies how some companies deliver consistently delightful products. Their framework based on case studies from ubiquitous products and services is an essential reference for anyone who aspires to be a rock star product manager.—**Hugh Molotsi, Innovator, Advisor, and Entrepreneur**

Product Takeoff provides a playbook for teams who want to put their customers first. It's an essential read to build great engaging products!—**SC Moatti, Founding CEO, Products That Count, Managing Partner, Mighty Capital, Bestselling Author, Mobilized**

Product Takeoff is a compelling read because of its overall product management theme. It opens my mind to new product ideas with the interesting concept and themes. This book is a pleasure to read simply because of its case studies and deep learning it can provide to aspiring product innovators.—**Manik Arora, CEO, Verveba Telecom**

Creating a product that is invaluable to the customer is both an art and a science that requires a blend of innovative thinking and the ability to know what the customer wants (often before they know themselves). The book titled *Product Takeoff* is an invaluable guide, as it covers many ideas and frameworks, along with providing step-by-step instructions for aspiring innovators and product developers to create bleeding-edge products. The road to progress takes many turns, and having a set of frameworks and ideas helps seed innovation, as well as provide tactical steps for execution. *Product Takeoff* is a brilliant guide that serves as a medium for both inspiration and execution, and is a must-read to add to your bookshelf regarding innovative product development.—**Gail Ferreira, PhD, Principal, Boston Consulting Group**

Product Takeoff is a must-read for everyone who cares about building the right products in the right way!—**Amidha Shyamsukha, Product Management Leader**



Product Takeoff (Book Excerpt)

**By Kamal Manglani
and Navjot Singh**



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Acknowledgement

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Introduction

Product Takeoff is about making dreams a reality. This book will give you the tools to envision new products and achieve a radical, rapid pace of innovation.

Our concept is partly inspired by the *Carousel of Progress*¹, a theater show created by Walt Disney for the New York World's Fair in 1964. After the fair, the show ran for years at Disneyland, before finding a permanent home at the Walt Disney World Resort, where it delights visitors to this day.

As the show begins, the audience slowly rotates around a central stage, like a carousel². The first scene opens onto a typical American family at home in their living room in the early 1900s. The family marvels at a dizzying array of new products that have changed their lives—from moving pictures and gas lamps, to an icebox and the telephone. They are certain they have achieved the pinnacle of innovation, and the incredible technology they now enjoy will never be surpassed.

As the carousel turns, we see the same family inside their home in the 1920s. More new inventions surround them: electric light bulbs, indoor plumbing, a radio broadcast delivering the news, and more. They excitedly mention that it's now possible to travel from the East Coast to the West Coast by train in only three days. Once again, they feel technology has reached the highest possible level of imagination—but the carousel continues to turn.

The *Carousel of Progress* was Walt Disney's favorite attraction, and he was deeply involved in its creation³. The show looks back on the twentieth-

century experience of progress and the incredible advances in the lives of Americans. Surprisingly, the exhibit holds the record for both the longest running stage show and the most performances in American history. Walt Disney intended for the attraction to remain on view forever—as if progress itself should never come to an end.

Even today, in each moment of the *now*, we feel that the cycle of progress is on the verge of take-off, though in the twenty-first century, we've come to understand that each innovation paves the way for the next. With potential beckoning all around us, we recognize both the possibility of failure and an opportunity to increase our learning exponentially.

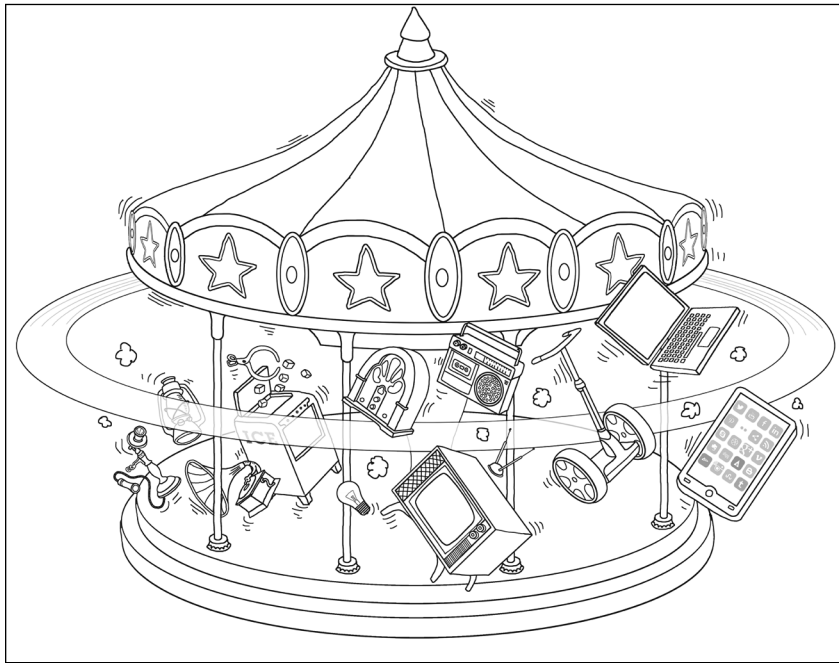
We are all on the carousel—although at times, it might feel more like a rollercoaster without seatbelts.

Everyone wants to build an awesome product, and every business wants in. But what elements of product management are actually necessary to lift off your growth?

In this book, we'll cover the four major principles of the innovation cycle: *vision, strategy, team, and rapid learning*. We'll demonstrate a systematic method for generating ideas, building a highly collaborative environment, and crafting the customer journey. Our goal is to help you create products that break the Product Life Cycle and enable your company to flourish in a growth stage for a longer period of time.

The core of our process is to start with customer needs and ensure a faster feedback loop; however simple it might sound, this is *the secret recipe for growth in revenue, growth in learning, or both*.

We wish you the best, and we invite you to join us in creating highly scalable and desirable products.



Part

1

INNOVATION

Radical Innovation

“If you can dream it, you can do it.”
—Tom Fitzgerald, Disney Imagineer⁴

In one swift move, Apple dropped “computer” from its company name and launched the first-generation iPhone.⁵ Steve Jobs had taken a technology that had been around for close to thirty years by that point—the cellular phone—and fused it with a design sensibility and now-famous innovations. At the time, it was seen as a risky, ambitious play. The year was 2007.

The pace hasn’t slowed since. One by one, companies in the technology space began to innovate. Netflix launched streaming services in 2007, and Tesla launched the first electric sports car, the Roadster, in 2008. Uber was founded in California in 2009, and yet another innovative juggernaut, Square, launched their financial services in 2010.

Innovation has become a day-to-day topic. At offices, meetup groups, and conventions all across the country, people talk about the latest products and anticipate the next. We speculate about driverless cars changing the world—our children may never have to drive, and accidents on the highway might be a thing of the past.

Not every venture is rewarded, and even the best-known companies make massive mistakes. At the 2015 Consumer Electronic Show (CES) in Las Vegas, many visitors wore Google Glass, a product stopped by Google that same year. Google Glass remains a cautionary tale—when untethered from customer needs, the quest for innovation can backfire spectacularly.

At the same event, Mercedes Benz displayed its powerful and sleek F 015, described by the company as an “innovative perspective into the future of mobility.⁶” The interior of the car was designed to serve as a digital living space that constantly interacts with the passenger, vehicle, and the outside world.

Dr. Dieter Zetsche, chairman of the board of management of Daimler AG and head of Mercedes-Benz Cars said, “The car is growing beyond its role as a mere means of transport and will ultimately become a mobile living space.⁷” When the car takes over from the driver in situations where driving isn’t much fun, passengers in self-driving cars will be able to enjoy free time for relaxing or working as they please.

As Zetsche emphasizes in the case of the Mercedes F 015, *there’s much more to a product than its technical capabilities.*



***With the launch of the iPhone in 2007,
a juggernaut of innovation was unleashed.***
Photo by Brandon Ong on Unsplash

Amazon is another leading source of innovation, and the company has been hard at work. Founded in 1994 as an online bookstore, it has come a long way by innovating on many fronts. At Amazon, the MVP (minimum viable product) concept is deployed such that at every stage, products they launch are fully utilized and carry on with the supplemental suite of products that follow. It is not a coincidence that Amazon is one of the most customer-centric companies.

Pricing in retail can be a tricky concept. In the 1990s—back when the only retail option was a brick-and-mortar store—a consumer's biggest disadvantage was not knowing the price of the product at competing stores. For example, to compare prices on Tide detergent, you had to drive to five different stores, and only then would you know which retailer had the cheapest price.

The consumer web has completely revolutionized retail pricing.

Here's a step-by-step example of a consumer planning to buy Tide detergent online:

- 1) Go to Google search.
- 2) Search "Tide."
- 3) Switch to Shopping results for Tide.
- 4) Search for the type of online retailer the consumer wants to use.
- 5) Choose the retailer, go to their website, and purchase.

Google has solved the problem—consumers can now compare prices from twenty-five different retailers for the same product, allowing for fast decision making.

Even when a retailer isn't offering the best price in the comparison, they still need ways to acquire and retain customers. Amazon, once again, delivers a solution.

In 2015, Amazon launched Dash, a Wi-Fi-enabled smart button.⁸ In case of detergent, the button can be attached to a washing machine, and it enables one-touch ordering. This might be an innovation for the busy consumer who doesn't have enough time to go online and search for products—or it might be another strategy to wrestle back negotiation power from the same consumer.

With a handy smart button, there's no need to go online and search for Tide. Instead, just push the button, and the product will be delivered the

very next day. Since the consumer didn't go online through the purchase cycle, they may not have compared prices (and didn't even think of going to a different store). Is this a win-win strategy for all? It might be if you're the customer who wants to save time, and that's whom Dash is really made for.



The Amazon Echo delivers a new level of innovation to the consumer web.

Photo by Rahul Chakraborty on Unsplash

In 2016, Amazon launched Echo, a Wi-Fi-enabled multi-use home device. The Echo can play music, podcasts, talk, and listen. It's ready to understand your buying patterns, the movies you watch, and the music you listen to. Re-ordering a favorite product can be done with a simple voice command. The Echo may well be starting another chapter of innovation by taking complete control over our lives. It debuted with basic services like smart lighting, radio, and news but has added more functions—including a cooking and chore virtual assistant.

Year in and year out, innovation in technology is nowhere near stopping—rather, it's moving at a rapid pace and permeating every facet of our world.

But this story is not limited to technology.

Innovation doesn't just occur solely around technology. *Instead, it's about the experiences we create in the most unexpected places.*

At the time of this writing, Magic Castle Hotel was the second-highest-ranked hotel in Los Angeles on TripAdvisor. A basic, comfortable room was nominally priced and otherwise identical to their competitors. However, most reviews mentioned the hotel's unique "Popsicle Hotline" experience. Anyone can request a free popsicle from a dedicated hotline phone near the swimming pool. This simple experience gives customers and their children a lifelong story to remember.

What experiences will you create with innovation?

Worksheet

Approach the following questions as an opportunity to engage a growth mindset. By working out answers to these questions, you'll be defining a 360-degree understanding of Product Ownership and Management and preparing yourself for success in today's environment.

When you're finished or even as you work, share your answers with peers to stimulate discussion and grow your team-building skills.

- 1) What is innovation?
- 2) Why do we need Product Management?
- 3) How can we learn quickly on large platform migrations or products? Or, how does PM apply to platform products?
- 4) Give an example of how being bold is relevant to you.
- 5) What is a Product Owner? Why don't we call them Product Managers?
- 6) How do you become a Product Owner?
- 7) Is the Product Owner the CEO of the Product? Considering Amazon Music as an example, what does this mean?
- 8) What's the difference between a Business Analyst and Product Owner?
- 9) Who should be the Product Owner?
- 10) Who should be the Product Owner for a Platform team?
- 11) I'm not technical enough. Can I still be a Product Owner?
- 12) What is continuous delivery, and what do I need to do to implement it?

- 13) What are the success measures for your role?
- 14) What are the success measures for your Product Management function?
- 15) How is Product Management different for web product and a mobile app?
- 16) How do you hire great Product Owners?
- 17) How do you kill products or end the lives of products?
- 18) If you acquire a new product, is it an innovation? For example, Microsoft acquired LinkedIn. What is their product strategy?
- 19) Regarding change management around Product Management, do you think Product Managers are also change agents?
- 20) How can a change of ecosystems focus our innovation efforts? Use investing in mobile-first strategy over enormous web development efforts as an example.
- 21) Discuss the new age of voice recognition products: Alexa, Google, and Deep Speech 2.
- 22) What is machine learning? How will you incorporate its foundational principles into the products you build?
- 23) Are customer acquisition channels that are non-electronic valid? Why are bookstores bouncing back?
- 24) Explain the five tactical things every Product Manager should know: vision boards and success metrics, roadmaps, release planning, breaking down work, and prioritizing work.
- 25) Define a bold vision based on your work to date.
- 26) How is Product Management different in a startup compared to an enterprise?
- 27) *What is one thing you've learned from this book that you'll try now?*

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About the Authors



Navjot Singh is a senior product development executive with over seventeen years in product development and product management. He has worked for many large corporations and has been responsible for the launch of many products right from their ideation toward a steady growth strategy. He has also gone through many leadership and product development programs at top tier universities like University of California at Berkeley and IIM-Ahmedabad. Nav is also an MBA from Hult International Business school in San Francisco and currently working on a startup idea and as Director for Product Management in the telecommunication industry.



Kamal Manglani coaches product executives, product management teams, and agile development organizations in large enterprises and startups. An innovator at heart, he is a seasoned executive focused on uncovering new and sometimes unconventional paths to growth. Kamal has over seventeen years of corporate, consulting, and entrepreneurial experience all geared at one thing: turning untapped potential into real customer value.

Kamal Manglani has defined new areas of agility using first principles approach, design thinking, lean startup, and Day 1 execution discipline.

Product Takeoff



Product Takeoff is an essential read for anyone looking to bring a new disruptive product to market. The book could have easily been called, *Listen*. Get something out into the world using all the latest thinking that popularizes process and methodology approaches (think Agile, Lean Startup, Design Thinking, etc.) and put it in the hands of customers and then ... Listen! This approach may not guarantee immediate success, but it darn well will avoid slow, costly failure. Thank you, Kamal and Navjot, for sharing your insights and wisdom with a world hungry to give us the next big thing!

Richard Sheridan
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Author of *Joy, Inc.* and *Chief Joy Officer*

Product Takeoff demystifies how some companies deliver consistently delightful products. Their framework based on case studies from ubiquitous products and services is an essential reference for anyone who aspires to be a rock star product manager.

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