



Inspired: How the Best Companies Create Technology-Powered Products and Services

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The basic premise of *Inspired* is that the best tech companies create products in a manner very different from how most companies create products. The goal of the book is to share the techniques of the best companies. This book is aimed primarily at Product Managers working on technology-powered products. That includes the hundreds of "tech companies" like Google, Facebook, Amazon, Twitter and the like, as well as the thousands of companies moving to leverage technology (financial companies, media companies, retailers, manufacturers, nearly every industry). *Inspired* covers companies from early stage start-ups to large, established companies. The products might be consumer products or devices, business services for small businesses to enterprises, internal tools, and developer platforms.

Inspired is secondarily aimed at the designers, engineers, user researchers and data scientists that work closely with the product managers on product teams at these same companies.

Inspired: How the Best Companies Create Technology-Powered Products and Services **Details**

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From Reader Review Inspired: How the Best Companies Create Technology-Powered Products and Services for online ebook

Amr Salah says

A must-read book for every designer out there, and is considered as the holy book for product management as well.

Ellen Chisa says

I'm embarrassed to say I hadn't read this book until today. It's pretty a concise summary of all the other articles, books, and conversations that I've had in the field. You could probably save a lot of time by reading this book when you're first interested in PM, rather than after doing it for four years. (But re-read it then, too!)

I particularly liked that he discussed:

- Clear definition of role separation and responsibilities of marketing, PM, interaction design, development.
 - The emphasis on the "Product Discovery" process. I think people underestimate how much of PM is a researching/incubating ideas role. You spend a lot of time sorting through information and considering what is/isn't relevant.
 - The need for high fidelity prototypes. If I had to pick a single skill that would make me a better PM, being able to quickly produce a prototype would be it.
 - Ways to do small usability tests as a PM. I think there's a lot of pushback from this in the industry - lots of people worry the PM can't detach / research will be useless. There's a lot to be said for small amounts of research.
 - Discussion of "how to build a PM team" - I think he's completely right that there are often people throughout companies with the right skills (and attention to detail).
 - Dealing with special requests from clients (and the hidden costs of those requests). I'd recommend it to anyone who is struggling with a few major customers, and has a CEO that wants to accommodate special requests. I've never personally had this challenge, but he seemed to have practical advice.
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Sten Tamkivi says

Fantastic, compact summary of principles successful tech companies use breaking their work between small, focused product teams. We were striving towards this at Skype as we grew, I've tried to build early Teleport as a crisp product team; and now we are heading that way again with Topia, after merging 3 development teams and cultures over last 18 months.

Marty speaks from personal experience from Netscape to eBay, but also from his advice work running Silicon Valley Product Group. Must read for onboarding people new to setting work up around products, but also for experienced PMs and product team members to refresh the structure around basics: from customer discovery to roadmaps.

Jenn says

The information in the book was good and useful to learn how things work or should work on a product team, but the delivery was a little slow and dry.

Joel Pacheco says

Comprehensive

Thorough literature of customer-centric product development using agile practices with top-notch real-life cases from Apple, Google, Amazon, and such.

Recommended for leadership executives who want a comprehensive overview of the roles in a product development team and product managers, designers, and engineers working for tech companies.

Thanks, Marty!

Graham says

Possibly one of very few books actually written all about Product Management, and it's a good one. I love how it starts with a bunch of things that people think are Product Management but which aren't. I also like the simple framework and definition of PM around valuable+useable+feasible, and how he builds up detail on achieving those qualities through the book. Got a bit dry as it came towards the end, but was a good length. Highly recommend for anyone in or thinking of moving into PM.

Ruslan Khalilov says

That's a book I would recommend to people who want learn about good practices in Product Management.

There are no buzzwords, useless frameworks and other 100+ of concepts about PM work.

It's just real meat, real experience, insights about PM in top companies in Silicon Value.

During the time when almost everyone has an opinion about what does it mean "building a great product", Marty Cagan shows that there is a basic foundational knowledge that you need to learn and execute in order to build something meaningful.

The narrative is written in a non-formal way, so you can read the whole book pretty fast.

More than that, Marty created a web-page where you can find more info, links, etc. that are not available in the book.

Have a good read!

Jorge Camargo says

If you're a product manager (tech), or a stakeholder in the product management process, this is a must read book.

Adam Wiggins says

"Inspired" is a well-written, thorough, and down-to-earth work covering all aspects of product management at software companies.

To paraphrase/summarize: the job of the product manager is to discover a product that is useful, feasible, and valuable. They do this through understanding users and potential users in detail and evaluating opportunities to solve problems for those users. Once an opportunity is identified, they create a prototype, validate the prototype with users, then work with engineering to build the product, product marketing to launch the product, and sales and support to follow up on the success (or failure) of the product.

The book covers how product management fits in with other functions -- engineering, interaction design, visual design, project management, product marketing. The difference between product management and product marketing is often misunderstood, but Inspired explains it simply: product marketing is about understanding the marketplace (in aggregate), how your product fits into that, and how to explain it when it comes time to launch. Product management is about the content of the product -- understanding the users/customers (individually), how the product works, what it is for. Creating a product and explaining a product to the world require two very different skillsets that are rarely found in the same person.

There's also a great chapter on how to "manage up," meaning how to work most effectively with your manager.

Some excerpts and points:

- "Engineers think in terms of implementation models, but users think in terms of conceptual models."
- You need "one product manager for every 5 - 10 engineers," one interaction designer for every two product managers, and one visual designer for every four interaction designers.
- "As a product manager, you are responsible for defining the right product, and your engineering counterpart is responsible for building the product right."
- "Keep the focus on minimal product. Your job as product manager is not to define the ultimate product, it's to define the smallest possible product that will meet your goals."
- While most work the engineering teams do comes from product, engineering teams should reserve some amount of time (the author used 20% when he worked at eBay) for refactorings, rearchitecting, and other internal technical changes that are unrelated to product.
- Great product people may already exist in your organization if you look around. The author suggests that they often come from engineering.

- Product managers should be passionate and evangelize internally. They "inspire the rest of the product team, and the passion for a product is contagious."
- Empathize with your target market, but don't slip into the trap of thinking of yourself and your friends as being the target users, even if it's partially true. Related: "It can be dangerous for a product manager to have too much domain expertise, because they believe they can speak for the target customer, and that they are more like their target customer than they really are."
- Engineering knows what's possible, so they are an important input to the product discovery process.
- Product marketing knows of broad unaddressed needs in the marketplace, making them another important input to product opportunities.
- Good revenue vs bad revenue: the former enhances your Net Promoter Score and expands your market, the latter does the opposite -- for example, adding customized features for one banner customer, what the author calls "specials."
- Product management should be a top-level organization, not placed as a subset of engineering or marketing (two common org structures). The design team can be part of the product org.
- "Conduct the real meetings before your official meeting." Get buy-in from key stakeholders beforehand. "The formal meeting still has an important purpose, which is for every at the table to see that everyone else is on board."
- "Opportunities for new products exist all around us, in every market -- even mature markets. This is because what is possible is always changing."
- Product should always be working well-ahead of engineering, to keep engineering teams fed with new work when they finish their current projects.
- "Review the business performance of products that have launched, typically 3 - 6 months post-launch. This sort of accountability will help the council better understand which investments and decisions they made were good ones, and why."
- The author strongly favors high-fidelity prototypes (e.g., they look like the real thing, not a rough paper mockup) as they are cheap to create nowadays and give better results when validating the prototype with users. High-fidelity prototypes are also great for engineering teams, because it's extremely clear what needs to be implemented.
- On the importance of reference customers at launch time: "Potential customers need to know that this product really works for people like them."
- Building a customer advisor board of charter around six customers will help in the feedback process for a new product, and also provides real customer references at launch time. Think of these charter users as development partners, and treat them as colleagues.
- "Winning products come from the deep understanding of the user's needs combined with an equally deep understanding of what's just now possible."
- Use "personas," archetypes of an imaginary but plausible user that describes a particular customer segment you're targeting.

- If there are technical feasibility risks (e.g., something that might be hard or impossible for engineering to implement), get with an engineer to address them early, during the prototype phase.
- Do your own user testing, ideally in person.
- Take care to avoid accidental "user abuse" -- surprising changes in your product, especially ones that create incompatibilities. Even releases too many changes in too short a time period ("change fatigue") can be a type of user abuse.
- "As a general rule, users don't like change. Sure, they want the software to be great, and they clamor for new functionality, but most people aren't excited about taking the time to learn a new way to do something they can already do."
- The author describes what he calls "gentle deployment," which is a way to cautiously and respectfully roll out changes to a large userbase. This includes techniques such as rolling out both the old and new versions alongside each other, with a link somewhere inviting users to try out the new version, long before the new version becomes the default.
- Make sure to reserve product, engineering, and design resources to follow up on feedback in the week or so following a big product or feature launch.
- Great ideas almost always come from the bottom up, not top-down product strategy. Use techniques like Google's 20% time or skunkworks teams to encourage this.
- "Build relationships before you need them."
- On working in large organizations: "Pick something worth fighting for, where the outcome truly matters. When you do fight, make sure you're fighting for your product and not against another person." And: "Triage your meetings ruthlessly." And: "Evangelize! Explain the vision and strategy, demo the prototype, and share customer feedback. Don't underestimate the importance of this internal sales function."
- "Knowing how to get feedback on product ideas is probably the single most important skill for product managers."

Adam Zabell says

tl;dr - products need prototypes, are grounded in answering emotions, and can always be improved.

Product management starts with this book. If you want to be one, start here, then go find something that talks about the products in your field of interest, or describes the process by which you get yourself hired, or the way you raise capital to fund your own product. But, start here to learn what it means to build a product quickly and successfully.

Not that you're guaranteed success. Especially when you're working for somebody else, your ability to drive a product from an Idea to a Sale is going to require negotiation with every other part of the business. Most people are used to thinking that the idea in their head is the idea that will get delivered, even though there are a dozen people working on the product. And most companies aren't actually committed to the idea of having a person who owns the Idea of a product, allowing the role to be implied by a project manager or chief

architect or lead engineer.

It's clear this is a book that was built from blog posts, because there's some repetition of phrasing which made me wonder if I'd misplaced my bookmark. Normally that feels like sloppy editing, but here it felt like a successful lecturer who returns to a few key phrases to remind you of the previous point and how it aligns with this next one.

I wish I'd read this book a year ago. It answers 90% of the questions I had at the time, long before I acquired the title of "product manager."

Disha says

Picked up this book after a great review in Economic Times. The content is very disappointing to say the least. The author has missed on several key responsibilities and challenges of product management and has only penned a theoretical and ideal world description. The book does not talk in examples and almost sounds like a boring lecture. Not for beginners and surely not for veterans either. Disappoint s.

Siyu says

A very informative book on sharing the author's product management experience. Each chapter is very short, so it is easy to be followed. The book is more like a desk handbook for reminding ourselves to be careful with the product management process. A good introduction for people who has no product management experience to have a sense of what is product management. And a good reminder for people who are already product managers.

However, the book, still, like other product management books, more focused on consumer/internet services product, not enterprise product. It indeed talks a little about enterprise product, but stays at very high-level. I strongly agree with the author on all the things he points out around enterprise product management pain points in this book, which I think is harder for people to truly understand how important the things he mentioned if themselves ever worked on enterprise product.

All in all, great summary of all the tips for product management.

Arunthep Sangvareethip says

Not just a product book, this is an ultimate book for building great culture that happen to deliver the best possible product

I fell in love with the first version. This version is going above and beyond what I had in mind when buying. I just told my team of Product Manager Team that if there is a book for 2018 that worth every second to read, this is the one!

Ivonne says

Un libro increíble y obligado para todos aquellos que trabajamos en tecnología, deseamos tener nuestro propio emprendimiento tecnológico o simplemente queremos acercarnos más al mundo de las plataformas, software y creación de productos digitales que cambien la vida de las personas. Me gusta mucho el enfoque en Producto y cómo da las pautas para ser un Product Manager verdadero, teniendo en cuenta todas las variables. Los ejemplos del libro son muy valiosos y su lenguaje no espanta, no enreda y no te hace sentir ignorante. Como primer paso es increíble, creo que lo releeré varias veces, es bastante información útil.

Chris says

Inspired is pretty high level and tends to focus more on the organizational challenges related to product development. I feel that there are some better resources out there (especially online blogs) if you as a product manager are looking for strong guidance at a more tactical level. Although, the SVPG website has some useful resources. I kept putting off reading this book, and after having experienced the growing pains as a PM and other major organizational transitions, most of the insights the book had to offer I had already learned the hard way. So if you think you're like me, I wouldn't beat yourself up for not having read it. However, the book was still a pleasant read and is filled with healthy reminders on the critical role of a product manager and proper perspectives on developing winning products.
