BECOMING A
HIGH-GROWTH PRODUCT LEADER
WITH
CONTINUOUS DISCOVERY

Learn the 5-stage path from agile product development to high-growth product leadership

H2R PRODUCT SCIENCE

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THE PRODUCT SCIENCE PODCAST

COLUMBIA | ENGINEERING
The Fu Foundation School of Engineering and Applied Science

MediaMath

shutterstock

weightwatchers

BABIES Я US

FALCONX

Capital One®

Unilever

Lean Startup Co.

Let me tell you a story.

shutterstock

"Shutterstock Editor was created to help **make non-designers' jobs easier** and significantly reduce the time it takes for them to find, edit and use an image."

— Catherine Ulrich, former Shutterstock Chief Product Officer

- Prototype to public beta in 3 months

- At 1 year, 10x product usage

- At 3 years, 5 million people had used it

- Today, it's part of Creative Flow, Shutterstock's AI-assisted design suite
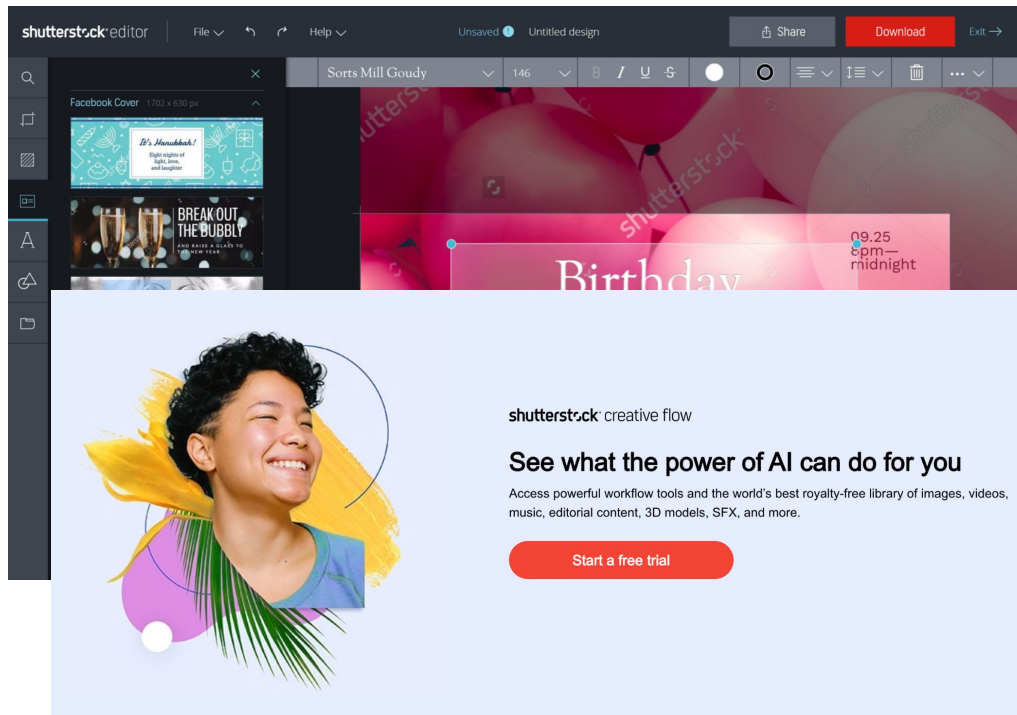
Dream

Reality

Follow the Product Science Success Path To Become a High-Growth Product Leader

Stage 1: Agile Product Development

Stage 2: Product Discovery

Stage 3: Continuous Product Improvement

Stage 4: High-Impact Experimentation

Stage 5: High-Growth Product Leadership

STAGE 1 | Agile Product Development

DOING:
Building design and development plans around direction from leadership

NOT DOING:
Additional product discovery research to inform decisions

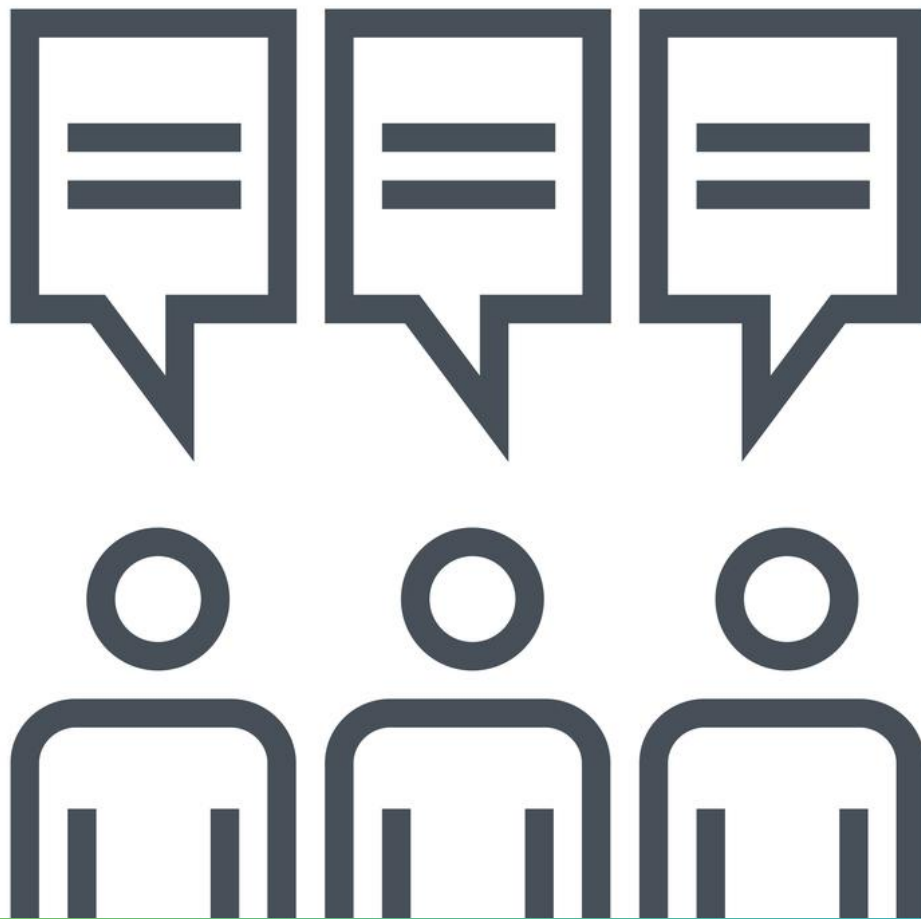|		
	Milestone	Do you develop and release new software on a regular basis, either in sprints or continuously?
	How It Feels	Frustrating.
	Next Steps	Start small. Talk to 2 customers.

STAGE 2 | Product Discovery

DOING:
Product discovery at major decision points like the beginning of a project

NOT DOING:
Continuously refining plans and validating assumptions

Milestone
Do you plan and conduct research with users to help you design and build the right product?

How It Feels
Exciting at first, later disappointing.

Next Steps
Set one learning goal each sprint and share results at a Built-Learned-Planning demo.

> Rather than a "Product Discovery Phase" where we come up with several weeks of validated product backlog items and deliver them to engineering, I encourage teams to do continuous product discovery – where we are constantly identifying, validating and describing new product backlog items.

MARTY CAGAN
FOUNDER, SILICON VALLEY PRODUCT GROUP

Built Learned Planning Demo

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STAGE 3 | Continuous Product Improvement

DOING:
At least one type of continuous product discovery activity

NOT DOING:
Getting the full benefits of multiple modes of continuous product discovery

Milestone
Do you plan and conduct research with users at least each sprint?

How It Feels
Confident, yet frustrating.

Next Steps
Use a Pre-Mortem Risk Assessment.

Exercise:

Pre-Mortem Part 1

Brainstorm ways that this initiative might fail.

- Usability Failure: What are the trickiest parts to design?

- Feasibility Failure: What is least understood about how to build this?

- Value Failure: Even if we built everything we envision, why would users/buyers not buy this?

- Viability Failure: Why might this not meet the business goals?

- Ethics Failure: Why might this be ethically risky?

➡ **One idea per sticky note**   ➡ **Take 8 minutes to write as many ideas as you can**   ➡ **Indicate type with color**
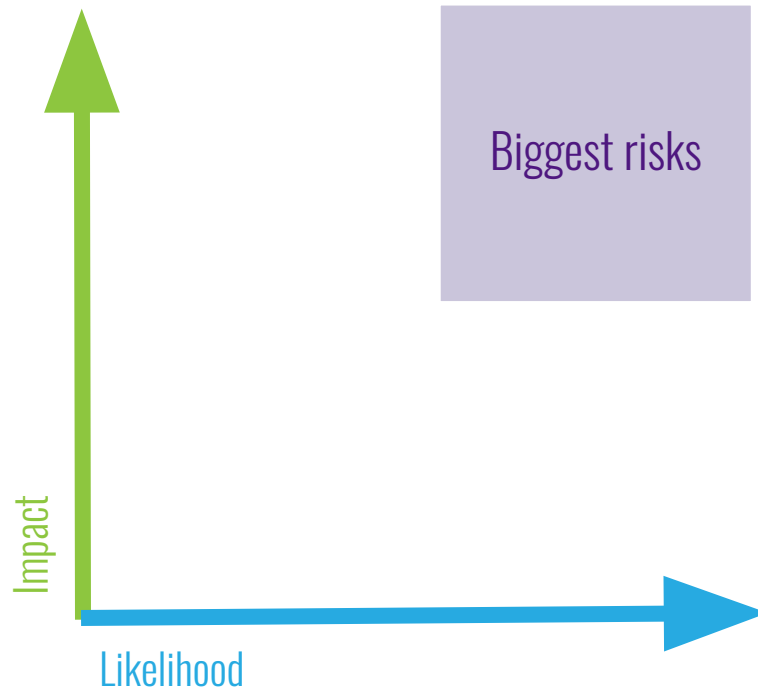
Pre-Mortem Part 2

Draw a chart like this and place your risks on it according to your assessment of:

- How likely is it that this will happen?
- How strongly would it impact success if it did happen?

Pick the single biggest risk.

Biggest risks

Impact

Likelihood

→ Place your risks on the chart individually → Discuss with team

STAGE 4 | High-Impact Experimentation

DOING:
Multiple types of continuous product discovery

NOT DOING:
Successfully convincing decision makers

Milestone
Do you commonly find that once you release software to your users, your data shows that they use it in the ways that you expected?

How It Feels   Demotivating

Next Steps   Engage key stakeholders with product discovery and its results.

STAGE 5 | High-Growth Product Leadership

DOING:
Gaining trust from decision makers and consistently delivering high-growth

	Milestone	Do your stakeholders trust you to make good decisions and consistently deliver on the desired outcomes for your users and product?
	How It Feels	Confident and trusted.
	Next Steps	Stay curious and authentic. Create tools, frameworks, and training.

Product Science Principles

Evidence-Based Product Strategy

Continuous Discovery and Delivery

Empowered Teams

The Product Science Success Path

Stage	Question	Next Step
1) Agile Product Developer	Do you develop and release new software on a regular basis, either in sprints or continuously?	Start small. How can you get closer to your customers? **Talk to 2 customers** and focus on getting to know them and why they use your product.
2) Product Discovery Practitioner	Do you or someone on your product development team plan and conduct research with users to help you design and build the right product?	Try setting one learning goal for each sprint. Begin doing a **Built-Learned-Planning Demo** to include what you learned and what you're planning next in your team demos.
3) Continuous Product Improver	Do you or someone on your product development team plan and conduct research at least each sprint or more frequently with users to help you design and build the right product?	Do a **Pre-Mortem Risk Assessment** exercise to think through the biggest risks in your product plans, then tailor your research to focus on the biggest risks - this might be known challenges or areas that your team knows the least about.
4) High-Impact Experimenter	Do you commonly find that once you release software to your users, your data shows that they use it in the ways that your discovery research suggested they would?	**Invite key stakeholders** to the Pre-Mortem Risk Assessment and the Built-Learned-Planning Demos or make sure they have another forum for regularly engaging with the discovery and its results.
5) High-Growth Product Leader	Do your stakeholders trust your product team to make good decisions and consistently deliver on the desired outcomes for your users, other teams, and the business?	Stay curious and authentic. **Create tools, frameworks, and training** so that other product teams can collaborate using the same tools for research and communication.

Thank You!

What areas do you want to know more about?
Send me a message and let's talk about it.

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