

TEI017-Greg Geracie

Speakers:

Chad McAllister

Greg Geracie

Chad: Hi, this is Chad. Today I have the pleasure of discussing innovation with Greg Geracie. He is an experienced Product Manager, author of the bestseller, *Take Charge Product Management*, and also Editor in Chief of the [inaudible] [00:00:30]—a guide to the product management and marketing body of knowledge. He is a coauthor of the annual study of Product Team Performance. He also teaches product management at the DePaul University, and for the last seven years, he has served as President of Actuation Consulting and advises many well-known organizations on product management and innovation practices. Greg, thank you for joining me today.

Greg: My pleasure to be here, Chad. Thanks for the invitation.

Chad: Absolutely. I'm always curious about how people get their start in product management. You have deep experience in that field. But we all come from different backgrounds, right? It might be customer service, training, development, engineering, marketing, etc. In your case, you were involved in sales before product management. How did that sales experience prepare you for a role in product management?

Greg: Great question, Chad. Speaking from my perspective, I think Sales is a great entry point. Although, I agree with you that product management is an equal opportunity provider. People can come into product management from almost any point on the compass. I think the benefits of coming from a sales perspective, however, is that sales is fundamentally about establishing trust, effective communication, thoughtfully leveraging resources, strategically thinking and planning, and above all else is executing. I think all of these skills are needed by product managers—at least in my experience—particularly because product management in the majority of organizations is essentially influence-based. I think the biggest difference between the two roles is the time dilation. When you work in a Sales role, you have this compelling sense of immediacy as you go from customer to customer trying to close deals first-hand. In the Product Management world there is less of that pressure in the short-term circumstances, but rather more consistent long-term thinking and planning. So the time frames are much more stretched out for product managers to operate under. I think it's a bit of an adjustment that has to take place to move away from thinking about individual customers to broader market needs. But there are many commonalities between the various functions that you can leverage as you go forward as a product manager.

Chad: Yeah, I like some of the ones you highlighted there—the skill of building trust, communicating clearly, establishing rapport with the customer, etc. My background is primarily engineering and development roles, but I have help sales and I've actually been in sales role in past as well. I've observed two approaches that people take to sales. One is to be focused on making the sale and the other tends to be focused on providing value to the customer. Did you see that in your own personal experience or did you see that in companies you've worked with?

Greg: Yeah, I think the best sales organizations I have personally seen really gear towards trying to solve customers' problems. I think startup organizations sometimes have a tendency to view all dollars as good dollars. But as they scale, it becomes a bit of a problem because the services or products that they've sold can sometimes not be a good fit for what the customer needs. Down the road, that creates

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relationship issues, not only for the sales person, but also for the organization with the customer. I've seen that play out and when sales organizations or those individuals tend to try to sell what they have in their bag, even if the customer's need doesn't resonate with that. So I think the best sales organizations look at what are the underlying issues that a customer is experiencing and compare that to what is available but not overselling or changing the shape of the solution beyond what it can realistically do but rather just sell into those needs and meet them. I think that type of emphasis on trying to really identify customer's needs is one thing that I think product managers also benefit from. They benefit from that feedback that sales organizations provide with that specific sales mindset because it is valuable information that helps the product development team as well.

Chad: Absolutely. I find that perspective of focusing on what the customer's problem is or how we can add value to them, is what makes that connection to product management really useful. It sounds like you put that experience in sales to good use as you moved into product management.

Greg: It's been tremendously helpful. I will say that having Sales experience does give you some credibility with sales organizations because they know that you understand their pain. They know you've been there before. But at the end of the day, each individual salesperson shapes their opinion based on how well you, as a product manager or product management organization communicate and give them the tools to be successful. It does give you some street credibility with them—at least initially—but it is not something you can count on for the long term. It is more about what you do in your role.

Chad: Yeah, it provides that initial rapport but you have to deliver as well.

Greg: Ultimately, yes. That is the key.

Chad: Very good. I came to product management by first being a Project Manager in a software company. I found the Project Management Institute (PMI) and their guide to the Project Management body of knowledge to be really helpful in proving my skills and get my hands around what project management really meant. Later, when I found out we were going to be doing more than managing software projects—we were actually delivering products—I realized I needed to discover this bigger field called Product Management. I was surprised there wasn't a similar guide as the one I found for Project Management that I study to learn about what I needed to know to become a Product Management. You corrected that by leading the development of the guide to Product Management and Marketing Body of knowledge. How did that all come about? What is the background on that?

Greg: That's a great question, Chad. First of all, I have a lot of respect for the PMI and the PIMBOK. I think they are likely the benchmark that all organizations or professional associations and professions aspire to in terms of their ability to create some standardized language processes or certifications, if you will, for the industry overall. Some would argue that they do a great job of moving the industry forward and others would argue that they are too constraining. I've heard both arguments in the past. To me, the value of having a document like the ProdBOK is the ability to lay the foundation for trying to build some commonality. I think you mentioned earlier that all Product Managers learn through trial by fire these days. My original book, *Take Charge Product Management*, was really geared towards helping

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people step into that role in the first one to three years of their professional careers and to help them avoid making the most common mistakes by teaching them how to take control of the product management process. If you talk to Product Managers, they'll say that their two greatest enemies are time constraints and being asked to do so many things at once by multiple parties, and trying to balance conflicting priorities, requests from customer service all the way to the board, and looking for information about market share or something. Part of the problem is that with everyone already coming in from Sales, you from Project Management, others from Finance, it really is an equal opportunity profession. The problem associated with that is that there isn't a common way of communicating a common lexicon, tools, and practices that everyone gets to a common level of understanding with. Ultimately, that's what led to the development of the ProdBOK. There are obviously forces inside the profession that aren't intentional but that just exist because of the natural distribution of market share in terms of training and education and have become impediments to people rallying around common standards. So the ProdBOK was an effort, not just from myself and also my co-editor [Stephen Epinger](#), but also by 60 of the industry thought leaders to try to come up with some common definitions, terminology, and processes that can help people in all levels of the profession to create a foundation cornerstone. It will need to be evolutionary, it will need to evolve overtime. But the way that it really started was by *Take Charge Product Management* getting a number two on Amazon. [AIPMM](#) reached out to me—or actually, I reached out to them to see if they would help me market my book at which point [Tres Padilla](#) at PMM had suggested the creation of body of knowledge to help create those kinds of standards in terms of lexicon processes and tools and at least get the cornerstone laid that can be built on going forward.

Chad: Yeah, a few things you said there that provide a lot of credibility to the effort in the work that you've created in the ProdBOK is that it is a collection of numerous insights from 60 different authors. It isn't just your perspective or another person's perspective. It is really an integration of what is the body of knowledge to point to for Product Managers. It also presents integration with a professional organization. The AIPMM, The Association of International Product Managers, They're standing behind this also, right?

Greg: Yeah, they were the sponsor. They actually contributed the necessary resources to be able to produce the book. My job as Editor in Chief was to align, not only my co-editor, [Stephen Epinger](#) from [MIT](#) who lends academic credibility to the book to help the book's rate of adoption at academic institutions, but also through the relationships I've built with large industry thought leaders. For example, [Greg Cohen](#) and [Roman Pitchler](#) wrote the [inaudible] [00:11:29] of the ProdBOK. [Steve Johnson](#) and [Linda Gorshell](#) contributed as well. Anybody in the industry would recognize the names of the people who contributed. I think the one thing that is nuance about this Bok that is different from others, such as the [PIMBOK](#) or the [BABOK](#), and that is worth me pointing out is that I've probably contributed four BOKs at this point. I've [inaudible] [00:11:56] the newest edition of the [BABOK](#), the [Biz Bok](#) for Business Architecture. After creating the Product Management BOK, affiliate associations started asking me to

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contribute as a Product Management expert to their bodies of knowledge as well. The reason why I bring this up is because what I feel that is a little bit different about the ProdBOK is that there was an attempt made to not write this book solely from the perspective of Product Managers even though it's geared towards Product Managers. The underlying philosophy was that Product Managers are the point of the spear. But they cannot be successful on their own. Their ability to be able to work with key constituents across different disciplines or communities of practices enables them to get projects on their own. This applies to project managers, business analysts, and a range of other parties. We worked with thought leaders across a variety of different industries such as the BA and the Project Management community to actually get them co-author sections about how the two professions should work together to optimize their working relationship and maximize the effectiveness of Product Managers. So it's a slightly different take than PMI or some of the other groups. Although, I think that what we will see as we go forward is more emphasis in the cross-industry perspective for industries and professions to start trying to pull the threads together and not to treat everything solely as an isolated functional view of things. Also, to try to come to some agreement about how these professions should integrate and create effectiveness across the various disciplines.

Chad: Yes, each of these professions has a collection of tools, and those tools tend to cross over quite a bit between the professions.

Greg: That's right.

Chad: As a Product Manager, I use a lot of Project Management tools as well as Business Analyst tools. The list goes on.

Greg: Right.

Chad: So, in that ProdBOK, what are—there is a big collection of authors (60 people) contributing to this—can you review the main topics that the ProdBOK collects together?

Greg: Sure. There are really three primary sections in the ProdBOK. The first has to do with the history of Product Management. It's much older than I think people realize, spanning back about 70 years. Although, it started off as Brand Management and ultimately evolved into its current state as "Product Management". That section also deals with standard terms that practitioners at all levels should know, and also includes fundamental concepts. That is the first section of the book. The second section of the book is really geared towards product management processes from the conception of a product to its ultimate retirement. In other words, what the inputs and outputs are which are similar to what PMI has done for those who are familiar with the PIMBOK. Ultimately, there is a third section with key product management

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tools that help practitioners apply some of the common tools that are required virtually by every product manager.

I think it's important to point out that even though there is an attempt to try to encapsulate a broader ray of terms, concepts, processes, and tools, I think it's important to point to the listeners that bodies of knowledge are not meant to be prescriptive. In other words, they're not meant to be followed literally. They are more of a reference manual that can frame up commonly accepted practices and provides a comprehensive list of options that you can choose from each step of the way, as you move a product from creation through retirement. It's important to keep in mind that it's a reference guide and not a "How-to" book. You have to apply some situational knowledge when you read these kinds of books.

Chad: Which is the same in the case of PMI's PIMBOK, which is an interesting collection of details on processes, inputs, outputs, and tools used. You need to look at other places in order to do Product Management but this is a really useful guide to use when you want to learn what Product Management is.

Greg: Yup. Absolutely.

Chad: I do recall the history section from the ProdBOK. I really enjoyed getting more familiar with the roots of Product Management and how it has evolved overtime.

Greg: I think a lot of people don't realize how long the history really is. It's really evolved into something separate and distinct with tremendous value. I will tell you that I when I worked with the other associations, their BOKs looked to Product Management as a key North Star, if you will, because they recognize that Product Managers lead product teams and not "project teams". So they are looking to us to codify our own standards and practices so that they can dovetail more neatly with us. I think that has been part of the problem up until about a year ago when this book came out. There wasn't really anything substantial for them to tether to before then. That was a significant problem. From an academic adoption standpoint, I also think that is why we don't see a lot of undergraduate training courses in Product Management. In fact—this might be a bit of interesting trivia for you—I think I am the only professor of Product Management to undergraduates in the entire United States. I've been saying that for about a year and a half now. Nobody has challenged me on that. I must say, however, that I say the only professor for a dedicated course in just Product Management, as opposed to Product Management as part of the subjects overviewed in a broader undergraduate subject area such as Marketing. So I think it points out to the need for the ProdBOK and also the need for more academic training for people who are coming up through technical professions and want to learn how to work more effectively with product managers when they graduate.

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Chad: I certainly agree with you. If any of my listeners email me and let me know of another undergraduate program, I will pass that on to you. But I suspect you're right. I've had the pleasure of teaching Product Management and Innovation Management courses at three universities but they're all graduate programs. Likewise, I've looked at the ProdBOK specifically as a good framework to build a course around. For any universities listening, we will be glad to help you figure that out because I've been through that a few times and I really like using the ProdBOK as reference material for learning these disciplines. It's a good contribution. As you put the book together, one of the things I have run into was heated debates around the semantics of what Product Management actually is. I've come into one camp which says that Product Management is all about the product after it launches and how we manage the product management life cycle. It's not about the fuzzy frontend part. It's not about the new product development process where we make the concept real. The other end of that perspective—which is what I think is presented in the ProdBOK—is that product management is all of those things. The ideas to products in the hands of customers.

Greg: Yes. I'm sorry, are you asking where I fall into that spectrum?

Chad: Yeah. And also if you've encountered this before or if it came up as you were editing the ProdBOK.

Greg: Okay. I personally feel that Product Management falls into the latter camp. No surprise there. My belief is that Product Managers are ultimately responsible for nurturing and maintaining value. That is, creating value for the products that they are responsible for throughout their entire product life cycle. To me, there is nobody else in the organization that actually has accountability for the product that has various phases. Let's take the example of Project Managers for a minute. If you were to look at a definition of PMI of where a project starts and finishes, it typically starts with a Charter and it ends at launch or at managing of the launch process. There is a defined start and ending point. To me, what differentiates product managers from Project Managers is that a Product Manager's job is never done. Whether it is incubation or the various phases that occur all the way through its retirement, they are the single person accountable for maintaining and optimizing the value of the product through all its various phases. I think part of the reason why the second camp you pointed out exists is there are very few people that are experts in every phase of Product Management. You might be particularly good on the strategic aspects such as conception and planning, but you might not enjoy the nitty gritty details of the development process. You might converse this with the people that love the downstream aspects of the job, whether it's the launching or the nitty gritty, hands-on development. The size of the company has a role to play here as well.

Chad: Sure.

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Greg: In startup companies, you have to do it all. You're the jack of all trades. In mid-size companies, you start to specialize into strategic and tactical, perhaps. In larger organizations, you get to emphasize in completely different skills and be able to assess acquisitions, partnerships, and things along those lines—things that might not be applicable in the startup phase. To me, part of the problem is that we tend to think of Product Managers as the brush stroke or “one size fits all”. However, there are many different skills required to span the entire product management cycle. I think that's part of the reason why you start to see the life cycle being carved up, particularly as companies scale because there is a recognition that maybe we will have our product managers focus more on the conception through the development phase and then we will turn it over to a product marketing manager to manage the launch, and then market maintenance of the product while channeling that feedback back into the product managers. There are numerous variations on this theme but I think that is part of the challenge. A product manager spanning the spectrum has to have a lot of skills. It becomes more difficult as the company grows to span that spectrum, but it's not impossible to do. I think with appropriate training and education, Product Managers can do an effective job of doing that. So I tend fall in the second camp. I like to see Product Managers responsible for the entire product life cycle and working closely with counterparts such as product marketing or product owners to ensure there is an effective execution at all phases throughout the life cycle.

Chad: Thanks for addressing that perspective on that. I'm glad to now have a place—the ProdBOK—to point people to that offers the very wide bookends of describing product management in those terms of taking the idea from the very beginning to managing the retiring of the product at the end of its life. It's not unlike what we find in Project Management, where PMI talks about what Project Managers do. But inside a specific company, you might have one person that does nothing but Scope Management and they are not focused on the other aspects of Project Management [inaudible] [00:24:43] or time, etc.

Greg: That's right.

Chad: Let's make this a little more applicable and let's talk about specific practices. Is there an example of a company that is applied? Maybe the product practices or what you've done in putting the steps in the *Take Charge Book* that you used to change the approach to product development and management?

Greg: Absolutely. As you know, we're leading global product management and consulting in training organizations. We tend to practice what we preach. We use the methods, tools, and techniques that are both outlined in *Take Charge Product Management* as a type of core. We then supplement with material from the Product Management and Marketing body of knowledge because it is such a great reference which helps to augment a lot of work that we

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do. So the work that we do ranges with a wide variety of organizations that are solely dedicated to the enterprise software or the SAS environments. We work with companies like Johnson & Johnson consumer products to SAS companies, like [inaudible] [00:25:49] care. For those who are not familiar, they are the world class solutions provider for the senior living community. We work with [Telecom](#) companies in the UK and India like [Labara](#), to the American Hospital Association and nonprofit organizations. We cross a wide range of verticals, if you will.

From our standpoint as it relates to the tools, we think that there is a tendency for organizations to not get the fundamentals right as they focus on doing too many things and not doing any of them particularly well. We are often asked to look at and assess the product management team, the processes and the tools that are place. Our book, *Take Charge Product Management* really gets at our core beliefs about what the core fundamental processes need to be. One of the things that we think differentiates really successful product management organizations from those that are less affective are two things. One is results and I think everyone would agree with that. The second is being able to get to a point where they are proactive. And finally where there is strong alignment between the company's business goals and objectives as well as the actual practice of Product Management inside the organization.

We've come to the opinion that there are really different profiles for Product Managers. If you think about a company's business goals and objectives, if you were to hire a really detail-orientated Product Manager and put them into a strategic role, they would probably won't do as well for the organization as opposed to hiring someone more strategically-orientated. Vice-versa, if you take a strategic Product Manager and you take them downstream really in the nitty gritty, they're not likely to be successful either because they are not going to be happy with that kind of role, it's not the right thing, etc. This is why we have developed different personas and profiles of Product Managers that we apply that we also align and back up to the overarching goals of the organizations to help organizations manage the mix of their talent.

Secondarily, from a process standpoint, we believe that all of the various product managers' processes need to be neatly aligned to the company's business goals and objectives. In our annual survey of product team performance, two years back we asked the question of "How do organizations primarily align their product teams to the company's business goals and objectives?" It was sort of shocking to see the feedback that came back from about 1,200 survey respondents. The majority said that the product roadmaps were the primary way that the organization was relying on driving alignment between the company's business goals and objectives and the actual product team's activities. They were bypassing a lot of the strategic elements of the job, whether it be product portfolio management or product strategy. Teams were so focused on execution that they were viewing roadmaps as the primary way of connecting back up to the company's business goals and objectives. It's a little bit disconcerting

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to hear that the focus is solely on execution. I don't think anybody would argue the importance of execution. However, execution without context doesn't necessarily drive the best results. Therefore, part of what we do is we ensure that the various tools that should fall within product management organization reign from product portfolio management all the way down to product strategy and into requirements management, roadmap development, and ultimately into measurement, whether that is through product scorecard or PNL. All of those things are aligned at their consistent goals and objectives in criteria that enable organizations to have line of sight to how their teams are performing based on the company's business goals and objectives in annual cycles.

Another aspect of this is if, for example, all the companies we do work with and step in as [inaudible] [00:30:31] heads of product management as they search for a permanent lead or we come in to help them with specific projects. For example, we may come in to help them resolve responsibility issues between product marketing and product management and putting a racy level approach in place and try to get some consensus within the key constituents in both those teams in terms of where the responsibilities line up. We do that kind of arbitration as well but at the end of the day, the tools that we use are the same tools that are outlined in the book and we work very diligently in their application within organizations. We try not to overcomplicate it. It's really about trying to get results. But you have to have the right people and understand the different types of product managers is critical to do in that and taking a close look at the processes and ensuring that they support the needs of the business goals and objectives. Whether it's J&J where we stepped in as an interim and had a product manager for them, or other organizations like the American Hospital Association where we do more limited work in specific areas in support of their goals and objectives, it spans the spectrum, Chad.

Chad: Okay, so there's a lot there. The key things were driving towards the results; having the right people doing the right work; having the proper processes in place and not overcomplicating things; using the tools that tell you if you're aligned with the organization and are getting you towards the objectives and goal—kind of like a product scorecard. Is there an example—and I understand if you do not want to use a specific company name—that says you pulled out into a situation and they were really struggling with some particular thing that you commonly find as an issue. I'm wondering if there is an example you can highlight in order to help us understand it better and how to solve it.

Greg: Sure. Regardless of engagements, there's typically two starting points each time. IT goes down one of two paths. Regardless of whether it's stepping in on an interim leadership standpoint or doing more targeted work inside an organization, typically what organizations request of us is one of two things: A) We're struggling with having our product teams understand how to think more strategically about where we're going. We're stuck doing a lot of

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execution work, but we need help on the strategy side to be able to ensure that they're making good decisions efficiently and that they will give us the best chance in achieving the organization's objectives and gaining by and from other executives in the organization's plan so that they fully support it.

That is one starting point. Starting point B) tends to be where the rubber meets the road down at the requirements level by helping organizations create a series of objective criteria and objective ways of providing clarity to both stakeholders inside the organization around how product management is going to be making decisions as well as informing customers about how or where their incoming requests relates to others' request and that may already exist in inventory or in the backlog. In the instance of strategy, in the case of a large consumer product company was brought in to basically pull an interim ahead in product management role and they wanted to really focus in on the strategy. They have tremendous relationships the marketing of one organization of their scale and size gives them a whole range of assets that they can bring in. For example, they can call Michelle Obama and try to see if what they're working on aligns with her initiatives. They have that kind of horsepower. At the end of the day, the issues laid in the lack of a strong product management leadership. They had difficulty finding someone to fill that role. They needed to find a way to bridge the various functional leaders in the organizations so that they would support a go-forward plan for the next one to three years and built their resource plans around it. The work we did was to initially go in and work with the leadership team, propose a template that enabled them to start to frame it all up, and to collaborate with them. This took place over the course of five days where we all met up in a central location. We facilitated the session, we put together a rough draft, and then we worked it through the various levels of the organization with continuous refining. It took about 30 days for them to have a coherent, well documented product strategy that not only key stakeholders and customers could understand, but also that the product teams and the quart team members supported as well in terms of its execution.

On the other side of the equation, another starting place to use as an example with [inaudible] [00:36:05] Care, they wanted to have some type of criteria by which the various aspects of the business would all be able to roll up into some type of portfolio management metrics so that they could make decisions about where to place their bets. They had tremendous a skillset at being able to understand their markets, their market share, and where the [inaudible] [00:36:31] was. We were able to really hone in on those areas but because they didn't have a head of product management at the time, they needed support. Being able to really try to translate that down into what things are we going to do to try to capture more of this share and what kind of return are we going to get based on those investments. So we work with them in order to define organizational specific criteria—metrics, if you will—that enables them to look

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across the expanded backlog, both by product area and then in aggregate and finally be able to figure out how to place the appropriate bet. Those tend to be the two places where most organizations want to start. If an organization has a good momentum, they want to focus more on the strategy side if they do not have the right resources inside the organizations. If an organization is struggling on execution—although that wasn't the case in the example that I gave you—they may want to focus more on the actual execution side and how that ties back up to the strategy and creates some type of product portfolio view.

So those are the two most common examples of how we get brought in and how some of the work is executed.

Chad: Good, thanks for sharing those. I think there is huge value in recognizing that there should be alignment between what we are doing in our innovation product development efforts and their business strategy goals and objectives. Sometimes, we simply don't have a handle on what either one of those are—let alone, how they are aligned. But having a good starting point like the ones you've indicated have good value. Of all the roles inside the organization, I think product managers are acutely aware of the cross-functional nature and that there is all these different functions a product manager is pulled on as we try to manage stakeholders and meet expectations. I sometimes forget about how any change we make is regarded as a change management issue and we are working inside the system. It sounds like you've had a lot of experience, especially working at both strategic and execution level while recognizing that this is a change in the organization. We need to manage that, get people's buy, and get people in an aligned direction.

Greg: Yeah, I think you've hit it on the head, Chad. I think some organizations are so busy on the execution side that they focus on execution to the point where they really don't have a coherent direction. I think the great recession did a lot to undermine a lot of organizations' focus on strategy overall. It exacerbated that problem. On the other side of the equation, I think that when you talk about alignment, this is something that a lot of organizations really struggle with in ensuring that all of their resources—both the people as well as the processes and the tools—are actually working towards a common goal. A lot of times, organizations are either missing tools. We talked about the lack in product portfolio management or product strategy and focusing on roadmaps. Or, the tools are misaligned and not working in a way that creates a sustainable system. Another thing is that very few organizations get to the point where they're actually proactive. They put out a product management calendar, for example, with key events throughout the year that are going to take place so that the counterparts can align their schedules to support those kinds of things. It's not just about results. It's about optimizing the return to the organization and ensuring that the product management organization—which is one of the most important aspects of creating value—leads that value

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creation process and is optimizing its returns to the organization and doing so in a way that has respect for other parties inside the organization and also is effectively communicating their leadership by putting the other calendar that helps everybody understand when critical events are going to take place. These could be things like roadmap iterations sessions, when customer advisory councils, preparation for board meetings, and things that are repeatable within organizations and could be processed. I think proactivity is something that is really lacking in a lot of product management organizations and something that would go a long way. Generally speaking, CEO's are rewarded for being able to achieve the plans that they've set out. The Sales organization leadership is rewarded for executing their plan. There is this proactivity principle or predictability principle where if people can understand that you tend to be rewarded for your performance. I think we could take a page from senior executives and sales leaders and strive to be more proactive as a profession in terms of our execution.

Chad: It would probably relieve a lot of stress on product managers to have that plan in place.

Greg: Absolutely.

Chad: So your book, *Take Charge Product Management*, is more of a step-by-step guide to managers, and it also contains the tools that you've used with these organizations. Of the books that you've been a part of and services that you've provided, is that a place you would recommend people start?

Greg: I think that both books serve a different purpose, if you will. *Take Charge Product Management* is really geared towards stepping into the product management profession for the first time or for those who have less than five years' experience. Although, the book would benefit anyone. The goal of that book is to make your life as a product manager easier and lead you down a path of taking control of your job while achieving proactivity—something we were just talking about that few product managers achieve. On the other hand, I think the ProdBOK is a useful reference book for practitioners of every level. It is not something you're going to read from cover to cover, but it helps the individuals standardize their language, make sure that you're not (unintentionally) missing process steps in critical tasks, and it provides some guidance on how to work effectively with other product development team members provide tools you can use. I think at the end of the day, Chad, each of them has their place. It depends on the needs of your listeners. I think *Take Charge Product Management* is a neat book to read and it can get you humming quickly. It's written in a way that is very accessible because a lot of the tools that are aligned in that book are actually the ones that we use in various complex, and sophisticated organizations. So don't be deceived by the approachability of the book. The tools have teeth.

Chad: Very good. I assume the standard outlet for these books would be Amazon.com?

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Greg: Yup. You'll find both books on the front page of Amazon.com for product management. They're also available at better bookstores everywhere.

Chad: Very good. I always like to wrap up our discussions with an innovation quote. Can you share a favorite of yours and why you chose that one?

Greg: I am an Albert Einstein fan. I wish I was nearly as smart as that gentleman was. He had a quote that always stuck with me and it goes along the lines of, "We can't solve problems by using the same kind of thinking we used when we created them." The reason why I like that quote is because in my perspective, it succinctly sums up the key challenges that we face as product managers and innovators. If you think about problems like global warming, we've created this problem. But the level of thinking that created that problem is going to require another level of thinking to solve that problem. It requires looking at problems from completely new angles. I think that's something that product managers do well. Organizations often get caught up in the trap of living in their domain and not aggressively searching for ideas that exist outside the box if you will. That could be applied in new ways to solve core business or customer problems. We, as consultants, within my organization see it all the time. I think Einstein's quote reminds me that the answers are out there, but it requires investing time and energy thinking outside the box and outside of our domain to reach those answers. It also reinforces the role of strong product managers. Not only by making incremental improvements, which are often the most obvious, but also to search for disruptive or innovative solutions outside our standard frames of reference or domain. The quote has always stuck with me. I paraphrase it a lot but I think I quoted you exactly as Einstein had said it himself.

Chad: Very good. Innovation certainly involves new ways of thinking. For people that want to follow up with you, what is the best way to gain contact with you and anything else you want to leave the audience with?

Greg: Sure. I'd love to hear from anybody in the audience. My name is Greg Geracie. The company is Actuation Consulting. That's www.actuationconsulting.com. My phone number, if you want to reach out, is 312-775-2373. You can find me through email at greg@actuationconsulting.com and I am also on Twitter at GregGeracie. You can also reach me via LinkedIn under Greg Geracie as well. You should be able to reach me any number of ways.

Chad: Very good. Amazon.com is the place to find the books. Greg, I appreciate your time talking with us today and sharing your experiences in product management.

Greg: It's been a pleasure, Chad. Thanks for the opportunity.

Chad: Thank you. I also want to thank the everyday innovators listening. The reason why I do these interviews is for you by trying to provide value to the work that you are doing. I

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Speakers:

Chad McAllister

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appreciate all the work that everyday innovators do in pushing innovation forward. Keep innovating.