

TEI 027: If You're a Product Manager, You Need to Know About PDMA

Speakers:

Chad McAllister

Charlie Noble

Chad: Hi everyone, this is Chad. I've had the pleasure of interviewing people in all types of roles that can help product managers, developers, and innovators. Today, I get to bring you a discussion with the Chairman of Product Development and Management Association (PDMA), Charlie Noble. I've been wanting to do this interview because PDMA is the professional association that really opened my eyes to the discipline of product management. Charlie is also an award winning professor at the University of Tennessee, where he teaches Design, Innovation, and New Product Development. He has helped many organizations with product development and marketing issues as well as contributing to research in these subject areas. Charlie, thanks so much for talking with us today.

Charlie: Thank you, Chad. It is great to be here.

Chad: I thought we could structure this interview into two parts. First I want to learn about you and the insights you've made about innovation. Second, I want to know more about PDMA as an association and your collaboration with PDMA. Does that sound like a good plan?

Charlie: Sounds great.

Chad: Cool. I am going to take you back a few years here. I saw when you were a grad at Boston College, that you were involved with a student group that founded 12 businesses. I thought wow, what rich experience for a college student be starting businesses. How did that experience shape your view of business and the innovation work you do

Charlie: Oh wow. That's an interesting tidbit that you've latched onto there! I haven't talked about that in a long time. Yes, I was one of the founding members of an organization called BC Student Agencies which, as far as I know, is still going strong today. The idea was to be an incubator for student entrepreneurship with minimal level of university support. We really had no working capital at all except for office space and the like. It was just breeding ground where we can get together and brainstorm and come up with all sorts of things. In the course of my time there I was getting ready to start four different businesses which accounted for a tenth or two of GPA each in reduction because I was spending all my time on them. But it was worth it.

Chad: I think I would trade the experience for the GPA.

Charlie: Alright. Good. I should have had you talk to my parents back in the day. But it was great. It was a great experience. In terms of innovation, we started different things—most of them were more service oriented. I think service innovation is a much under-focused field. I still consider that innovation work. In terms of insights and knowledge, I learned much about looking for holes in what customers want and need, and looking for shortcomings in what they're getting now. The most lucrative and incredibly profitable business that I started happened because we had a lot of students at Boston College who were not from the immediate area. We had a lot of foreign students and students from out of state. Those students would move out of their dorms in May and they would have all these items like desk lamps and the like that they needed to put somewhere, but there was no mechanism to accommodate that. In observation of that, we invented a business called BC Storage and I hired a bunch of football players for a week in May. It was a great service. They would go up to people's rooms, give them empty

TEI 027: If You're a Product Manager, You Need to Know About PDMA

Speakers:

Chad McAllister

Charlie Noble

cardboard boxes. The students would fill them up and I would send the football players up there to carry the boxes down. We would load them into a moving truck and put them in storage over the summer. Then, we would reverse that process in the fall. I was at how much you could charge for a basic cardboard moving box with that kind of service component. We made tens of thousands of dollars, which all went back to the university and other services. But it was a great learning experience. Students were thrilled and no one ever bargained the price because there was nothing like it. So that is just a basic principle of innovation. Finding those market opportunities was really critical. It was also in the early days of desktop publishing. One of the businesses we created that was most successful was a resume building business, where people were doing desktop publishing work on early Macs and things like that to produce nice resumes for people who otherwise were sitting in front of a typewriter. That is another example of finding that opportunity. These are not the greatest revelations in terms of mindset but it did open my eyes to how easy it is to find opportunities—if you're open-minded and observant enough to what is going on around you.

Chad: Yes, exactly. Much of it is about being observant and open-minded like you said. Those are both industries that continue today. Great job providing the storage service and the resume service. I'm curious if it was those experiences or something else that really fostered your interest in product development and innovation. When did that begin?

Charlie: In truth, it was really an evolution for me—a bit of a transition. The short story is that I was a finance person as an undergraduate in the late 1980s. I graduated in kind of a hay day—a real formal, strategic management department in corporations. I went to work for a couple of big companies in strategic planning. I was making these really long-term strategic plans. One of them was for a company in the east coast called BJ's Wholesale Club. I was making these long-term plans which would take months to complete them. I was the king of spreadsheets. I would then turn in these magnificent plans only to find out a month later that management would be selling half the company or make some radical shift, which means my whole plan would go in the garbage. And that got me thinking.

When I went to get my PhD at Arizona State, which was in the marketing department, you start thinking about dissertation ideas and research ideas. The first step in my own transition was thinking more about implementation versus planning. I was hung up on this idea that you can make beautiful plans but if you don't implement them well, then what difference does it make? I played around in that state of my research. In my dissertation, I got to working with a few big companies such as Phillip Morris, and cigarette packaging goods company. I got exposed to innovation and what they were doing. They showed me products that really took off and some that failed. I was also working with some really unusual companies such as Rural Metro, which is the biggest privatized fire and ambulance provider in the country. They work where I live now as well as in a lot of other communities. They did some really innovative things that I started to study from an implementation standpoint. So I think I started my evolution at the back end of innovation in terms of implementing ideas and seeing how those play out. Over the course of my career, I've pulled more towards the front end. In recent years, I've studied things like open innovation, wisdom of the crowd, ideation stage stuff—including a big focus on design.

TEI 027: If You're a Product Manager, You Need to Know About PDMA

Speakers:

Chad McAllister

Charlie Noble

Through all these things, I feel like I pulled myself backwards through that innovation funnel which was fun and exciting. I very much enjoyed that trip.

Chad: Let's dive into one of those specifically. You talked about research you did during your dissertation. Since then, you've dived into other areas like open innovation. Through your dissertation or through your experience working with companies, have you been involved in any research in a way that lead to some particularly interesting findings? Any personal "A-ha!" moments that stand out for you?

Charlie: Yes, quite a few actually. I guess I can talk about a few different things but I thinking I will tell you about the most recent one that is exciting for me and that is still happening right now. I think a lot of your audience might be familiar with a company called Quirky, which is a really interesting user innovation, crowd-based innovation platform. For those that don't really know about Quirky, anyone in the world can kick in any back of the napkin idea for an innovator product. They can submit their idea to an online platform which is a community with over a million members. From there their idea will be critiqued, people will suggest brand names and taglines, and new features. Some products will actually go into market at the end and will be sold online or at different retailers. Those that contributed along the way end up with an equity stake in the product. In theory, they get checks in the mail if the product is a success. So it is a really interesting eco-system. One of the things that I'm interested in now is how the jobs of product development teams have changed in a world of open innovation and customer input into the process. If you think of the classic way to think about product development and real front end stuff, you think of a team sitting in a conference room with a bunch of Sticky notes and hashing things around and playing ping pong with their board in the meantime. That still happens but now you see as time goes on, the process of really changing. If Doritos runs a competition to find the next Super bowl Ad and they get 30,000 submissions, then it is much more of a sorting process for that development team than it is a creating or ideating process. That is very interesting to me and it almost suggests that the skillset of product developers may need to change as we go forward.

Working with a student in my dissertation, we just put on the finishing touches on a study of Quirky. He's found a really interesting data source. Quirky has a live streaming video session once a week where they critique half a dozen product ideas that have gotten some traction in the organization. Whole management team of seven or eight people will be up there at a panel and talk about the pros and cons of these ideas. They also have an audience of 50 or so people who are employees, friends, and other kinds of folks who will come and [inaudible] [00:12:29]. It's a really great insight into this incubator of what is happening and how the management team makes decisions. And with these videos, he is coding them and turning the video into data by looking at different comments and decisions. We're trying to look at the predictors of a good decision down the road. So some aspects of that process are most likely to lead them to pick the winning product and avoid latching on to the dogs and pushing those through into development. The result is still being shaped at the moment but it's been very fascinating so far. For example, we're finding that management teams is much better at picking winners than avoiding losers— if that makes sense. In other words, they don't pass on too many products that would have been successful otherwise, that which we have ways of measuring. But they do latch on to too many ideas that end up being dogs down the road. Looking at ways to increase that managerial success rate in your

TEI 027: If You're a Product Manager, You Need to Know About PDMA

Speakers:

Chad McAllister

Charlie Noble

product team decision-making is what we are really shooting for. I think we have some good stuff that will come out of that. Overall, it is a fun and very important project.

Chad: Yeah, it sounds like a very interesting study in looking at the management decision-making process. My personal understanding of the Quirky model (and for those of you listening who would like to look them up, I think they are at Quirky.com) is basically a design studio in New York. They have crowdsourced the design process. Last time I looked, the decision-making process came down to 50 percent of the weight that came from the community. That means you as an individual can participate in the community and vote on ideas, comment on ideas, and share your own ideas. Half of the decision to go forward with product development or not is left to the community. The other half is left to the industrial designers because most of these are physical type of products. The industrial designers are the designer and management teams at Quirky. Is it still the same notion?

Charlie: I think so. It used to be the head of specific threshold—about 200 or more thumbs up from the community. If you got that many, you would get through the first stage gate and you would get more personal attention and so on. I think there was some shameless gaming that was going on. People were asking their friends and family to help them over the hump. But they became more black box about it in terms of what get a product over. Another interesting aspect that has changed over the years is that when Quirky first started, I believe they were charging \$100 dollars as a fee to submit an idea, you could argue as a good thing.

Chad: You'll get some skin in the game.

Charlie: Exactly. People are going to think things better before they just throw them out there. Then it dropped ten dollars, and now it's free, which makes it more interesting from a research standpoint because it just creates all this extra [inaudible] [00:16:11] that's in there. People will just throw all kinds of crazy ideas that the system and the community has to sort through but seems awfully inefficient. I think they're feeling some pains from that.

Chad: Interesting. For the everyday innovators who are listening, if you are curious about this model and open innovation or crowdsource innovation, you can review interview 6 where I talked to Professor [Carlo Flippo](#) who did her dissertation by also using Quirky. Charlie, if you would like to connect and collaborate, I would be glad to make that happen.

Charlie: Yeah, great!

Chad: So that research is really interesting. I'll be happy to see what you find out there. Anything that can help a management team have a better, efficient, and effective decision-making process that leads to picking winners from a group of ideas is powerful insight. We'll have to keep in touch and see that where that goes. Along with that, this is a problem that a lot of companies have, that are developing products figuring out what are those winners. Is that another common problem you've encountered with companies when it comes to product innovation? Like that elephant in the room that we know we should be talking about and is really limiting what could happen?

TEI 027: If You're a Product Manager, You Need to Know About PDMA

Speakers:

Chad McAllister

Charlie Noble

Charlie: That is a great question. Looking at this from a distance, I think there is tension between the idea of radical or breakthrough innovation and incremental or steady innovation. If you look at the literature in books that is being written, radical innovation is sexy and exciting and something we like to think about. When you look at studies of what is done and categorize innovation that really comes out into the world, the vast majority—with estimates of 80 to 90 percent—we have to categorize as more incremental and modest innovation. But there are tradeoffs there—which is another study I am working on which looks that high risks, high costs, and high returns of radical innovation versus the more predictable and modest results of incremental. Therefore, broadly speaking, that will be the biggest challenge for companies. Many want to do the radical things like inventing the next product categories and platforms but it's expensive to do that and the cost of failure is high if it doesn't work out. Leaning to the conservative side is something that is easy to say to companies. You need to embrace failure and accept risks and things like that is fun to think about but when you're a manager who has to think numbers and his job is on the line, it's a bit harder to think in that manner. So I see a lot of great ideas that are quite radical in the early development stages and that get toned down to make them more modest improvements of what is already out on the market. In the end, I'm not sure what the answers are but the idea of trying to find that right balance breakthrough stuff that you really want to do and the meat-and-potatoes type incremental improvements is where most companies really struggle.

Chad: Right. Absolutely. There is tension in between trying to keep the lights turned on and the operation running that the business is involved in.

Charlie: Absolutely.

Chad: Okay, I've asked you about a few contexts—the research you've been involved with, some insights from companies that have emerged. I want to ask you about the student context too since you are also a teacher. As you are teaching students about product design and element issues, are there times where you encounter these lightbulb type moments with students where they start connecting the pieces together and they suddenly understand what is in front of them? I know from my personal experience in teaching innovation management to graduate students, many times I see them coming into the class with absolutely no familiarity with the notion of what product development consists of. I'm curious is you've encountered this in your own experience as a teacher.

Charlie: Yeah. That is what makes teaching exciting and fun. The course that I take and the structure in which I teach is very much around the customer journey. It is very consumer focused. A couple of points where I see lightbulbs turning on is on the very first assignment I give out, which is a "bad products" assignment. It's really fun to do. So instead of saying we are going to develop a new product and we should invent this wild jetpack thing that doesn't exist yet, I really want them to be grounded in the idea that there is tons of room for improvement in everyday stuff we already have around us. That assignment that we do on the first day is kind of funny because I literally tell them to take their backpacks (college kids these days have huge backpacks with amazing amounts of stuff in them) and I have them dump everything out on their desks. I have them work in little groups of two or three. Then, I have them go through an exercise where I make them go through every little thing they hold in their backpack and think about what value that adds to their life, what purpose it has, and think about how

TEI 027: If You're a Product Manager, You Need to Know About PDMA

Speakers:

Chad McAllister

Charlie Noble

well that thing performs it's intended function. They might have a little stapler and they might comment that they need it but the little stapler can't staple more than five pages at a time without getting jammed. So it's a very simplistic way to look at things. But it's a really great way to get them to critique the everyday items that they've had around them for a long time. OXL Company has gone through this process with all kinds of kitchen gadgets and appliances. That is the mindset that I like them to go through there and that is just one aspect.

Another aspect in terms of lightbulb moments is when they get other perspectives on ideas. My college students tend to be very biased on how a college student looks at the world. I put them through a process where they are doing stuff out in the field. They do video journals and ethnographic assignments and in that process, I intentionally make them talk to other demographics than themselves—older people, people from different cultures, different backgrounds, etc. I find that in developing that kind of empathy that emerges from doing that kind of exercise, it really helps them be much better innovators and designers because it gets them out of their own box. And they also come back with a lot of interesting ideas that they never would have come up with by brainstorming with other college students that are on the same platform. I think that is worthwhile.

Chad: Yeah, absolutely. I love that customer journey focus. It is the design thinking notion of getting out of your office and going to where the potential users are experiencing the product. You learn much from them that way. I think a lot of product innovation comes down to the mindset of being aware to make those observations when things aren't working so that we can ask questions about how to improve our projects or products and ask why hasn't anyone yet solved the problems. That is such a great exercise you do with your students! Thank you for sharing that.

Charlie: Thank you.

Chad: I think that could be turned into a half-day easy workshop for anyone involved in a group. People will show up and have everyone open their purses or bags and analyze everything inside. It starts the innovation gears as we look at how to make our personal everyday products better. Thanks for talking through that with me.

I want to transition to the second part of the discussion that I talked about, which is your involvement with PDMA. I will give you my back story on that. I was originally involved in electrical engineering and got involved in developing products and leading product development. I frankly had not figured out what that was. I thought it was about managing projects. We were making software systems for customers but I never thought about it in terms of product development. I knew that we needed to learn more about what we were doing. I didn't have my hand around this full knowledge of what we were actually doing. I knew I was missing some pieces but I didn't know what they were. So I got on the web and did some research. That is how I came across the Product Development and Management Association—PDMA. I got involved with them by helping the local chapter and became curious about their certification on the new Product Development Professional. I climbed aboard and received my certification, created a study group to help others with it because I found a lot of personal value in that. Now, I hear a lot of positive feedback from people who participated in those study groups that tell me

TEI 027: If You're a Product Manager, You Need to Know About PDMA

Speakers:

Chad McAllister

Charlie Noble

about how much value they found in them as well. That's my story on my discovery of PDMA. I'm sincerely excited to be talking with you who is the current Chairman of the Board for PDMA. Please share about what this association is. What is your back story? How did you become involved with PDMA?

Charlie: Okay, terrific. PDMA is a little bit unusual as far as professional organizations go in that there are some significantly different groups in the organization—at least in terms of background. There's a big practitioner component and provider component which makes for about 85 to 90 percent of the organization. About a 10 percent is academics. Interestingly enough, however, PDMA was founded by academics over 30 years ago. It has really interesting history, which I like. I was always attracted to the organization because of the corporate membership. There are a lot of great academics involved and it's wonderful to interact with them and present research to them. But to me the bigger appeal was the chance to get to interact with practitioners and figure out the answers to those burning questions that are on people's minds. In efforts of finding those answers we could perhaps start research collaborations which would be beneficial. That was initially my selfish motivation to get involved. I really enjoyed interacting with all these folks and what I got out of it. At some point, I was asked to become part of the leadership. I worked with international affiliates and tried to build our international base, which was interesting and rewarding. I then moved up as vice president of academics, where I was involved with a lot of our publications, academics conferences, and managing our academic membership. That was a really good taste of what PDMA was all about and it got me into different things. After that—about a year and a half ago—I was asked to become the vice chair of the organization, which was a great honor. In January, I became the Chair and I believe I am the first academic to be Chair in 20 to 25 years which is exciting and what a great opportunity for me. I look at the job as building [inaudible] [00:28:53] that PDMA is executing, but also as really tightly tying together these constituencies we have in the organizations. We've done some neat things to bring together academics and practitioners because it really can be a win-win. A lot of times, practitioners end up getting great consulting projects that they would otherwise pay tens or hundreds of thousands of dollars for but they get them for free if they connect with the right academic. That is how we are trying to build those connections because it creates value for both sets of members and that connection is what separates us from other competing organizations that are out there. Overall, it makes it a very exciting environment to be involved in.

Chad: Very good. I personally like that distribution of practitioner and educational audiences and having different people involved. In my involvement with the local chapter of PDMA, there's always been this discussion that we need practitioners because they are the ones who know and understand innovation and getting things done. I think I appreciate this more now that I've gone through the path of earning my own PhD and doing some teaching as well. A lot of what you will find in practice has come from the academic world. It's that research opportunity that you mentioned which probably peaked some of our listeners' ears who are interested in that free consulting. It's out of those experiences that so much of what we learn demonstrates in our practice and that is why it is really important to have that broad arrangement of research. Because as practitioners, we might know what might work in a specific situation and when we try to use that solution somewhere else, it doesn't work the same way, which

TEI 027: If You're a Product Manager, You Need to Know About PDMA

Speakers:

Chad McAllister

Charlie Noble

may baffle some of us at times. Sometimes that research that looks at that broader concept that helps us understand what else we need to consider.

Charlie: I think that's great. Conversely, academics can get out on some esoteric limb.

Chad: That's never happened.

Charlie: I think having conversations with practitioners that are there in the trenches serves as a fantastic reality check at times, and it helps academics appropriately focus what they are doing. So I think there is a symbiosis that is wonderful. The more ways we can cultivate that in the organization, the better we are able to make everyone a winner. That is what we are shooting for.

Chad: We should bring up some of the benefits of PDMA and some of the artifacts and materials they produce. I have talked to CEOs who will say they have never read anything in an academic journal that was applicable to what they do. Therefore, there is that bridge that we in academia suffer from in making those connections of making the materials more accessible to practitioners. I have noticed that PDMA addresses this by having two different publications, correct? "The Journal of Product Innovation Management" and also "Visions". One is more of an academic oriented publication and "Visions" is more of an industry trade practitioner publication. Those are two publications available to PDMA members. I don't know if you have any other perspective to add to that.

Charlie: Yeah. Thank you for talking about those. As you mentioned, "Journal of Product Innovation Management", JPIM, is really the leading academic journal in new product development and innovation, so it is widely respected in the academic world. That is critical to the academic [inaudible] [00:32:52] of what we do. The problem with an academic journal—and I have also published a number of things in those—is that for something to be accepted as a rigorously done project in academics, it has to be 20 pages long and filled with a fair amount of Greek letters and formulas just to pass through that rigorous review process. As you've also experienced, I've met a lot of practitioners who say that if you can take that 20 page thing and give me two, three, or even one well-grounded nugget out of that for me to use, that would be really great because they don't have time to pick through the long complex article. We try to address that in "Visions", which is published in more of a magazine format. That has a lot of thought pieces and what is going on in the world. And we just added a new section to "Visions" in the last couple of issues that takes selected articles from the academic journals and does a distilled, half-page, very managerial write-up that can be enough in itself for people to take away or it can sting a reader's curiosity enough to have them hunt the full article. That is something that I pushed really hard to make it happen. It's another way to bridge that divide and make things accessible in a way that it makes sense for practitioners. I'm hoping we can do even more of that and build those synergies across the organization.

Chad: What are the other benefits of PDMA (for those listening)? What are the things that would draw someone to PDMA, assuming they were already interested in product management and they want to learn more?

TEI 027: If You're a Product Manager, You Need to Know About PDMA

Speakers:

Chad McAllister

Charlie Noble

Charlie: Great. All the research that we do on customers, members, and potential members in terms of what they are looking for always distills down to two things, which is what I call learning and connecting. The connecting piece is networking. I think sometimes most professional organizations undervalue how powerful that is as a driver of participation. But in product development, people want to network. They want to network to get new ideas, to learn practices, and also to make connections if they are looking for that next great job. On the connecting side, we have our big international conference, which is called the PIM—Product Innovation Management Conference. This year, it is at Disneyland in Anaheim, CA on November 7-11. We get people from all over to attend. We are also developing more regional conferences. A lot of people are having a harder time getting out of the office for two, three, or four days and the expenses associated with that is too much for them. So we are trying to put together regional conferences to give people a one-day experience, which is easier and more convenient for them. We also have 17 chapters around the United States, as of today. We have 20 affiliates around the world. We have lots of ways that people can network and connect.

In terms of the learning piece, that comes from our publication that we talked about. That is really important. We also have awards where we identify best practice and lean practice kind of companies. One that we call the Outstanding Corporate Innovator Award is very prestigious. We've had big companies like Clorox and Starbucks win that award in recent years. There are also smaller, lesser-known companies that are doing really innovative things. At our big conference, we will have them present their ideas and tell us what they are doing, which is always a real highlight. We have a certification program, MPDP, which is the new product development professional. I know you have been very involved in that, Chad. That is a great way for someone—especially at the early stages in their career—to get a terrific concentrated jumpstart on their own knowledge base in product development. We are doing several things to grow that program and get more people certified. There is just so many things! We have a new educational platform, which is a series of onsite delivered course modules that we are offering to our corporate members. If there are companies out there that are interested in taking a whole product development team up to a higher level of expertise, we have a whole series of things that we can offer onsite that will help them get there. That has been a fun thing to develop and it is unfolding as we speak. We also have something called CPAS which is our Competitive Performance Assessment Survey. One of the things we found in terms of learning is that members and potential members are really curious about what the competition is doing—benchmarking, understanding practices, etc. PDMA has a long history of at least 15 years of performing a study every few years of new product development practices across a wide range of industries. We will look at those long term to see how the focus field is shifting and we will also look at what the best companies are doing versus the not-so best in order to pick out some learning points from that comparison. PDMA members who attend the conferences and read our publications can tap into all that knowledge as well. I think we do offer a lot of value for members and it's an incentive to have people join. We're always excited to have people join our community.

Chad: Sure. I like those overarching categories of learning and connecting. Lots of opportunities for learning. Another one I've heard about is the PDMA Tool book Series. I know there is a series of books that get put out there every year and I've contributed to one of them before. The chapters are

TEI 027: If You're a Product Manager, You Need to Know About PDMA

Speakers:

Chad McAllister

Charlie Noble

separated by topic and written by different individuals and are often really meaty, step-by-step guidance on how you do something. If you want to know how to do ethnography, you can go find a chapter that will give you insights.

Charlie: That's great. I was actually the co-editor of the most recent book, which is on open innovation. Those have been really popular and successful. You can find all that stuff on our website.

Chad: Yes. For anyone that wants to get involved with PDMA that can benefit from connecting with others and learning more about product management through connecting with others as well as gain access to all that the association has to offer, where do they go to find out more about PDMA and local opportunities?

Charlie: Terrific. The general website is www.PDMA.org. You can find all kinds of resources there including information on how to join. If you would like to contact me directly, that would be great. I would be happy to point you in the right direction. You can find me at chair@PDMA.org. That's probably the best way. We're always looking for volunteers; we are a volunteer-driven organization. If people are interested in connecting with a local chapter or international affiliate, or if they would like to get involved in our committee, I'll be happy to plug them into the right connections for that.

Chad: Absolutely. Does that extend if they're looking around for a local chapter but they don't find one, can they reach out to you to look into what's involved in getting one developed or make an offering to get people to come together to talk about product management together?

Charlie: Yes, absolutely. We're always looking to cultivate new chapters. So if you look at our website and you don't see anything near you, feel free to reach out to me. What we often do is we study our own database to see where the concentration of members are and that aren't well-served so we try to pull them together and make some connections.

Chad: Okay. So again, the contact is chair@PDMA.org.

Charlie: Correct.

Chad: The volunteer position comes with a nifty email address. That's nice.

Charlie: That's the name perk.

Chad: That's it. As listeners know, we like to wrap up our time together with an innovative or success quote. What did you chose and what was your motivation for choosing that one?

Charlie: Okay, terrific. There are lots of wonderful quotes and you can go for the most recent ones or ones coming from Aristotle. One that I like that is very straightforward and is by consultant, [Gary Hammel](#). His quote reads, "Innovation is enormously important. It's the only insurance against irrelevance. It's the only guarantee of long-term customer loyalty. It's the only strategy for outperforming dismal economy." I just think that's a fantastic quote. It captures a lot of things. The idea of insuring against irrelevant really drives home the idea that you can't stop innovating. If you do, you're going to be sliding and not moving forward. We already know that but the quote reinforces it very

TEI 027: If You're a Product Manager, You Need to Know About PDMA

Speakers:

Chad McAllister

Charlie Noble

nicely. I think the idea of long-term customer loyalty is an interesting dimension of that. It's not always thought of when we think of innovation. Erroneously, when we think of innovation, we think of new customers. I want to build a new product that is exciting and brings in new customers. That is wonderful but as customers become more demanding in more fields, you have to dazzle them regularly and innovate for them. Just to keep their loyalty and keep them happy. I like how [Hammel](#) drives that home. The last part was the only strategy for outperforming dismal economy. That is the mantra that a product developer has during a down economy which is not to cut down the [I and D](#) budget. Don't cut the development budget. When times are bad, if anything, let's do more because that is when we can power through great products. People always find the resources to acquire those if you're really standing out from the crowd. I think that quote captures a lot of nice elements in a concise way.

Chad: All really important elements. [Hammel](#) has come up before in this podcast. He's just a great management guru and innovation thought leader. Thanks for sharing that quote for us and those three important points there too. To follow the research that you're doing, aside from the email you shared, is there another way that you want to provide to listeners who want to follow the work that you're doing?

Charlie: You can find me on LinkedIn as Charles Noble. You can catch me at the University of Tennessee. You can also catch me on Twitter, where I'm not as active as I'd like to be but I try to pick my spots well, which means I won't clutter up your Twitter box. You can catch me there [@ProfNoble](#) on Twitter. I'd be happy to have you jump on. I'd like to follow lots of other interesting people too. So I'd love to make some connections there.

Chad: Very good. I appreciate your time. Everyday innovators listening, thank you again. I try to find guests that have good information to help you learn more about product development and management and innovation in the work that you are doing. If you have any suggestions for guests, please let me know. The best way to reach me is the [everydayinnovator.com](#). That will forward you to my business page and you can contact me there. Thanks everyone.