

TEI 113: Innovation tools  
Host: Chad McAllister, PhD  
Guest: Evan Shellshear

CHAD: Hi, this is Chad. Welcome to another discussion helping product managers become product masters. Product masters have influence to create products customers love. Gaining that influence involves learning to think like a product leader and that is what I am here to help with. A frequent question lately has been what tools are used by product managers and innovators. In this episode, we're addressing some tools for innovation. I'll cover product management tools in a future episode. To discuss innovation tools, I talked to one person, the one person, who has literally written the book on innovation tools, which appropriately is also the title of his book, *Innovation Tools*. My guest and best-selling author is Evan Shellshear. Evan's focus is on industry-transforming technologies and methodologies, from software to consulting. His background is in economics and game theory and he's also the founder of Simultek, a company that leverages game theory to elicit people's true preferences. To get the summary of our discussion and also the resources mentioned during the interview, please go to [www.theeverydayinnovator.com/113](http://www.theeverydayinnovator.com/113). I hope you enjoy the discussion.

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CHAD: Evan, thank you for joining the Everyday Innovators!

EVAN: It's a pleasure, I'm glad I can be here today.

CHAD: I'm glad it worked out. You are in Australia and I am in Colorado in the United States, so we have a bit of distance between us.

EVAN: Not with the technology that's available today. It just seems to be possible to do anything, doesn't it?

CHAD: Isn't it amazing? I've done a few international interviews and have a panel discussion coming up soon, which will be a lot of fun. I'm glad that so far our technology holds out well for us. Some of this is a result of innovation and you wrote about this recently, in a book called *Innovation Tools*, which I'm very curious about. What was the background there? Why did you write this book?

EVAN: *Innovation Tools* really, for me was to fill a gap for people out there who are well aware of things like the Lean Startup, what you'll find typically and this arose in many conversations in a lot of the work I did, is there's a gap between the theory of the Lean Startup and other such methodologies and actual execution. What that gap revolves around, it revolves around, I understand the framework, I understand the methodology, I understand the ideas behind what I should be doing, what I'm missing are the concrete set of tools to make that a reality, especially low-risk ones. The Lean Startup is really about managing risk. It's a risk management methodology and framework to help people launch new ideas and companies in a low-risk fashion. What was missing was not just a set of tools to implement that but a set of tools that were centered around low-risk activities and low-risk or risk-minimizing execution strategies. So that really was the impetus for my book. I wanted to fill that gap and help people find out what are the actual risk-minimizing tools out there to help you implement something like the Lean Startup. It was really a lot of conversations around people saying, "Yeah, look, I get it but I need to do something, get my hands dirty. What's out there?" So that was the reason why I wrote that book, to help people with this important piece.

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CHAD: Okay. When I look at innovation, I often use a three-part model and this is specifically to what product managers tend to deal with. The first part I call Ideation; it's called the fuzzy frontend traditionally, where we come up with new ideas. The middle part is actually developing the product. In a lot of organizations, this looks like some sort of stage gate process or maybe a hybrid agile stage gate process. The third part is what happens after you launch, managing that product lifecycle, you commercialize it. The set of tools you address, since you made this connection to Lean Startup, I'm assuming now that they probably focus more on the fuzzy front end, that first part where we get ideas from. Is that the right place that these are?

[4:16]

EVAN: Sort of. I'd say it's partially correct. So if I look at myself and think about if I were to give myself a title and put myself in a box, I would say I'm a product developer, and that's really where I see those tools fitting in. The third part, these tools aren't as relevant. That product lifecycle management, they're not going into that whatsoever. It's really about the development and launching of a product. Some of the ideas in the book touch on the ideation, the fuzzy front end, but I would say a fair bit of the tools are on the actual execution and the product development. So when you're going through that stage gate, if you're going to be applying a Lean or an agile process, you're going to be using some methodology to actually develop your product in any type of build, measure, learn scenario, what are the actual tools that fit into that build part that minimize or lower risk? That's kind of what it's about. But there are a number of chapters in there that will assist with the fuzzy front end. There are a number of chapters in there that will provide benefit for those type of activities.

CHAD: Okay. Let's dive into some tools that are featured in the book. One I saw just kind of browsing through and as we chatted earlier, I told you I try not to actually read books in detail with guests because then they're not new to me and I like discovering this just as the Everyday Innovators listening are discovering it too. I do know a fair bit about crowdsourcing and that's one of the tools you cover. I want to get your perspective of what you shared in the book, too. Can you tell us about crowdsourcing?

EVAN: Crowdsourcing is one of those chapters where I really spent a long time thinking about should I include it or not. There are enough books and there is enough information out there about crowdsourcing and really the question is what could I add that is new to that. This is a big challenge to me. It felt like I needed to put it in but I didn't want to repeat everything else that was out there. I decided okay I'll put it in there. I want it to be there; it's really important. In fact, the first chapter and the third chapter touch on crowdsourcing from differing perspectives. The reason why I feel crowdsourcing is really important, is it's been a massive catalyst for driving innovation. We know that the crowd, or everyone out there, has a huge number of perspectives, expertise, things like that that can be contributed to a problem. We've really seen lately some of the big successes have been able to tap into that expertise. That's really, for me, what crowdsourcing is about. People out there in society have over their lifetime have built up an expertise in some topic. What you're doing with crowdsourcing in my eyes, is you're tapping into that latent expertise, that desire for people who know something special, to give you that something special. That's really the challenge and the benefit of crowdsourcing. It's really can I get to that knowledge. That's, I guess, one part of crowdsourcing that I look in my book, this important sort of tapping into problem solving abilities, ideas, understanding and stuff like that. The other part of crowdsourcing I look at is where you flip it on the head. Instead of reaching out to the

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crowd and saying, "Can you provide me with solutions, ideas, or anything?" you reach out to the crowd and say, "I've got an idea or a solution. Can you help me fund it?" So that was where in my book, I tried to take the perspective of the bigger picture of all these crowd activities. So looking at how can the crowd assist, not only just with ideas but also potentially with finance, and also looking at where crowdsourcing can go and where the future I see of it being and all sorts of things that are now being picked up around democracy and how the crowd can be much more active and involved in things like that to other issues around what are problems and challenges with crowdsourcing at the moment.

[7:52]

CHAD: So let's talk about some challenges, then. What have you come across for crowdsourcing that has made it more problematic?

EVAN: Well, we've seen in a few cases where things like crowdsourcing can really go wrong. There's a thing called the crowd slap that I talk about in my book that's happened a few times, where a number of companies like Chevrolet have tried to source the crowd for ad campaigns or different things like that and because of the company's image in society, instead of people taking it seriously, they went and made fun and ridiculed the company. However, I really feel that the biggest challenge around crowdsourcing is managing the crowd and having the right expectations from the beginning. So in 2006, IBM ran their innovation jam, right? As a part of that innovation jam, they got 46,000 contributions, 46,000 contributions, which they then reduced down to 31 ideas for further refinement. That's less than 0.1 % of all ideas contributed, half of that, of 0.1 % were actually even used at the end of the day. If we think that it took someone five minutes to consider every idea, right, then we're looking at about 160 24-hour days it required IBM to go through all those ideas, or about 480 work days, or roughly two years of time, of one person's time, to go through all those 46,000 ideas. The question there for them was would it have simply been better if we'd invested in our own people to come up with those ideas over a 6-month sprint and prototyping and development phase. This is the challenge with crowdsourcing, I think. It's understanding what you're going to get out of it, what the work requirement is, crowdfunding people who I run into all the time say, "Let's just run a crowdfunding campaign." I say, "No, no, no. To a run a successful crowdfunding campaign is actually a big challenge. You need high quality videos, you need to market the campaign, you need to do a lot of things and sometimes it just simply could be better taking that money and developing what you want and going to an angel investor." I think around crowdsourcing, people just need to have the right expectations and understand the amount of work involved in managing and successfully running a crowdsourcing campaign and the appropriate relationship between the person doing the crowdsourcing and the people providing the ideas, which is everything around an intellectual property to remuneration for their efforts, all these different things. So I think there where the major challenges lie and to do a successful crowdsourcing campaign, you really need to have those under your belt.

CHAD: A lot of those same problems show up with the...we have automated ways of doing this now, but the employee suggestion box, where employees are providing ideas. Again, if you're not setting the expectations there and managing some kind of selection process and trying to be transparent and giving feedback to those who submitted, those systems kind of break down.

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EVAN: Exactly.

CHAD: This has the added complications that you need to prepare materials to help the crowd know what it is you're trying to get done, and there's some expectations around the quality of those materials.

EVAN: Exactly.

CHAD: Did you look at specific tools for that, like the Kickstarter platform, in terms of a crowdsourcing tool to help find funding for an idea and that sort of thing? Just curious.

EVAN: In what sort of respect do you mean? Do you mean tools to assist you launching a Kickstarter campaign, or?

CHAD: Yeah, I didn't know if you looked, in the book, if you looked...you mentioned platforms earlier a little bit, for crowdsourcing, about that being one tool on the other side of the equation when it comes to finding resources for funding?

EVAN: Absolutely. So I look at a few of the different platforms that are online—such as Yet2, NineSigma, and InnoCentive. There are quite a number out there that help people launch crowdsourcing campaigns...that's not crowdfunding, that's more simple crowdsourcing and getting ideas because one of the challenges around exactly what you said, managing expectations, for a number of brands, is they don't want to expose their brand to the crowdsourcing opportunity that they see there so they might want to put up an anonymous campaign and launch that by InnoCentive or some other platform. That's definitely an important tool. Kickstarter and different crowdfunding I think there are multiple platforms and you need to...and I investigate two of them in my book: Indiegogo and Kickstarter. The user of those different crowdfunding platforms simply need to understand what's best suited to their needs and their scenario and I do describe them and provide a lot of extra information in the references as to where you can find more details relevant for your specific campaign.

CHAD: I have an interview coming up in just a couple weeks, well, this will confuse listeners. Sorry, Everyday Innovators. By the time this episode comes out it will have already come out. But it was with one of the guys at First Build, which is kind of the crowdsourcing lab extension of GE Appliances.

EVAN: First Build. Yep. I think I investigated them at the end of one of my chapters, talking about taking it all the way through from crowdsourcing to funding to prototyping to manufacturing, which is what First Build services, I think, offer.

CHAD: Yeah, exactly. I'm glad you're familiar with it, too. I thought that was a good job of separating from, like you said, the crowd slap problem of ridiculing the company because of what they're trying to do, separating what GE is doing from First Build. Because if you see GE show up on a Kickstarter platform, that just feels weird. I'm not expecting that and I don't know if I should take it seriously or not. What are they doing there? But to create, basically what ends up being an innovation lab that's taking products all the way to the market, I thought was a smart strategy on their part.

[13:49]

EVAN: Absolutely. I think one of the big companies that just likes to go straight to crowdsourcing, crowdfunding, is SONY. They seem to have a level of success. It's kind of a criticism of crowdfunding

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platforms that it really should be there for untested ideas and not product launches of established companies, however, people seemed to love the Pebble Smart Watch as it went back for the third time it still got a fantastic reception, so, yeah, I'm not sure what the expectations are. It seems to be that if you're too big you're not allowed to use it but if you're small you can just continually use it. It's not obvious how the crowd will respond to these things and I guess that's one of the challenges.

CHAD: Right. At least it is an opportunity for some feedback and that's the critical thing we need in product management.

EVAN: Yes.

CHAD: So there's some of the issues with crowdsourcing and pros and cons. The other thing that comes up, and I think you have a collection of tools that are addressing prototype work. As product managers, depending what industry we're in, this prototype term gets thrown around in very different ways. I'm using it in the context of design thinking, where we come up with what we think might be a market we need to serve, we start understanding the consumers in that market better, we start doing some really rough, quick prototypes to iterate our understanding with them about what we have, if it works or not, right? At some point, that prototype kind of evolves to something that might actually become preproduction, premanufacturing and then volume manufacturing. What kind of tools do you include and address about this early prototyping work?

[15:23]

EVAN: I think that's an absolutely critical part of a lot of product development and design and even for the crowdsourcing and crowdfunding you often need to have a prototype to get crowdfunding. You can't just have made it up. So one of the tools that I looked at in there, and it's kind of more conceptual in the sense of a tool, it's hackerspaces, makerspaces, tech shops, fab labs, all those different types of places where, as a product manager and developer, if you have a new idea, what you don't want to do is spend \$50-100,000 buying a machine to produce it in a good quality form to actually have a nice prototype, because you may as well spend that money outsourcing that work to someone else to do it for you who's got that machine. The way to drive that price down is really hackerspace, makerspaces. What hackerspaces and makerspaces are and usually offer are usually a collection of machines, C&C mills, 3D printers, lathes, stuff like that, even in a lot of them you get high quality software to design your prototype. This is really a big innovation driver and risk reducer for product managers and developers who don't have those specific tools. So for like \$100/month, you're able to go along to a hackerspace or a makerspace and prototype your idea for merely the cost of your time and the resources and materials that you need. I think that's an important tool that's developed recently around allowing people to gain access to tools that they need to prototype without having to spend a lot of money. I think that's a really important tool for creating prototypes and something people often overlook. The other big part of it that people often overlook is the expertise that exists in these hackerspaces. So going along, it's often a community where you can tap into the people around you and understand, okay, I'm trying to design it like this, have you got any pointers for me? You can get a lot of that fantastic feedback and help even if that design-led thinking stage, so people around you on the benches can be some of your initial customers and are you interested in this and you're in a community there that can achieve so much more than when you're on your own.

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CHAD: That's a great way of thinking of it, that the two things that those kind of spaces give us is really inexpensive access to sophisticated tools for prototyping work and people who might provide some of the insights for what it is we're trying to innovate. Like you said, these people that show up to makerspaces often they have deep engineering backgrounds and they have a lot of knowledge. They also might represent our customers that give us some insights on what products might be.

EVAN: Exactly. And like I said, the real reason behind all these chapters, crowdsourcing, everything like that, so that we don't lose the bigger picture, is really about managing risk. So if we go back to crowdsourcing, it's about instead of you investing a huge amount of money and time on a single idea, you may have the opportunity to get a lot of ideas, which reduces your risk. With this one, it's about, instead of investing a huge amount of money in a single machine, you now have access to multiple machines for a small fee and you've then again reduced that risk.

[18:36]

CHAD: And that technology changes over so quickly, why bother buying it if you can use resources of the makerspace that they have a larger community, they're incentivized to help keep their technology up to date.

EVAN: Exactly.

CHAD: I have a quick fun story to tell you that I think you might find interesting. I talked about this back in my episode 025 that I did at [www.everydayinnovator.com/025](http://www.everydayinnovator.com/025) and it was a guy I met, he happened to be working in the office where I was renting some space for a while, and he was the CEO of a golf training company. So they make aids for golfers. They start with the PGA pro tour here in America and they make aids for them to do a better job golfing, better job putting, better job driving, whatever the case is. I was just talking about what I do, and he goes, "Oh, I have a product problem." He had these two pieces of plastic lying on the floor of his office, and said, "I've got to find a way to just get these to slide next to each other and be able to make it inexpensively. Could you help with that?" I'm like, "Well, I'm not really a physical product sort of guy, but I have access to a small design team and we'll see if we can come up with some prototypes for you." So I took it to them, had the team, there were 7 people available, had them break up into two pairs and one group of three and they all just churned out quick prototypes on a 3D printer and we had four prototypes I brought back to him. His initial idea, he was going to, like he has in the past, get molds made and ideally find something he could extrude, since that's an inexpensive way to get something made, and one of the prototypes he looked at and went, "This is really good. Do you think we could just print these instead of having to go to molds?" And so he had everything just 3D printed instead and using that prototype tool for the prototyping options, became what was actually manufactured also.

EVAN: It's really interesting taking that approach. It was something that may not have been viable a while ago, but HP and a few other companies now are putting 3D printers that are now becoming so fast and printing objects so quickly that for some products now it may or may not make so much sense to go to injection molding or other typical manufacturing processes, so it's a really interesting point, actually.

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CHAD: It's changed quickly. The funnest part about the story was my 7 designers, the oldest one at the time was 12 years old. It was just a little class I was teaching and the kids were great and they did all the work and it was pretty cool.

EVAN: That's awesome.

CHAD: So we have tools and making use of things that are already there. The makerspace and hackerspace is really smart. What are some other tools that are wrapped up in this?

[21:18]

EVAN: So some other tools, again, it's...I'm focusing on that low-risk approach. One of the tools I really like in this book is the one on how do we make choices around innovation. I know this has been one of the chapters that has been discussed quite a lot in the book, on the behavioral innovation. Again, it's kind of more conceptual than physical. It looks at really, how do we make our choices around innovation and how are they influenced by our biases, by our preconceptions, by all these different factors that make us human beings. I think this is something that is really important that is often overlooked in the product development and product management. It's the decisions we make and how good they are. So what I wanted to do in this chapter was I wanted to push forward a field that really hasn't seemed to have gone anywhere and that's behavioral innovation. What it is is it's an amalgamation of behavior economics, which is an extremely important and hot topic at the moment, and innovation, which is obviously very hot. What it does, it looks at combining the two to better understand how do our biases and heuristics affect our decision making when it comes to innovation. The specific focus I take in this chapter is in particular around funding, around investing time and energy into the different innovative activities—new products, new services and everything. I think it's a really interesting chapter because I would claim it's the first time it's appeared in a book, so it's the first time you actually see these ideas collected in one place beyond a few sort of white papers, blog posts and simple things like that. I wanted to collect the material that was out there and put it in one place and really throw it out there and throw down the gauntlet and say, "Look, here's this amazing field that's critically important, let's give it more attention." That was kind of my objective with that chapter, as well, to bring it to the forefront that when we make decisions around innovation and product development and product management, it's really those decisions that are critical, so how can we make better decisions? I think that's an extremely important tool for us to drive better decisions, to lower the risk, and to make sure more of our products are successful simply because we're choosing the right ones.

CHAD: Yeah, and in that, as you call it, the behavioral innovation, and talking about the biases, there has been more written in this last year that's popped up on my radar about the cognitive biases involved in innovation and that we all see things through our lens of experience that clouds our decision making. Do you have an example of how that impacts the innovation of a project?

EVAN: Absolutely. One of the biggest ones is the sunk sum cost fallacy. It's really where we invest effort and time into something and so as it starts failing, we feel it necessary to invest even more effort and time into it. It's really throwing good money after bad. It's something that's quite challenging. I give some solutions around what I think you can do to get around that in my book, but the examples are everywhere of companies that have started developing a product, it hasn't shown its promises it should have, but because peoples' reputations are on the line, and even if there are stage gate processes with

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teeth to say this should be killed, people can be creative and find a way to keep it alive. This is I think one of the big challenges, something like that. There are quite a few other ones that I examine in the chapter. Things like herding mentalities, where we tend to follow the herd without productive development and look at what's happening around us and either don't pay enough attention, which is what Nokia and Blackberry did, or simply follow the herd blindly over the cliff of insanity and just fall down without products and develop things that just don't make any sense instead of questioning why we're doing what we're doing. Really, I think from a company perspective this is critical. We might think as individual product developers that's fine, but when you have the politics and a large corporation around and these decisions are being made, we need to understand how we can make them better because often people in large companies need to develop products around a strategy that's given to them and if that strategy is poorly formulated and poorly decided upon based on reasons that aren't good, then I think that's something that it doesn't matter how good a process you've got, it's your garbage in, garbage out all over again.

[25:47]

CHAD: Yeah, it's a really good point. We often have strategy misalignments between the organization's strategy and the objectives and what we see as the innovation strategy and how we're approaching innovation and we may think we have those things lined up but when it actually comes to putting barriers in place that erode our innovation efforts, we might just recognize that we have some alignment issues there.

EVAN: Exactly. That's the big one. It's like taking a step back and looking at the bigger picture. We might be the best product developers on the planet but if our emotions and if the decision processes are bad in terms of the human side of it, not the protocol side of it, then you can forget everything you've done.

CHAD: And that herding mentality, that's a fine line. I tend to err on the side of let's understand our customers deeply and find out what their unmet needs are and try to do something that others aren't and not be misled by what others have done, but your Blackberry example's a good one of if we don't pay attention to where the market is heading at the same time we might miss some opportunities there, but if we're just in the business of copying what everyone else is doing, we're not going to really have anything that differentiates ourselves to the marketplace either.

EVAN: Exactly. And there's been enough studies that have demonstrated that companies that attempt to do fundamentally new products, disruptive innovation, things like that, are more profitable and outperform their peers on the stock market.

CHAD: Yeah. Apple is really interesting to me. At some point, Apple was the cool company and you were one of the cool kids if you had the Apple device. Now they're grown up into the large, what looks like the slow-moving company, and I'm not even sure where they're going in terms of the herd anymore. Interesting to me. So we've talked through a few tools so far together, looked at some crowdsourcing ideas and platforms to support that, both on the funding side and the idea generation side and issues with that, including just the number of ideas we might get and how we manage that going on. Prototyping tools, hackerspaces, makerspaces—really brilliant uses of those to help us really inexpensively approach prototyping. And behavioral innovation, revolving around our biases and decision making. What is another tool we should highlight from the book?

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EVAN: I think another important tool that we should definitely consider is probably heading toward the end of the chapter and this one I'd like to take up simply because it's a different style. It's more around a business model of innovation. As product developers and product managers, we tend to simply focus on, well, not simply. We tend to focus on developing new products and services. However, what we often need to consider is the business model these products and services are embedded in. Is that business model innovative, is that business model going to product something better or have we simply pulled it off the shelf? What I look at in one of my later chapters is this software as a service paradigm. I call it X is a service, because really it can be applied to a lot of things nowadays. It starts with software as a service, you've got hardware as a service, infrastructure as a service, platform is a service, and I asked myself and I ask the reader in the book, where else will this head? For us as product developers in different areas, what can we take away from this? I look at two really exciting areas, which is medicine is a service and manufacturing is a service. It explores that idea of what could that mean. Doing something as this service, it really has the hallmarks of a few important things. Those are: ubiquity, so you can tap into it almost wherever you are; scalability, so you can scale it up as needed; elasticity, so you can, depending on the demand, you can shrink it or increase it; and a few other factors like that. It's really looking at a few of the industries where these characteristics didn't exist and watching them enter these industries and also challenging the reader to say, "Look, this is happening in these industries that weren't thought of as being industries where you could simply produce a one-off item, for example, in manufacturing at the price and ability that you could if you ordered 100,000 of them. Or medicine, can we drive down the cost and just have that on-demand as we need?" So looking at your industry, challenging the reader, your product or service, can you offer it in this new fashion, this new paradigm? Again, the focus of the book is about reducing risk and lowering that threshold to innovate so that the idea around this as a service is we want to lower the risk to our customers because we're lowering the price and commitment to them, but it's also, look at the platforms out there, the tools for you to offer your service or product in a simple way, taking advantage perhaps of manufacturing as a service, taking advantage of software as a service and scaling up on someone else's existing infrastructure your ideas and services you want to test. I think that's a really important one that people may not think of quickly. They might think, well, I've got to do all this work myself. You don't. You can either tap into the existing infrastructure and use this business model, or you can look at using this business model yourself to make your customers decision as to whether they're going to use your service is not an easy one because it's quite cheap, it's low risk, it's easy for them to test it and scale it up and down. I think that's an important tool around the business model innovation as well that product developers and product managers should be aware of.

[31:15]

CHAD: I think there's opportunities across the spectrum in terms of a product's life where business model innovation is important, but it would seem like this would be something that ideally you would want to consider first. What is our business model, how are we going to generate revenue from this, and then let that drive the actual construction of the revenue. Like you shared, software as a service is very different in its architecture than a traditional stand-alone system or client-server type of architecture.

EVAN: Exactly.

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CHAD: Very different business models would come out of it.

EVAN: I think that's where I want the reader and what I do different to everyone else in taking that model and saying, look, people are applying it in medicine, people are applying it in manufacturing. Your industry, how can you apply it and drive a fundamental revolution in the way your products and services are delivered and offered?

CHAD: Yeah. I wasn't sure that Microsoft was going to be able to make that change, as software as a service was getting so dominant, but they seem to be making the transition with Windows10, which had been provided for free, at least for a period of time. Then they moved Office to a cloud configuration and they're taking those steps. I didn't think they would get there just because it's such a different economic model of taking small amounts of money over time as opposed to these larger chunks that come in at a more predictable pace.

EVAN: But I think they see the benefit for consumers, it's easier, and like I said, I agree with you. It was an interesting development. We're seeing a lot of interesting innovations coming out of Microsoft. Everything from HoloLens to a lot of the VR activities. So they are, it's not totally surprising. I don't think they've lost their innovation mojo.

CHAD: I don't think so either. They've kind of become the new cool kids on the block in some respects.

EVAN: Yeah.

CHAD: We'll see what ends up happening between the big guys of Microsoft and Google and Apple and where we are in a few years. It will be very interesting indeed. As listeners know, I always love an innovation quote. I asked for you to share one with us and tell us what it means to you.

EVAN: So my innovation quote I have today is something that really touches base and ties into a lot of the topics about low-risk innovation and there's no need to be really risky when innovating. It is, "There is no need to innovate innovation. There exist enough disruptive innovations just waiting to be assembled." That's something that ties back to Thomas Edison and the way he innovated. He just said you need a good imagination and a pile of junk. I really believe that's true. There's a concept for it called technology brokering and that's where I hope my book also makes a contribution in helping people understand how can we simply take the world around us and use it to innovate and inspire us instead of thinking that we need to go back to some fundamental research and a scientist in a lab fundamentally doing something different. I think there's enough combinations that can be made out of the existing products that exist in the world and make something very disruptive and very innovative. I think there's a lot to be said about that and a lot of benefit there. I think it really focuses on my idea of minimizing that risk, so just finding off the shelf products, putting them together and creating disruptive new ideas. So it ties in quite well with my book. It was actually a sentence that unfortunately got cut from the final version, but it's something that was kind of more a model I've got in my head that we don't need to sit down and consider the universe when we're trying to innovate. That's not necessary. We can really do disruptive, amazing things with what's around us.

[34:55]

CHAD: Yeah, sometimes it's just a matter of looking at it from a different perspective, a different lens.

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EVAN: It ties exactly into what you said before about design-led thinking and finding unmet needs and desires and stuff like that. People talk about the iPhone—it doesn't fit Clayton Christensen's perfect mold of a disruptive innovation, but in my eyes, in any definition of disruption that I would have, it should be one of the disruptive forces of this world. I think it's a good example of wholly good technologies that were taken off the shelf, put together in a product in a clever way, that had a massive impact.

CHAD: That's something Apple's particularly good at. They do do their own research and development but they are masters at taking what exists and packaging it in a very appealing design that provides value to us.

EVAN: Exactly.

CHAD: It illustrates well your example you don't have to look around much. Thanks so much for sharing that quote and all the information on the tools from your book. I am anxious to look through the book in more detail. Can you tell the Everyday Innovators listening how to find out about your book and just more about the work you do?

EVAN: The book itself, there's a website for it, [www.innovationtoolsbook.com](http://www.innovationtoolsbook.com) but if you want to keep up to date, I've got a Facebook page, innovationtoolsbook, you can also follow me on Twitter, where I talk every now and then about innovation and innovation tools. About the book, I put up tweets about it but mostly I'll keep you up to date about the important technology events around the world that I think are out there. My Twitter handle is #EShellshear. Otherwise, send me a tweet, connect with me on LinkedIn, get in touch, post something on the Facebook page, send me a message. I'm more than happy to answer questions. If people who grab the book and you want to explore it in further depth, I really enjoy that. I really enjoy sort of exchanging the ideas with the readers and seeing where they can take it. The book should serve as a platform for the readers to build something amazing upon, so I'm always happy to discuss those things with people and to see what type of successes you can make out of these tools and then support that as well.

CHAD: It's gotten a number of good reviews on Amazon and I appreciate people taking the time to share those reviews that this is a helpful resource. I will have those links, Evan, that you mentioned, for everyone listening. They will be on the show notes for this episode to make it easy for you to find the book page and the Facebook page and Twitter handle EShellshear and your LinkedIn profile, too. Evan, thank you so much for taking time and talking about your new book.

EVAN: It was an absolute pleasure. I look forward to joining you on the show again.

CHAD: Thanks for listening. Please tell other product managers and innovators about this podcast. I make that easy. Just go to the show notes for the summary of the discussion with Evan at [www.theeverydayinnovator.com/113](http://www.theeverydayinnovator.com/113). You'll find the links at the top of the page to share this episode on your favorite social media site. Also, from that same page you can download the Product Mastery Roadmap that shows you how to gain influence by going from product manager to product master. Again, that's [www.theeverydayinnovator.com/113](http://www.theeverydayinnovator.com/113). Keep innovating!