

# The Top-10 Tools & Insights

for  
Product Managers and Innovators  
from the

# First 100+ Interviews

---



**10. Smoke Test.** Startups to large corporations are testing ideas with customers before building products. A smoke test is a public facing description of your product with a mechanism for capturing opinion, feedback, or investment. Use it to assess or even build a market before you invest in building product. Think American Idol. For example, you might create a website featuring your product concept and offer it for sale (before you build it). Kickstarter is the ultimate smoke test to measure interest in a product concept and get funding before development begins. [Hear details in the interview with Andrew Warner, founder of Mixergy.](#)

**9. Idea Generation.** Create more concepts for new products by asking employees and partners for their ideas. Structured sessions can quickly generate new ideas for products and features. The ideas are then synthesized, filtered, and selected, choosing the best to develop as products. Geoff Peters shares the system he used at non-profit Compassion International that led to *Water of Life*. During an innovation retreat, employees created 1200 ideas, which were synthesized and filtered to 35 product concepts and then ranked for development. [Hear Geoff describe the process.](#) BONUS – listen to [how ideas are prioritized.](#)

**8. Design Thinking.** Connecting with customers to deeply understand a problem and what they value is where Design Thinking begins. Moving through the five steps of Empathize Define, Ideate, Prototype, and Test, this is a customer-focused innovation methodology that works. Ethan Appleby used it to win a weekend hackathon and then founded a startup with the hackathon seed money. [Hear how to apply Design Thinking.](#) BONUS – Design Thinking at [IDEO and Bose.](#)

**7. Jobs-To-Be-Done.** Tony Ulwick and Clayton Christensen created JTBD for identifying the “job” customers “hire” a product to do. It involves six processes that begin with a job map to understand the customers’ job-to-be-done and ends with conceptualized new products to address the most valuable unmet needs. [Hear Tony describe the details.](#) BONUS – [Outcome Driven Innovation](#) that is JTBD put into action and [JTBD examples](#)

**6. Voice of the Customer.** VOC is customer research to gather and understand customer needs. It is not simply asking what customers want, but a tool for uncovering unmet needs. You start with (1) a detailed list of customers’ wants and needs, (2) expressed in the customers’ own words, (3) organized into a hierarchy, and (4) prioritized by the customer. Hear one of the original practitioners of VOC, [Gerry Katz describe how to use it.](#)

**5. Lean and the Lean Canvas.** Lean, aka Lean Startup, is a tool that maximizes quickly learning about the riskiest aspects in product concepts. Small, fast experiments are run to test hypotheses and understand what customers want. The Lean Canvas is a valuable one-page tool to capture the findings in a business-case fashion for a product concept. [Hear Ash Maurya explain these tools.](#) BONUS – [scaling Lean](#) and [going faster with Lean](#).

**4. VOC – Prototype – Build – Launch.** Sometimes it's advantageous to use a combination of tools. Bill Ott puts together many of the insights covered in other interviews into one cohesive product journey – that of updating a commercial carpet cleaner. The steps included (1) identifying customer needs, (2) using Voice of the Customer research to uncover and prioritize needs, (3) navigating the Lean cycle of Build, Measure, and Learn, and (4) launching successfully. [This journey will connect many product management pieces for you.](#)

**3. Innovation Labs that Work.** Corporations are eager to be more innovative but struggle to make it happen. A popular approach is to create or join an innovation lab. It doesn't always work as intended, but it is working well for GE Appliances in the form of FirstBuild. One of their keys to success is the creation of an open community where anyone can submit and develop ideas as well as contribute to engineering solutions. [Don't miss this interview if you are creating an innovation lab.](#) BONUS – [building innovation capabilities at a large organization.](#)

**2. The Elevator Pitch.** A key skill that separates good from great product managers is the ability to effectively and persuasively pitch their ideas to peers and executive leaders. Crafting elevator pitches builds this ability. Begin by understanding the interests of your audience. Then frame your message in a surprising way that makes them respond in a "tell me more" manner. Before making your pitch, consider what questions you will likely be asked. Also, plan the outcome you want and the action you will ask for. [Pitch master Chris Westfall tells you how to be more persuasive.](#) BONUS – [speak with confidence.](#)

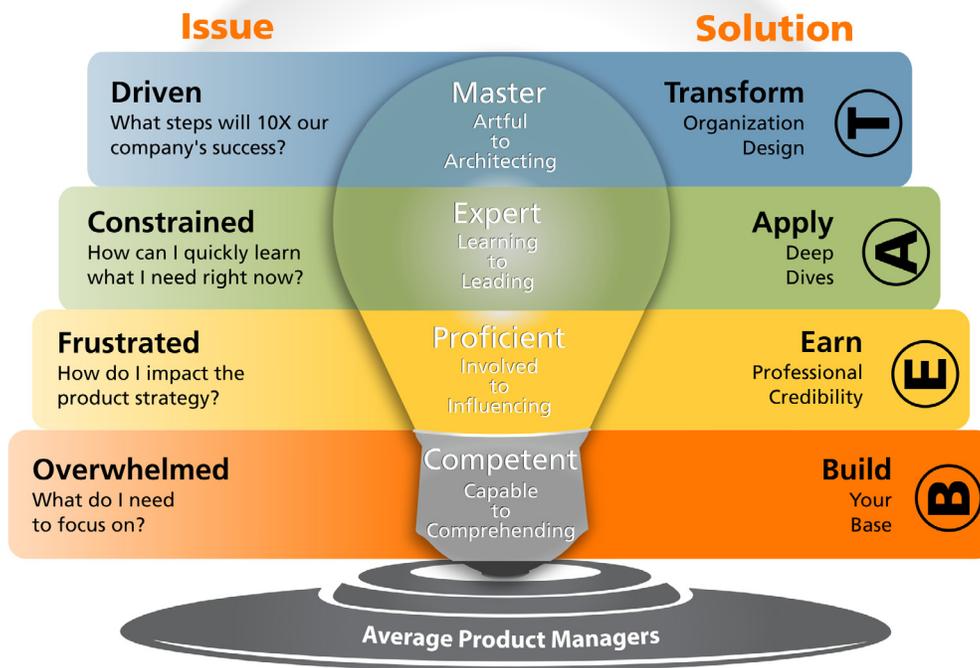
**1. Organization Design Blueprint.** As an effective product manager or innovator, you know how to build better products. You also have unique insights about your organization along with unique influence. This equips you to transition from building better products to building a better organization. Product managers can move to senior leadership by using the organization design blueprint and being part of organizational improvement. [Hear John Latham share how you can make this move by becoming an organization designer.](#) BONUS – [why product managers should be organization designers.](#)

## Much More from the 100+ Interviews

All of the interviews are organized by the Product Mastery roadmap to help you BEAT the competition. Use it to gain the knowledge and influence necessary to become a Product Master who consistently BEATS the competition.

The roadmap contains 4 levels:

1. **B**uild your base – know what to focus on at any moment.
2. **E**arn professional certification – gain confidence and knowledge to impact strategy.
3. **A**pply deep dives – make the transition to leadership with hard and soft skills.
1. **T**ransform the organization – go from building better products to building a better organization.



Find valuable discussions with knowledgeable practitioners and savvy insiders for each of the four levels of the roadmap to BEAT the competition by going to

[www.TheEverydayInnovator.com](http://www.TheEverydayInnovator.com)