

The most significant change we made regarding the MVP of our product was the switch from a two-sided product (CSMs and the customer) to a one-sided product (CSMs only) and back to a two-sided product. The initial change to a one-sided product was done in an effort to ensure we were holding ourselves to the standard of making our MVP "minimal", using what we began to call the "Uber model" (where Uber initially made the app only available to riders, not drivers). We had plans to first create a great project management tool for CSMs and later add a customer-facing module in vNext. However, through our testing, we learned there was like not enough value added in a one-sided product to gain significant user adoption. Learning that the CSM's main unmet job to be done wasn't necessarily "keep track of my own tasks" but instead "make sure the customer does what they are supposed to do", it pushed us back to the two-sided product for our MVP.

My most significant learning from this semester (and this may seem basic, but I came in with near-zero PM knowledge) was that, at its core, a great product is **not** a compilation of cool features; it is a solution to a very real problem that the user has in their life, and any features added to the product are just a means to achieving that end solution. Knowing the pain points inside and out (and continuously iterating on your solutions to them with your customers) helps you understand what sort of tradeoffs your customers are OK with.

In terms of the discovery process, I think our team did a great job not taking the words that customers were saying verbatim, and instead digging in and prodding for more information. A specific example came when a CSM, seeing a wireframe of our one-sided (CSM-only) product, stated "Yeah, this could be helpful...", with her voice trailing off a bit. If we had only paid attention (and trusted) the words she was saying, we would have left it at that and gone and made a one-sided MVP. However, we prodded for more information, and we eventually got to "I'm not sure how much I would use something like this." That is a far cry from her initial response of "this could be helpful"! I learned to pay just as much attention to *how* customers say something as *what* they say.

Our biggest challenge in discovery came simply from, as a B2B product, finding end users with which to perform interviews and lo-fi tests. Finding CSMs that were willing not only to speak with us but to let us come to their offices and see the tools that they are currently using often took quite a while and made iterating difficult. For example, when we developed a new lo-fi test, it could sometimes take a few weeks just to get it in front of end users. If I were to do this process again with a fairly specialized B2B product, I'd focus much more on gathering a list of potential customers up front, being more diligent about going to places where "our customers would already be" to establish this list of contacts (such as conferences, etc), and proactively scheduling meetings sprinkled throughout the semester, knowing that we will have some sort of interview or lo-fi test that will be valuable when the time comes.

On top of how best to gather user feedback on B2B products, my other key learning is that the discovery process is never "done". As customer needs and pain points change, a great product changes with them. This doesn't happen automatically-- a PM must maintain a close link to his

customers to notice when these needs are changing, as they may not be something that the customers ask for explicitly. The life cycle of the discovery process -- performing interviews, iterating on jobs to be done, returning to customers to perform tests -- lasts in perpetuity. Consider that job security for PMs :).

From a professional perspective, PM101 was very helpful not just in learning the fundamental tactics of how to do Product Management, but holistically how PMs may fit into a company based on how its people and processes are organized. I found it exciting that, from a career perspective, I was in full-on "networking mode" throughout the semester (I am looking to be a PM at a startup) while concurrently learning lessons in the PM101 classroom that helped me in that networking. With hindsight, it's easy for me to see how my coffee chats evolved over the last few months, as our guest speakers, PM101 panels, and readings have helped me have a much better idea understanding what to look for in the Product team of a potential employer. It's obvious to me now that Product is treated very differently depending on the company, and there are many ways to tease that out in an informal conversation (the two most impactful questions to me are "Who does the product team report to in the organization?" and "Where do priorities come from and how do decisions get made?").

Personally, I take the semester as a validation of the hypothesis that I am meant for Product Management. My Technical Services background has given me years of experience in user empathy, workflow understanding, and product design (especially for B2B products), and I didn't know until this semester how key these skills are to Product Management. As a result of this, I have much more confidence searching for PM jobs, and I'm excited to get out into the "real world" and put my skills to the test.