Product Strategy Essentials

How to Build Focused & Profitable Products
What products we’re talking about

Infoproducts (books, courses)

Productized consulting

Software
Layered Stacks

Remember that iOS 7 presentation, where strikingly flat layers were presented separately in perspective to demonstrate the sense of several dimensions? The layering technique is a powerful example of how decomposition makes the interface look really exciting. It borrows complexity and visual interest from top technology manufacturing giants.

Simple Screen Stack

This technique is very easy to implement.

Take one screen, convert it to smart object and position it in perspective on an angled device shot. Then duplicate it 2-3 times using “Smart Object via Copy” so that you can replace layer contents later and “detach” the copies from the screen surface with equal distance between each other.

Handy tip: use the keyboard arrows with the Shift key (which results in precise 10 px moves), and count the moves each time, like “four to the left, two to the top.”

Then create shadows between them. Shadows are subtle, blurred, dark silhouettes of the above layer, clipped on the layer underneath. Or you can use regular drop shadow style — if your perspective angle isn’t too dramatic. Just make sure all drop shadows are solid black in color and very subtle in opacity.

You can do the same thing without a device shot and it will still look great. It depends entirely on the context. The optimal number of screens to display is 3–4, a greater pack will look overwhelming and non-informative.

+6 interviews
Poor strategy is a recipe for disaster.
Why your product should exist

Audience + Pain

300x500 Method
Today you’ll learn how to...

Define your strategy
Apply your strategy
Deal with new features
Think large scale
Step #1

Define Your Strategy
Four pillars of product strategy

Audience
Goals
Tasks
Objects
Q1. Audience

Who is your ideal user (paying customer)?

Do you know them?

Do you like them?

Can they pay you?

Do you know how to reach them?
Q2. Goals

What goals is the user trying to achieve with your product?
I want to write a book...

(because then I can) build authority
(because then I can) have better clients
(because then I can) make more money
(because then I can) travel more
Q3. Tasks

What primary tasks does the user perform daily with the help of your product?
Classify tasks by type

Analytical
Proactive
Reactive
Q4. Objects

What objects (entities, items) do users create and manage while performing their tasks?
Use the real language of your customers to describe product strategy.
Step #2

Apply Your Strategy
In your sales copy

Address the audience

Appeal to their big goals

Describe their tasks
In your product design

Facilitate the important tasks

Focus on one task at a time

Carefully manage the important objects
In books & courses

Organize your book as a sequence of key tasks

Focus on one task per chapter

Be consistent with language, give definitions & make a glossary
In software products

Focus on streamlining just a few important tasks

Make it one important task per screen

Build your navigation around objects
“Find out what people like, and make your strengths stronger. Because that’s what makes people love a product — rather than a product that’s just okay in every regard.”

— Ankur Nagpal, the founder of Teachable
So what did I do wrong with my first book?

Vague audience
Vague goals
Vague tasks
Step #3

Deal with New Features
Feature creep can ruin your product.
Shubunkin Goldfish

Price: £2 each
New fish implications

20 gallons of water for the first fish, 10 gallons for each additional fish

Like to dig out plants

Bully other kinds of fish

Need daily maintenance
New feature implications

Strategy
Marketing and sales
Support
Usability
“My job is saying ‘no’ a lot. You can’t make a tool that satisfies everyone. And if you try, it’s going to be a terrible tool.”

— Peldi, the founder of Balsamiq
Classic qualifying questions

Does this feature solve a real pain?

What are the development and support costs?

Can we build an integration instead?

What part of the existing user base will benefit from this immediately?
Product strategy questions

Does it serve your ideal audience — or does it expand it?

Does it serve the big goal — or does it add more goals?

Does it facilitate the important tasks — or does it add new tasks?

Does it breed new objects?
More goals and tasks don’t make a happy user.
Step #4

Think Large Scale
Nothing exists in isolation.
Simple product lineup

Free lead magnet (free course)
Entry-point purchase (book)
Main product (SaaS, consulting)
Advanced product lineup

- Free lead magnet (free course)
- Entry-point purchase (book)
- Medium-touch product (course, workshop, or consulting package)
- Main product (SaaS, consulting)
- Super-expensive “dream” product
Think of your personal strengths.
Meet Marie Poulin

Digital Strategy School (expensive course)

Doki (courseware)

Consulting business (helping clients build courses)
Content strategy

Mailing list setup
Free course
Blog & newsletter
Book
Podcast
Videos
Continue learning about product strategy with this free course

uibreakfast.com/ltvconf

The 1-Hour UI Audit
Focused strategy is a luxury you can afford.