

Twitter Thread by Shreyas Doshi



Shreyas Doshi

@shreyas



A B2B Product Management Story: on discovering problems that customers actually care about

Very visual story thread■■■

Destined to Fail

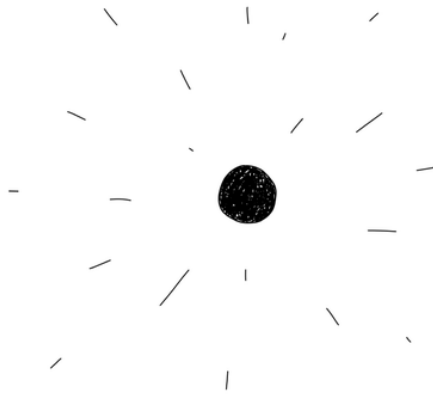
A B2B PRODUCT MANAGEMENT STORY

Story: Shreyas Doshi @shreyas

Artwork: Shaun Miller @shaunemiller

Our story starts with a new product idea

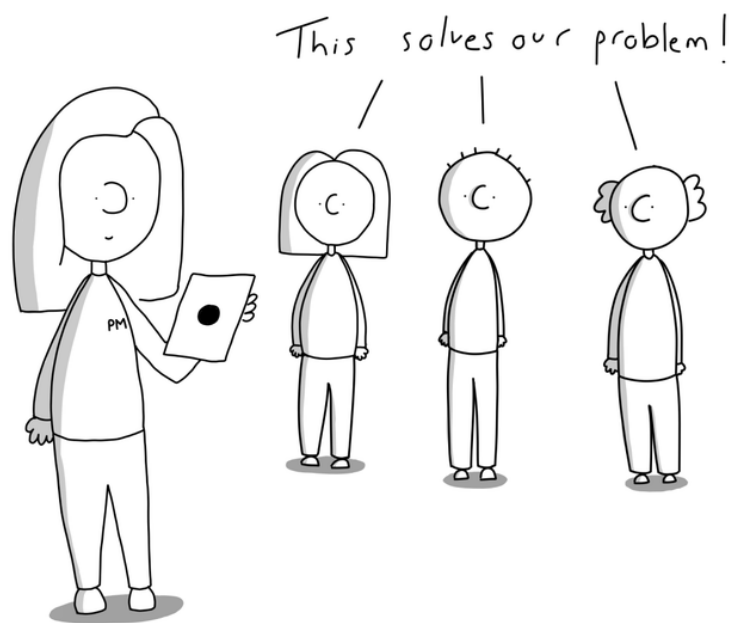
PM diligently talks to customers about whether this product will solve their problems



New product idea

Customers say yes!

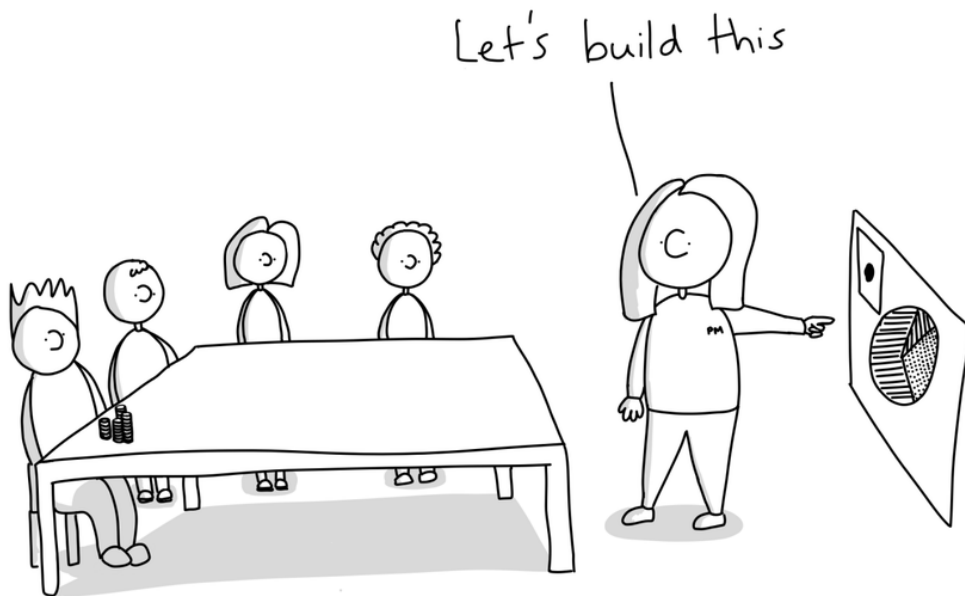
Customer interviews



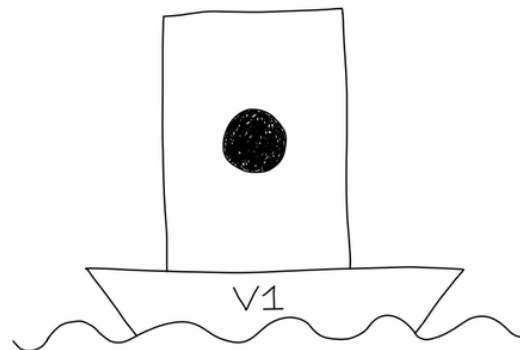
PM reports findings to the executive team

There's excitement

Staffing obtained ■■

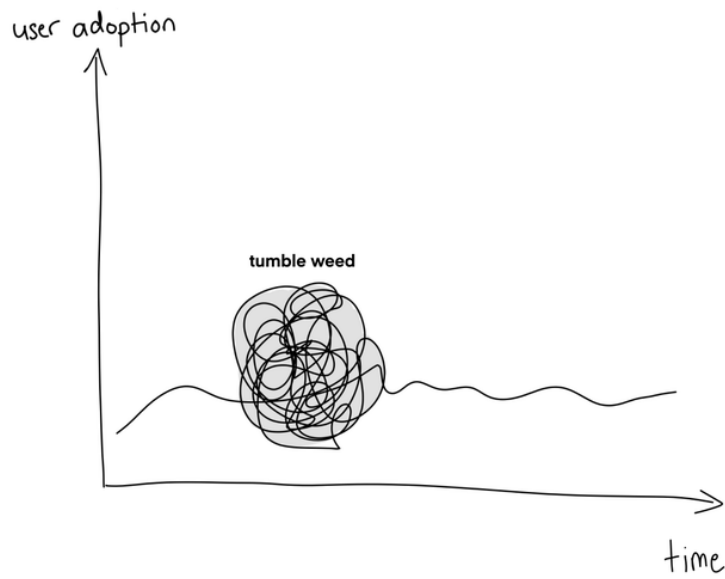


■ ■



First version ships

Hardly any customer adopts it



At the next product review:

PM directs attention towards positives:

"Here's what we've learnt"

Learnings usually include:

"Our MVP isn't sufficient. We need to make it easier to implement & adopt. We need features X, Y, Z"

MEMO

Why there's been no growth yet

A

B

C

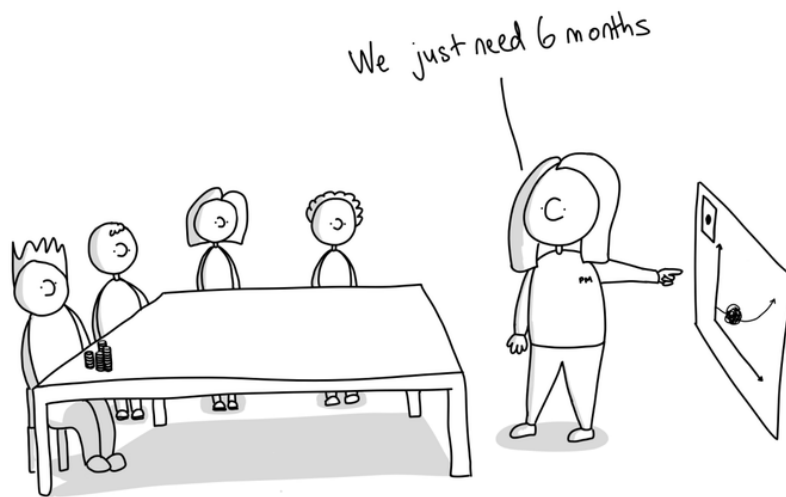
How we'll make it better

X

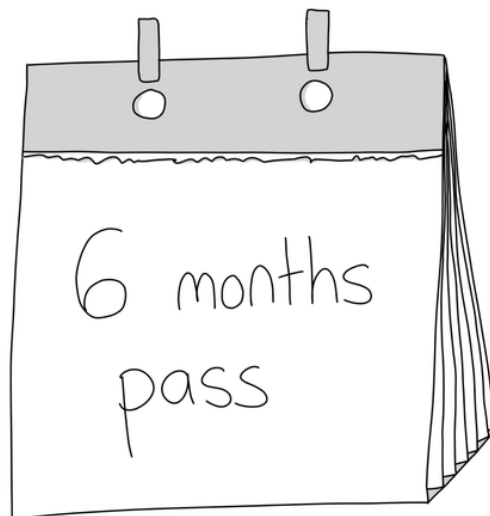
Y

Z

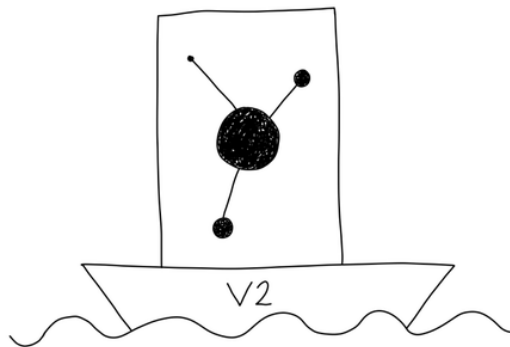
PM gets mandate to build said features



<https://t.co/t3lqjMDUkH>

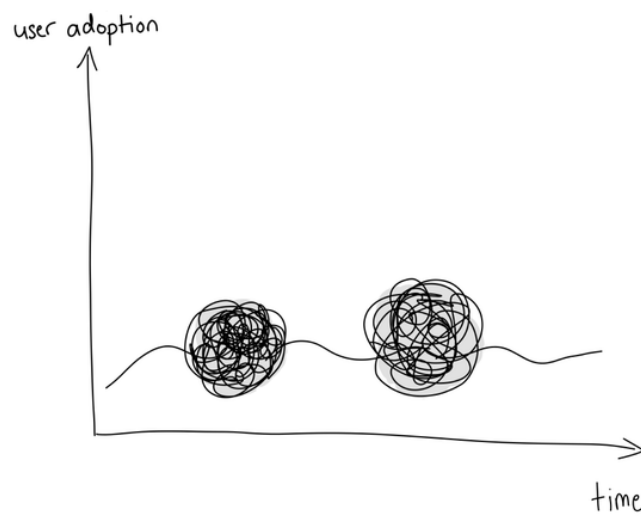


<https://t.co/Br3jhoc28P>



Second version ships

Adoption is still anemic■



At next product review:
Sales & Marketing start getting implicated

PM says:

"We know from talking to customers that we have the right product. We just need to improve our Go-To-Market strategy."

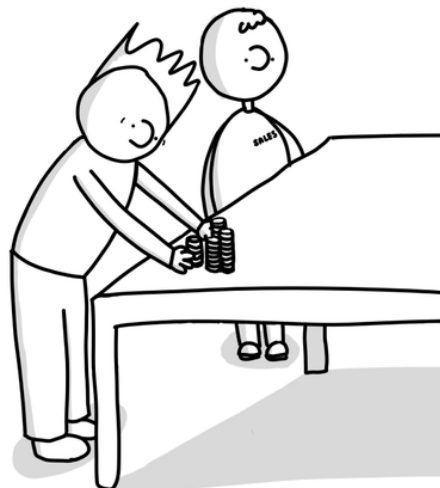


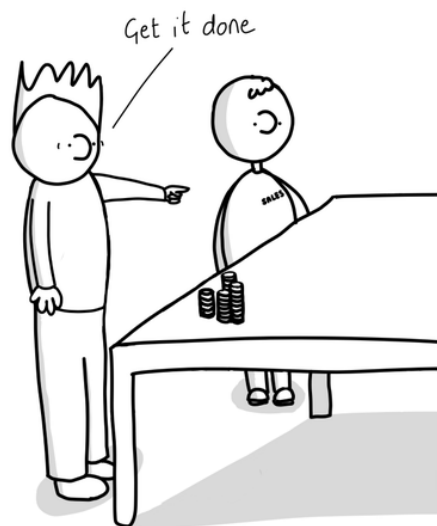
Executives & the PM are "pot-committed" at this point.

Ideas about how to better sell the product are discussed: reduce prices, cross-sell, bundle, email campaigns, re-organize the Sales team, etc.

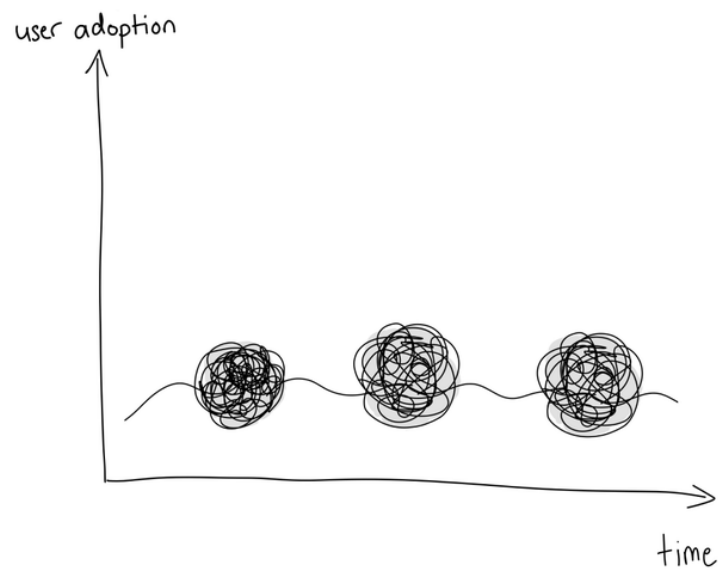
Changes are made.

Exec already feels pot committed





Still no growth■



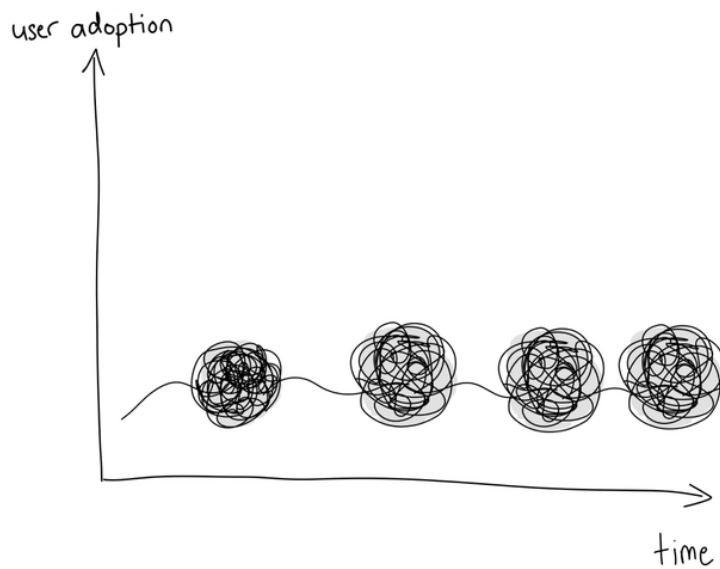
By this time, original PM has left the team

A new PM joins. Starts with a "customer listening tour" in first 90 days

Identifies some additional issues

Presents new findings & recommendations to the executive team

Gets mandate to execute on revised plan



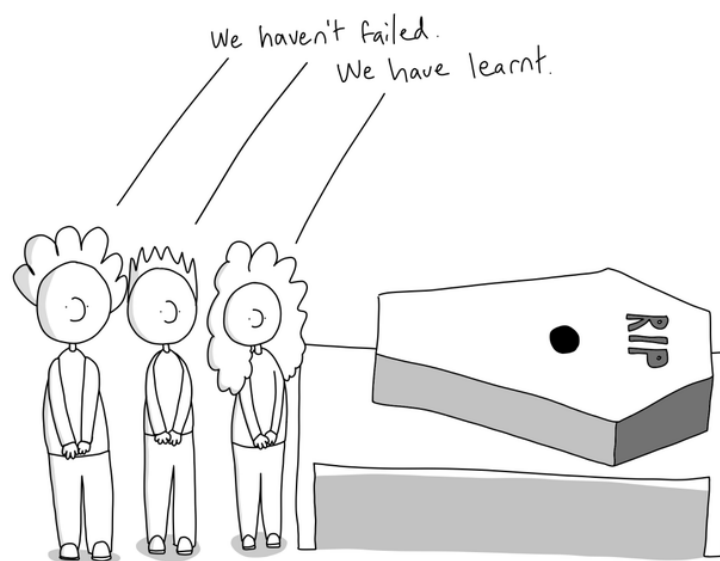
Ultimately:

Executive team decides to sunset the product

Learnings are captured and shared widely in the org

"We haven't failed, we have learnt"

Of course, Edison is quoted at some point



So, what really happened here?

Many possible reasons for this saga, but the most common ones:

(A) The product should not have been built in the first place

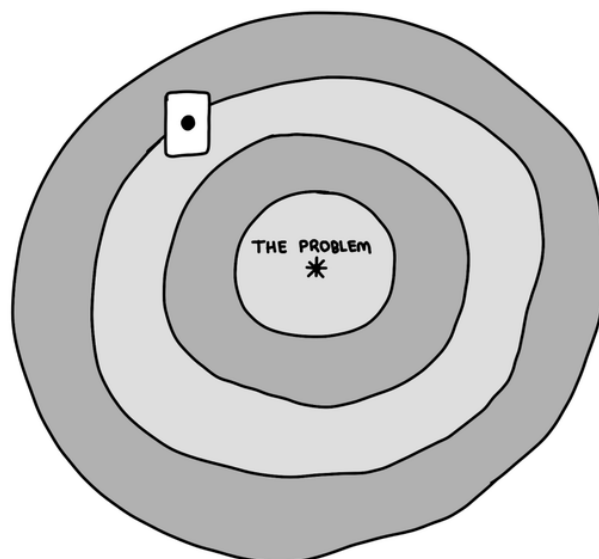
(B) The original product was ill-conceived & the later pivots had to inherit this original error

Let's look at (A) ■■

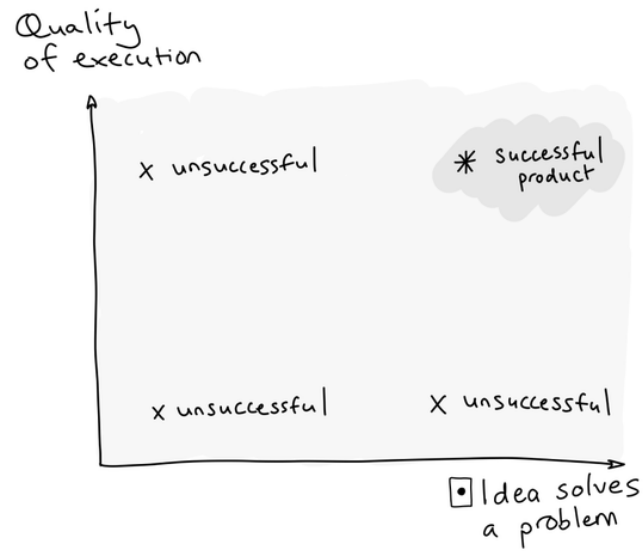


The product solved *a* problem

But not *the* problem

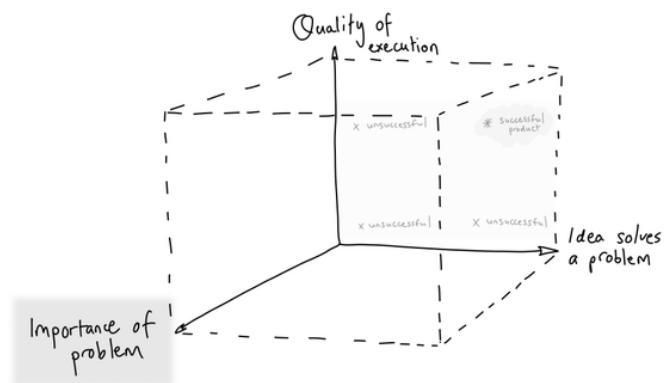


Often, product teams want to be in the top right quadrant



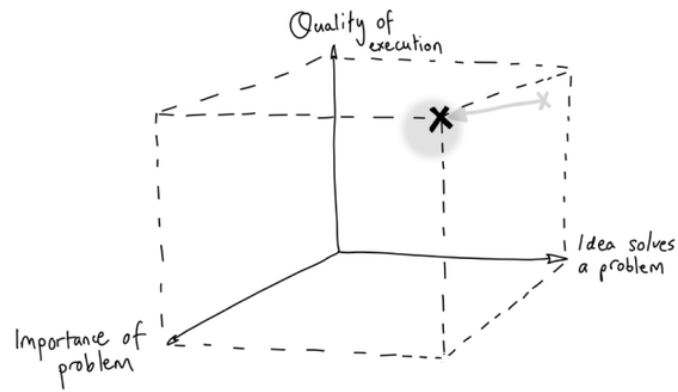
But, there's more to the puzzle

... But this model
assumes all problems
are equally important...
... there's a 3rd axis



We need to understand this

And remember it



The best products tackle the problems that matter most (and do it well!)

Daniel Kahneman said:

"Nothing in life is as important as you think it is, while you are thinking about it"

This is the Focusing Illusion.



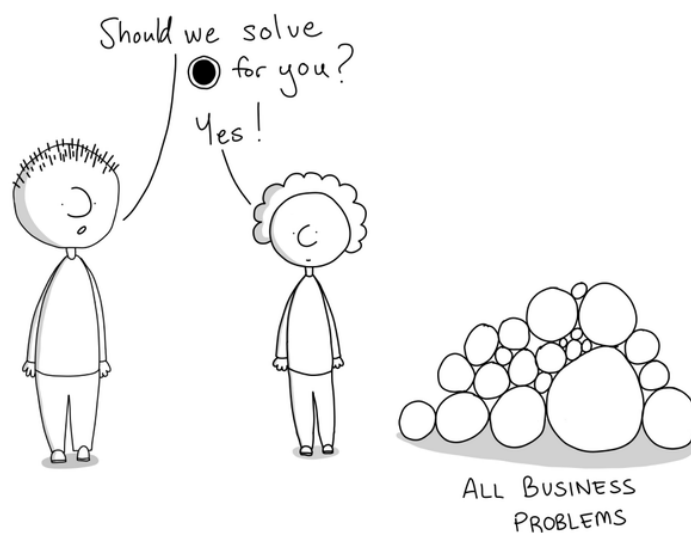
The Focusing Illusion, in business:

"Nothing in business is as important as it actually is, while you are talking about it."



When you talk to a customer about a specific problem, they will naturally “focus” on that problem, at the exclusion of other problems they (or their business overall) is facing.

With this focus comes a disproportionate emphasis on solving THAT specific problem.



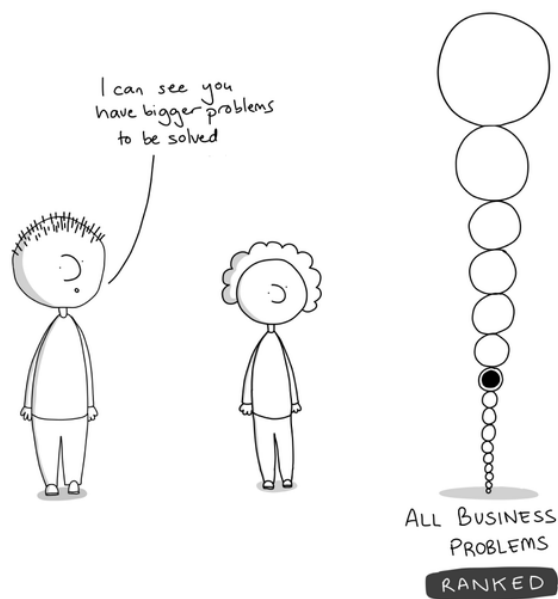
A good solution here:

Customer Problems Stack Rank (CPSR)

Ask the customer to stack rank the problem vs. the other problems they are trying to solve for their business & org.

Also get the CPSR from other personas involved: VP Support, VP Mktg...

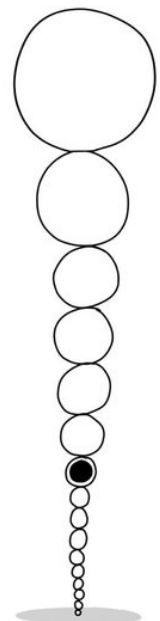
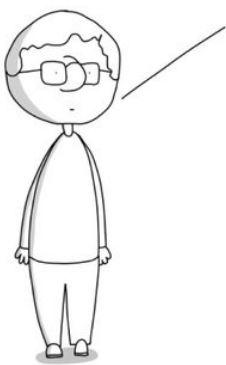
You are now closer to truth.



The lesson

So whether you're a PM, a product leader or an executive:

- ▶ Understand the Focussing Illusion
- ▶ Recognise its power
- ▶ Remind yourself that you aren't immune to it
- ▶ Use tools like the Customer Problems Stack Rank to help yourself and your customers combat the Focussing Illusion



Huge thanks to [@shaunemiller](#) for collaboration on this thread.

The excellent visuals are all Shaun.

Any mistakes are entirely mine.

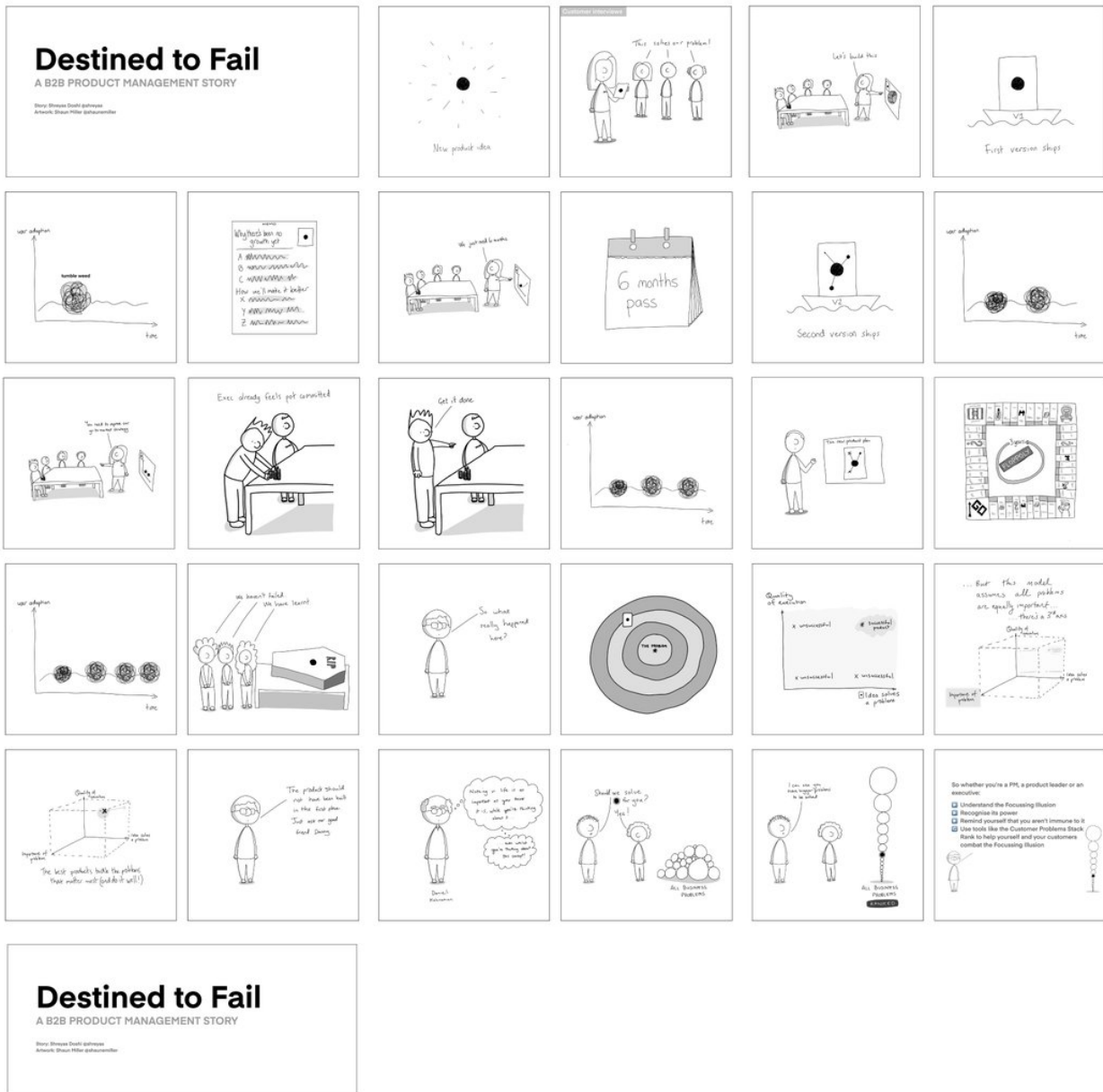
Consider following Shaun at:

Destined to Fail

A B2B PRODUCT MANAGEMENT STORY

Story: Shreyas Doshi @shreyas
Artwork: Shaun Miller @shaunemiller

B2B Product Management Story, in 1 tweet



Back to the top of this thread:

<https://t.co/HIAu8K8lxE>

A B2B Product Management Story: on discovering problems that customers actually care about

Very visual story thread \U0001f447\U0001f3fe [pic.twitter.com/SQKpmLtBGC](https://t.co/SQKpmLtBGC)

— Shreyas Doshi (@shreyas) March 28, 2021

Want more details on solutions?

Check out the original non-visual thread, from this tweet onwards:

<https://t.co/fmDQG4I9c5>

12/22

The focus of your early discussion was on the problem, solution space, & willingness to buy

But when the customer is FORCED to prioritize the implementation of your product vs. every other problem they are facing it is no longer a theoretical "would you use this?" exercise

— Shreyas Doshi (@shreyas) May 22, 2020

If your B2B product can consistently:

A) Prevent the buyer from getting fired, or

B) Help the buyer get promoted, or

C) Very directly earn them more revenue

you might be on to something big.

More tips ■■■

How will the buyer get promoted?

<https://t.co/mhzk2ixwtL>

In B2B product management, always ask:

"How can my product help the buyer get promoted in their job?"

There will seldom be a bullseye answer to that question, but it will often inspire more creativity and better feature prioritization. <https://t.co/CZ5zVbLKAu>

— Shreyas Doshi (@shreyas) May 7, 2020

A thread on thinking about B2B products

<https://t.co/SCHx45MoQ9>

A sensible null hypothesis for B2B products is that the customer doesn't really need your product, will not pay for it, and will not deploy or use it.

— Shreyas Doshi (@shreyas) June 11, 2020

Think like a marketer

<https://t.co/0TeeUVqNQZ>

One secret to becoming a world-class B2B product manager is to learn product marketing principles.

Think like a marketer *upfront* while defining the product & its target audience.

And if possible, get a strong product marketer who can partner with you on your product.

— Shreyas Doshi (@shreyas) [September 23, 2020](#)

Understand the competition

<https://t.co/2002Qt6p7K>

This is going to sound too obvious, but just hear me out:

B2B startups & product teams should take the time to understand their competitors.

Too many product folks don't do this & as a result go through a lot of pain.

Why does this happen & how to get this right?

[Thread](#) a great perspective on positioning vs narrative

— Shreyas Doshi (@shreyas) [July 17, 2020](#)

Be rigorous with segmentation

<https://t.co/HVMnmKLisD>

A good customer segmentation is worth a thousand strategy meetings.

— Shreyas Doshi (@shreyas) [March 7, 2021](#)

Be intentional about positioning

<https://t.co/sDs4G73LHR>

A few notes for B2B product ppl

1. The line btwn prod mgmt & prod mktg is blurring
2. Very imp't for B2B PMs to understand positioning (to devise prod strategy)
3. [Thread](#) a great perspective on positioning vs narrative
4. If u r a B2B PM, I'd recommend following [@aprildunford](#) <https://t.co/ZC5WHvjYhE>

— Shreyas Doshi (@shreyas) [August 4, 2020](#)

Probably the most important thing to remember about most B2B products

<https://t.co/v1rlvx5qsO>

Last but not least, remember this about B2B products:

For your customer, the chief alternative to your product is \U0001d62f\U0001d630\U0001d635 your most formidable competitor's product.

The default alternative is simply inaction.

And a close second is often a spreadsheet.

\U0001f642

— Shreyas Doshi (@shreyas) June 11, 2020

Working on B2B products at a product-focused company is fun for product people who get energized by business impact *and* want to build superb products

<https://t.co/WKNRbW4uty>

As a product person, almost nothing can match the fun of working on a B2B Product at a Product-Focused Company

B2B \u21d2 Much higher likelihood of success than Consumer

Product-Focused \u21d2 Everyone cares deeply about user experience \u21d2 You get to build a product you can be proud of

— Shreyas Doshi (@shreyas) October 3, 2020

The Focusing Illusion is one of 7 cognitive biases of product managers and product teams.

Check out this thread to learn about the other cognitive biases and increase odds of product success:

<https://t.co/ayOLSo6REr>

Why do smart product people & teams often build products with mediocre or no impact?

A cautionary thread of biases and fallacies we encounter when building products\U0001f447\U0001f3fe

1/10 pic.twitter.com/G32kWjE2EZ

— Shreyas Doshi (@shreyas) July 12, 2020

If we are talking about product success, it's important to recognize the role of the market.

A short thread exploring this:

<https://t.co/wPWFwCcoW1>

Convenient illusion:

Inputs + Outputs = Outcomes

Inconvenient reality:

(Inputs + Outputs) \xd7 Market = Outcomes

— Shreyas Doshi (@shreyas) August 10, 2020

Executing well on an important problem is a necessary but not sufficient condition for business impact. Should also have a rigorous strategy. You don't *have* to write it down, though it often does help align the team better.

A thread on product strategy:

<https://t.co/th9ciAKnik>

Product Strategy\u2014in 1 tweet.

What:

Rigorous treatment of where to play & how to win

Why:

Drastically improve odds of product success

Create org-wide clarity

Outlook:

3-5 years

Components:

Situation assessment

Target customers

Differentiation pillars

Roadmap

Brief action plan

— Shreyas Doshi (@shreyas) May 17, 2020