

September Event with John Mansour
Requirements and Positioning: Are They Really the Same?

By Greg Cohen

John Mansour, founder and CEO of ZIGZAG Marketing spoke at the September 7th, 2005 SVPMA meeting. He engaged the audience in a discussion of "Requirements and Positioning: Are They Really the Same?" Mr. Mansour showed how product managers can save time and energy during product planning.

The speaker first advised that when describing what's in your next release, don't describe features. Rather, discuss the reason why you added that feature since this is the reason people buy the product. Start with "why" you added the feature and end with "what" the feature does. For example, "we lower cost by reducing bandwidth needed to stream video." This is much more effective than saying "we reduce bandwidth" and forcing the customer to connect the dots as to why that is beneficial.

When evaluating successful positioning, John showed advertisements for a BlackBerry handheld – "hours away from the office, seconds from email" and a Fellowes paper shredder – "what's in your garbage could trash your credit rating." Both these statements get to heart of why you would use them, speaking to the problem being solved. For example, the Fellowes advertisement doesn't discuss capacity, or cross shred, or any of the technical features of a paper shredder. It simply focuses on a key problem their product addresses. Further, although shredders have been around for decades, Fellowes makes it relevant to the more recent concern of identify theft.

The speaker presented a concept called connecting the dots. Customer issues start at the top with a market trend, this in

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Ten Steps to Global Launch Success

By Karina Jensen

It's the night before the worldwide launch and you're wondering if you're ready to go global. A timely and successful launch can make a big difference in worldwide revenue, especially in the first, few months following a product introduction. A successful global launch increases market awareness, organizational efficiency, and sales results worldwide. This requires effective planning, communication, and education. In preparing for your launch, consider a global readiness check list to review key needs prior to the worldwide announcement.

1. Evaluate local market opportunities

In order to leverage local market opportunities, a pre-launch analysis of the competitive space and customer demand in key country markets is a necessity. Don't risk missing out on new opportunities to increase international revenue by avoiding a market check-up prior to the global launch. Existing and emerging markets around the world can offer hidden opportunities for expanding global market reach. In order to develop a revenue plan that supports global

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Letter from the President

Over this past year SVPMA has made tremendous progress. We have more than doubled the member base, held several great workshops, brought on high-profile sponsors such as Accept Software, and dramatically increased our website and job forum traffic. Along with this we have also had some excellent monthly events with high-visibility speakers from prominent companies (Google, Roxio, Garage Ventures and many more) talking on a variety of relevant and useful Product Management topics.

Our goal as an organization is to help Product Management professionals be more successful and satisfied with their jobs and careers. Over the course of the next year we want to continue to hold excellent and useful events and continue to increase the visibility and value of SVPMA to our members and to Silicon Valley.

If you have any ideas or suggestions for event topics, speakers, workshops or other activities you'd like to see please let us know!

I'd also like to encourage all members to get involved with SVPMA. It's a great way to further build your network and move your career forward. The experience gained from working with a team like the one that runs SVPMA will pay off for you for years to come.

I look forward to seeing you all at SVPMA events during the coming year.

Brian Lawley
President, SVPMA

Mark your Calendars!

Upcoming event speakers and Workshops:

- December 3rd, 2005 - Great Demo!- Demonstration of effectiveness
- December 7th, 2005 - Ray Martin, Asyst
- January 4th, 2006 - Barbara Nelson, Pragmatic Marketing
- February 1st, 2006 - Niti Agrawal, Stage4Solutions

For more details please go to www.svpma.org

SVPMA is an all volunteer non-profit association for Product Managers in Silicon Valley and around the San Francisco Bay area.

Our mission is

- To provide a forum to share day-to-day experiences and insights in Product Management
- To create a safe network of peers
- To promote research and education in Product Management

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- Education opportunities with industry experts to learn best practices

How to Run a Successful Beta Program: Part 2

By Brian Lawley

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In the last issue we covered setting appropriate goals that are concrete and measurable for your beta programs. In this issue we'll cover recruiting participants.

One of the biggest mistakes that I see companies make with beta programs is that they significantly underestimate how difficult it will be to get customers to sign up. Product teams are usually pretty enamored with their own products, and they assume that customers will be more than willing to participate. Sometimes this is the case, but oftentimes it takes much more work and planning to get things off the ground.

Your success at recruiting customers will depend on a number of factors, including what stage of the product lifecycle you are in (upgrade version, brand new product, etc.), how well known and prominent your company is and how popular your products are (Apple could probably find iPod beta testers pretty easily). Other factors will be how easy it is to find your target customers and how much effort and time you will be asking them to put in.

If you have an Enterprise software application from a completely unknown new startup company that will require the beta customers to go through a lengthy installation (or worse yet, could potentially affect their other mission-critical systems), you may have a difficult time recruiting. On the other hand, if you have a consumer application that takes little time and provides immediate benefits, you may find it easier to recruit.

Depending on all of these factors you will need to gauge what kind of recruiting program you need to do and how strong the incentives need to be. You may need to make personal phone calls and visits in order to convince customers to participate. Or you may be able to use email or even a form on your website.

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turn produces a business or CEO challenge, which becomes a departmental task, which finally becomes a problem to solve. Solving this problem is where the product manager comes into the picture. A business solution is developed and that solution is comprised of product features.

When creating requirements, you should start with what's happening in the market. Mr. Mansour recommends that the Product Manager take responsibility for making sure requirements get into engineering without a lot of other stuff. The Product Manager is responsible for focus groups, market validation, and ultimately ensuring that what is being proposed will work. The product manager further orchestrates the process but does NOT write the functional specification. If the Product Manager is writing the specification, it means she is not out researching the next release.

The positioning hierarchy starts at the brand. Underneath brand sits the positioning statement, which may be different by segment. The positioning statement, in essence, is

the elevator pitch. This flows into value anchors, which are 3 – 6 problems that apply to 90% of the segment you are targeting.. Finally there are business requirements, which ideally are cross-segment, creating economies in solving the problem.

Although positioning and requirements are not the same, if you start at the right level when defining the requirements, they can be used to both create the positioning and the functional specification. Business requirements often take more than one release to satisfy, but you can write the requirement once and add more features against each requirement by release. You can then use the requirement to message each of the market segments as the feature set develops. Also, a new release does not mean new positioning. The positioning should only change if you are pursuing a new market or solving a major new problem for an existing market.

John Mansour's approach to managing requirements and positioning can be a real time saver. And time is something that all product managers could certainly use a little more of! ☘

Looking for new opportunities in Product Management?
Check out the many job listings on the SVPMA Forum:
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The SVPMA represents over 800 talented product management and marketing professionals!

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Sources for recruiting include the following:

- Current customers
- Prospects that didn't purchase
- VCs/Investors
- Your personal network
- Sales force & leads
- Advertisements (Craigslist, local newspaper)

In terms of incentives, there are many things that you can offer participants. Certainly the "Help us improve the product" angle will work to some degree (more if you have a fanatical user base). You might also want to offer free or reduced pricing or upgrades. Or you may even want to have a contest to keep users motivated. For example, one of the recent beta programs that the 280 Group ran was called the "Great Bug Hunt". For each valid bug submission the beta tester received an entry into a drawing for an iPod. Not only did this incent them to sign up, but it kept them enthused to continue using the product

throughout the course of the whole program.

In the issue in part 3 we'll cover expected participation & response levels, beta agreements and selection of participants.

Brian Lawley is the President of the 280 Group, which provides Marketing and Product Management Consulting and Contractors to help companies define, launch and market breakthrough new products. For more information see www.280group.com. ☘

October Event - PM Software Panel

A Panel Discussion on Product Management Software: The State of the Art

By Greg Cohen

The October 2005 SVPMA event focused on “Product Management Software: The State of the Art.” Three executives from leading product management, requirements management, and product planning companies performed a show-n-tell of their solutions and then participated in a panel discussion led by SVPMA’s new President, Brian Lawley. Representing the solutions were:

James Davies, President and CEO of Accept Software, makers of Accept Planner 3

Joachim Karlsson, Senior Vice President Strategic Solutions at Telelogic, provider of Telelogic Focal Point. (Joachim was the founder and former President & CEO of Focal Point, which was acquired by Telelogic.)

Andre Levesque, Chief Product Officer and founder of Ryma Technology Solutions, creators of Feature-Plan.

Numbers were drawn to determine the speaking order, and James Davies of Accept Software went first. Accept Planner is a modular suite that originated from engineer’s frustrations at not knowing from where various requirements were coming. Accept Planner makes it explicit which requirements are committed on contracts, which are because of the competition, etc. Further, fea-

tures have a value, a cost, and a market impact that can be analyzed more rigorously than the traditional P1 – P4 rating that is usually given in requirements documents. This makes it much easier to do portfolio analysis and compare development scenarios. Once the requirements are in the system, market requirement and product requirement documents can be automatically generated. The solution can be hosted or installed locally by module and is role based.

Next up was Joachim Karlsson from Telelogic. Focal Point was first launched in 1998 in Windows. The web version came out in 2001 and has a strong presence in Northern Europe with company leaders such as Volvo, Nokia, and ABB. Focal Point was acquired by Telelogic about six months ago and is now being sold globally. Focal Point helps the user start at the market segments and manage this down to features, products, resources, and finally the release. The product has a semantic search engine to help identify duplicate features in the system. It also assists the user in prioritizing the features by displaying them side by side and letting constituents rank which is the most important relative to each other. This data can then be segmented by market, stake holder group, customer, etc. Mr. Karlsson said Focal Point helps companies “identify everything we could do, then decide what we should do.” The solution can be hosted

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Give Adobe feedback and get a free SVPMA membership or renewal voucher!

Adobe would like to invite you to provide feedback on new and existing products. Your feedback is vital for helping Adobe make its products fit your needs. A typical feedback session takes 2 hours and is conducted at Adobe’s headquarters in downtown San Jose. We are looking for all levels of experience, from novice to expert! At the end of the session, you will be offered a voucher for free SVPMA membership or membership renewal.

To express your interest, please email signup@adobe.com with “Usability” in the subject line. You will receive an email with a link to a brief survey. Once your eligibility is determined, you will be contacted by phone or email. Thank you!

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launch objectives, you will need the market data to build a strong business case and secure budget for local markets.

Keep in mind the competitive landscape and customer preferences vary from country to country. Leverage your worldwide network of country managers and partners to develop a clear understanding of the local marketplace. Create an analysis tool that will allow you to make the most effective decisions concerning the product launch strategy. This will allow you to evaluate similarities and differences for factors such as product demand, customer preferences, technology infrastructure, local market trends, language needs, and cultural business practices. With your market intelligence in place, you'll be ready to build a global launch plan.

2. Create a global plan and roadmap

The global launch plan provides a clear vision and roadmap to facilitate execution by cross-functional and cross-regional teams. It needs to be developed and delivered at least 4-5 months prior to launch to ensure effective execution through timely adoption of messaging, strategies, and production of deliverables. The creation of the global launch plan also provides the opportunity to engage teams worldwide. Ensure early input from key functional and country teams who will drive global and local marketing, communication, and sales readiness activities. Objectives, milestones, and success metrics need to be realistic, time-sensitive and locally adaptable. By providing a global planning template, the launch manager can collaborate with teams and ensure early participation in launch efforts. In addition to key objectives, strategies, and tactics, the template should include a timeline and a checklist of core deliverables that can be reviewed for country marketing and localization needs.

3. Design an effective launch process worldwide

Global market success is dependent upon your internal infrastructure and the ability to coordinate a centralized strategy with local execution. This is determined by the ability to build a launch management framework and process where you can leverage internal team knowledge, manage project flow, and effectively deliver product on time and on budget in every part of the world. Not a small task! Make sure to build a global roadmap that accounts for key milestones in the global readiness areas of product, marketing, communication, and sales. Then you can utilize project management tools to develop key roles, responsibilities, tasks, and timelines that support the roadmap – including the critical dependencies for meeting global launch objectives. A deliverables matrix should include key globalization, localization,

and translation dates for completion of marketing and sales tools required for local markets. Now just make sure you're ready to execute.

4. Engage launch team across cultures

When launching a new product, a successful outcome is always dependent on team alignment. It's important to ensure understanding, participation, and ownership from cross-functional and cross-regional team members. Building your network of team members across functions and cultures takes careful planning and relationship building. So where do you start? Check in with your team members around the world and create a networking strategy! Bring out the organization chart and identify your key drivers and influencers for the following: 1) Strategy Team (Executive sponsors), 2) Core Team (Cross-functional and cross-regional members), and 3) Local Team (country marketing managers).

Then be prepared to assess your networking space. Do you have the appropriate foundation to build a network across the organization? Is everyone aligned with your launch objectives? Is your core team onboard and committed to the project? Is the launch management team aligned with influential groups within the organization? And finally, are the Americas, EMEA, and APAC regions aligned? If you answered no to any of these questions, you will need to re-visit your networking strategy.

5. Communicate across functions and cultures

When communicating around the world, you'll need to ensure that you can align teams and manage time zones effectively. In order to maximize awareness, interest, and participation in the global launch, it's important to develop a communication strategy that will engage team members in the Americas, EMEA, and APAC. A communications strategy needs to address when communication takes place, to whom it should be communicated, and what will be communicated during the launch process. A successful internal communication strategy should engage cross-functional and cross-regional team members through the use of regular and consistent communications. This includes vehicles such as weekly launch meetings, regional launch calls, and email updates.

Karina Jensen learned the importance of global readiness from her career in international marketing and sales. She's the principal and founder of Global Minds Network, a consulting firm dedicated to global readiness and launch success for professionals, teams, and organizations. ☘

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or installed locally by module and is role based.

The final speaker was Andre Levesque of Ryma Technology Solutions. FeaturePlan automates the Pragmatic Marketing framework and promises that you will spend less time on the tactical and more on the strategic activities. It was launched in 2004 and is 100% .net and sits on SQL Server. The next release will be fully web based asp/.net. FeaturePlan starts by organizing all the inbound sources of data including win/loss reports, call statements, incident reports, market research, competitive analysis, etc. From these, the user creates problem statements. Requirements are then written, and finally those requirements are grouped into releases creating the roadmap or "market release table." The solution is fully integrated and is role based.

Amazingly, all three vendor demonstrations worked flawlessly and showed the strong capabilities of Product Management applications in the market place. Further, all the solutions have many more capabilities than could be demonstrated to the audience or captured here in this article. You are probably now wondering what it all cost? Although none of the vendors would be pinned down on specific pricing, you should budget \$65 - \$100 per user per month depending on size of installations and modules purchased.

Greg Cohen is a Senior Product Manager at Instill Corporation and on the board of the Silicon Valley Product Management Association. He has over seven years in software and application services specifically with spend analysis, business analytics, and contract management. ☘

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BOOK REVIEW

The Art of the Start by Guy Kawasaki

Reviewed by Greg Cohen

The Art of the Start: The Time-Tested, Battle-Hardened Guide for Anyone Starting Anything by Guy Kawasaki is a no nonsense manual to making a difference. The author starts by saying that “entrepreneur” is not a job title but a state of mind. Thus, the book is not just for individuals trying to create the next great company, but for those in established companies trying to create the next great product and those in non-profits trying to create the next great school, church, or organization. Further, Mr. Kawasaki writes that his book is for people’s whose attitude is “Cut the crap and just tell me what I need to do.”

The book is broken into five sections: causation, articulation, activation, proliferation, and obligation. The book covers everything from where to start, raising money, and how to create contagion. Below are some of the highlights,

Make meaning. Set out to change the world in a positive way. This might be a product that increases the quality of life, rights a terrible wrong, or prevents the end of something good.

Make mantra. A mantra is three to four words that guides the employees in their job. It is not a mission statement, which involves too many people trying to please an even larger group of employees, shareholders, and customers. To illustrate his point, the author lists a number of real corporate mission statements and offers an alternative mantra. The most poignant example is from Wendy’s whose mission statement is:

“Our guiding mission is to deliver superior quality products and services for our customers and communities through leadership, innovation and partnerships.”

Mr. Kawasaki thought the company would be better served with the shorter mantra of *healthy fast food*.

Get going. This is not the time to analyze or write the business plan. Start building a prototype, writing software, or launching your website and create something you love. Do not create better sameness. Take a lesson from the Toyota Scion and be willing to polarize people. Because “It’s not how great you start – it’s how great you end up.” Lastly, find soul mates. Although one person is often recognized as the innovator, there is always a strong team that made it happen.

Define a business model. Most companies start by targeting a niche. So be specific about who has money in their wallet and how you will get it out. Keep the business model simple. Lastly, “you can’t change the world if you’re dead, and when you’re out of money you’re dead.”

Weave a MAT. MAT stands for Milestones, Assumptions, and Risks. Starting a company is a fresh start and you need a priority of what to do. Milestones are things you would brag to your spouse about, such as finishing a design or beta release. Assumptions of the business must be made and tracked. These include things like sales call per day, conversion rates, costs, time to install product, etc. Lastly, tasks help finish milestones or test assumptions. A task might be find an office or identify a vendor.

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Niche thy self. Start-ups do not start big. Mr. Kawasaki illustrates this point with a simple x-y graph divided into four quadrants. Along the y-axis is the ability to provide a unique product or service and along the x-axis is the value to the customer of the product or service. You want to be in the upper right, providing a unique product of value. In the lower right exists price competition, since many companies can provide the product. In the upper left exists “stupid” companies, providing unique products of little value. Finally, the lower left is reserved for dotcoms, providing little value that anyone else could also provide.

Observe the 10/20/30 rule. This rule applies to pitching the company when raising money. “10” is the optimal number of slides in your PowerPoint deck. “20” is for the number of minutes it should take to convey your message. “30” is the point font to use because your audience will include gray haired investors with bifocals. But even if your audience is youthful, thirty point font ensures you do not add text so that you can read it. Audiences catch-on fast to this and read ahead. In the same section, there is also a great mini-chapter on the art of PowerPointing.

Hire infected people. Does the candidate “get it?” Do they love what they do? Be willing to hire people better than yourself because A players hire A players, B players hire C player, C players hire D players. And, therefore, it does not take long to get to Z. Do not assume just because a person has big company skills, they have new company skills, and further, just because they worked for a successful company doesn’t mean they were a major cause of that success.

Lower the barrier to adoption. Make it easy for someone to use your product by flattening the learning curve. It should be as simple as open the box, plug it in, and it works. Further, embrace evangelist and give them the tools to spread the word.

Let one hundred flowers blossom. Sometimes you cannot predict what will drive your product’s success. When flowers are blossoming that you did not expect, figure out where and why and adjust your plan. More simply, when a market appears that you did not anticipate, take the money. Further, find the key influencers in organizations. In large organizations, the higher you go, the thinner the air and the harder it is to support intelligent life. Therefore, don’t suck-up. Rather, suck across and down. These people have tremendous influence in the organization.

Be a mensch. Highlighting its importance, “The Art of Being a Mensch” is the final and only chapter in the section on Obligation. Mr. Kawasaki makes the point that you should be a mensch, which is a Yiddish term for someone who is a good and ethical person. This is imperative because organizations exist in the context of a larger society and companies that harm society do not scale and do not last. It is important to set the highest standards for your employees. Thus, a) help people who cannot help themselves, b) do the right thing, the right way, and c) payback society

An easy and entertaining read, *The Art of the Start* is packed with thoughtful content typical of a book three times its size. If you’re looking for solid advice and inspiration in starting the next great thing, “get going,” and pick-up a copy of this book as a companion for your journey.

Greg Cohen is a Senior Product Manager at Instill Corporation and on the board of the Silicon Valley Product Management Association. He has over seven years in software and application services specifically with spend analysis, business analytics, and contract management. ☘

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Speaker: Peter Cohen - Founder and Principal, The Second Derivative

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More information & Registration: <http://www.svpma.org/workshop.htm>

SVPMA Workshop Series:

The Silicon Valley Product Management Association (SVPMA) was founded to address the needs of Product Managers, Product Marketing Managers and other professionals working within the Product Management field.

The goal of the SVPMA Workshop Series is to provide our members hands-on, interactive product management training delivered by leading consulting and professional services companies, lecturers and trainers.

Speaker Bio:

Peter Cohan is the founder and a principal of The Second Derivative, focused on helping software organizations improve their sales and marketing results – primarily through improving organizations' demonstrations.

Peter Moderates "DemoGurus[®]", a community web exchange dedicated to helping sales and marketing teams improve their software demonstrations. Peter is the author of the book *Great Demo!* which provides a method for creating and executing compelling demonstrations, now in its 2nd edition. Before founding The Second Derivative, Peter launched the Discovery Tools[®] business unit at Symyx Technologies, Inc., where he grew the business into a \$30 million operation. Peter also served in marketing, sales, and management positions at MDL Information Systems, a leading provider of scientific information management software. Peter currently serves on the Board of Directors for Collaborative Drug Discovery, Inc. He holds a degree in chemistry.