

## September Event with Brain Lawley **How to Get Phenomenal Product Reviews**

*By Greg Cohen*

Mr. Brian Lawley, President of the 280 Group LLC, spoke about *How to Get Phenomenal Product Reviews* at the September 8, 2004 meeting of the SVPMA. Mr. Lawley's presentation gave the audience a systematic approach to this essential but oft neglected topic, and gave insight into how a product manager can influence and accelerate the review process.

Mr. Lawley, has over 15 years of product marketing and management experience. His company, the 280 Group, assists its clients, such as Adobe and Palm, in creating breakthrough products and generating market momentum. Prior to founding the 280 Group, he held Director and Senior Product Management positions at Whistle Communications, Symantec, and Apple Computer. Mr.

Lawley earned an MBA with honors from San Jose State University and a Bachelors Degree in Management Science from the University of California, San Diego with a Minor in Music and Computer Technology.

Good reviews offer a third party opinion that is more credible than a company's own marketing. Early adopters live by reviews. Good reviews ultimately lead to awards, and the "tipping point." A good PR firm can be essential to the overall review strategy, making key introductions that will get the attention of reviewers and industry pundits. Further, you've worked hard to bring a product to market and your career is now on the line. A bad review can sink your product, while good press can

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*and More*

## Applying Product Management Process to Managing Your Career Part I

*By Patti Wilson*

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It's funny how most people become very well-versed by the end of their worklife in the body of knowledge, models and methodologies of their field. However, most professionals give only sporadic and urgent attention to their careers when in an active job search, at performance review time, graduation and retirement.

As product development and management is part of virtually every organization, so is the unspoken need to manage your careers. Richard Bolles, author of *What Color is Your Parachute*, has noticed with amusement that the root Greek origin for the words "career" and "caren" are the same. He goes on to say that most people manage their work lives with the latter and not the former. That is they sort of trip or fall into different jobs, companies and livelihoods without paying much attention to the direction, congruency and long-term consequences of their choices.

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# Product Management is Inherently Political

By Rich Mironov, reprinted with permission from Product Bytes

Recently, I had lunch with a bright young product manager trying to perfect the process for deciding which features to include in his next product release. Skipping past theory about “internal ROI” and other quantitative approaches, we talked about having to choose among the many demands for enhancements from sales teams: that MRDs are only the starting point in an ongoing lobbying campaign for product improvements. In other words, product managers will always have to manage the emotional world of people and internal politics.

## First, Let's Set the Stage

As product manager for the next version of TechX,

SVPMA is a 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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you've collected a nearly infinite list of possible improvements, advances, new features, and architectural repairs. Your goal is to build an orderly list of items, review them with Engineering for size and suitability, then issue a definitive requirements document (**MRD** or **PRD**) that formally declares what will be built. Being analytical and a bit compulsive, you think of this as the *end* of a long process, after which Engineering will leap into action.

You've had to make choices from a dissimilar list of potential projects:

- **Customer specials** needed by specific big accounts, even if they are not likely to be of general use to others (*more on this later*)
- **Broad feature improvements** as demanded by the market, reviews, user groups, and your keen sense of what customers want
- **Internal architectural changes** that will be invisible to customers but are needed for improved quality or longer-term goals
- The occasional **high-profile product bet** anticipating emerging market needs or hoped-for shifts in related technologies

Trade-offs within each group are easy, but across groups are nearly impossible. Part of your job is to balance these different categories so that your next release meets a few needs from each group. (*Does this sound like a state budgeting process?*)

Within each group, you try to draw up rational criteria. Among features demanded by specific customers, you look to your sales teams for revenue commitments and certainties. (“*How big is the deal? Is this the only feature blocking the sale? Can we get a commitment from the customer to buy if we deliver by March 15<sup>th</sup>?*”) You probably built a deal-specific spreadsheet to track opportunities and likelihoods, which you will need later.

For more general market requests, you poll sales teams and industry analysts. Engineering typically demands a few sacrifices to the gods of architecture, so a few of these make the cut.

In addition, you are trading off time and resources

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against your overall list. For example, adding a data conversion option will push back the release date by two weeks. Including Voice-over-Telepathy costs five months. Since most engineering schedules run late, you need to negotiate a delivery date that gives you some breathing room. Etc.

Ultimately, an MRD is the culmination of intense negotiations with all parties (engineering, marketing, sales, customers). It represents a compromise based on your best judgment and the facts on hand. BTW, great PMs deliver superior MRDs and also leave each constituent group feeling valued/respected/listened to. After emailing the final MRD to all groups, your team takes you out for a well-deserved celebration. This *feels* like a milestone.

### But The Fun Has Just Started

Nearly immediately, two kinds of problems arise. One is caused by actual changes in the world: shifting customer needs, market trends, product experience, and general evolution. The second is lobbying from the sales teams who did not get their favorite enhancements into your

MRD. By making hard choices about which features are in your next release, you've had to postpone other legitimate requests.

A quick aside about your most successful sales teams: they are experts at understanding and influencing how customers make decisions. Faced with customers who want to make rational buying choices using objective criteria, they will cajole, schmooze influencers, rewrite RFPs, promise upcoming features, sponsor golf outings, scrutinize budgets, and generally work to tilt rational decisions in your company's favor. This is *precisely* what makes them so successful and so valuable to your company. And why they take deals away from less aggressive competitors. And why they wield such influence internally.

What should you expect from sales teams that don't get their favorite features committed in your MRD? The same behavior that you've consistently rewarded them for: lobbying Sales executives about the strategic importance of their deals, having customers call you demanding action, rejiggering revenue projections to improve relative ranking, taking you to lunch, asking your boss to

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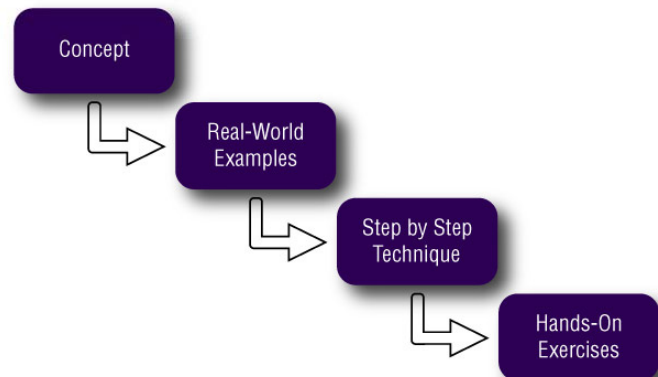
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#### Workshop Format



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send you “into the field” for a week, insisting that one more feature can be shoehorned into the release. You may call this “politics.” Sales teams call this “influencing decision-makers to improve the MRD process.” Remember that you normally applaud this approach.

Now, we have an analytically-minded product manager beset by account teams trying to reprioritize the MRD. Each sales team has some legitimate argument or new information to present. You would rather be managing the next phase of product delivery than listening politely to ten more pleas for help. How did you find yourself in this situation, and what can you do next time to avoid this trap?

### **Political Issues Require Political Solutions**

Allocating scarce resources always leaves some people dissatisfied, and drives them to escalate complaints or question the decision-making process. This is certainly true of MRDs, which prioritize Engineering’s projects and schedules. You can call this “politics” if you like, or

“group decision-making” or any handy phrase from the MBA Organizational Behavior handbook. Regardless of the label, even the perfect MRD will leave some of your constituents unhappy. To keep the process moving forward, you need political support for the decision process and your final choices. Generally, I’d suggest this comes out of a pre-negotiation with the head of Sales. Imagine this discussion with your VP of Sales:

- “If we’re going to hit our delivery dates for TechX version 5, we can allocate up to 45 engineering-weeks to one-off enhancements for high profile customers. I need your help to support the most important deals. I’ve built this spreadsheet of requests, required effort and likely revenue.”
- **“OK”**
- “Looks like we could commit to these 5 special deals for GM, Goldman Sachs, Deutsche Telekom, the Air Force, and Safeway. That leaves 20 other deals uncommitted, including Sloan Kettering and FedEx. Are there any you’d move up the list and replace the ones I

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## October Event with Sridhar Ramanathan Is Outsourcing Right for You?

*By Greg Cohen*

Mr. Sridhar Ramanathan, Managing Partner of the Pacifica Group, gave an engaging presentation at the October 2004 meeting of the SVPMA on the Outsourcing Business. Although Mr. Ramanathan covered what to look for when outsourcing, his main focus was on the business model and opportunity to offer outsourcing as a capability. This piqued the interest of many in the audience who had never realized their companies were in the business of outsourcing.

Mr. Ramanathan has deep expertise in running an outsourcing business. Before founding the Pacifica Group Management Consultancy three years ago, Mr. Ramanathan spent 12 years helping Hewlett Packard become the #1 ERP outsourcer. He was responsible for worldwide marketing of HP’s \$1.1B IT Outsourcing business and held profit and loss responsibility for HP’s electronic messaging outsourcing and e-services business units. He received his MBA from Wharton and is an adjunct professor of Marketing at Golden Gate University.

The Information Technology Services Marketing Association (ITSMA) defines outsourcing as “a contractual relationship between two or more parties for the ongoing

management (and in many cases the improvement) of infrastructure or business processes.” Improvement and time to market are the primary reason companies outsource. They want to gain access to expertise, so they can focus on their core competency. Other reasons are to share in the economies of scale of the vendor, move asset purchases off the balance sheet and into predictable expenses, and push change management responsibility to the vendor. Straight cost savings rarely motivate the decision to outsource.

There are different kinds of outsourcing:

- Application Outsourcing- ERP outsourcing (e.g. MySAP), which includes deployment, planning, upgrades
- Business Process Outsourcing – EDS’ HR Services (payroll, benefits)
- Infrastructure Outsourcing – HP Desktop Management Services
- Application Service Providers – On demand appli-

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chose? After all, I'm just a lowly product guy and not the all-knowing head of Sales."

- ***"This looks about right. Good job."***
- "One other thing I need: those next 20 account teams are going to be pushing you hard to get their enhancements back in. I need your commitment that we won't add any to the list without pulling off one of these 5. If we expand the requirements, the release date will slip and you'll lose several of your top deals."
- ***"Hmmm. How about if I go over your list with my regional managers and make sure this is right? We'll get back to you by Monday"***
- "Absolutely. You're my customer on this. After your meeting, I'd love your initials at the bottom of my spreadsheet, so that I know I have the right information handy for follow-up discussions..."

What just happened? You found someone in Sales to help make and confirm decisions, and a defined method for considering changes. When the sales rep covering United Airlines calls you, feel free to explain that her VP of Sales approved the final list. This also sets up a more rational discussion about changing priorities: if

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set your product apart from its peers.

So how do you go about getting phenomenal product reviews?

First, recognize that some products will never win, many products are equal, and a few products are so exceptional, they will win no matter what. Most likely, you have a product that is relatively equal to others in the market, and you will need to use all facts and arguments at your disposal to convince the customer and reviewers that your product is in fact, superior.

Second, realize that reviewers are overworked and underpaid. You can do a lot to make their job easier.

Mr. Lawley offered a top 10 to achieving great product reviews:

10. Put a dedicated senior product manager on the job and make it their number one priority for the next six months. This person should be a good planner, experi-

FedEx is suddenly more important than Safeway, you can explore the revenue and technical trade-offs involved in swapping their place in the queue. Getting "buy-in" from Sales management means that your choices are more likely to meet Sales' overall goals and revenue objectives.

Of course, this applies to the other key constituents of your MRD: executives in Engineering, Marketing and perhaps Finance or Manufacturing. Having your decisions ratified *now* by future lobbyists will keep things moving.

### ***Sound Bytes***

Product managers are paid to make decisions that have an impact on the broader organization. This makes us part of the internal political process. Rather than ignore this reality, we need to understand how decisions are made and re-made, then design our process to let the real world help us. ☘

*Rich Mironov has worked with technology companies in Silicon Valley since 1981. He is the principal of Mironov Consulting and is now VP Marketing at AirMagnet.*

enced with the review process, and charismatic.

9. Work from a timeline, with bi-weekly meetings. You should start four months before launch, expect two to four weeks of slippage, identify a target list of analysts, and start with a friendly analyst to work out some of the kinks.

8. Assemble your material and references. You want to make it as easy as possible for reviewers to be able to steal your work. Give them printed materials, CDs with soft copy, and put it on the web for when they lose the CD. Give them press releases, images and screen shots, customer quotes and references, and step by step instructions on getting started with the product.

7. Create a killer demo, practice it over and over, and always give it yourself. This might be the only time the reviewer actually sees the product. The demo should highlight the top five features and benefits in three to five minutes, use a real world scenario, tell a story, and end with an unexpected twist. Also, since you will have practiced this demo many times, refuse to change it at the last minute.

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cations (e.g. Salesforce.com)

- IT Utility Services – Critical Path’s Managed Messaging
- Internet Service Providers – Data center, web hosting (e.g Savvis)

For a vendor creating an outsourced service offering, some of the benefits include a predictable and recurring revenue stream, with reduced overall selling costs due to two to 10 year contract terms. Once in an account, it is easier to continue to expand share of a customer’s wallet. Further, switching costs are high, which creates a large barrier to entry.

The decision to become an outsourcer needs careful consideration. Most software companies emphasize volume. Outsourcing focuses on optimizing a small number of customer relationships. The company must shift from hunting to a farming mindset. Further, outsourcing is a different business model. Leading IT Outsourcers earn 40% gross margins, much lower than traditional software licensing margins. In addition, you need to be able to have operational efficiencies and scale, continually driving down costs while delivering flawlessly against your service level agreements. This requires maintaining metrics and gauges on the business to track performance and anticipate issues.

Risk management is a key element of the outsourcing relationship. Risk must be quantified and priced into the contract. If your customers require five 9’s availability, you need fair compensation. This, along with other new processes, will require a different team that includes sales specialist, operations experts, and pricing analysts. Lastly, exiting a bad business can be very difficult.

The product management implications are many:

Software	Outsourcing Business
Product Definition	Service Definition
Development and Launch Process	Change Management Process
Team is PM, Marketing, Engineering and Support	Team also includes HR, Legal, Finance, and a Pricing Analyst
Customer Acquisition	Customer Retention/Expansion
Innovate	Copy/leverage

The outsourcing business has many advantages over traditional product business models. Nevertheless, it also comes with risk. It requires a different skill and operational mindset. For the companies that can make the transition, outsourcing is an engine of long term growth and income. ☘

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6. Make your product dummy proof with preset accounts customized to your reviewer. Include a customized letter to the reviewer, user name and login, and test the account to ensure it works.
5. Set the competitive argument. This gets you in roundups and makes the reviewers work much easier. Do not claim that you do not have any competition. Because if you don’t categorize yourself, the reviewer will.
4. Phase rollouts, track equipment, and check in regularly. Do two to three reviews early to work out any issues, and then do the rest in waves. During this phase, it is important to be responsive, so phasing it ensures you can handle any requests. Once you have sent the product, check in regularly with the reviewer on a weekly basis to answer questions and make sure everything is going smoothly.
3. Provide *immediate* response. Thirty minutes is

ideal, but always respond within the same day. You will also need to get the commitment from engineering and the organization that any reviewer issue will be treated as top priority. Your company’s ability to resolve an issue quickly can often leave the reviewer with a better impression than if he or she had not had an issue at all.

2. Include at least three screen shots and photos with captions. These shots should highlight the product’s top three features. The reviewer may actually use your text verbatim.

1. Write the review for them by creating a reviewers guide. This professional document will make the product easy to review and to write a review. Although producing the guides can be pricey, they are worth the expense. Provide the guides to the reviewers in hard copy, PDF, and Word formats. The reviewer might actually use your prose. So provide them with the lazy way out by making it easy for them to grab your text. The user guide should include the following sections: Overview, Introduction, What to consider when evaluating this type

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Does this sound familiar or resonate with what you have been doing with your career? Have you been making strategic well planned and executed choices? Have you known your career goal and deliverables to be met at any given time? In your career lifecycle have you launched into a new career path or new job successfully?

Career Management and Product Management share commonalities in architecture and processes. Actually only the content is different. If you are a product manager who can manage a product lifecycle from conception to launch with enhancements and iterations over time, then you can successfully manage your career lifecycle over your worklife.

### **The Career Management Body of Knowledge**

There is a body of knowledge that has been researched, identified and recognized by the academic community that outlines and defines how to manage your career. The overall process is time and deliverables driven repeatedly throughout your worklife that is much akin to a product life cycle. Managing your career lifecycle from choosing a career, searching for a job to succeeding at work repeatedly maps to product lifecycle from conception, development and launch with follow-on upgrades, enhancements and iterations.

Like Product Management, the knowledge required to successfully manage your career lifecycle are categorized under the three macro phases that repeat continuously throughout your worklife:

- **Front End (Career Choice):** Understanding your work criteria and value. Identifying and using your best skills, strengths and abilities. Applying your talents to products and services that are in alignment with your interests. Working with people and within organizations that support, encourage and nurture you. Understanding your personality drivers and style.
- **Middle (Job Search):** Connecting and building relationships with fellow professionals. Targeting and presenting to organizations and hiring authorities. Defining, designing, and generating self-marketing collaterals both online and offline. Researching and understanding business sectors, industries and companies. Negotiating and closing on offers of employment, consulting contracts, etc.
- **Back End (Workplace Success):** Being able to articulate your value add to colleagues and management. Effectively contributing and collaborating within a team and autonomously. Being able to read the personality drivers and styles of others. Applying emotional intelli-

gence and leadership competencies to reach organizational goals while building rapport and affinity with colleagues, customers, vendors, partners and management.

### **Career Lifecycle Architecture**

As mentioned, Career lifecycle architecture or organization scheme encompasses the three macro phases as mentioned: front end (career choice), the middle (job search), and the back end (workplace success). The Career Company's career lifecycle model organizes knowledge in each macro phase around two to four subtopics.

#### **Front End: Career Choice**

This first macro phase is about discovery of your career criteria in terms of personal style, values, abilities, education, and experience. With those career criteria identified, career choice is the process of matching them up to opportunities in the marketplace and all of the planning and strategy to accomplish this. It includes determining areas for further enhancements (education) and development (different job experiences). It requires the identification of organizational and business sector needs, problems, and benefits, and the ongoing career choices and development to continue to align to marketplace and organizational dynamics.

The two subtopics include Purpose, as in knowing what you have to offer to the marketplace and how that knowledge is informed by market requirements, long-term goals and short-term objectives. The second subtopic, Place, includes the research and analysis to determine the appropriate organizations and optimum venues that will generate a career ROI (return on investment) on your career criteria.

#### **Middle: Job Search**

The Front End/Career Choice phase moves to the Middle/Job Search phase with the development and publication of your formal product specs document better known as your resume. Like Product Management, the career lifecycle's second phase is primarily about realization. It covers the entire process of converting your career criteria into an active job search – and all of the processes to accomplish this. It usually requires detailed resource management, creative sourcing techniques, network building capabilities, and sophisticated relationship management technology. It ends when you have achieved your next workplace opportunity or consulting venture.

The Job Search phase's three subtopics are Packaging, Participation and Presentation. Packaging brings all your features, benefits and enhancements to bear to position

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and pitch you as a desirable job candidate in the marketplace. It can include offline tools such as resume-blogs, professional websites, and profiles on networking sites, as well as resumes, cover letters, biographical descriptions, brochures, personal pitches and testimonials. Participation is your ongoing and active professional involvement within specific business sectors, industries and groups that enables you to leverage the power of your connections for the benefit of a job search and ultimately your career lifecycle. Finally, Presentation is the learned set of techniques and competencies needed to manage the perception of others to your positive regard resulting in job offers, successful compensation negotiation and career moves.

### **Back End: Workplace Success**

This third phase is primarily about fulfillment and effectiveness. The first subtopic, Performance, covers the entire process from beginning a new position, your self-management, personal productivity and interpersonal abilities as you attempt to fulfill your career and financial potential. It ends when your efforts or services have reached the end of their useful lifecycle within this position or organization.

The second subtopic, Perspective, covers your strategies, plans and tactics when you consider yourself a candidate

for job change, career change, re-education, and/or retirement. Perspective focuses on using this process as one of renewal, and regeneration regardless that the choice may be determined by the marketplace in the form of off-shoring, out-sourcing, mergers and acquisitions.

At this stage, the process begins anew with the undertaking of a new career development and career lifecycle initiative, and a return to the macro discovery phase of Career Choice.

Part two will cover in detail the steps and deliverables to execute on within each phase of the three phases that will enable you to manage your career and keep your career lifecycle on track. ¶

*Patti Wilson is a well known Bay Area career counselor, coach and managing principal of the CareerCompany.com™. In July 2001, she founded an innovative online job and career networking and support group for high tech and bio tech professionals called the Wednesdayjobgroup.*

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# BOOK REVIEW

## **POSITIONING—The Battle for Your Mind**

Review by Cam Geer

Recently, my colleagues at Mirasys were discussing...OK, arguing over...what to name our new product and how to talk to our target customers. In looking for some support for my particular case, I picked up a copy of the marketing classic, *Positioning — The Battle for Your Mind* by Al Ries and Jack Trout.

It turned out to be a refresher course in key concepts that, as product managers, we need to work with everyday. The challenge we face in our over stimulated society is how to convince people that our product is worthy of their time and mental energy. **Positioning** shows that in order to do this, we have to carve out a space in the minds of our prospects.

And we know that's not easy. Today the mind of our prospects are more fractured than ever – dozen of applications active on the desktop, countless web sites to view from a Google search, ceaseless cell phone calls, instant messages, and, of course, emails to answer. How can we possibly carve out a place with all that noise?

That is where **Positioning** becomes central to your product and marketing strategy. The only way to get into the mind of your prospect is to leverage what is already there. In order to do this effectively, you must know your prospect intimately.

### **How well do you know your prospects?**

**Positioning** reminded me of something that could be very important to product managers, the term—*prospect*—is the customer you don't have yet. And the person or people most important for you to increase sales of your product! It seems that product managers in Silicon Valley have a bad habit—and I know I'm guilty—of using the word “customer” to mean Customers *and* Prospects, where often the positioning of your product required is very different for the different audiences.

To help us with our positioning at Mirasys, we created profiles of the different people who buy and use our product. Once they became “real people,” they took on a life of their own and it became easier to develop positioning statements that might get stuck in their minds.

### **What's in a name?**

In **Positioning**, I found the chapter “The Power of the Name” to be the most helpful. Picking a product name is central to reinforcing your positioning strategy. As Ries and Trout stated, “the name is the hook that hangs the [product] in the prospect's mind. In the positioning era, the single most important decision you can make is what to name the product.” So many technology products are named as a result of their engineering prowess with little regard to what that name might mean to a prospect. Positioning emphasizes

the point that an effective product and company names must be two or three syllables.

So all this got me thinking:

### **What is the long term value of positioning?**

Positioning is so strong that even Microsoft with all its market and technology might can't move Intuit from the top spot in personal finance, tax preparation, and small business accounting. Quicken, Turbo Tax, and Quickbooks, all excellent examples of positioning names, have been market leaders almost as soon as there were released.

Look at Google as another example: with their singular focus on the “search position,” they have radically changed the way we all work. But notice that they don't make money directly from us with their search position. Google sells that position to someone else trying to find a way into our minds!

### **What is the role of technology in positioning?**

Technology must support the position and continue to defend the position. A great example is how Salesforce.com is replacing the positioning of Siebel as the product of choice for salespeople. Salesforce.com starts its positioning with its name, then continues it by moving into the mind of salespeople (who tend to be less savvy when it comes to technology) as an easy to use web service as opposed to Siebel a complex software application.

### **How will you position your new product against Google, Outlook, or...?**

The great thing about innovative technology, it continues to open new places in the mind of your prospect. **Positioning** is a great place to start your next strategic marketing initiative if you're wrestling with your colleagues over some of these issues. While some of the examples may seem dated or a little distant, **Positioning** remains an important tool for today's product manager.

### **Next Up on the Reading List**

Inside Intuit	Suzanne Taylor &
The Art of the Start	Guy Kawasaki
The Innovator's Dilemma	Clayton M. Christensen

What's on your shelf? Please feel free to share your reading list, [camgeer@yahoo.com](mailto:camgeer@yahoo.com). ☘

*Cam Geer is an SVPMA member and Director of Product Management at Mirasys ([www.mirasys.net](http://www.mirasys.net)). A product strategist with over 13 years experience, Cam has worked continually on the forefront of emerging technologies for companies that evolve into significant segments of the software industry including—digital video, e-learning, entertainment, and personal finance.*

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**Writing an Effective Product Brief**

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8:30am Registration/networking/breakfast  
9:00am Workshop  
Noon Wrap-up/networking

Continental Breakfast will be served

**Speaker:** Michael Knowles Partner One Straight Line™

**Location:** Radisson Villa Hotel San Mateo,  
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of solutions, A guided tour of the product, Coming Soon . . . , Summary, Contact Information, Competitive Comparison, and a FAQ.

Getting phenomenal product reviews requires a lot of work and planning. But the benefits can be the difference between market leadership or getting lost in the crowd. If you do not have the time or resources, companies like the 280 Group can assist in managing the launch or developing the material. If you would like to see an example of a Reviewer's Guide or Competitive Comparison, email Mr. Lawley at [brian@280group.com](mailto:brian@280group.com). ☞

**Agenda:**

The effective product brief is an ideal way to both clarify your thinking about a proposed product, and communicate that thinking to a diverse audience. Product managers are faced with communicating product concepts to multiple audiences: their peers, the engineering staff, the executive staff, salespeople and, often, the customer who requested the design. Each group has its own unique needs.

Product briefs help you balance market justification, "speeds and feeds," and the product's value proposition for customers in a way that is exciting and informative. A well-designed product brief is the foundation document for budget presentations, product requirements specifications, and marketing communications plans.

One Straight Line leads the group through a sample product release, providing a template and appropriate language to create an effective product description. Bring your own product concept and you will leave this workshop with a product brief that gets results.

**Speaker Bio:**

Michael Knowles is adept at gathering information from his clients and presenting these facts through cogent programs that develop a straight line between core objectives and customer satisfaction. In the past 20 years, he has held a variety of leadership positions in product marketing, marketing communications, technical communications, and information technology. Michael has a BA in Technical Communications from Hartford University with a minor in Philosophy. [mknowles@onestraightline.com](mailto:mknowles@onestraightline.com)

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