September Event with Geoff Huckleberry of Instill
Customer Focused Product Management
by Greg Cohen

Geoff Huckleberry, Senior Director of Product Management at Instill, spoke to a large audience on Customer-focused product management at the July 9th meeting of the SVPMA. Geoff opened with the challenge of product management: you have lots of accountability but no authority and must influence people with lots of authority but little accountability to support your decisions. Customer knowledge is the key to success.

Customer knowledge allows you to focus, developing the attributes that will contribute most to the product's success and convince others of your product decisions. Further, it lets you identify new opportunities and stay ahead of the competition. To understand a customer, you must know what they are trying to accomplish, their affinity for technology, their prioritization of activities, their pain points, their environment, and what works for them and what

doesn't. How do you know when you have customer knowledge? It is when you know what a target customer will say before they do.

Geoff then presented eight key success factors that he has developed over his 11 years in product management at fortune 500 companies such as Intuit, CCH Incorporated, and American Express as well as start-up ChemConnect. The first key success factor Geoff spoke of is to *begin with the end in mind*. He emphasized the importance of creating a customer research plan outlining the objectives, decisions to be made from the research, target profile, methodology, and key questions. By knowing where you are going, you will avoid getting vague or useless feedback. Geoff gave an example of a focus group where he created the findings presentation ahead of

Sponsors

truereq

Inside this issue

and More

The Product Manager's Toolkit
Interactive Demo Authoring Tools
by Bob Lee

Introducing The Product Manager's Toolkit: An ongoing series about the tools and processes we use to survive.

In this edition of the toolkit, we'll look at software tools designed to help product managers and product marketing managers create interactive demos of their products.

The Pitch
Launching a product involves a series of carefully choreographed tasks. Two critical tasks are:
- Briefing the analyst community, the press and customers
- Training the sales force, support staff and professional services organization

To succeed at these tasks, it is very important to have a mechanism to visually illustrate what your product does and how it does it… in other words: you gotta have a demo.

Focus Pocus

by Susan Wheeler

What's the one essential element for business success that is most difficult for people to do? Focus!

Companies are re-focusing on their core business - they are finding that, when the economy gets tough, they need to devote their energies, resources and thinking power to the things that will most likely succeed.

I remember those panicked days of waking up at 3am, feeling like I had to do everything all at once. My friends and I would gather around at mid-morning, talk about our lack of sleep, then wonder how we were going to do everything that we needed to do in the next 24 hours. Self-cloning did not seem to be a feasible alternative. Nor did adding more hours to the day. That frantic feeling of "I've got too much to do and not enough hours in the day" paralyzed some of us. I can remember walking down the halls and seeing folks staring out of the window, slightly stupefied. Others would race from meeting to meeting, thinking if they just walked a bit faster, the "to-do" demons wouldn't catch them.

One of the biggest problems was that they were trying to do too much at once. Instead of focusing on one thing at a time, they were trying to move multiple points forward at the same time. This was a recipe for failure. When you are leading a business, you need to create a clear direction a picture of where you want your business to go, of what are the most important things your company should work on. And you need to set the example.

By setting a focused direction and creating a set of goals, you make it much easier for your team to decide what to do first. They now have a filter that they can use to put that stack of papers either "in the need to do now" pile or "when I get around to it" pile. Every activity should move them forward to the goals that you have defined. A recipe for failure is to try to be all things to all people - look at Chevrolet (a cheap car, and expensive car or a truck) as an example or at AT&T as another.

All too often, companies find that their current product or service focus isn't giving them the results they want. So they decide to add new revenue streams - new products or services. They take the same set of people and ask them to now develop, market, sell and support a broader array of products. Instead of narrowing their focus and increasing their chance for success, they expand the work, dilute their efforts and decrease the likelihood that their organizations will do the right things first. When companies try to be everything to everybody, they wind up appealing to no one.

When we examined why companies have this tendency, we found the following:
1. Companies are afraid that, if they too narrowly define what they do, the customer will not see the solution they need
2. Companies are afraid they might choose the wrong direction - the market might take a different turn from where they are heading (what if the next great meal idea isn't fish-on-a-stick?)
3. Focus is scary - if you decide not to pursue a direction, it means that you don't get revenue from a possible source.

We're going to talk about why these are myths and the three steps you can take to avoid the loss-of-focus trap.

Think of focus as photographers do -- as a beam of

---

light converging on a single point. In business, you can't point your lens at 50 different targets at the same time. That will only produce a fuzzy picture, the sort where you miss all the little details that really matter. However, once you choose a specific target, that narrow beam of illumination can reveal the path to the best opportunities. As Lewis Carroll said in *Alice in Wonderland*, "Would you tell me, please, which way I ought to go from here?" "That depends a good deal on where you want to get to," said the Cat. "I don't much care where-" said Alice. "Then, it doesn't matter which way you go," said the Cat. A company that doesn't know where it wants to focus is like Alice - it really doesn't matter which way they go if they have no end in sight.

The Three Myths

Myth # 1 - If you clearly define the one thing that you do, customers won't think they need what you have to offer. Narrowing your focus means you could lose business. Take the corollary if you define what you do in a broad sense, customers might think you can offer what they need. This doesn't work because y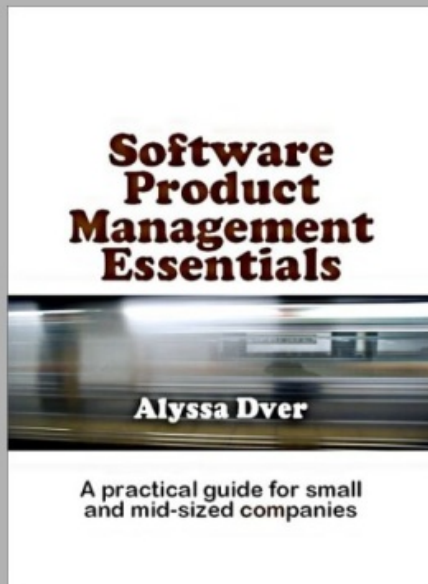ou confuse your potential customers and you confuse the people who work for you. No one knows what you do and what you don't do. Is McDonalds the "Value Menu" or is it the "i'm lovin' it" company? Is Colgate-Palmolive a toothpaste? A bar of soap? A dishwashing detergent?

Myth #2 - What if the market heads in a different direction? If you did your homework and keep up on what's happening with your internal and external environment, you should be prepared. You should not be surprised by changes in the market or the competition if you do a good job of scanning the environment.

Myth #3 - To put focus into practice means going against human nature. We constantly have to fight fires on multiple fronts. Focusing doesn't mean that, after pursuing option one you can't go back and pursue option 2. But, from a customer standpoint, being a specialist is seen as being superior to a generalist. Most people have their cars serviced by a specialist rather than by the corner gas station. Serious sporting enthusiasts buy their equipment at a specialty shop, not

at a sporting goods store. Audiophiles don't purchase from department stores.

The analogy I like to use for focus is the one of a photographer. Just like a good photographer, a business must have clear focus. The following three key activities will ensure that your business is focused for success.

Simplifying Your Business
Trying to pack too much information into a photograph is like cramming too much into your suitcase: It only makes the thing you're looking for that much harder to find. A good photograph should reveal a single subject or idea with as little clutter as possible. It's okay if someone looking at your photos asks where they were taken, but if he or she has to ask what they are pictures of, you're on shaky ground.

The same is true in business strategy. You need to be able to pare down your strategy so that it is uncluttered. You don't want to make it difficult for your sales force or your customers to find the value in what you provide. Even though your customers might need more information and context, the benefits and value of your product or service should stand out clearly and simply.

Paring your strategy down to its bare bones begins as a mental process. Try to describe in a single sentence what it is you do. Then begin to eliminate all but the essential elements.

Filling the Frame
There's an old adage in photography that says if you want to improve your photographs 100 percent, move closer. It's true. The one sure way to keep from including too much extraneous information in a photograph is to fill the frame with your subject and nothing but your subject. Filling the frame from edge to edge leaves little doubt about what your intended target was.

In business, filling the frame means providing the structure that's needed to carry out your strategy. In order for a focused strategy to be successful, you need to create and implement the structure to support it. This structure includes the marketing, operations, etc. and it enables you to maintain your focus. You need to make sure that everyone in your company is centered on the same thing and that they have the tools to help them. So once you set your focus, communicate it broadly.

In photography, the simple act of making your subject bigger in the frame involves the viewer at a much more

intense level. A chin-to-forehead portrait of an interesting face, for example, immediately puts the viewer eye-to-eye with your subject. A very tight shot of a bear--even if you made it with a long lens at the zoo--creates breathless drama. In business, you want to create the same intensity - the same in-your-face shot so to speak.

A common problem here is that we often *think* we're filling the frame when in fact we're not even close. Think of all the photos you took where you thought, "Gee, that waterfall seemed so close in person but it looks so far away in my pictures." What's happening is that when you're standing in front of a scene, you're concentrating so intently on your subject that your brain is tricked into thinking your subject is closer than it actually is. So in business, when you think you are focused, take another look through the lens and see if your brain has tricked you.

Handling Flashes of Light and Inspiration
Creating is fun - so many business owners have such great ideas that it seems they pop out an idea a minute. It's like the flash of inspiration a photographer gets when they see a great shot. But eventually, the photographer must make a decision about what the best shot is and then go for it.

As with photography, you don't often have the luxury of waiting by a scene for a spectacular bit of lighting, but if you know when such light is likely to occur, you can be on the lookout for it. Photographers know that among the best times to expect dramatic lighting are just before or after a storm. They wait for the theatrics of sunset and sunrise that often brings high drama to their shots.

Capture these moments of inspiration - but don't act on them right now. Use your light meter to determine if they fit with the plans that you have laid out. By weighing them against your current business, you decide if it makes sense to pursue these new areas right now or if it makes sense to keep them as part of your album for some future time. You can always take them out and look at them when the time is right.   Z

Susan Wheeler is a Principal with Pathfinder Consulting Solutions, helping companies achieve focus by prioritizing market and business strategies. Her next article will deal with the link between a company's market strategy and its operating model. If you have a different viewpoint on the reasons companies lack focus, you can reach her at susan@consultpathfinder.com.

October Event with Ruth Hennigar
Top 10 Things Needed to Create a Successful Product
by Greg Cohen

Ruth Hennigar spoke to a large crowd on the *Top 10 Things Needed to Create a Successful Product: Getting from Market Requirements to Final Software* at the October 6th meeting of the SVPMA . Ruth focused on what it takes to get a successful product built and shared lessons that apply to both large and small companies alike. Ruth developed her rules after 20 years in Information Technology, most recently as the VP of Software at Palm. Prior to Palm, Ruth was in 2 startups, as the Executive Vice President of Systems at BarterTrust.com and as the VP of Products at OnLive! Technologies. Before joining OnLive!, Ruth was the GM of the Java Products Group at Sun. Ruth also spent 6 years at Apple in various engineering and management roles and began her career at Bell Northern Research (now Nortel) as a software engineer. Ruth currently serves on several Advisory Boards for startup companies. Ruth is passionate about shipping products people want. She delivered her top 10 list in Letterman like fashion with humor and punch. Recapping the count down:

#10. *Define the customer*. You must know for whom you are building your product. Close your eyes and visualize your customer. If you can't see them, you have not defined your customer. What attributes does the core customer base posses? What problem are they trying to solve? Along with knowing who is the customer, you also need to know who isn't the customer. This will let you assess feature requests and stay focused. Once you know the customer, write it down and share it with the whole team from engineering to QA and even the executives. Make sure everyone clearly knows the target customer.

#9. *Set up-front product goals*. Decide at the beginning what the "must have" features are and the release timing. Establish your quality goals and create tests to validate the goal, such as uptime or performance. Once again, write it down.

#8. *Identify core team members.* Once the team is identified, identify a project lead. This person is the general manager of the project. She will have her trusted lieutenants but take responsibility for tracking that all the pieces come together on time. You should then clarify roles and responsibility within the team. You must get buy-in and ownership from the other team members. If this doesn't happen "you are toast." Ensure you have an executive sponsor, who may not have day-to-day tasks, but is required to prepare for and attend the regular team meetings.

#7. *Identify key issues early.* Identify issues and get them on a list. Then assign people to resolve these issues as soon as possible. You must leave time in the schedule for these issues, be it licensing or additional research. Also, be upfront when you know you don't know and reserve time to figure it out.

#6. *Learn from the last time.* Use the last project to analyze what worked, what didn't, and what improvements can be made. Review these issues in the planning meeting. Because if it didn't work last time, don't expect it to work this time, unless you have changed something. Further, introduce change and new processes early; do not wait until you are mid-project to implement a new methodology.

#5. *Understand the tradeoffs.* Understand the variables from resources, features, quality, and delivery date and make your tradeoff decisions as early as possible. You will always need to make some tradeoffs, so remember to compare the options against the original product goals.

#4. *Tell the truth.* Telling the truth is critical to get teams working together. You should never shoot the messenger; doing this will make sure that in the future your team will only tell you what you want to hear. You want the truth and you want it as soon as it is known, because the sooner you learn about an issue, the more options you have. One trick of the trade is to build in a detailed level of granularity in the schedule; this makes it easier to track small slips before they turn into major problems.

#3. *Communicate.* Clear and frequent communication is essential to successfully deliver a product. Set-up non-meeting commutation channels such as a website for discussions. You should never assume, rather be clear and specific. The core team should meet weekly. This will likely be a team of 3-6 people. Then send updates to the entire team, which might consist of 20 or more individuals. Lastly, having effective meetings requires an investment - team members need to do their pre-work. For all meetings, have an agenda and keep minutes.

#2. *Focus, focus, focus.* Keep your eye on the ball. Ruth advises keeping a short list of critical items. She refers to this as "Ruthless prioritization." You should review new requests and data against the original product goals. Make sure to avoid feature creep and "last customer input trap."

#1. *Make decisions.* You should make decisions and stick with them. This will keep you from loosing precious time by revisiting old decisions. Have a consistent process for decision-making. Identify who gets to make the decision, who has to be included, and who gets a vote versus an opinion. Once the decision is made, write it down along with options reviewed, and support the decision maker. Ruth mentioned that if new information becomes available, it is ok and prudent to revisit a decision. Adding perspective, she advises that very few decisions are fatal that aren't obvious.

That's it! Follow these ten rules and you'll release a successful product that customers want.   Z

"Keep asking yourself, What's changing? What's the opportunity this presents? Do this a dozen times a week. Get addicted to change."

From *Leading the Revolution* by Gary Hamel, Plume Books

the meeting. The slides only had the chart templates because the values needed to come from the research. But Geoff knew how he wanted to present the findings, which then let him know the correct questions to ask and data to capture.

Plan for research even under tight deadlines is key success factor two. Because getting it right early focuses the effort and keeps to project on track through delivery. Otherwise, errors get multiplied as the project moves through development, marketing, sales, and implementation. Also, do not substitute second hand feedback in place of customer research. Sales, client services, and support each have biases based on their roles and interactions with the customer. Only direct feedack will let you translate customer needs into engineering requirements and make tough tradeoff decisions.

The third key success factor requires *tightly defining your target*. Your research will then be predictive of the market response and customer satisfaction will rise. This is particularly important in situations where there is a gatekeeper between you and the actual user. Although the gatekeeper's needs must also be met, be it the economic buyer or IT, it would be foolhardy to design a product based only on their interpretation of the user's needs. You have to speak to actual users.

Key success factor four tells us to *focus on delivering value and NOT technology*. The reason for this is most customers are trying to accomplish a task and that is what they care about. Further, focusing on the value results in a more intuitive solution. If the technology is too advanced, it will only get between the user and their objective.

Geoff advised *focusing on the basic user first and then the power user* in key success factor five. This gives you broader market penetration, requires less effort, and therefore results in superior financial performance. As you add features to satisfy the power users in subsequent releases, it is important to keep the user experience uncluttered for the basis user. Turn the power features into configuration options or place off the main screens. The power user will find where the advanced features are. But place your basic user in front of an advanced feature screen, and they will not know where to start. This is important because as you move through the adoption curve, the number of unsophisticated users will grow faster than power users.

Key success factor six tells us *not to get defensive, rather, seek actionable learning*. In particular, negative vocal leaders who are in your target group represent one of the greatest opportunities for product and financial improvement. First, really angry customers often have the best clue of what they are trying to accomplish and their needs are probably typical of the larger customer base. Further, if you can get them on board by correcting the product, they will become vocal advocates and your best sales person.

The seventh key success factor is to *be customer focused, not customer compelled*. Catering to every customer desire does not let you make the appropriate trade-offs between customer and financial success and may alienate your core users. Geoff used the example of Southwest Airlines, which regularly ignores its top three complaints: meals, curbside check-in, and assigned seating. Southwest eliminated these benefits to deliver on two more highly valued airline attributes: on-time arrival and inexpensive fares.

The last of the key success factors, number eight, addressed *including your competitor's customers in your research*. This will enable you to understand your perceived weaknesses and your competitor's weaknesses. You can use this information to improve your own product, extend an advantage, and position against the competitor's product.

Geoff added a few extra points to consider, such as have customers quantify answers where possible, get your customers to open up by flagging your discussion as research, and avoid bringing anyone from your company to an interview that might want to cover up a weakness. Following this advice along with the eight key success factors will give you the influence you need in your organization to deliver exceptional products and achieve superior financial results.   z

---

ON THE MOVE

If you or a product manager you know has recently been promoted or started a new job, please email the SVPMA at OnTheMove@svpma.org .

A Little Background

Creating demos can be a painstaking, time-consuming and expensive process. In the past, I spent a ton of money paying consultants to create demos because I had neither the time nor the tools to do it myself. After doing the screen captures and writing the storyboard and the script, I would send the files to the consultant and begin the laborious process of shepherding the demo through multiple iterations until it was done. During this time, I would pray that nothing would change in the product or that my management would not suddenly decide to "tweak" something in the demo story or messaging, launching a frenzy of screen captures, rewrites, emails and phone calls to the consultant to incorporate the changes.

In an effort to gain more control over this process, I began to look for demo authoring tools. A few years ago, I came across Lotus ScreenCam. I used ScreenCam to create demos for my products; train sales and support staff and even built a self-running kiosk demo for trade shows. Unfortunately, ScreenCam had a number of drawbacks. It generated huge files that required a proprietary player, had a weak editing toolset and offered no effective way to distribute the demos over the Web. I abandoned ScreenCam when Lotus orphaned the product back in 1998-1999. And so my search began again.

The Criteria

My experiences with ScreenCam helped me define the feature set of my next demo authoring tool. I needed a tool that could do five things well:

1. Record the demo: Provide a fast, easy-to-use method of capturing the demo elements (screenshot, mouse clicks, text entry, voice over, etc.)

2. Edit the demo: Offer complete control over the editing process - I had to be able to quickly and easily change any facet of the demo at any point in the stream.

3. Enhance the demo: Easily add audio, video, text, images, shapes and callouts, as well as support linking, spell-checking, branching, user interaction such as text input or mouse selection, and comprehension testing via quizzing and scoring.

4. Generate the demo: Create small, portable files playable on virtually any client platform.

5. Publish the demo: Provide a simple means of publishing the demo for distribution over the Web, on CDs and DVDs or via email.

In short, I needed a complete authoring environment tailored to the creation of demos and simulations.

The Contenders

While there are a number of demo authoring products out there, we'll look at three that I believe best meet my criteria. The products are presented in the order in which they were introduced to the market.

- ViewletBuilder by Qarbon
- Camtasia Studio by Techsmith
- RoboDemo by eHelp

I'll provide a brief overview of each product and vendor. We'll then examine how each one addresses the criteria outlined above. The observations made here are based on my own experiences and needs. To be fair, I suggest that you evaluate these products and make your own judgments based upon how they meet your requirements.

ViewletBuilder

ViewletBuilder has been on the market since 1998 and is the flagship product of Qarbon. Qarbon describes the product as "the leading simulation software and animated help authoring tool." ViewletBuilder uses a "snapshot" metaphor to record your demo content… it may be helpful to think of taking photos with a digital camera. ViewletBuilder's authoring environment is highly integrated and emphasizes ease-of-use. In addition to ViewletBuilder, Qarbon offers ViewletFarm2, a server-based organization, management and deployment tool for Viewlets. Qarbon is the only vendor to offer their authoring tool in versions specific to Linux and Solaris as well as Windows.

Camtasia Studio

Techsmith produces Camtasia Studio and its sister product, SnagIt, a popular screen capture utility. Techsmith's website describes Camtasia Studio as "the premier video screen recording program that records, edits and shares videos of any action on your Windows desktop." The key word here is "video" because unlike the other two products described here, Camtasia records the demo as a continuous stream and stores it as an AVI file. Think of it as a camcorder for your screen. Camtasia Studio is actually a collection of components. You use different tools in Studio to record, edit, enhance and publish your demo. Camtasia was first introduced in 1999, followed by Camtasia Studio in October of 2002. The authoring environment is Windows only.

RoboDemo

Introduced in July of 2002, RoboDemo is from eHelp, best know for its RoboHelp product. RoboDemo is part of a broad suite of products described on eHelp's website as "help and user assistance software." eHelp calls RoboDemo "the easiest and most affordable way to create interactive simulations and demos." Like ViewletBuilder, RoboDemo uses a "snapshot"

• metaphor to capture the demo stream. RoboDemo's authoring environment is robust and nicely integrated. The authoring environment is Windows only.

Now we'll see how each product addresses the five criteria I outlined above:

Record
• **ViewletBuilder** records the demo content as a series of "snapshots." These snapshots can be triggered automatically by your mouse clicks or by manually pressing a hotkey. The cursor position is captured in each snapshot and the cursor movement is simulated when the demo movie is played. The result is a realistic simulation of your actions during the demo in a smaller, more compact file size than that of a continuous video file.
• **Camtasia Studio** records your demo content as a continuous video stream. Everything that happens in captured and then saved as an AVI file. You get a complete representation of your actions during the demo but the resulting files can be significantly larger than those made using the "snapshot" approach of ViewletBuilder or RoboDemo.
• **RoboDemo** also records the demo content as a series of "snapshots." These snapshots can be triggered automatically by your actions, such as mouse clicks, keystrokes, dragging and dropping an object or by manually pressing a hotkey. As with ViewletBuilder, the cursor position is captured in each snapshot and the cursor movement is simulated when the demo movie is played. RoboDemo's file sizes are comparable to those produced by ViewletBuilder.

Edit and Enhance
• **ViewletBuilder** demos, called "projects" are viewed as a series of slides, each slide representing a screen capture. Slides can be easily added or deleted. Double-clicking on an individual slide opens it in the editing environment. The editing environment is fully integrated with a strong emphasis on ease-of-use. The toolbars and menu options are context-sensitive, adjusting the functions available to match the action you are trying to perform. The enhancement toolset is robust, with a full range of objects such as balloons or call-outs, text notes, shapes, and images. The toolset also offers the ability to define interactive functions such as text input, mouse clicks, and quizzing. Adding audio to your slides through the built-in audio recorder is simple. Prerecorded audio can be imported as

well. ViewletBuilder includes a built-in spell-checker. Demos can be previewed at any time in the editing process.
• **Camtasia Studio** employs multiple tools to perform the edit and enhance functions. You use Camtasia Recorder to capture the demo, Camtasia Producer to edit the demo and add audio tracks and Camtasia Effects to enhance the demo with shapes, lines, text and images. These three tools are not fully integrated and it takes a little time getting used to jumping back and forth between them. The working environment in Producer and in Effects is very similar to that of a video editing tool, with the demo movie file displayed in a linear timeline. Camtasia Studio does not offer quizzing or other interactive functionality. In addition, you cannot branch the demo because of the linear nature of the demo files. Camtasia Studio does not include a spell-checker. It is easy to preview demos at any time in Producer or Effects.
• **RoboDemo** files, or "movies", are viewed as a series of frames similar in appearance to the slide view offered in ViewletBuilder. Frames are easily added or deleted. To work on a frame, double-click on it to open the editing environment. The tools and functions are well integrated and enhancements such as shapes, images and text are easily added. RoboDemo also provides interactive functionality such as text input, mouse clicks and quizzing. It also offers a few bells and whistles not found in the other products; such as the ability to have RoboDemo automatically generate text captions based upon the action being recorded. Audio recording is straightforward with the built-in recording function and you can import prerecorded audio files. RoboDemo also offers a built-in spell-checker. As with the other products, you can preview your demo at any point in the editing process.

Generate and Publish
• **ViewletBuilder** compiles your completed demos into a Flash (.swf) file. The portability and widespread use of the Flash Player makes it a good choice for publishing demos via the web. You can add additional Flash sequences (such as an animated logo) to the beginning and end of your file to further customize the demo. ViewletBuilder also automatically generates a generic HTML page to provide a simple Web front-end for your demo. You can edit and enhance the HTML to customize the front-end. In addition to publishing the demo in Flash format, you can generate standalone executables for

Windows (.exe), Linux (.vvl) and MacOS (.hqx) and you can create a zipped version of the demo file for distribution via email. You can also export the demo slides as image files or as an Adobe Acrobat PDF. Finally, you can export the demo's text captions to an HTML file, making it easier to localize your demo content for international distribution. Once translated, you can import the captions back into the movie.

- **Camtasia Producer** stores your completed demo files in AVI format but can also generate your files in a wide variety of video formats: including Flash (.swf); QuickTime (.mov); Windows Media (.wmv); RealMedia (.rm); and even Animated GIF (.gif). Producer also allows you to export the demo as a Windows executable (.exe) file. Camtasia Studio includes a MenuMaker tool to build simple menus of your demo files for publication on a CD-ROM. To publish and distribute in Flash format, you can use an optional tool called Theater for Camtasia Studio. Theater generates menus for your Flash demos complete with Flash playback controls.

- **RoboDemo** can export finished movies into Flash (.swf), Macintosh Projector (.hqx) executable, and Windows executable (.exe) files, as well as a format that supports playback on many PocketPCs. RoboDemo can also automatically generate generic HTML code to add a Flash demo to a web page. You can then edit and enhance the HTML to further customize your Web front-end. You can export a demo to an MS Word (.doc) file, a useful feature when documenting or distributing a demo script. And you can export and import the movie captions into text files (.txt) or HTML files, making it simpler to edit or translate them. RoboDemo also incorporates MenuBuilder, a tool that simplifies the task of building a front-end for your demos. MenuBuilder can be used to design and generate menus in HTML, Flash (.swf) or Windows executable (.exe) format. It provides a selection of built-in templates and can also import PowerPoint templates.

Versions, Pricing and Demos

- **ViewletBuilder4** (the most recent release) is offered in three versions: Lite for $99; Standard for $199; and Professional for $499. The Standard version is fine for demo creation unless you want to include interactive functionality like quizzing or user input. If that is the case, then spring for the Professional version. Qarbon offers a free trial edition for download. The trial version embeds a watermark and promotional animations in the files you create but otherwise offers full functionality comparable to that of the Professional version. There is no time limit on the trial edition. Download the trial edition at www.qarbon.com.

- **Camtasia Studio 1.1** is regularly offered at $349. Techsmith offers a fully functional trial version with a timed evaluation period of 30 days. You'll find the trial version at www.techsmith.com.

- **RoboDemo** is available in two versions: RoboDemo 5.0 will ship in October 2003 with an introductory price of $299; RoboDemo 5.0 eLearning Edition should also ship in October 2003 with an introductory price of $499 (list price is $599.) Get the eLearning Edition if you want to include quizzing and scoring in your demos. eHelp offers a downloadable trial of RoboDemo 4.0 that is active for a period of 15 days. A trial version of RoboDemo 5.0 is in the works. The 4.0 trial version has some minor functional limitations. Download it at www.ehelp.com.

Summary

We've only scratched the surface of what these tools offer. If you are spending lots of money and time on consultants to produce your demos, these products are worth a look. Try them… you'll save money, have more control over the demo creation process and get your demos in front of your customers faster. If you don't have the time to produce the demos yourself, enlist your sales engineers, support team or professional services team. Have contests with prizes for the best demo. Once these tools are in use, you may find that they will spread throughout your customer-facing organizations. The support team can use these tools to provide animated FAQs that will help reduce their call volumes, the training team can incorporate them into their online curriculum, and the sales team can use them to provide early looks at new products or as "leave behinds" for customers after a first call. And you might get a few days off.   z

Have any ideas for the Toolkit? Send them to Bob Lee at robtglee@comcast.net.

Bob Lee has been in high tech marketing for the past ten years, holding product management, product marketing and evangelism roles for companies such as Symantec, Clarify, Computer Curriculum Corporation and SeeBeyond. His interests include writing, e-Learning, software interaction design and cool tech gadgets. Bob is currently working on a book about Silicon Valley and the software industry.

SVPMA Workshop Report

by Jamie O'halloran

The Workshop series is on a roll. Our second workshop continued to deliver our members a wonderful opportunity for learning and skills building. We had a good turn out and were fortunate to have a wonderful presenter in Jonathan C. Miller, Founder & CEO of Truereq software. We would like to extend our warm thanks and appreciation to presenters Jonathan and his team for the exceptional Product Lifecycle Management workshop they provided.

During the workshop some participants requested a follow-up session to continue exploring Product Lifecycle Management topics and collaborative product definition. We also received very positive survey results and additional requests for another session with Jonathan and his team. The Truereq team happily is providing an additional presentation and breakout session for attendees in November. If you are interested in finding out information about this session please contact Devin McKinney, Director of Product Marketing, Truereq: devin@truereq.com or (650) 283-5133.

The Product Lifecycle Management workshop presentation slide deck will be posted on the SVPMA web site shortly.

November 2003 Workshop
We are also very excited to announce the next workshops in our series:

Defining your Distinctive Competencies: Plan Your Career and Market Yourself Using the Pragmatic Marketing® Framework, presented by Barbara Nelson.

Whether you are currently employed or are looking for a job, being able to set yourself apart is essential. In this workshop, attendees will learn how to clearly articulate what value they can deliver to an organization.

If you are a product manager or product-marketing manager, learn how you can use the Pragmatic Marketing Framework to demonstrate how you are delivering strategic value to your company.

If you are currently exploring job opportunities, find out how you can use the Pragmatic Marketing Framework to differentiate yourself from the hordes of other applicants scrambling for the few jobs that pop-up.

The presenter, Barbara Nelson has over 20 years of experience in the software industry and successfully launched several products following a market-driven methodology. At Pragmatic Marketing® she has been an instructor for the top-rated courses "Practical Product Management" and "Requirements That Work".

Mike leads break out session at the September Product Lifecycle Management Workshop

SVPMA Appoints Three New Board Members

The SVPMA announces three new appointments to the board of directors.

Jamie O'Halloran
As Director of Workshops for the **SVPMA**, Jamie is responsible for developing and managing SVPMA's workshop series. Jamie manages B2B offerings at Cisco Systems and has 10 years of eCommerce and SCM experience. Prior to Cisco, he held various product, marketing and operations management positions at QRS Corporation, helping to develop numerous collaborative commerce, product catalog and channel management solutions for the retail industry. Jamie Graduated Cum Laude from the University of Massachusetts, Amherst with a B.S. in Psychology.

Anar Taori
Anar is the **SVPMA** Director of Membership. She is a seasoned technology marketing professional with several years of experience in Product Management, Development, and Marketing. She has worked at industry leaders such as Intel, Morgan Stanley, Compression Labs, Sprint, and American Express.

Anar holds an MBA from Wharton with a MS in Electrical & Computer Engineering from Purdue University and a BSEE from Birla Institute of Technology and Science (BITS), India.

Sachin Gangupantula
Sachin is the Director of Business development for the **SVPMA**. Sachin is responsible for developing and managing relationships with sponsors of the SVPMA. and strategic marketing. He manages product marketing responsibility at TeamF1, Inc., a silicon valley-based embedded security company, and is an advisor to the innovative web-magazine Slowread http://www.slowread.com for entrepreneurial opportunities in India, which was launched in September 2003. He has amassed considerable experience during the past ten years in software industry with evolving roles in software design and development, product marketing, strategic marketing and business development. Sachin holds an MS degree in computer science from University of Hawaii and a BSEE degree in electrical engineering from Birla Institute of Technology and Science (BITS), India. z

---

Location, Location, Location

Dear Members,

We wanted to take this opportunity to inform you that the SVPMA is exploring other venues for events and workshops. Though we understand that many of you have become accustomed to the Sunnyvale location, constrained availability and rising costs of the current Sunnyvale location have necessitated our current search for alternate locations.

We continue to be committed to providing you with high quality speakers at an affordable price.

- SVPMA Board

Workshop Report from previous page

The workshop will be taking place on November 15th: Radisson Villa Hotel San Mateo. Details of the event will be sent out via email shortly or look for the advertisement at the back of this newsletter.

January 2004 Workshop
In January, we will be bring you a workshop on Communicating with your Customers, focused on how to speak to hi-tech customer's in order to persuade them to buy your products. Steve Martin will be our presenter.

We are excited to continue to bring you great speakers and presenters on topic that will help you succeed in you careers as Product Management and Marketing professionals. Thanks to all who helped develop and make our workshop series a success. We look forward to your attendance, participation and feedback in the future.   z

LETTER TO THE EDITOR
Do you have an issue you would like to share with the membership, feedback on a presentation or article, or suggestions for the newsletter? Let us know. Please email all comments to letters@svpma.org .

BOOK REVIEW
User Interface Design for Programmers by Joel Spolsky
Review by Greg Cohen

I have picked up a number of books on user interface design over the years, but Joel Spolsky's *User Interface Design for Programmers* is the first to hold my interest from cover the cover. Joel has an informal writing style but takes great care in the structure and layout of his work. He starts by building the case that controlling ones environment is the core to making users happy. He shares a humorous story of his first job working on the production line at an industrial bakery. Joel developed a number of improvisations to control his environment, which meant ensuring that the bread lines kept moving and that giant lumps of dough did not end up on the bakery floor. He then jumps right into computers and delivers his cardinal axiom of user interface (UI) design: "A user interface is well designed when the program behaves exactly how the user thought it would."

UI design starts with understanding your user's profile and the user model. More simply, how does your user expect the program to behave? If folders are employed as a metaphor, people expect them to act in a certain way based on their experience with folders in real life. Likewise, skilled computer users assume new software will work in a similar way to other software they have used in the past. Joel points to some of the amusing differences between Macintoshes and Windows machines that can frustrate users who need to switch from one to the other.

Joel illustrates his points with screen shots and stories from his own experiences as a developer at Microsoft and Juno. He shares the good and the bad at Microsoft and mostly just the bad at Juno. He covers the gamut of UI controls. In discussing *affordances* and *metaphors*, Joel tells a story of how when the Microsoft Word team switched to using tabs in dialogs, usability shot up from 30% to 100%. When they tried, however, to put two rows of tabs on a screen that moved forward and backwards depending on the row you clicked, the laws of physics were violated, and users became confused. The team solved this by going back to a single row of tabs with scroll arrows. Joel's real answer to the problem is to figure out how to whittle down the many options to a manageable size.

Further into the book, Joel draws an intriguing distinction between usability and learnability. Most usability tests actually test learnability, trying to answer the question of whether someone can sit down in front of the computer and complete a series of tasks. Learnability is great the first time you need to complete a task, but if you need to perform the task frequently, learnability may get in the way of usability. For example, a print wizard is great the first time and maybe the second time your need to print, but if you print often, it is a lot more usable just to click on a printer icon or type <ctrl><p>. The web is a medium where learnability is a lot easier to achieve than usability. But there is only one chapter on designing for the web. Although the lessons in the book are universal, web design could have used more coverage.

Joel offers some general advice throughout the book as well. Some of the highlights include "don't be creative." Instead, go look at how other popular programs work and emulate their UI's as much as possible. "Don't be so sure [Microsoft] is not right." Microsoft spends more money than anyone else on usability testing and keeps detailed statistics on tech support calls, so there might be a very good user reason behind their implementation. Further, "People can't read." This advice goes beyond just the fact that no one reads the user guide: even simple dialogue boxes are best kept terse - a few words at most.

User Interface Design for Programmers should not be reserved for programmer, but read by product managers and anyone who influences software product design. The book is simple in its presentation and thought provoking in its content. Joel's stories are entertaining and easily illustrate the differences between good and bad user interface design.   z

Saturday November 15th 8:30 am to Noon

Radisson Villa Hotel San Mateo

Plan Your Career and Market Yourself Using the Pragmatic Marketing® Framework

SVPMA.ORG
Silicon Valley Product Management Association

Identify your distinctive competencies & use the Pragmatic Marketing Framework to do it!

In today's tough job climate, it is more important than ever to clearly **articulate what value you can deliver to an organization**. Whether you are currently employed or are looking for a job, being able to set yourself apart is essential.

If you are a product manager or product-marketing manager, learn how you can use the Pragmatic Marketing Framework to **demonstrate how you are delivering strategic value** to your company. If you are pursuing job opportunities, find out how you can use the Pragmatic Marketing Framework to differentiate yourself from the hordes of other applicants scrambling for the few jobs that pop up.

Even if you have previously attended Pragmatic Marketing's "Practical Product Management" course in the past, you will come away with new ideas on how to use what you learned and will become re-energized about the process. If you haven't yet attended any of Pragmatic Marketing's courses, this will introduce you to the "grid" and get you started on how you can **differentiate yourself as a product manager or marketer**.

Workshop agenda includes:
- **Continental Breakfast & Networking**
- **Introduction to the Pragmatic Marketing Framework**
- **Break-out Session to discuss & define your distinctive competencies**
- **Discussion of career planning and self-marketing**
- **Break-Out Session to discuss & define self-marketing strategy**

Event location: Radisson Villa Hotel San Mateo, 4000 South El Camino Real, San Mateo, CA
8:30am Registration/Networking
9:00am Workshop
Noon Wrap-up/Networking

Pre-Registration (before November 11)	Event Day Registration
SVPMA Members $25	**SVPMA Members $35**
Non-SVPMA Members $40	Non-SVPMA Members $50

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

About Barbara Nelson
Barbara Nelson has over 20 years of experience in the software industry and successfully launched several products. At Pragmatic Marketing ® she has been an instructor for the top-rated courses "Practical Product Management" and "Requirements That Work".

Prior to joining Pragmatic Marketing ®, Ms. Nelson was Vice President of Product Marketing for Solomon Software, a leading provider of business and accounting applications for the middle market (now part of Microsoft).

Barbara attributes her success to "building products people want to buy" and is a self-proclaimed "market-driven product evangelist".