

# Case studies For PM



The Case Study round is one of the qualifier rounds for any product manager interviews. It helps recruiters understand your product, problem-solving, and communication skills.

Generally, case studies will have multiple parts to gauge your overall product understanding.

- **Product Design Questions**

Expectations: Wireframes & Prototypes

- **Revenue Estimation/Projection**

Expectations: 3 or 5 years of revenue estimation

- **Writing a blog or email to your customers**

Expectations: Simple blog or email in 300 words

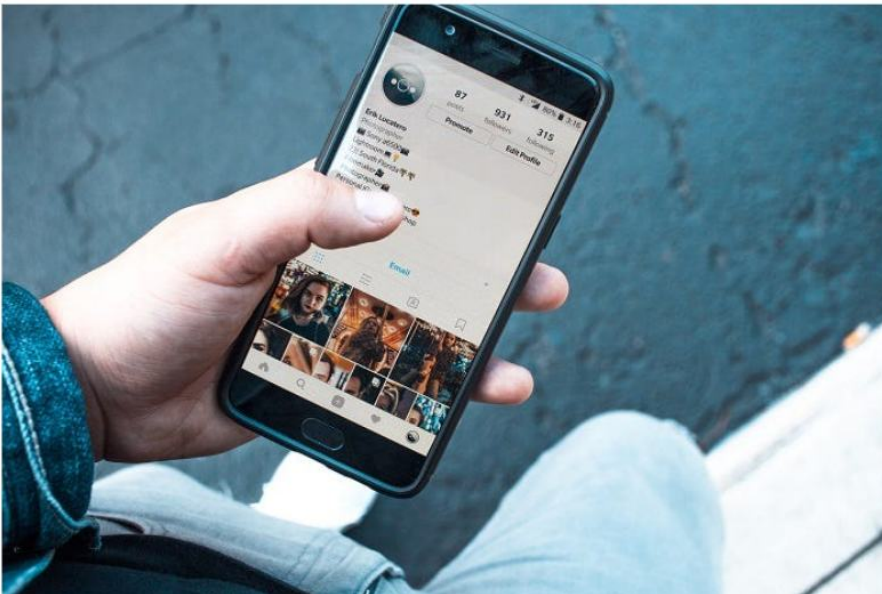
- **Problem Solving Questions**

Expectations: User flow diagram or pdf docs or presentation

Let's jump on the sample questions and scenarios

## 1. Instagram Case-study

**Type:** New Features, Marketing, Problem-solving, Go-to-market strategies



You have been on-boarded as a Product Consultant for Instagram. In your monthly catchup meeting, you found that businesses or brands pay influencers to post adverts on their profile. Influencers are also generating decent revenue from their followers, but the entire process is happening outside the Instagram platform. Some of the companies who help businesses do this are — [Ifluenz](#), [Scrunch](#), and [Pulpkey](#).

**Part 1: New features** — Can you build something which can make the entire experience smoother for both brands and influencers? Think from both influencers' and brands' perspectives.

**Expectations:**

- Explain how you would like to solve this problem?
- User flow diagram.
- Wireframes & Prototypes

**Part 2: Launch Strategies** — Let's say you have got this feature built by your tech team. How would you go about the launch plan?

**Expectations:**

- Explain your launch or Go-to-market strategies for this feature
- Write a blog post in around 300 words to be shared with influencers.

## 2. Lyft Case-study

**Type:** New Features, Metrics, Problem-solving, Prioritization



You joined Lyft as a Product Manager. You aim to increase the revenue per active rider in the next six months. How would you go about it?

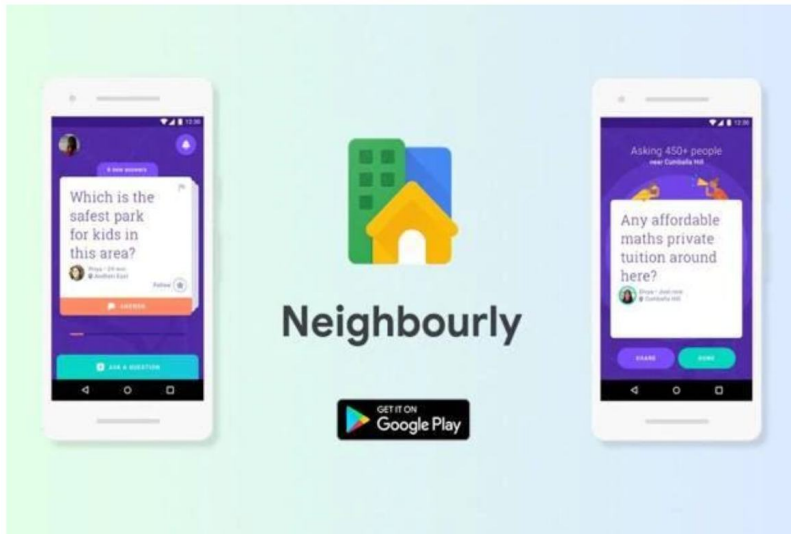
**Expectations:**

List down the improvements in existing features or suggest new features. First, provide a name and a short description of your product features. Then, please select the highest value feature and describe it in detail.

- Work on a PRD and wireframes.
- Include the metrics that would help you measure whether you are moving towards your goal.
- Three years of revenue estimation plan.

### 3. Google Case-study

**Type:** Metrics, Data, Business Insights, Product Roadmap



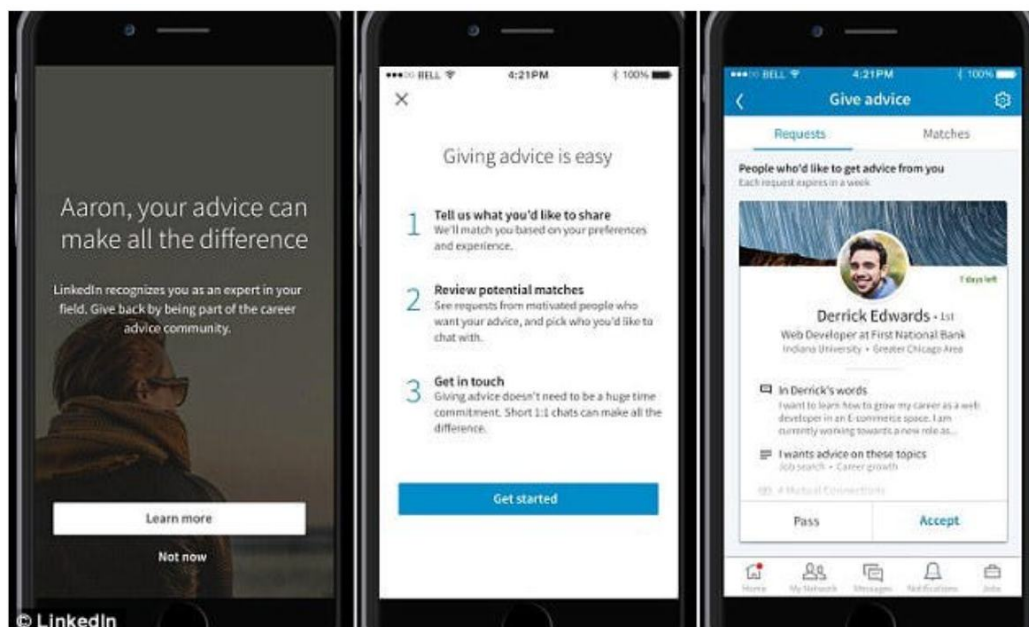
Let's assume; you joined Google as a Product Manager for a newly launched app [Neighbourly](#). How would you go about planning the 12-month product roadmap?

#### Expectations

- Build a 12-month product roadmap.
- Choose the metrics you would track and why.
- Come up with a revenue model for this app.

### 4. LinkedIn Case-study

**Type:** Data, Metrics, Problem-Solving





You joined LinkedIn as a Product Consultant. You have observed that the newly launched “[Career Advice](#)” is used by only 5 million users out of their 575 million user base. What would you change and why?

**Expectations:**

- PDF document the proposed solutions and how you would validate your ideas.
- List the Data points you would analyse, which lead to your conclusion.
- Discuss the success metrics of the proposed solution.

<https://sushantkr17.medium.com/clearing-the-product-management-case-study-round-sample-solution-91dcbe677f4b>

Product management case studies are detailed analyses of how a product was conceptualized, developed, and marketed. A typical product management case study contains the following:

1. The pain points and expectations of the user
2. Competing products in the market
3. **Development**, delivery, and iteration methods
4. Marketing strategies implemented to relay the product’s value proposition
5. How the product was received
6. Lessons for the product team

So, why should you learn about the development of a product in so much detail? The answer lies in the sixth bullet.

Let’s look at how reading case studies related to product management can help you.

## How product management case studies help you

**Here’s why reading product management case studies is a worthwhile investment of your time. A well-written case study:**

1. Gives you an in-depth understanding of real product problems: Meeting or exceeding the expectations of the customers is always challenging. Whether it is technical complexities, budget limitations, or organizational miscommunication, a case study helps you recognize the source of the problem which led to the development of a less-desirable product.
2. Contains practical insights outside of the theory: Even a layman can learn the steps of **SaaS product management**. However, seasoned product managers know that developing a successful product takes more

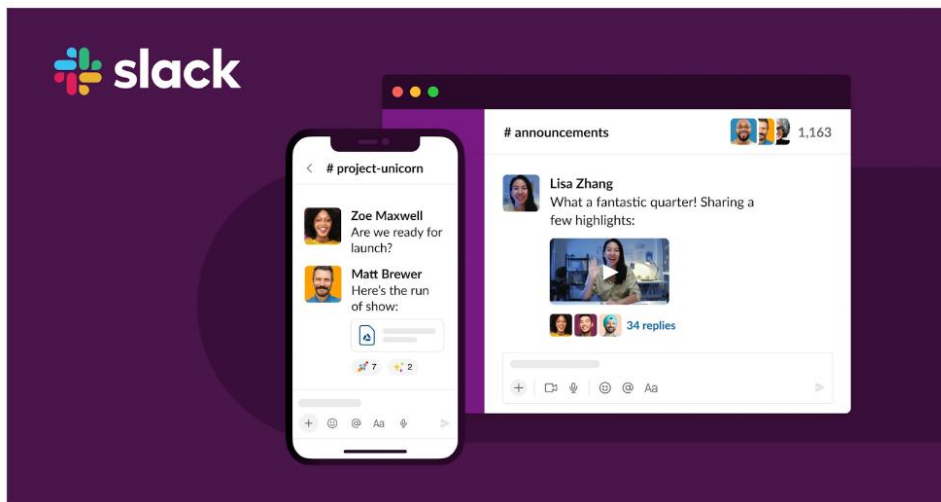
than learning the development steps. These case studies contain tons of real-life scenarios and the lessons that come with them.

3. Educates you and makes you a better product manager: Product management case study examples take you through the journey of developing a product, which helps you improve your existing approach toward product development. You will also learn better ways to manage your team and resources.

In simple terms, a product management case study helps teams learn lessons that they can emulate to develop a more profitable product.

In this article, let's look at six product management case studies that are a must-read for every product manager.

## 1. Slack: Initial product launch strategy



([source](#))

Stewart Butterfield started a gaming company called Tiny Speck to change the world of massively multiplayer online role-playing games (MMORPG). Him and his team created Glitch which was quite different from other games in that genre such as World of Warcraft.

Glitch was a 2D game that did not have the violent aspects that typical MMORPG games had at the time. It allowed extensive character personalization and Butterfield described it as "Monty Python crossed with Dr. Seuss on acid".

While building Glitch, Butterfield and his team used the Internet Relay Chat (IRC), an online chat tool popular in the 80s and 90s. However, it fell short as the team found it difficult to keep track of past conversations, which motivated them to build their own communication tool.

As they developed Glitch, their internal chat tool gained more features based on their needs.

Despite lots of support from investors, Glitch was unable to attract enough players to keep running profitably and **Butterfield eventually shut it down in 2012**.

After six months, in early 2013, Butterfield renamed their internal communication tool **Slack** – acronym for Searchable Log of All Conversation and Knowledge and requested his friends and colleagues to try it out and give feedback — they all loved it.

By May 2013, Slack was ready for the big reveal which posed a new challenge — executing the perfect launch strategy to drive demand.

## Slack’s Challenge: Nailing the initial product launch

While launching an app that can have such an impact on how organizations work, it is crucial to get it right. At the time, there weren’t many team messaging apps and most teams had conversations via email.

Slack needed a significant number of early adopters to validate their hypotheses about team collaboration and collect data that will help them improve its services further. Consequently, this increased the stakes for the first launch.

## How did Slack do it

**CEO Stewart Butterfield revealed** that on the first day of the launch, Slack welcomed 8000 new users which rose to 15000 at the end of the second week. The credit for this initial success, he explains, went primarily to social media.

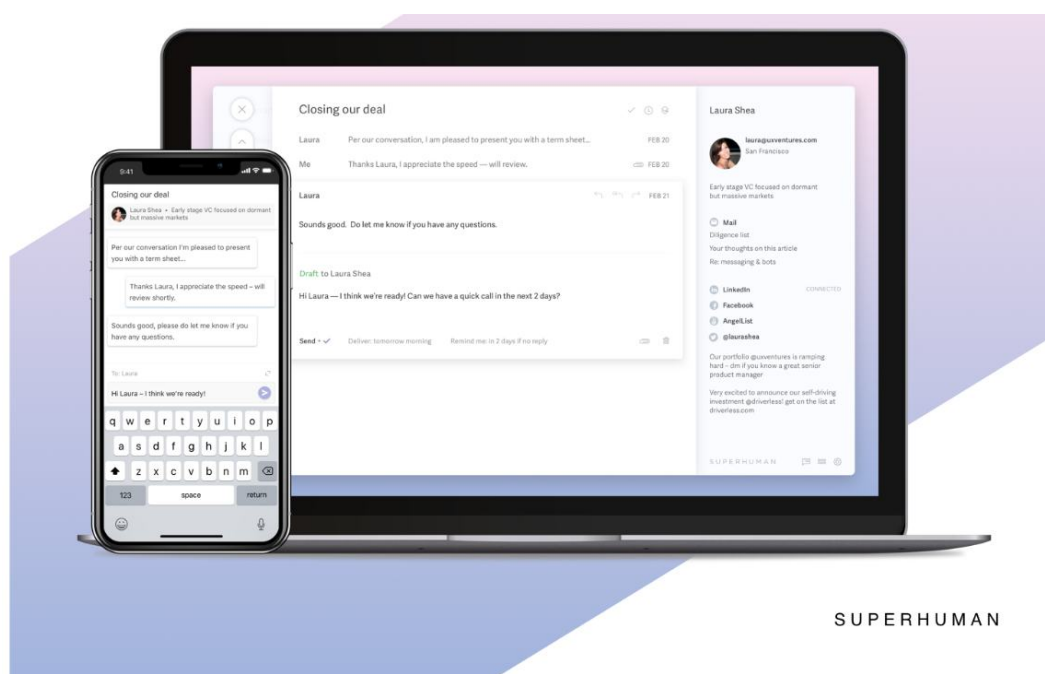
Social media helped Slack deliver its PR pieces through its genuine users. This led to a snowballing effect because people interacted with people.

Slack recorded over **18 million active users** in 2020.

Although the impact of social media-based word-of-mouth marketing will have different levels of success as it depends on factors such as the type of product and its use cases, you should have a social media marketing strategy to spread the word.

**Suggested Read:** [Leveraging VoC-driven AI Insights to Build Revenue-generating Products](#)

## 2. Superhuman: Finding product-market fit



([source](#))

[Superhuman](#) is a premium email service for busy teams and professionals who need more of everything; speed, usability, and personalization. Apart from superb design, Superhuman processes and executes any request within 100ms.

Rahul Vohra built Rapportive in 2010 — a plugin that adds social profiles to Gmail which was later [acquired by LinkedIn](#). This gave Vohra an intimate view of email and quickly realized that things will progressively get worse. In his words, “I could see Gmail getting worse every single year, becoming more cluttered, using more memory, consuming more CPU, slowing down your machine, and still not working properly offline.”

He also brought attention to the number of plugins people used, “And on top of that, people were installing plugins like ours, Rapportive, but also Boomerang, Mixmax, Clearbit, you name it, they had it. And each plugin took those problems of clutter, memory, CPU, performance offline, and made all of them dramatically worse.” Vohra had one question in his mind — how different would the email experience be if it was designed today instead of 12 years ago?

[Superhuman](#) was born to give professionals the email experience that they have been long waiting for. Smooth, easy on the eyes, and most importantly, blazingly fast. But, there was one elephant in the room.

The idea of building a better email service than the existing players sounded great. However, going against some of the biggest brands of Silicon Valley required more than a bad personal experience with Gmail. The Superhuman team needed evidence that such a product is actually desirable.

## **Superhuman’s Challenge: Establishing product-market fit**

The team at Superhuman was competing against the email services of Apple, Google, and Microsoft which made the product-market fit quite crucial. But how do you know whether you have achieved product-market fit?

### **How did Superhuman do it**

Vohra and his team came up with an innovative idea to measure product-market fit by testing crucial hypotheses and focusing on the right target audience.

**Superhuman had [two hypotheses](#):**

1. People are dissatisfied with Gmail and how slow it is.
2. People are also dissatisfied with third-party email clients and how buggy they were.

In a [product management case study](#), Vohra explained how to find the right audience — the users who would be ‘very disappointed’ if they could no longer use your product. After identifying them, all you have to do is build the product as they want it.



### 3. Medium: “Highlights” feature



([source](#))

Evan Williams co-founded Blogger and Twitter which has helped millions of people share their thoughts with the world. Although both platforms became quite popular, they still couldn't deliver the best reading experience to their users. Blogger allowed readers to browse topics by authors only and Twitter made it difficult for authors to aptly describe themselves.

He quickly recognized the need for a publishing platform that delivers a diverse experience for the readers and allows the authors to speak their hearts.

That's how Medium was born. It enabled readers to browse articles by topics and authors, helping them to gain different perspectives on any particular subject. It also allowed everyone from professional programmers to amateur chefs to share their insights with the world as they wanted it.

The developers slowly added more features to Medium such as tags, linked images, social cards, and sharing drafts as it evolved through the years.

One of the many notable features of the platform is the “Highlight” feature — where you can select any particular post section and treat it as a mini-post. You can comment on the Highlight or tweet it, which is handy for both personal revision and sharing interesting snippets with others.

**Suggested Read:** [Want to become a Product Coach?](#)

### Medium's Challenge: Determining whether “Highlights” added value

Medium faced a challenge while determining a metric that can give them an accurate assessment of the desirability of this feature. In other words, they needed a metric that would tell them whether the “Highlights” feature made user interactions better and more rewarding.

## How did Medium do it?

The team at Medium solved the challenge by [shifting their focus](#) to one crucial metric rather than multiple vanity metrics such as organic visits and retention time which signifies how much value your users are getting out of your product based on retention rate.

For Medium, it was [Total Time Reading \(TTR\)](#). It is calculated by estimating the average read time which is the number of words divided by the average reading speed (about 265 WPM) and adding the time spent by the reader lingering over good paragraphs by tracking scrolling speed.

## 4. Ipsy: Managing distribution



[\(source\)](#)

Michelle Phan started her journey as a YouTuber who recognized the importance of makeup in someone's self-expression. She has been sharing beauty tips and makeup tutorials with her audience since 2007.

While on a trip to Thailand, she observed how little girls scrambled to pay for makeup samples in front of vending machines. Five years later, she launched a subscription-based [Glam Bag program](#) — where the customers will receive 4-5 deluxe-sized samples of makeup products.

MyGlam, as it was known back then, quickly gained over [half-a-million monthly subscribers](#) which created one of the biggest online beauty communities.

Phan quickly realized what she wanted to do — to build a brand for women who wanted to share their perspectives on beauty and meet like-minded people with similar interests and styles.

[Ipsy](#), which comes from the Latin root "ipse" meaning "self", was created by Phan, Marcelo Camberos, Jennifer Goldfarb, and Richard Frias to expand the user experience.

Although Phan knew how to convert viewers into paying customers, executing a marketing strategy by scaling it up was challenging.

## **Ipsy's Challenge: Managing a content distribution strategy**

The first [makeup tutorial by Michelle Phan](#) has now over 12 million views. Videos like that helped Phan get her first subscribers on her MyGlam program.

This shows the importance and impact of influencer-led content on revenue for businesses in the beauty industry.

However, running an influencer content distribution strategy involves collaborating with multiple passionate influencers. It was challenging to find like-minded influencers who will promote only one brand. Moreover, when working with influencers, it's important to implement effective [content moderation](#) to make sure the posted content aligns with your goals.

Phan and her team had a simple solution for this.

## **How did Ipsy do it**

Phan and Spencer McClung, EVP of Media and Partnerships at Ipsy, partnered with beauty influencers like Bethany Mota, Promise Phan, Jessica Harlow, and Andrea Brooks who were already subscribed to MyGlam to create content exclusively for Ipsy.

In a [case study](#) analysis, McClung revealed that it put Ipsy on a content-based growth loop where the content was created by both the influencers and customers for the beauty community.

Sponsored content for products by influencers helped them increase their reach and helped Ipsy get more loyal customers. This growth loop gained Ipsy over [3 million monthly subscribers](#).

**Suggested Read:** [Pivoting equals failure?](#) 🍷

## **5. Stitch Fix: Mastering personalization**

## STITCH FIX OFFICE STYLE



LAYERED KNITS



PRINTED SHIFT DRESS



BOOTIES & SKIRT



OVERSIZED CARDI



UPDATED LEATHER TOTE



NEUTRAL DUSTER



CHAMBRAY BUTTON-UP



COLORLED JEANS



ALL BLACK



HIGH-WAISTED DENIM



BLACK TIGHTS



MIDI SKIRT

([source](#))

Katrina Lake, the founder of [Stitch Fix](#), realized back in 2011 that apparel shopping needed an upgrade. eCommerce failed to meet the expectations of the shoppers and retail shops were falling short in terms of options.

In an interview with [The Cut](#), she revealed "Searching online for jeans is a ridiculously bad experience. And I realized that if I imagined a different future, I could create it."

After realizing that no one has merged data and fashion shopping, she set out to make a difference. She started a personal styling service out of her apartment in 2011 when she was pursuing her MBA from Harvard.

Lake relied on SurveyMonkey to keep track of her customer's preferences and charged \$20 as a styling fee. In late 2012 Eric Colson, then the VP of data science and engineering at Netflix, joined Lake on her journey of crafting the future of retail.

Lake and Colson wanted to give their customers much more than just personalized recommendations.



## Stitch Fix's Challenge: Building a personalized store

Stitch Fix wanted to give their customers more than just personalized recommendations — they wanted to build a personalized store for them where everything they look at, from clothes to accessories, matches their flavor. But everyone's body dimensions, preferences, budgets, and past choices are unique which can make building a personalized store difficult.

The team at Stitch Fix found a simple yet effective solution for this challenge.

### How did Stitch Fix do it

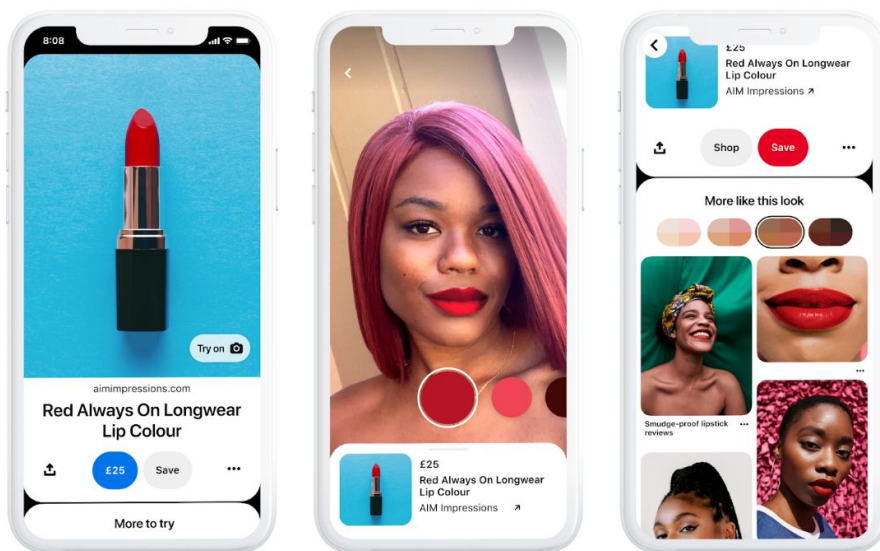
Katrina Lake, CEO of Stitch Fix, [revealed in a case study](#) that personalization is crucial for the onboarding, retention, and monetization of customers.

When signing up, Stitch Fix asks you a few questions about your fashion choices and picks clothes that look the best on you. Furthermore, the collections in your personal store will keep improving as it continuously learns more about your personal preferences.

Also, there is no subscription fee which makes Stitch Fix a great option for occasional shoppers.

**Suggested Read:** [Canva's Success Tale in the World of Design](#)

## 6. Pinterest: User retention



([source](#))

Ben Silbermann started his tech career at Google's customer support department. Although he loved the company and believed in its vision, he quickly became frustrated as he wasn't allowed to build products.

With support from his girlfriend (now wife) Divya and a college friend Paul Sciarra (co-founder), Ben created an app called "Tote" in 2009 which was described as a "catalog for the phone". Tote allowed users to catalog their favorite items and will be alerted whenever they were on sale so they can make a purchase.

However, the users used it to share their collections with each other instead. Ben recalled how he collected insects as a kid and loved sharing his collection with others. He recognized how people, in general, love to do that.

And, just like that, [Pinterest was born](#) where users can “pin” whatever they are interested in and add it to their personal collections.

[Pinterest](#) quickly became a hit and entered the global market.

Despite huge success within the US, Pinterest struggled to retain users globally. The team realized that the primary reason users churned is that something stopped them from getting the product’s core value — building personal collections.

### **Pinterest’s Challenge: Helping customers quickly realize the core value**

There are many things that can prevent a user from accessing a product’s core value and one of them is internal friction within the product.

Pinterest’s product folks zeroed in on the one feature that was the gateway to the product’s core value — the “Pin It” feature.

Users outside the US simply couldn’t relate to the term, even though all it did was save the item they like to their personal collection.

### **How did Pinterest do it**

The “Pin It” feature of Pinterest is linked directly to its brand identity. Casey Winters, former growth product lead at Pinterest, suggested changing it to “Save”, particularly in areas outside of the US.

As of the third quarter of 2022, it has over [445 million](#) monthly users all over the world exploring various “ideas” to build collections for sharing with their friends.

[Casey concludes in the product management case study](#) that checking whether the users are getting your product’s core value is pivotal in solving most of your growth challenges.

# Key Takeaways

Case studies for product management contain in-depth insights that help product teams improve their approach toward their product's ideation, [analysis](#), development, and commercialization.

**The six product management case study examples we reviewed above give these crucial insights:**

- 1. Slack:** Don't forget to use social media for marketing your product before its launch.
- 2. Superhuman:** Focus on the users that will be "very disappointed" if they can't use your product anymore to achieve product-market fit.
- 3. Medium:** Track the one metric that tells you whether your users are getting value from your product rather than vanity metrics such as organic traffic.
- 4. Ipsy:** Partner with influencers to educate your target audience on how to get the most out of your product.
- 5. Stitch Fix:** Learn about [what your users want](#) and recommend them just that.
- 6. Pinterest:** Continuously experiment by changing multiple variables to uncover new growth opportunities.

To put these lessons into practice, you need to provide your team with the right tools that help them interact with your users, learn about their preferences, monitor their usage data, plan the next steps, and manage product development effectively.

[Zeda.io](#) is a product management super-app that allows you to do just that. You can run your entire [product management process](#), from ideation to delivery, in one place. Zeda.io comes with over 5000 [integrations](#) with Zapier, enabling you to hit the ground running in no time.

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# More case studies Concept wise prep

## 1. Product Improvement Case Study

**Case:** You are the product manager for a popular social media platform. Recently, you have observed a decline in user engagement. Your task is to identify potential reasons for this decline and propose a strategy to improve engagement.

### Steps to approach:

- **Understand the problem:** Analyze metrics to pinpoint where engagement is dropping (e.g., specific features, user demographics).
- **Identify hypotheses:** List possible reasons for the decline (e.g., changes in user behavior, competitor actions, feature issues).
- **User research:** Propose methods to gather user feedback (e.g., surveys, user interviews).
- **Prioritize solutions:** Based on impact and effort, suggest a prioritized list of improvements (e.g., feature enhancements, UI changes).
- **Measure success:** Define key performance indicators (KPIs) to track the effectiveness of your changes.

## 2. New Product Launch Case Study

**Case:** Your company wants to launch a new mobile payment app. You are responsible for developing the product roadmap and go-to-market strategy.

### Steps to approach:

- **Market research:** Analyze the market to understand the needs, competitors, and opportunities.
- **Define target audience:** Identify and describe the target users for the app.
- **Value proposition:** Articulate the unique value your app provides compared to existing solutions.
- **Feature set:** Determine the core features that should be included in the minimum viable product (MVP).
- **Go-to-market strategy:** Develop a plan for launching the app, including marketing, partnerships, and distribution channels.
- **Metrics:** Define success metrics to evaluate the product post-launch.



### 3. Competitor Analysis Case Study

**Case:** You are the product manager for a ride-sharing service. A new competitor has entered the market, and you need to assess their impact on your business and determine how to respond.

#### Steps to approach:

- **Competitive landscape:** Analyze the new competitor's strengths and weaknesses.
- **Impact assessment:** Evaluate how the competitor affects your market share, pricing strategy, and customer loyalty.
- **Strategic response:** Propose strategies to counter the competitor (e.g., new features, pricing adjustments, marketing campaigns).
- **Implementation plan:** Outline the steps to execute your strategy and resources required.
- **Monitoring:** Define how you will monitor the impact of your actions and the competitor's moves.

### 4. Feature Prioritization Case Study

**Case:** You manage a project management tool used by small businesses. You have received several feature requests, but resources are limited. How do you prioritize these features?

#### Steps to approach:

- **Gather data:** Collect data on the requested features, including user demand, potential impact, and development effort.
- **Prioritization framework:** Use a framework like RICE (Reach, Impact, Confidence, Effort) or MoSCoW (Must have, Should have, Could have, Won't have) to evaluate and prioritize the features.
- **Stakeholder input:** Consider input from key stakeholders, including users, developers, and business leaders.
- **Roadmap:** Develop a roadmap that balances quick wins with long-term strategic goals.
- **Communication:** Clearly communicate your prioritization decisions and the rationale to stakeholders.

### 5. Crisis Management Case Study

**Case:** Your SaaS product has experienced a major outage, affecting thousands of customers. As the product manager, you need to manage the crisis and develop a plan to prevent future incidents.

## Steps to approach:

- **Immediate response:** Outline steps to address the immediate technical issue and restore service.
- **Communication:** Develop a communication plan to keep customers informed about the issue and your efforts to resolve it.
- **Root cause analysis:** Investigate the root cause of the outage and document your findings.
- **Preventative measures:** Propose changes to prevent similar incidents in the future (e.g., infrastructure improvements, process changes).
- **Post-mortem:** Conduct a post-mortem meeting to review what happened, what was learned, and how processes can be improved.

## Tips for Case Studies in PM Interviews:

1. **Structure your answer:** Use a clear, logical structure to present your thoughts.
2. **Ask clarifying questions:** Don't hesitate to ask for more details to better understand the problem.
3. **Show your thought process:** Explain your reasoning as you work through the problem.
4. **Be user-centric:** Always consider the user perspective and how your decisions will impact their experience.
5. **Balance detail and brevity:** Provide enough detail to demonstrate your knowledge, but keep your answers concise and focused.