

Continuous Discovery Habits

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Part I - What is Continuous Discovery?

"This book will introduce a continuous discovery framework that enables teams to discover brand new products and to iterate on existing ones"

"It [this book] outlines a collection of habits that, when deployed week over week, lead to better business outcomes and better customer outcomes"

"1. Outcome oriented - This means rather than defining your success by the code that you ship (your output), you define success as the value that code creates for your customers and for your business (the outcomes)"

"2. Customer - centric - It requires that we not lose sight of the fact (even though many companies have) that the purpose of business is to create and serve a customer"

"3. Collaborative - Rather than the product manager decides, the designer designs, and the engineer codes, we embrace a model where we make team decisions while leveraging the expertise and knowledge that we each bring to these decisions"

"4. Visual - The habits in this book will encourage you to draw, to externalize your thinking, and to map what you know"

"5. Experimental - Many of us may not have science training, but, to do discovery well, we need to learn to think like scientists identifying assumptions and gathering evidence"

"6. Continuous - Rather than thinking about discovery as something that we do at the beginning of a project, you will learn to infuse discovery continuously throughout your development process"

"He [Peter Drucker] argues that a company's purpose is to serve the customer. Instead of framing business needs at the odds with customer needs, Drucker is aligning the two, by arguing that serving the customer is how we generate profit"

"Opportunity solution trees are a simple way of visually representing the paths you might take to reach a desired outcome"

Part II - Continuous Discovery Habits

"When we manage by outcomes, we give our teams autonomy, responsibility, and ownership to chart their own path"

"When multiple teams are signed the same outcome, it's easy to shift blame for lack of progress"

"Challenging goals create focus, inspire effort and persistence, and help surface relevant organizational knowledge"

"It's perfectly fine to start with a learning goal and work your way toward a S.M.A.R.T performance goal"

"When setting product outcomes, avoid these common anti-patterns:

- Pursuing too many outcomes at once
- Ping-ponging from outcome to another
- Setting individual outcomes instead of product-trio outcomes
- Choosing an output as an outcome
- Focusing on one outcome to the detriment of all else"

"When working with an outcome for the first time, it can feel overwhelming to know where to start. It helps to first map out your customers experience as it exists today"

"To get started, you'll need to first set the scope of your experience map"

"To prevent group think, it's critical that each member of the trio [designer, engineer, product owner] start by developing their own perspective before the trio works together to develop a shared perspective"

"Drawing allows us to externalize our thinking, which, in turn, helps us examine that thinking"

"As you work to visualize what you know, avoid these common anti-patterns:

- Getting bogged down in endless debate
- Using words instead of visuals
- Moving forward as if your map is true
- Forgetting to refine and evolve your map as you learn more"

"Since we can't ask our customers direct questions about their behavior, the best way to learn about their needs, pain points, and desires is to ask them to share specific stories about their experience"

"A narrow scope [during customer interview] will help you optimize your existing product. Broader questions will help you uncover new opportunities. The broadest questions will help you uncover new markets"

"The golden rule of interviewing is to let the participant talk about what they care about most"

"Weekly interviewing is foundational to a strong discovery practice"

"A digital product is never done, and the opportunity space is never finite or complete"

"As you start building your continuous interviewing habit, avoid these common anti-patterns:

- Relying on one person to recruit and interview participants
- Asking who, what, why, how, and when questions
- Interviewing only when you think you need it
- Sharing what you learned by sending out pages of notes and/or sharing a recording
- Stopping to synthesize a set of interviews"

"Our customers stories are rife with gaps between what they expect and how the world works"

"But our job is not to address every customer's opportunity. Our job is to address customer opportunities that drive our desired outcome"

"After you've created your first draft [of opportunity tree], keep an eye out for these common anti-patterns:

- Opportunities framed from your company's perspective
- Vertical opportunities
- Opportunities have multiple parent opportunities
- Opportunities are not specific
- Opportunities are solutions in disguise"
- Capturing feelings as opportunities"

"We assume that success comes from launching features. That is what product thought leader Melissa Perri calls The Build Trap"

"Our customers care about solving their needs, pain points, and desires"

"By addressing only one opportunity at a time, we unlock the ability to deliver value iteratively over time"

"We want to prioritize opportunities that support our company vision, mission, and strategic objectives over opportunities that don't"

"As you assess and prioritize the opportunity space, be sure to avoid these common anti-patterns:

- Delaying a decision until there is more data
- Over relying on one set of factors at the cost of the others
- Working backwards from your expected conclusion"

"In other words, as we generate more ideas, the diversity and novelty of those ideas increases"

"Study after study found that the individuals generating ideas alone outperformed the brainstorming groups"

"Research shows that while we are better at generating ideas individually, we are better at evaluating ideas as a group"

"As you generate ideas, be sure to avoid these common anti-patterns:

- Not including diverse perspectives
- Generating too many variations of the same idea
- Limiting ideation to one session
- Selecting ideas that don't address the target opportunity"

"Product teams are particularly susceptible to confirmation bias and the escalation of commitment"

"Additionally, assumption testing is generally quicker than idea testing, and the faster pace helps us guard against the escalation of commitment"

"One of the best ways to align as a team around what your ideas mean is to story map them"

"We aren't story mapping what it would take to build the service - we are story mapping what the key players need to do for our customers to get value from it"

"Throughout your story map, every time you assume that an end-user will do something, you are making desirability assumptions, usability assumptions and feasibility assumptions"

"Pre-mortems are a great way to generate assumptions"

"As you work to identify the hidden assumptions behind your ideas, be sure to avoid these common anti-patterns:

- Not generating enough assumptions
- Phrasing your assumptions such that you need them to be false
- Not being specific enough
- Favoring one category at the cost of other categories"

"Assumption test don't merely give us a go/no-go decision for an individual idea; they help us evaluate sets of ideas"

"As we test assumptions, we want to start small and iterate to bigger, more reliable, more sound tests, only after each previous round provides an indicator that continuing to invest is worth our effort"

"Our goal as a product team is not to seek truth but to mitigate risk"

"As you design and run your assumption tests, keep these common anti-patterns in mind:

- Overly complex simulations
- Use percentage instead of specific numbers when defining evaluation criteria
- Not defining enough evaluation criteria
- Testing with the wrong audience
- Designing for less than the best-case scenario"

"This is why we say discovery feeds delivery and delivery feeds discovery. They aren't two distinct phases. You can't have one without the other"

"It's counterintuitive, but when instrumenting your product, don't try to measure everything from the start"

"Instead of trying to plan everything upfront, start small and experiment your way to the best instrumentation"

"We aren't afraid to measure hard things - and you shouldn't be either"

"As you work to instrument your product and understand the impact of your product changes on your desired outcomes, avoid the common anti-patterns:

- Getting stuck trying to measure everything
- Hyper focusing on you assumption tests and forgetting to walk the lines of you opportunity solution tree
- Forgetting to test the connection between your product outcome and your business outcome"

- "Most of the work in discovery is not following the process - it's managing the cycles"

"The fruit of discovery work is often the time we save when we decide not to build something"

"As you manage the cycles of continuous discovery, be sure to avoid these common anti-patterns:

- Overcommitting to an opportunity
- Avoiding hard opportunities
- Drawing conclusions from shallow learnings
- Giving up before small changes have time to add up"

"It's not enough to do good discovery if you aren't bringing your stakeholders along with you"

"When meeting with stakeholders, don't start with your conclusions. Instead, slow down and show your work"

"When meeting with stakeholders, start at the top of your tree. Remind your stakeholders what your desired outcome is"

"When we show our work, we are inviting our stakeholders to co-create with us"

"As you work with your stakeholders, keep these common anti-patterns in mind:

- Telling instead of showing
- Overwhelming stakeholders with all the messy details
- Arguing with stakeholders about why their ideas won't work
- Trying to win the ideological battle instead of focusing in the decision in hand"

Part III - Developing Your Continuous Discovery

"Instead of asking for permission or waiting for someone to show you how, start small. Iterate from there."

"Don't work alone. The habits in this book are designed to be adopted by a cross-functional trio"

"When product teams engage with their customers week-over-week, they don't just get the benefit of interviewing more often - they also start rapid prototyping and experimenting more often"

"I believe continuous interviewing is a keystone habit for continuous discovery. Of all of the habits in this book, if you are looking for one place to get started, this is it"

"As you work to adopt the continuous discovery habits, be sure to avoid these common anti-patterns:

- Focusing on why a given strategy won't work (aka that will never work here), instead on what is within your control
- Being the annoying champion for the right way of working
- Waiting for permission instead of starting with what is within your control"