

Rice Business Tech Workshop

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Rice ECE 2006, MBA 2008



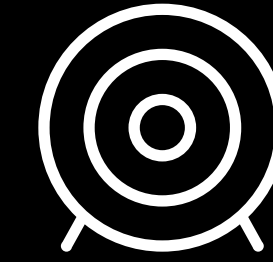
Warm-Up

Facebook

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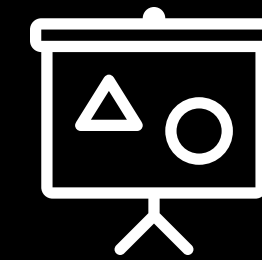
Devise A New Offering For Families

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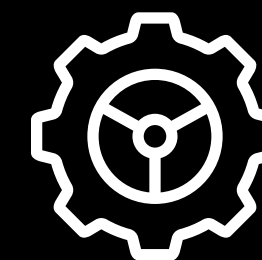
Target Users

Who are your target users?



Competition

Who are your direct competitors and or substitutes?



Primary Features

What are the primary features of the product?
What will you build first? What will you build in a year?

Workshop Outcomes



Broader Understanding Of Tech Industry

What is the tech industry?

What is the product development lifecycle?

What are the possible roles within tech?

Strategies For Pursuing A Career In Tech

What is the market for tech jobs?

What are pathways into tech?

What is your current strategy?

Practice With Product Development

What does it feel like to work within a specific role?

How does it all come together?

Workshop Agenda



Broader Understanding Of Tech Industry

9:00 - 10:15a



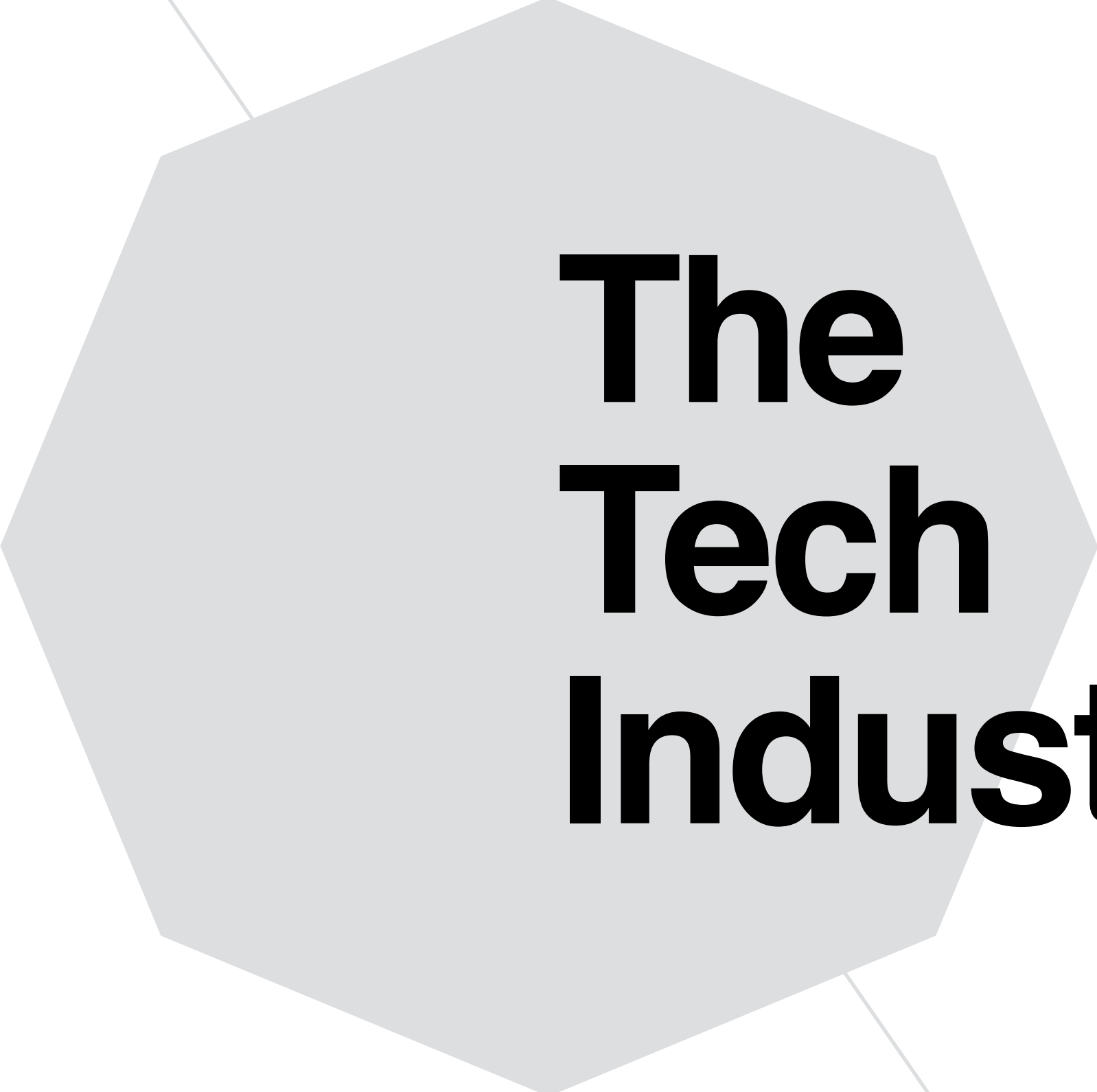
Strategies For Pursuing A Career In Tech

10:30 - 11:30a



Practice With Product Development

12 - 2p



The Tech Industry

When You
Think Of The
Tech Industry,
**Who Comes
To Mind?**

The Usual Suspects

When we talk, the usual suspects come to mind:

- Apple
- Google
- Facebook
- Amazon

What do these companies have in common?





VIACOM



NETFLIX

Applied "Tech" Companies

What might make these companies "tech" companies?

Each of the companies heavily invest in technology and leverages it as part of their consumer-facing products or part of their internal operations. Many of them consider themselves an "applied" technology company for ... industry.

Everyone Is A Tech Company

Software is eating the world. — Marc Andreessen

Technology is eating the world. And if technology is eating the world, there is a much broader need for tech-oriented professionals at companies beyond the traditional tech.

How Are Products Made?

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Product development process. Innovation lifecycle. Lean. Agile. Waterfall. All these terms attempt circle around the same questions—how do you build a product?

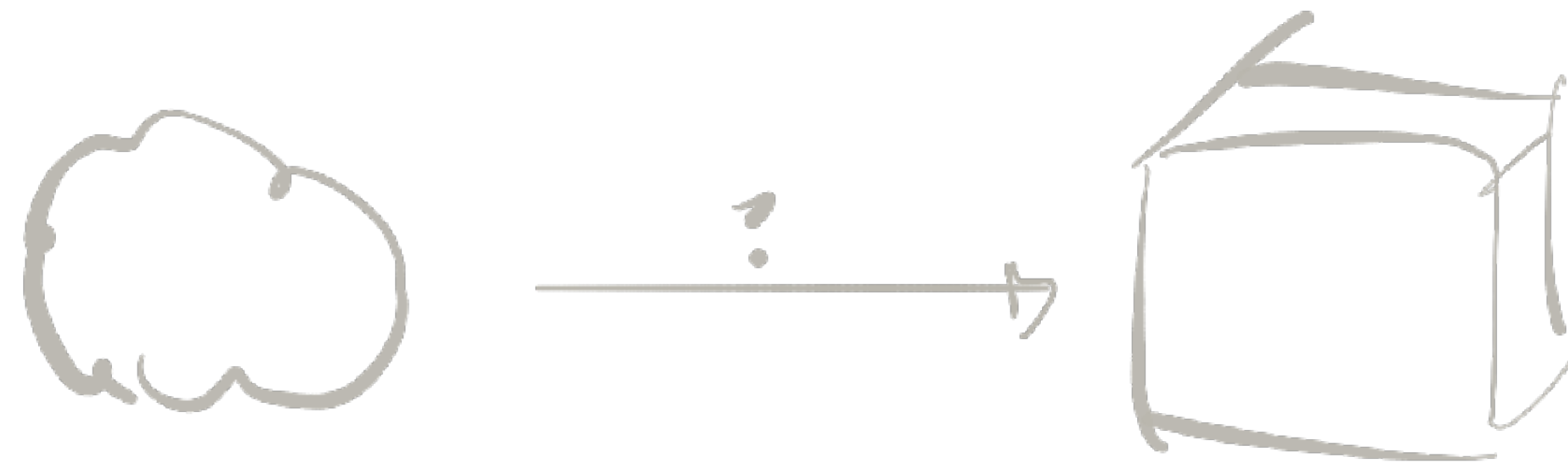
The answer? **It depends.** The answer is largely a function of:

- Company size
- Functional power brokers
- Time/investment horizon

Product Development

Good development processes describe how you move from stage to stage in development. It often articulates how tradeoffs get made, how risks are managed and what activities are coordinated to get an idea to market.

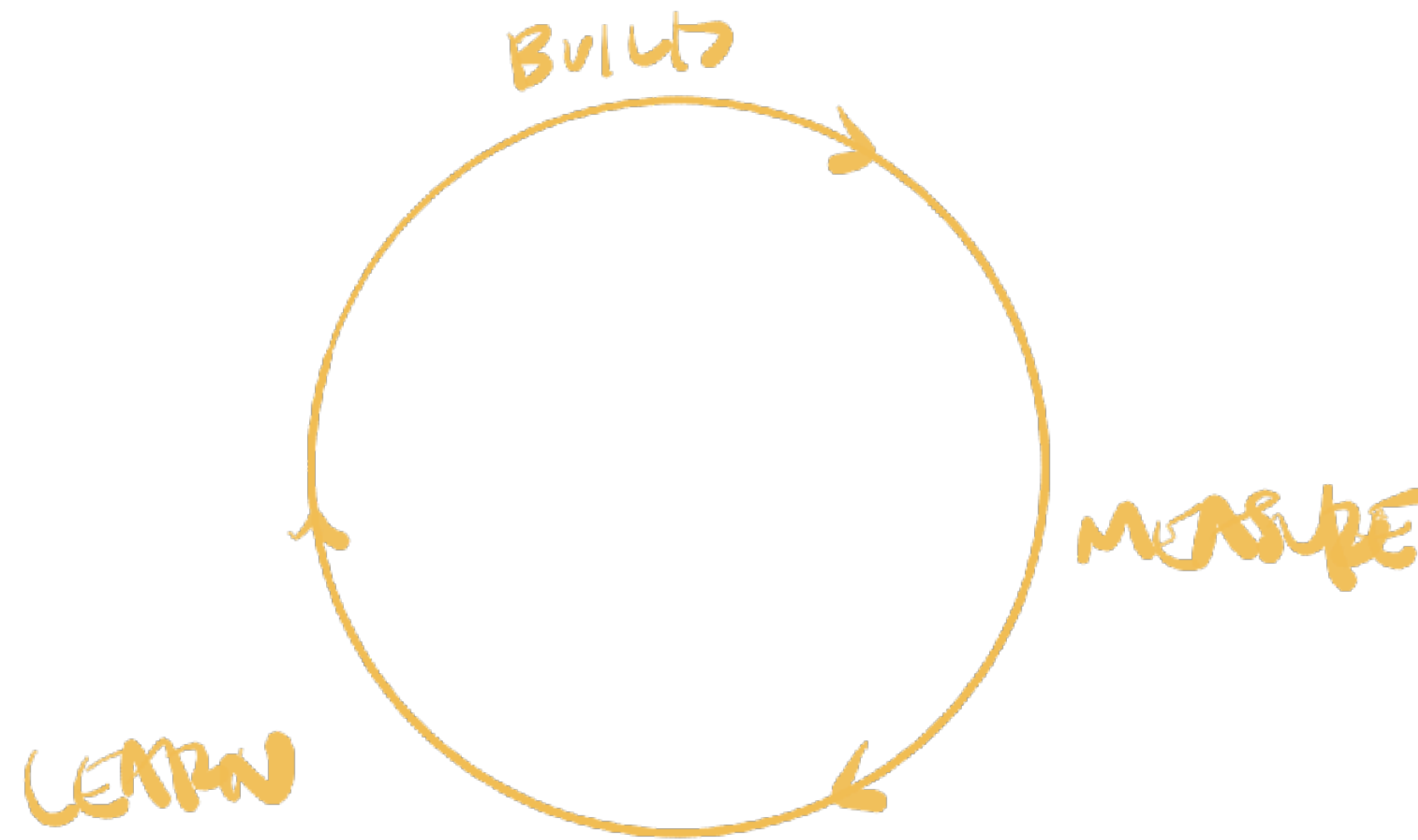
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Startup Development

In a startup, the planning horizon is usually no more than a few quarters at a time. Startup development processes usually optimize for speed over accuracy. This implicitly assumes the team can adapt quickly from feedback.

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Corporate Development

In larger corporate environments, planning horizons are longer, often on the order of years versus quarters. Given the level of investment, these development processes tend to progress slower and require more rigor. Given the slower pace and larger bets, it requires much higher accuracy.

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The Process Is Largely A Function Of Time Horizon

Startups usually favors the near-team and optimizes for speed with smaller bets. This can be an exciting atmosphere if you love the pace. On the flip side, it is largely chaotic.

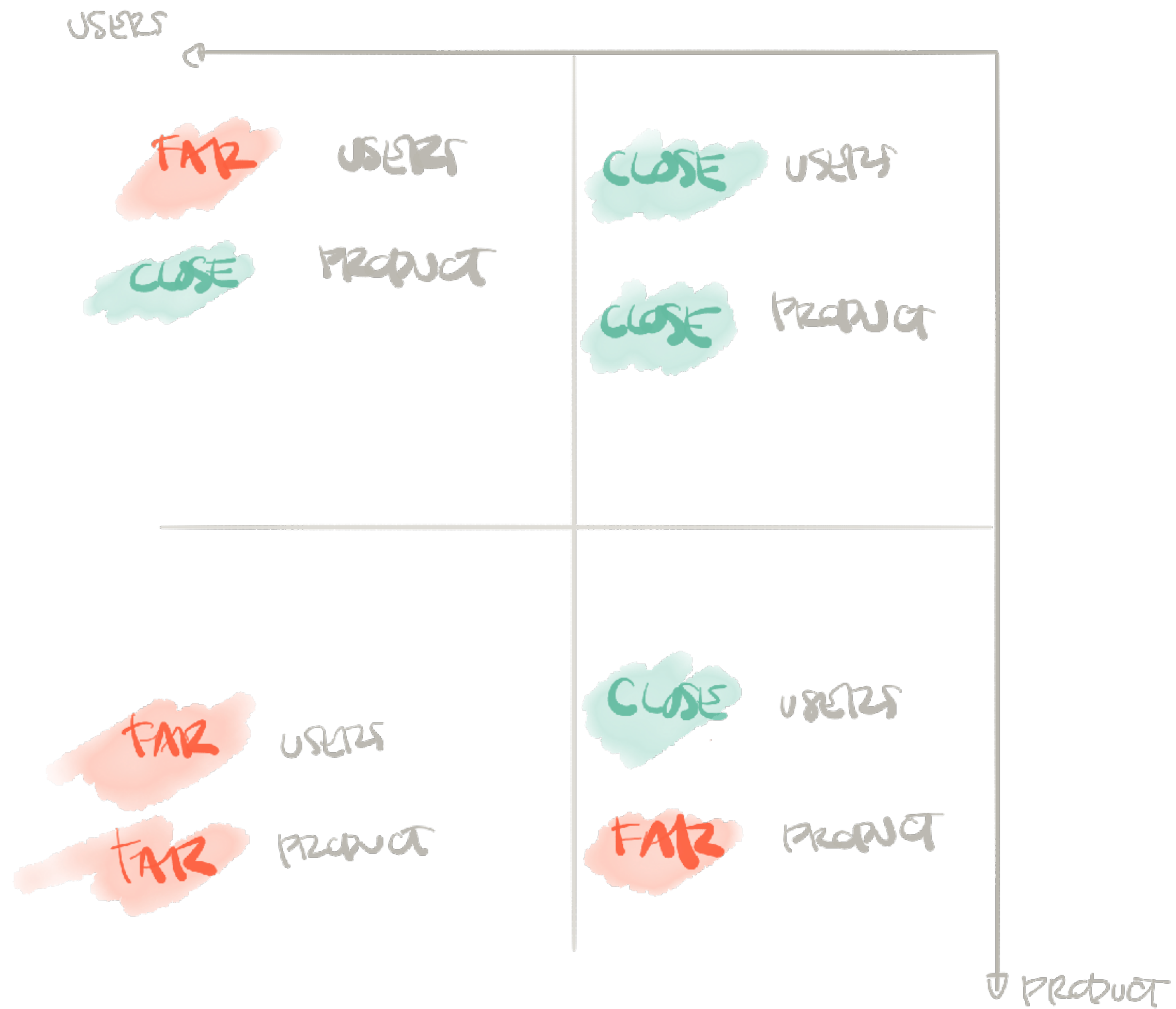
Corporate environments favor safer methods. This can be more orderly but pace can be slower so you may not often see the impact of your work.

What Are Roles Within Tech?

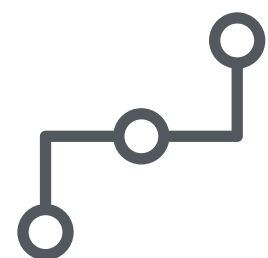
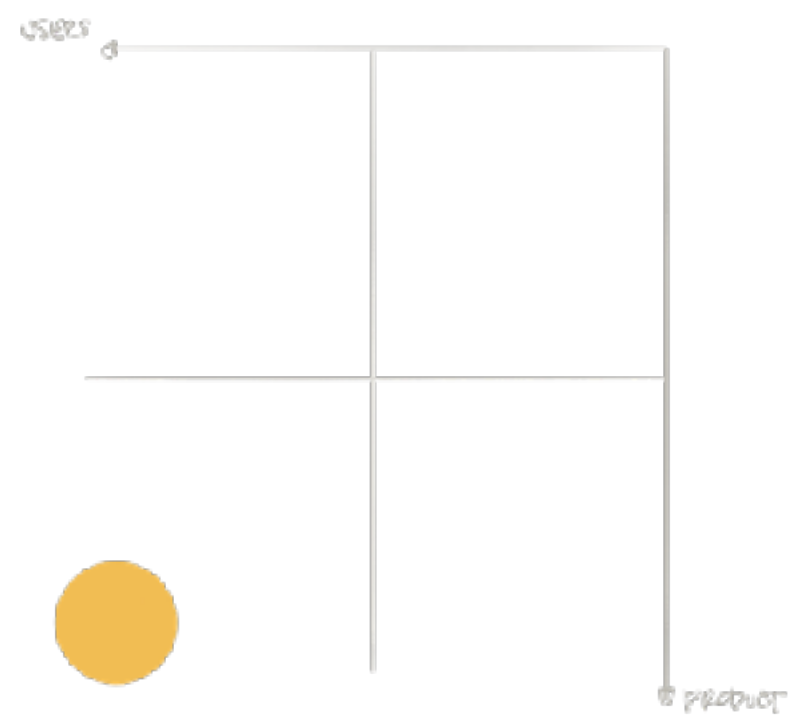
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Talking about roles in tech can be create more confusion than clarity. Rather that debate semantics, we're going to discuss roles through the following lens:

- What is their relationship to the product development lifecycle?
- What types of questions do they ask/answer?
- What tools/artifacts to the create?
- Who are they most likely to partner with?



Finance & Accounting



Relationship To Prod Dev

Calculates the level of investment needed and the expected return.



Questions They Ask

What is our monetization plan?
What headcount is needed to execute the product development plan?
What's our time horizon?

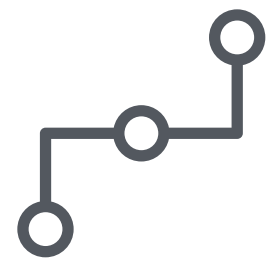
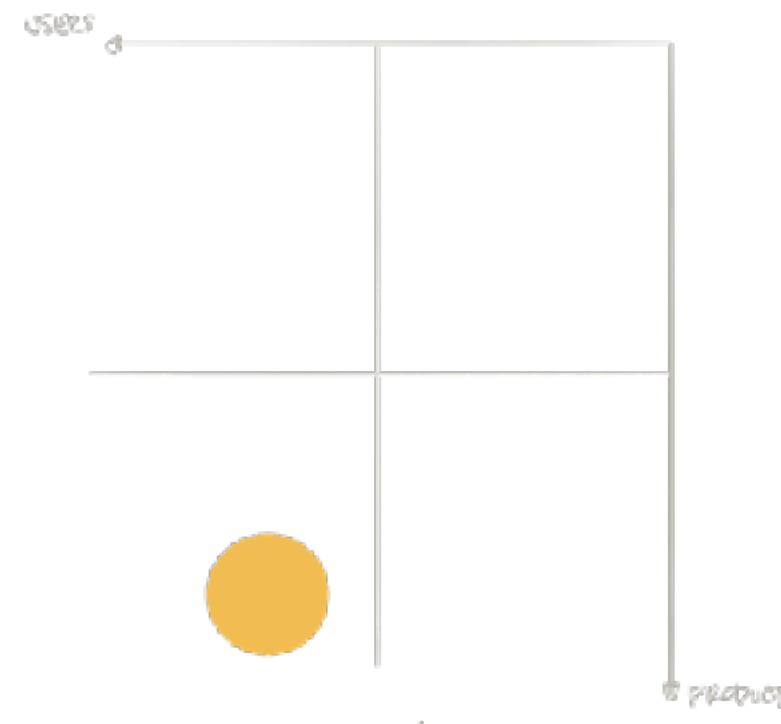


Collaborates With

CEOs
Product Managers

Corporate Strategy

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Relationship To Prod Dev

Influences where a firm competes. In startups, this role is often blended with product management or shared with VCs.



Questions They Ask

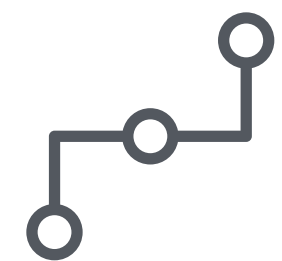
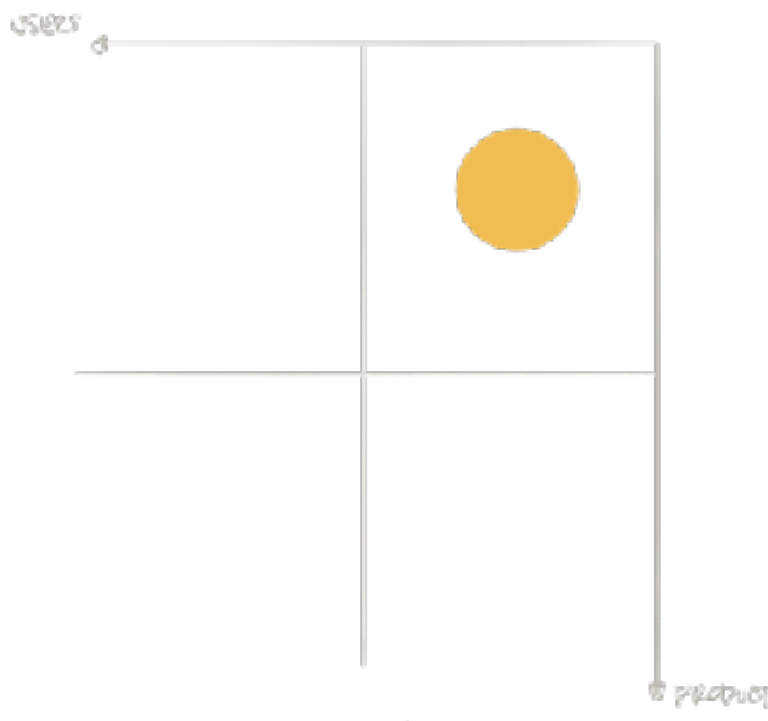
Is this market attractive?
What is the level of competition here?



Collaborates With

CEOs
Product Managers

Product Management



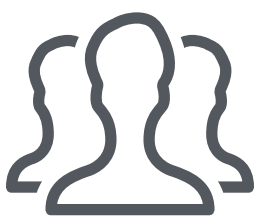
Relationship To Prod Dev

Coordinate the product development process from market analysis and user research to product definition and roadmap planning.



Questions They Ask

What is the value prop?
What is our MVP?
What's our on roadmap?

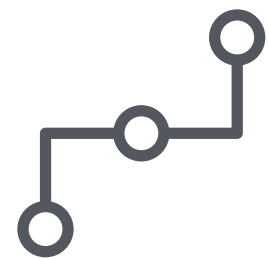
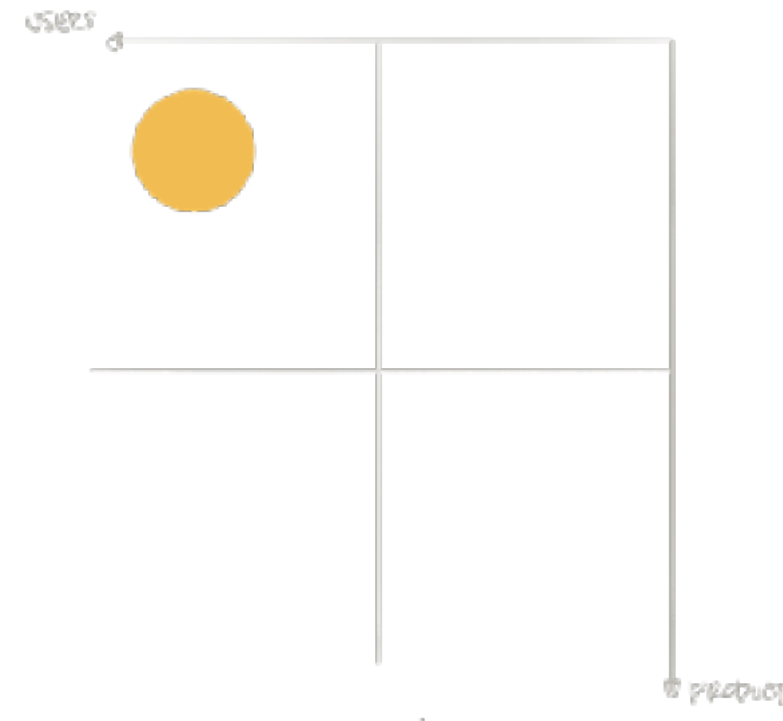


Collaborates With

CEOs / Executives
Marketers
Engineers
Designers

Program Management

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Relationship To Prod Dev

Shepards the development process from definition to production. In startups, this role might be blended with product management.



Questions They Ask

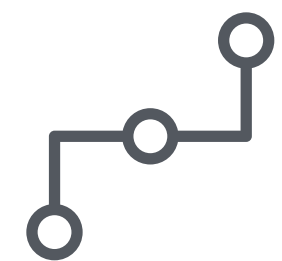
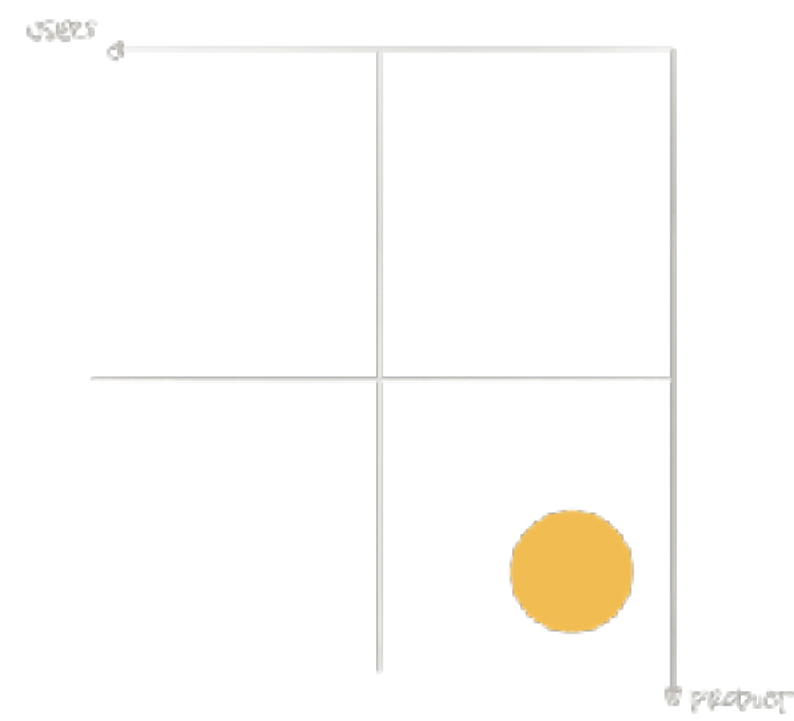
What is the scope for V1?
What is our ship date?
Do I have the right team in place to deliver?



Collaborates With

Product Managers
Product Marketing

User Research



Relationship To Prod Dev

Helps de-risk the product development process by exposing and testing assumptions



Questions They Ask

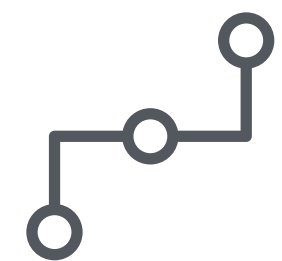
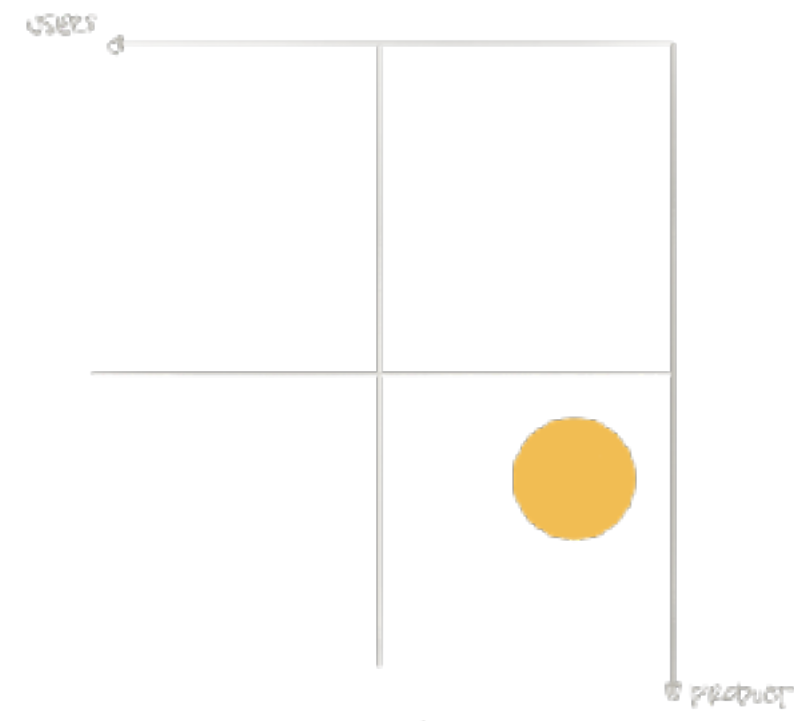
What are our assumptions?
Which are the riskiest?
What is an appropriate plan for validating our assumptions?



Collaborates With

Product Managers

Product Marketing



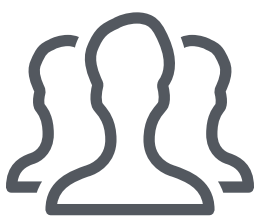
Relationship To Prod Dev

Helps build the market for the eventual product via positioning, messaging, onboarding, etc.



Questions They Ask

Who is our target audience?
What are the best channels to reach them?
What is the best way to frame our value prop to differentiate the product?



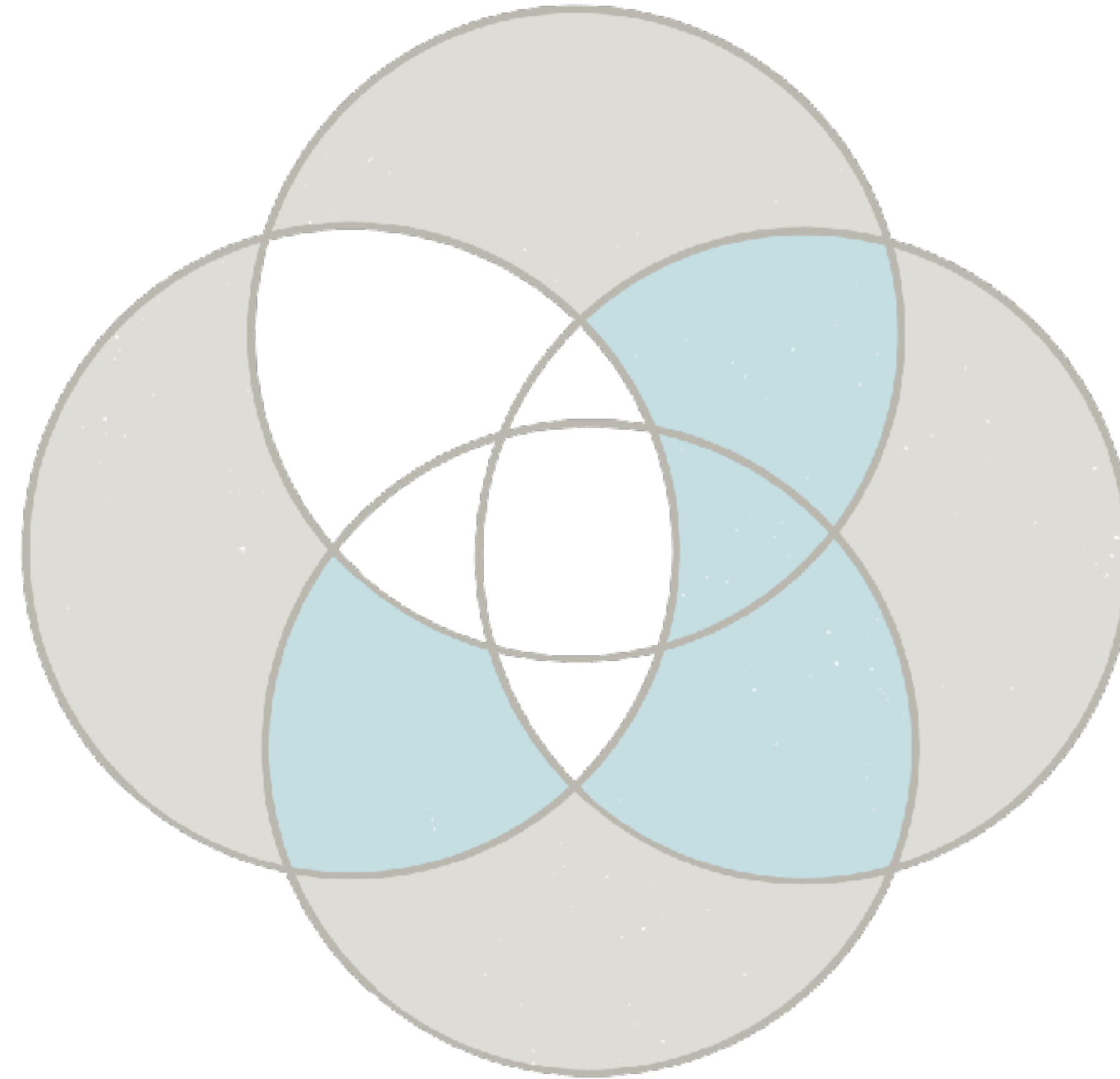
Collaborates With

Product Managers
(External Agencies)

MARKETING

PROGRAM
MANAGEMENT

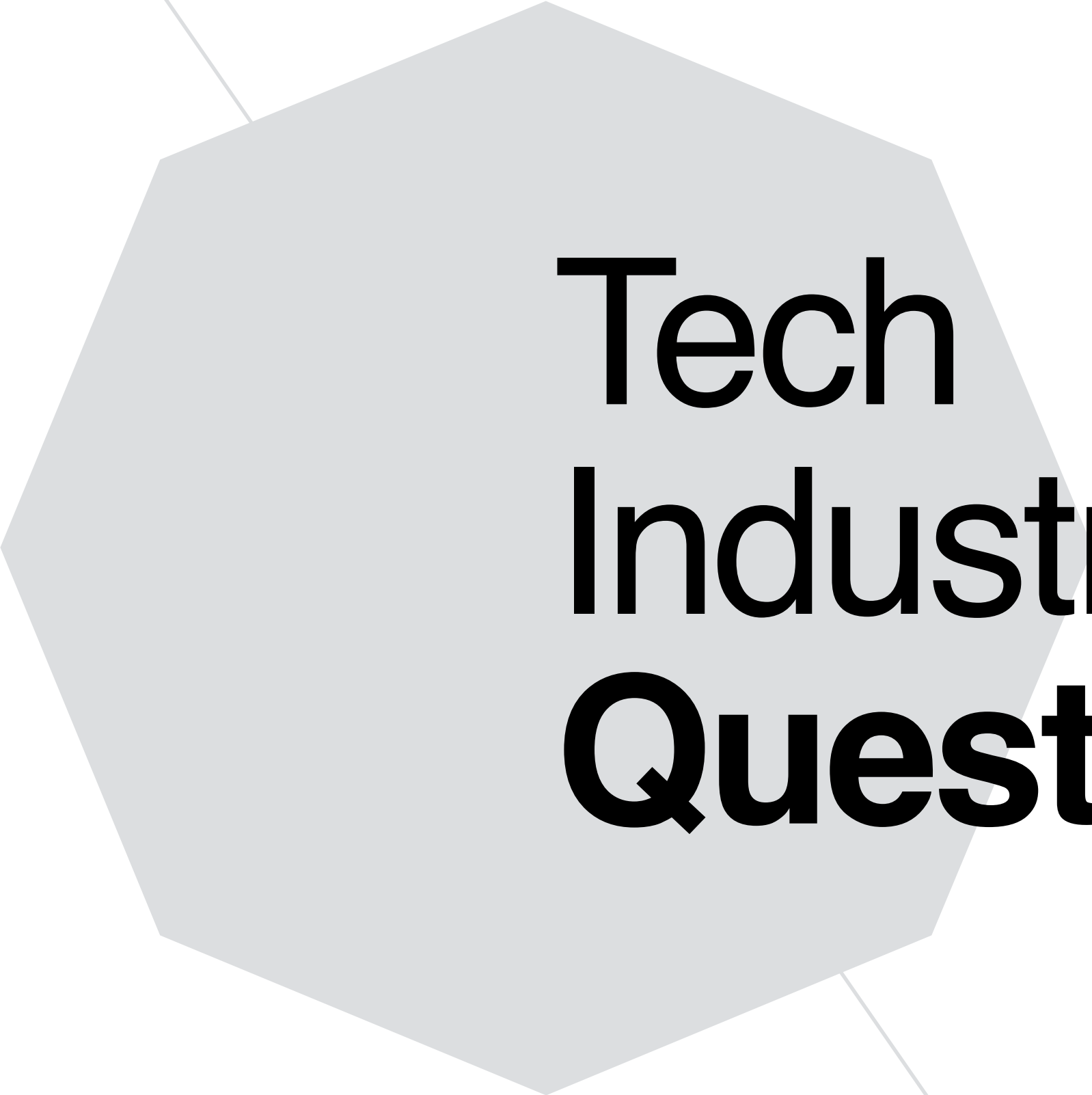
RESEARCH



Product
MANAGEMENT

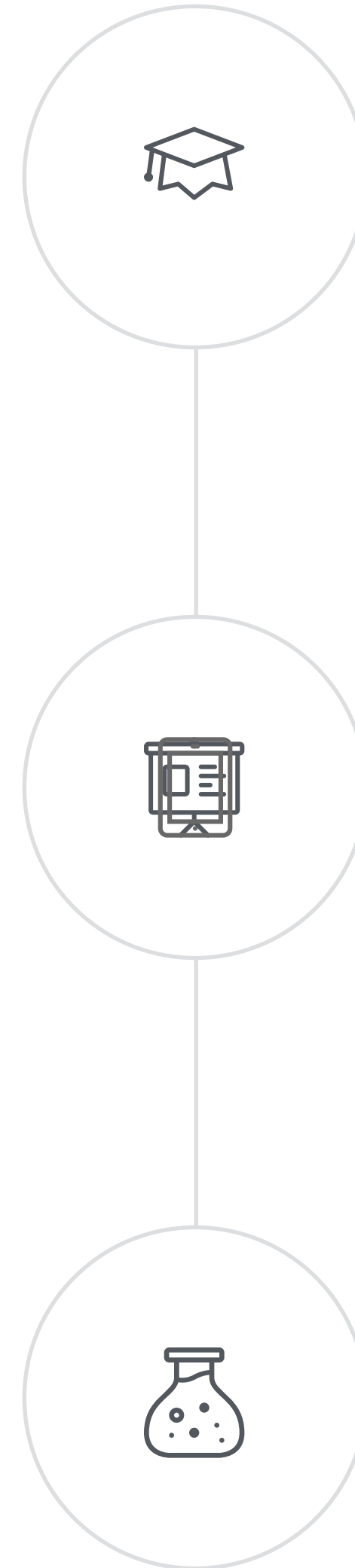
There Are A Variety Of Roles

There are a variety of important roles/tasks along the product lifecycle. While you may be open to several, you should understand the nuances across the roles in relation to the product and the consumer. Understanding this will help cut through the confusion of titles.



Tech Industry **Questions**

Workshop Agenda



Broader Understanding Of Tech Industry

The industry is broader than what it seems.

The development process varies by horizon.

There are a variety of roles.



Career Strategies For Tech

How Is The Market For Tech Jobs?

Demand (Companies)

As tech continues to disrupt/create opportunities across sector, the demand for tech-oriented professionals has continued to rise. This expansion has also create viable regional alternatives to Silicon Valley—Seattle, DC (consulting, education), Detroit (auto), Denver, Austin, Dallas, NYC, Orlando (hospitality), Raleigh-Durham.

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Supply (Job Seekers)

This growth in demand has lured a new wave of professionals into the sector increasing competition.

You Need A Strategy (Part 1)

Don't let the increase in competition deter you. You need to be smart about your strategy:

- Which type of company are you looking to work in?
Traditional tech or applied tech.
- What role/roles are you interested in?

How To Break Into Tech?

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We've already talked about a few dimensions of a tech job. Sector, size, function. While there are unique paths into tech, I will focus on two types—switchers v. pre-existing tech experience.

My goal is inspire productive reflections. This should NOT be a copy/paste exercise.

Tech → Tech

- **Before Rice MBA**

- Rice ECE
- Apple
- Academic Research

- **During Rice MBA**

- Full-time MBA
- Didn't declare concentration
- ILE with a tech consulting firm
- Participated in tech case competitions (won Sony Case competition)
- Tech club (4 people)
- Internship at Google (connected a NSHMBA)
- Interviewed all throughout second year; didn't get job offer until last day of classes.

- **Post-MBA**

- Microsoft (4y)
Product Management
- OpenBuildings (1y)
Product and Dev Management
- Intentional Futures (5y)
Design and Tech Strategy
- Continuing education through online courses, conferences, meetups

Non-Tech → Tech

- **Before MBA**

- BA Economics, Philosophy
- Real-Estate Management

- **During MBA (UW)**

- Concentration in Marketing
- Participated in Tech Club and Consulting Club
- Internships at Starbucks (Brand Management) and Intel (Strategy)

- **Post-MBA**

- Starbucks (3y)
Product Management
- Intentional Futures (5y)
Corporate Strategy

Building Relationship

- Building mutually beneficial partnerships.
- An balance between things you give and things you get.
- Strategic—it's very hard to maintain a large number of these so you must be strategic.

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Networking

- How do I get in front of a recruiter?
- Can be more of a numbers/volume game.
- Can be transactional and often value negative for the person you're interacting with.
- If you're asking someone to help, please do the leg work and make it easy for them.

You Need A Strategy (Part 2)

How are you managing relationship-building and networking?

While the each journey is unique, they share some common elements:

- **Competency.** Are you good at your basics?
- **Culture.** Can you speak tech?
- **Conviction.** Why do you want to be in tech?
- **Credibility.** Prove to me why you care.

What Is Your Strategy?

You have finite resources (time, sanity, finances, etc.). How are you developing and deploying them to your advantage?

- What is your **intent/goal**?
- What **existing resources** (network, pre-MBA story) can you leverage?
- What **capabilities** do you already have? Which do you need to build?
- How can you show **proof, potential**?



Career Strategies For Tech Questions

Workshop Agenda



Broader Understanding Of Tech Industry

What is the tech industry? The industry may be broader than you think.

What are the various roles within tech?



Strategies For Pursuing A Career In Tech

You need one.

What's your goal/intent?

How are you leverage your resources and building capability/credibility?





**Putting It
Together**

Details

- **Kickoff**
 - Form a mixed team of product development roles
 - 60 minutes to work together to answer this question
- **Output**
 - Up to 6-slides
 - 7-minute presentation with Q&A
 - Create a Google presentation
 - 1-person can photograph papers and email me your photos at jeremy.beasley@gmail.com
- **Materials**
 - White paper
 - Sharpies



Presentations

Thanks

Jeremy Beasley

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Resources

Podcasts

Exponent - <http://exponent.fm>

A16z - <https://a16z.com/podcasts/>

The Information's 411 - <https://soundcloud.com/user-875591423>

O'Reilly Radar - <https://www.oreilly.com/topics/oreilly-radar-podcast>

Recode Decode - <https://www.recode.net/recode-decode-podcast-kara-swisher>

Recode Media - <https://www.recode.net/recode-media-podcast>

YCombinator - <https://blog.ycombinator.com/category/podcast/>

Blogs

Benedict Evans - <https://www.ben-evans.com>

Frank Chen - <https://a16z.com/author/frank-chen/>

Resources

Books

Intercom on Product Management, Product Marketing, etc. - <https://www.intercom.com/books>

Lean Startup (product development in startups) - <http://theleanstartup.com>

Product Leadership - <https://productleadershipbook.com>