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Elena Verna explains how Lovable operates when product-market fit can slip within months, Ryan Salva shares his seven product-strategy levers, Aakash Gupta finds PM job postings and hires moving in opposite directions, and practitioners share cheap ways to validate demand and prototypes.

Lovable's operating model for the "PMF treadmill"

Elena Verna (Head of Growth, Lovable) says AI companies now run on a "product market fit treadmill." They can lose fit "as often as every three to six months" because the models underneath keep changing [1]. In practice, Lovable ships daily or weekly. Engineers handle their own launch marketing, and the people who built a feature are accountable for getting it used or ripping it out [1].

Three of her choices cut against standard SaaS practice:

- **Give the product away.** AI margins run about 20–30%, compared with 80–90% in classic SaaS. Even so, "human habit changing experience cannot be behind a paywall." Lovable counts free access as a marketing expense and targets a 3–6 month payback [1]. She says freemium converts at about 5%, while partner giveaways aimed at the ideal customer profile convert at 50–70% [1].
- **Everyone ships.** Non-technical staff ship to production, and engineering's job is to make that possible. Teams collide sometimes, but she says mistakes cost less than meetings: "If we need to, we can unship it" [1].
- **Agents carry the context.** Every department has its own agent, and those agents feed a "company brain" that is still being trained. Verna says 70% of her time is spent talking to agents [1]. New hires spend their first

couple of months automating their own playbook so they can move on to new work [1].

Strategy: pick two or three levers

Datadog VP of Product Ryan Salva names seven levers for enterprise strategy. He argues that only data and distribution create real differentiation, and the rest "just buys you calendar days" [2]. Teams can usually work two or three levers well at a time, and "not making choices is… fatal." He suggests ranking the levers honestly and re-checking the ranking. If you bet on speed of iteration and still haven't shipped three months in, "time to reevaluate" [2]. Startups usually have the edge on iteration speed, data and UX. Established companies win on enterprise capabilities, distribution and ecosystem [2].

On a related note, Shreyas Doshi reposted his breakdown of "be more strategic" feedback. It can mean three things: more product thinking (typical for Sr PMs/GPMs aiming for Director), creating new opportunities (Directors), or setting the actual product strategy and getting the organization aligned on it (GPM to VP) [3]. Ask your manager which one they mean [3].

PM job market: more postings, fewer hires

Aakash Gupta worked with Live Data Technologies and Levels.fyi to look at actual hires. PM postings are up 77% from the 2023 low, but PM hires are down 18% over the same period. AI PM hires are up 2.5x since 2022 but still make up only 7 in 100 PM hires. US median PM pay is $250K, up 14% since 2022 [4].

Gupta also published Growth Podcast transcripts and pulled out eval practices from them. The first is to keep a held-out test set you "never, never look at" while you build. The second is to keep failing evals for things that are impossible today and rerun them when a new model comes out. The third is to keep adding production patterns to the golden set rather than treating evals as a launch gate [5].

Headcount as a proxy

Hiten Shah argues that headcount no longer tells you what a company can do. A five-person team can now build its own internal software, research competitors and analyze thousands of customer conversations. "Counting bots could turn out to be just as misleading" [6].

Validation when building is cheap

In r/startups, founders mostly agreed that cheap building "just moved the expensive part." The signals worth trusting are real commitments, such as a preorder, a deposit or an hour on a call, and evidence that people already pay

for a workaround. Signups and likes don't count for much [7]. A separate thread on SaaS defensibility added that the tools people keep paying for are "the ones a team can't afford to be wrong about." Owning the historical record raises switching costs [8].

For prototype feedback, one PM suggests splitting the research by question. Send unmoderated tests to 15–20 customers to catch flow and comprehension problems. Limit live calls to 3–4 per round, focused on value. Ask CS and Sales to show one prototype screen on calls they're already having [9].

Also worth a look

Ravi Mehta opened a case on business-outcome ownership. Imagine you lead product at Airbnb and leadership wants guest issues cut 10% next quarter: what would you do? He says Airbnb's answer meant working against a goal its teams had pursued for years [10].

Sources

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