

Problem Design, Better Onboarding Evidence, and Senior PM Interviews

PM Daily Digest

2026-07-26

Problem Design, Better Onboarding Evidence, and Senior PM Interviews

By PM Daily Digest • July 26, 2026

A problem-design framework, an evidence-led onboarding loop, and a case where more intake improved conversion. Also includes practical AI workflow guardrails and an interviewer-by-interviewer strategy for senior PM roles.

Big Ideas

Design the problem before designing the solution

A recurring failure mode is the “**double square**”: product has one idea, engineering builds it, then the cycle repeats—without divergent exploration or convergent selection. The result, as described in the source, is often poor product outcomes. [1]

Use *problem design* to work upward from a proposed form factor: **What behavior would it support? What outcome does that behavior serve? Is this the right touchpoint—and ultimately the right problem—to address?** This prevents a tool or interface concept from defining the need prematurely. [1]

Why it matters: faster prototyping does not establish that a feature is worth building. AI-assisted implementation can skip alignment, edge-case discovery, prioritization, and validation—leaving engineering to maintain features that may not fit the product’s information architecture. [1]

Make complexity understandable, not merely smaller

For B2B and service products, “simple” should not mean hiding necessary complexity. The design goal is to present it in a way users can understand, control, and care about. [1]

Apply it to dashboards: require every displayed item to support a decision or action. A dashboard designed around action should show less information, not more, and make deliberate choices about what deserves attention. [1]

Tactical Playbook

Diagnose onboarding with enough evidence for the next decision

When early drop-off appears, do not wait for perfect statistical certainty—but do not redesign on a hunch either.

1. **Start with low-cost learning.** Use unpaid acquisition to collect initial signals before spending on scale. [2]
2. **Observe the experience directly.** Watch session recordings, speak with users, or sit beside a user and ask them to narrate their experience. [3, 2]
3. **Validate the friction point.** Seek *decision confidence*: enough evidence that a specific obstacle is real and warrants action, rather than enough data to make a universal claim. [3]
4. **Run a binary test.** Change one dimension at a time; one approach recommends beginning with ICP-focused tests once the core experience is understood. [2]
5. **Continue improving.** Treat onboarding as a continuous A/B-testing loop rather than a one-time redesign. [4]

Why it matters: this balances speed with disciplined learning, so teams can act on observed friction without mistaking noise for a product problem.

Use AI to narrow a workflow, not bypass product process

Before adding agents to a workflow, make relevant information—such as emails, documents, and support tickets—legible and queryable. Then choose the narrowest valuable loop, such as generating follow-up emails after sales calls, test it, and improve from the result. [5]

Keep shared synthesis in the loop. Decentralized, unstandardized research can yield competing “research-informed” answers and create conflicting versions of reality across teams. [1]

Case Studies & Lessons

Hertility: more intake increased conversion

Hertility Health made a longer intake mandatory before purchase. Conversion rose: women felt heard before receiving a test kit, while clinicians received better information and faced less burnout pressure. [6]

Lesson: removing steps is not automatically better onboarding. Test whether a step creates meaningful reassurance or improves downstream service quality

before classifying it as friction.

Customer contact is the startup learning engine

YC's guidance is to confront the market quickly through a repeated loop of building, talking to customers, and building again. The objective is learning whether people want the product—not extending research or development by default. [5]

For early products, one startup-community recommendation is to focus intensely on a single active user: speak with them, build toward their needs, then use that learning to win the next user. [7]

Lesson: launch early enough to obtain real-world data. A pivot should follow evidence that the core hypothesis is wrong and options have been exhausted—not rejection fatigue; pivots surfaced by customers during deep work are easier to evaluate. [5]

Career Corner

Tailor senior-PM interview signals to the interviewer

Senior interview panels may not know how to assess senior product candidates, so candidates should ensure their answers convey what each audience needs to evaluate. [8]

- **Board, VCs, or senior executives:** establish impact track record, ability to execute amid organizational complexity, and skills complementary to the hiring leader. [9]
- **Cross-functional peers:** demonstrate understanding of their function's challenges, likely alignment, and a proven record of impact. [9]
- **Prospective team members:** communicate direction, empowerment rather than layering, and investment in their growth. [9]
- **Hiring manager:** show product insight, alignment, and complementary strengths. [9]

Apply it: prepare a small set of stories that can credibly demonstrate these signals. Answer each question constructively and enthusiastically while steering back to the evidence your audience needs. [9]

Sources

1. AI Can Build the Solution... You Still Have to Design the Problem - Pavel Samsonov
2. r/startups comment by u/edkang99
3. r/startups comment by u/Plan_Steadily
4. r/startups comment by u/ItsPumpkinninny

5. What Actually Makes A Startup Durable
6. X post by @ttorres
7. r/startups comment by u/izalutski
8. X post by @shreyas
9. What Every Interviewer Actually Wants