

DIGITAL PRODUCT STRATEGY SONGBOOK

AN INTRODUCTION TO DIGITAL PRODUCT STRATEGY
FUNDAMENTALS BY ICONIC POP & ROCK CLASSICS

/CAPPS



- 01 One Vision – Queen
- 02 Come As You Are – Nirvana (MTV unplugged)
- 03 Imagine – John Lennon
- 04 Martha – Tom Waits
- 05 Rednecks – Randy Newman
- 06 Space Oddity – David Bowie
- 07 All Along the Watchtower – Jimi Hendrix
- 08 Money – Pink Floyd
- 09 Tom's Diner – Suzanne Vega
- 10 Hurt – Johnny Cash
- 11 Suspicious Minds – Elvis Presley
- 12 Stayin' Alive – Bee Gees
- 13 Under Pressure – Queen & David Bowie
- 14 I'll Be There for You – The Rembrandts
- 15 I Could Never Take the Place of Your Man – Prince
- 16 Beat It – Michael Jackson
- 17 Where The Wild Roses Grow – Nick Cave & the Bad Seeds Ft. Kylie Minogue
- 18 Human Behaviour – Björk
- 19 Paranoid Android – Radiohead
- 20 Every Breath You Take – The Police



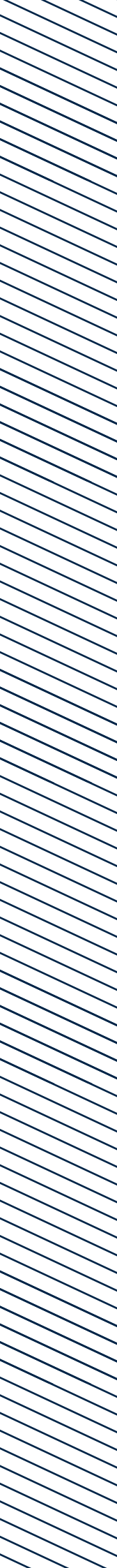
LISTEN THE PLAYLIST ON





Digital strategy often finds itself shrouded in a veil of mystery. Many people don't really seem to grasp what it entails or what to expect from digital strategists. Some of those strategists even actively keep this image alive out of a false conviction they need to protect the secrets of the trade. However, first of all: it's our belief that everyone (including strategists) would gain from a better general understanding of digital product strategy, and second: in the end, these so-called 'secrets' are really not that different from those of many other creative professions, such as, for example, writing songs.

Many of the fundamentals of creativity and digital product strategy are referenced in the classic songs we like to put on repeat when driving on the highway or love to sing along with under the shower. They can even be found in how these songs came to be. So by taking a closer look at the stories behind those iconic songs, we hope to lift the veil on the ins and outs of digital strategy. At the same time, we're providing you with the perfect soundtrack to set up your next winning product strategy.





EPISODE 1 ON VISION AND AUTHENTICITY

01
QUEEN
ONE VISION

02
NIRVANA
COME AS YOU ARE

03
JOHN LENNON
IMAGINE

Any new product starts with a vision. An idea or dream to create something great for the benefit of people and/or businesses. This will also be the starting point for building your digital strategy. Such a vision should be deeply rooted in your business's core beliefs and objectives. Only then, you will be able to create something that feels truly authentic and where people are willing to put their faith in. That's why it's so important to carefully safeguard this initial passion throughout the strategic process and not let it water down by

all the hard work that needs to be done.

To give an example: Queen wrote 'One Vision' after their Live Aid appearance in 1985, where millions of people came together to share their vision of a better world. It was a call to join forces to reach a common goal. The song became the band's de facto opening song for the 1986 Magic tour, considered by many to be their finest ever live show. Which makes it also a perfect opener for our Digital Product Strategy Songbook.



The 1985 Live Aid concert at Wembley united 70.000 people around one goal

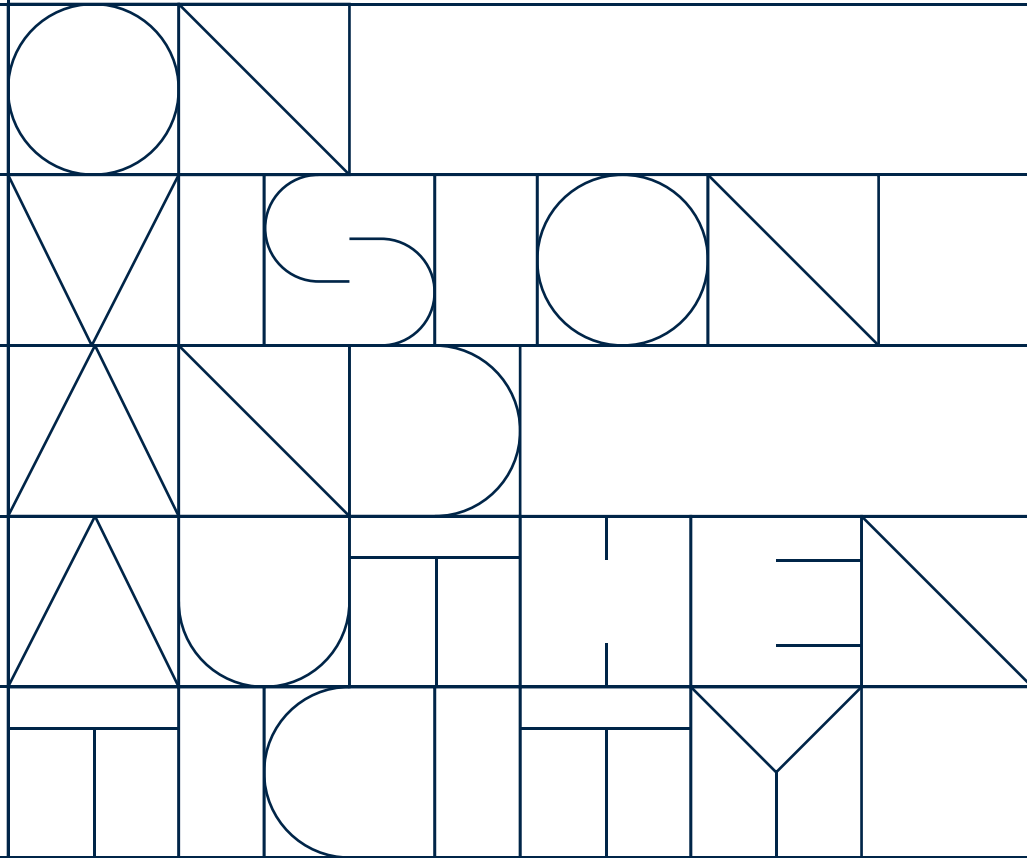
Vision often goes hand in hand with authenticity. However, the word 'authenticity' should be handled really carefully since it is another one of those ambiguous terms. By many musicians and businesses alike, it is quite often misused to justify specific choices, disguise value judgments, or distinguish themselves from the so-called "non-authentic". Authenticity is mainly about being believable and being able to connect and build trust with your audience. And this can only be achieved and maintained when you know what you stand for and what your common goal is. Whether it's Elvis' genuine rock-n-roll attitude, The Sex Pistols'

That being said, as a strategist you also need to be very mindful of how you formulate and communicate this vision so that you get all stakeholders on board.

When you read the lyrics to John Lennon's 'Imagine' for example, you discover a fairly strong political message. But since it is sugarcoated in a beautiful melody, it caught on. Despite it being the communist manifesto virtually spread all across president Nixon's U.S.A. Likewise, strategists need to search for the best wording to articulate the product vision. Not in order to deceive, but to make it understandable for everyone and to get as much buy-in as possible.



ON
VISION
AND
AUTHENTIC
CITY



HOW TO SING ALONG
DIGITAL PRODUCT STRATEGY SONGBOOK – EPISODE 1

01
QUEEN
ONE VISION

02
NIRVANA
COME AS YOU ARE

03
JOHN LENNON
IMAGINE



Every good product strategy starts with a clear product vision that is supported by all stakeholders. Be aware however that a product vision is not just some other term for a business or brand vision. They are truly separate things. Just like a product strategy doesn't equal a business or marketing strategy. A product vision is the translation of your overall business vision into a specific vision for your digital product.

In our Digital Strategy workshop, we co-create this product vision together via a number of targeted exercises that lay out all the different elements needed: what are your objectives, who are your target groups, what do we know about them etc.

At the end of the workshop, we bring together all the key strategic insights to formulate as simply as possible a clear product vision by following a really simple structure:

PRODUCT VISION TEMPLATE

FOR

(TARGET CUSTOMER)

WHO

(STATEMENT OF NEED OR OPPORTUNITY)

THE

(PRODUCT NAME)

IS A

(PRODUCT CATEGORY)

THAT

(KEY BENEFIT, REASON TO BUY)

Don't be fooled by its seaming simplicity: often the most simple things prove to be the hardest. Just go ahead and try it. Not so easy, right?

NEED SOME HELP FINETUNING YOUR PRODUCT VISION? GO TO [ICAPPS.COM](https://www.icapps.com)



EPISODE 2 ON EMPATHY

01
TOM WAITS
MARTHA

02
RANDY NEWMAN
REDNECKS

Looking at what you want to achieve from a business perspective is just one part of the job. To reach the product-market fit, you need to deep-dive into the world of your target audiences. You need to empathize with them to discover their needs, their wants, and their pains.

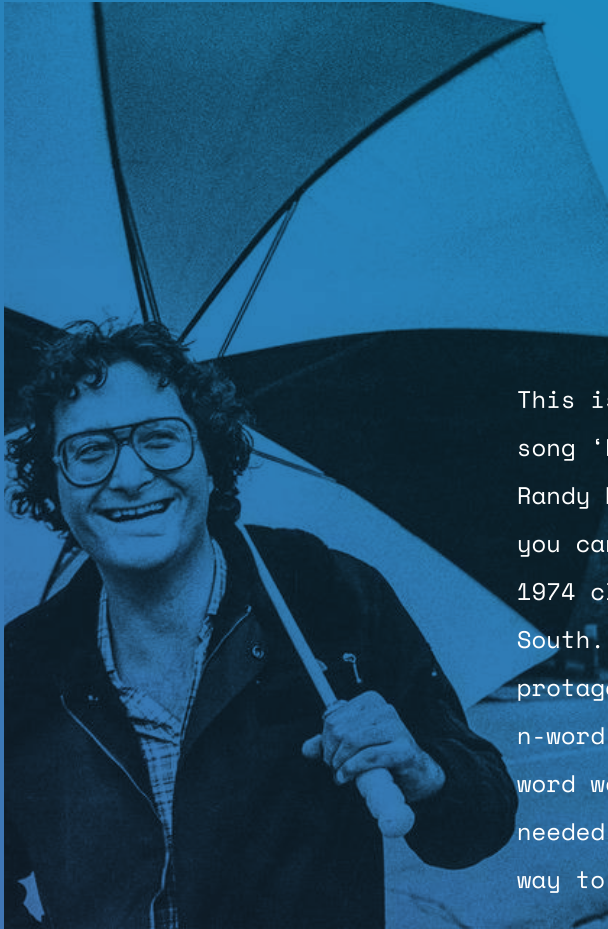
When 'Martha' was released on his 1973 debut album 'Closing Time', Tom Waits was a mere 24 years old. Yet, the song takes the view of a much, much older

man (Tom Frost) calling long-distance to an old flame (Martha) to reminisce. They talk about their past together and their current life, while the listener is left with the impression that he might still be very much in love with her. It's astonishing how you get sucked into the song and how you fully believe that you're listening to this old man talking (which is of course aided by young Tom Waits' already grainy voice).



Tom Waits at age 24 when he embodied the 50+-year-old Tom Frost

This kind of empathy doesn't always come naturally. It often takes a lot of research as a strategist and it's important to talk to actual users to gain good insights into their way of living and thinking. Especially when it comes to audiences you personally have little affection for.



This is exactly what Randy Newman does with his song 'Rednecks'. Born and settled in Los Angeles, Randy Newman is about as culturally distant as you can get from the guy he sings about in his 1974 classic hit: a proud redneck from the Deep South. Yet, he manages to get in the skin of his protagonist, even if that means he has to use the n-word he hates. "It always bothered me when that word went by," Newman told Uncut in 2003. "But I needed the word in that song. There was no other way to do it."

Thinking too much from your own point of view instead of taking that from your audience is truly one of the big challenges and often a pitfall when outlining your strategy.

ON

EMPATHY



HOW TO SING ALONG
DIGITAL PRODUCT STRATEGY SONGBOOK – EPISODE 2

01
TOM WAITS
MARTHA

02
RANDY NEWMAN
REDNECKS



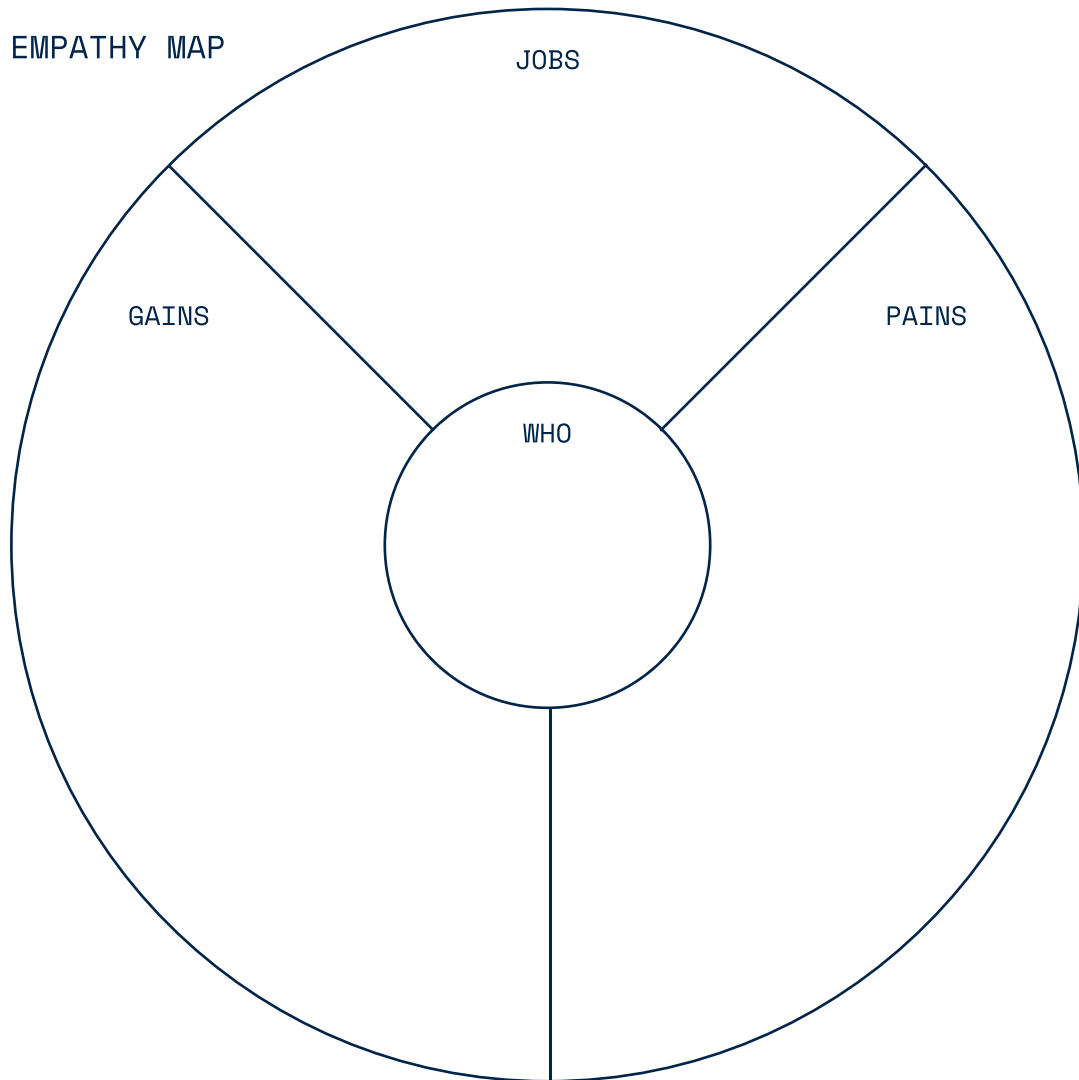
As a strategist, you need to be naturally curious about the psychology and sociology of human beings. You need to want to understand what makes people tick and you have to be willing to walk in their shoes.

The most obvious way to achieve this is by talking to your (potential) customers. By conducting well-thought-out user interviews right from the start, and not only after your product has been created, you can gain a really good understanding of what people want to achieve, what they are looking for, what their pain points are etc. Which will give you invaluable insights to craft your strategy.

However, people are known to not always correctly evaluate how they might act in a given circumstance or even how they acted in the past. That's why it is equally important to, if feasible, also observe people's behavior. You can take a seat next to a person and watch his every move. But you can also observe your audience digitally: by diving into analytics and research reports, you can dig up a lot of valuable behavioral data that, otherwise, would remain hidden.

Once you collected all your data, you can structure it into empathy maps and customer journeys for your different target groups and create an actionable overview from which you can derive your key strategic audience insights.

WANT TO BETTER UNDERSTAND YOUR CUSTOMERS? GO TO [ICAPPS.COM](https://www.icapps.com)





EPISODE 3 ON CONTEXT, TRENDS AND TECHNOLOGY

01
DAVID BYRNE
PSYCHO KILLER

02
DAVID BOWIE
SPACE ODDITY

03
PINK FLOYD
MONEY

In his book “How Music Works”, David Byrne (of Talking Heads fame) describes how any creative process is determined by context. Waterbirds have calls that cut through the ambient sounds of water, and birds in San Francisco were found to have raised the pitch of their songs in order to be better heard above the noises of increased traffic. Just like that, musicians have always adapted their creations to their context.

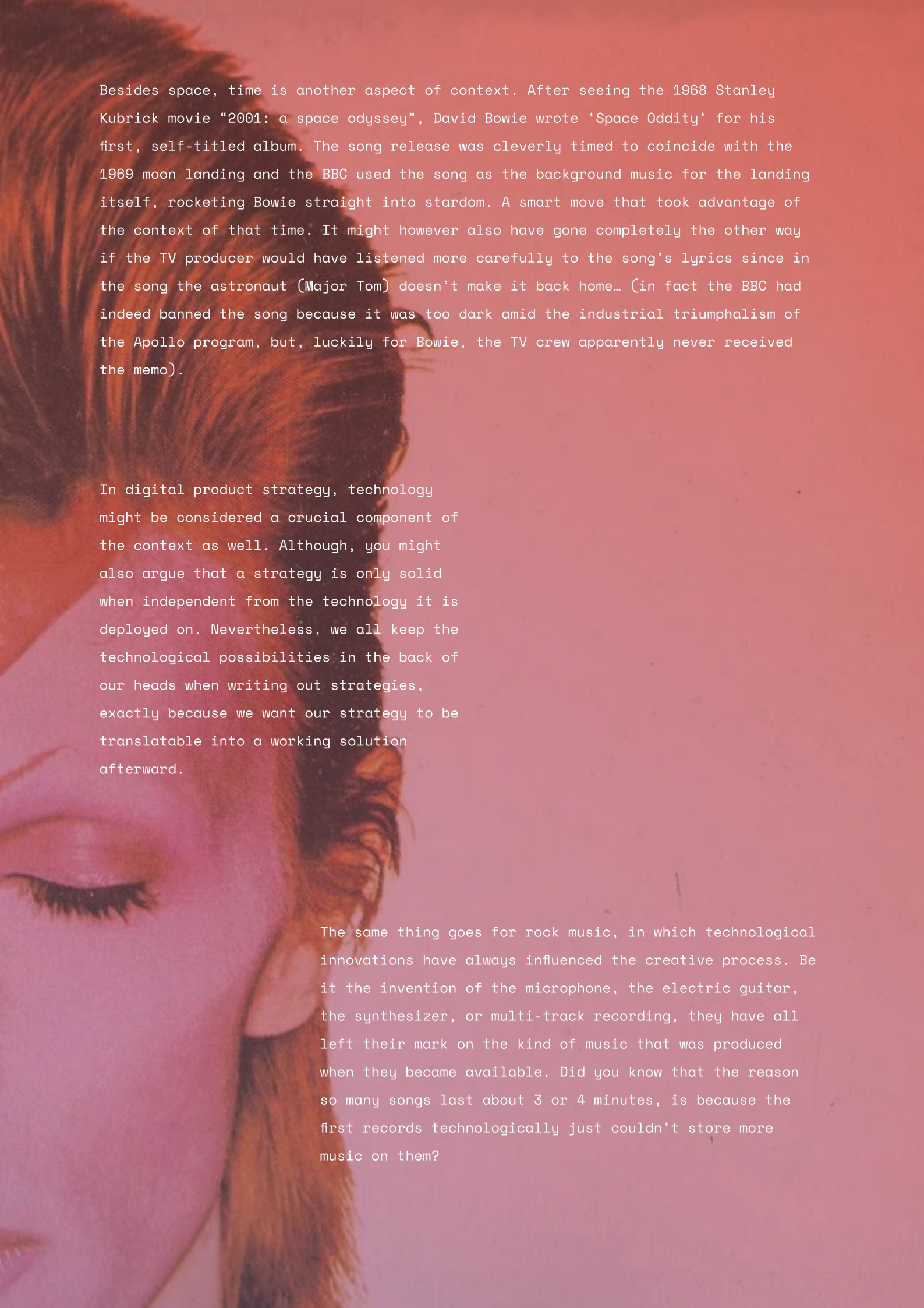
When in the mid-'70s concerts were moved to sports stadiums to support bigger audiences, the music also changed to more medium-tempo songs that allowed the sound to go all the way around. Just like today's personal in-ear players ensure that artists are careful with changing the dynamics too much in a song to avoid ear damage.

The sound of David Byrne's own 1973 hit 'Psycho Killer' for instance was greatly determined by the, then renowned, CBGB club; ground zero of the New York punk/new wave scene of the 1970s. All musicians, Byrne explains, wrote songs to fit that atmosphere, where “people drink, make new friends, shout, and fall down, so the performers had to play loud enough to be heard above that – and so it was, and still is.”

Talking Heads performing at the CBGB venue in 1975



The context product strategists operate in is not a venue for a gig, but the world in which the solution lives. This means that we have to take into account prevailing industry and consumer trends when plotting out our strategy. These will determine if our strategy will be relevant and catch on, or if it will be discarded by our audiences and fail to fulfill its objectives.



Besides space, time is another aspect of context. After seeing the 1968 Stanley Kubrick movie "2001: a space odyssey", David Bowie wrote 'Space Oddity' for his first, self-titled album. The song release was cleverly timed to coincide with the 1969 moon landing and the BBC used the song as the background music for the landing itself, rocketing Bowie straight into stardom. A smart move that took advantage of the context of that time. It might however also have gone completely the other way if the TV producer would have listened more carefully to the song's lyrics since in the song the astronaut (Major Tom) doesn't make it back home... (in fact the BBC had indeed banned the song because it was too dark amid the industrial triumphalism of the Apollo program, but, luckily for Bowie, the TV crew apparently never received the memo).

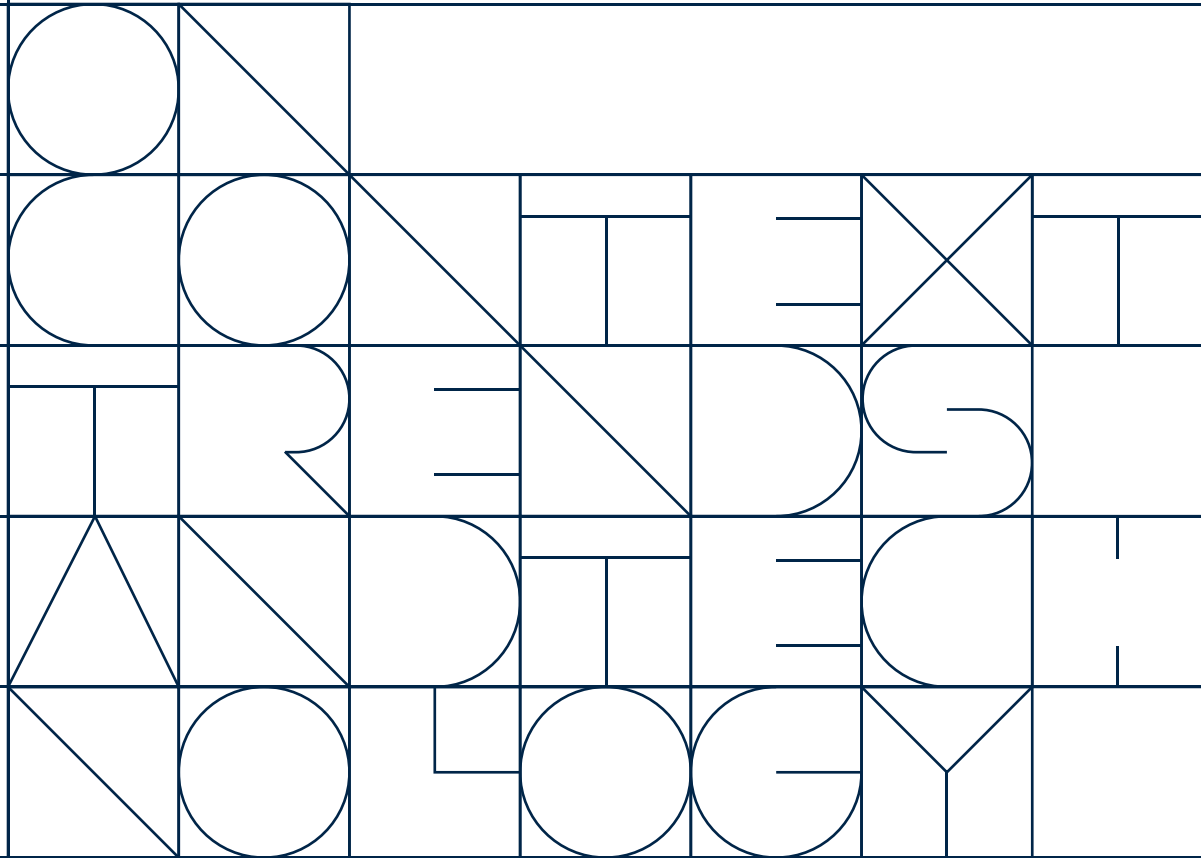
In digital product strategy, technology might be considered a crucial component of the context as well. Although, you might also argue that a strategy is only solid when independent from the technology it is deployed on. Nevertheless, we all keep the technological possibilities in the back of our heads when writing out strategies, exactly because we want our strategy to be translatable into a working solution afterward.

The same thing goes for rock music, in which technological innovations have always influenced the creative process. Be it the invention of the microphone, the electric guitar, the synthesizer, or multi-track recording, they have all left their mark on the kind of music that was produced when they became available. Did you know that the reason so many songs last about 3 or 4 minutes, is because the first records technologically just couldn't store more music on them?



Therefore, for our Digital Strategy Songbook, we have songs galore in terms of the influence of technology. Let's pick two: First of all, you can't get around Jimi Hendrix when you mention the electric guitar. With his 1968 rendition of Bob Dylan's 'All Along the Watchtower', he showed how technology (the electric guitar, combined with his signature wah-wah effect pedal and stereophonic recording) could change the direction and vision of a song.

Another great example of the influence of technology is 'Money' by Pink Floyd. Many studio effects were used on this song. They were using a new 16-track recorder, which allowed them to layer sounds much easier. This helped them to create the cash register tape loop that plays throughout the song, even though they still had to cut and paste the 6-meter long loop tape together manually to do this, using a razor blade and splicing tape.



HOW TO SING ALONG
DIGITAL PRODUCT STRATEGY SONGBOOK – EPISODE 3

01
DAVID BYRNE
PSYCHO KILLER

02
DAVID BOWIE
SPACE ODDITY

03
PINK FLOYD
MONEY



Most strategists know all too well how much context matters. For most of us, the sad reality is, however, that we just don't have enough time to keep up with everything happening around us. That's why we need to rely on trusted sources and partners to keep us up to speed and offer us the vital information for our work.

One of these sources might be even closer than you think: a lot of valuable information on your industry does already reside within your company. Keeping in mind what Lew Platt, former CEO of HP, used to say: "If only we knew what we know, we would be 3 times more profitable", it is wise to start by talking to internal stakeholders. Collecting all their industry knowledge will give you a big head start.

Next, plan for recurring market scans to benchmark your digital offering against your competitors. Compare features and user experiences and determine your position against other players. Without it, you won't be able to pinpoint your own USPs.

Ask your technology partner to organize inspirational workshops around new technologies. This will guarantee that you will stay up to date in a minimal amount of time.

One big thing you need to keep in mind is that contexts do change frequently. Technology obviously changes quite rapidly, but also your market changes, the economy changes, your customers change, ... So whatever you do, be prepared to adapt swiftly when needed. If you haven't yet, take a look at agile methodologies. Build step by step so you can learn quickly and adjust your course if needed. And create a flexible roadmap that allows for any contextual changes that might occur.

WANT TO GAIN A BETTER UNDERSTANDING OF YOUR CONTEXT? GO TO [ICAPPS.COM](https://www.icapps.com)



EPISODE 4 ON SIMPLICITY AND FOCUS

01
SUZANNE VEGA
TOM'S DINER

02
JOHNNY CASH
HURT

03
ELVIS
SUSPICIOUS MINDS

We currently live in a world with almost infinite possibilities. As great as this sounds (and is), it is also a pitfall for strategists to make their plans far too elaborate and complex. Especially in a hectic environment like ours, people often don't want to spend the extra cognitive effort to try and understand your way of thinking. Therefore, it is crucial to create strategies that are as simple and focused as can be. And so as a strategist, you learn to subtract instead of add.

As Leidy Klotz, professor of Engineering at the University of Virginia, points out in his book "Subtract: The Untapped Science of Less"; people have a natural bias toward adding stuff instead of leaving stuff out when they try to solve a problem. This leads to overly complex structures, overburdened schedules, busy people, and a lack of focus on what really matters. As an example, he mentions the Lego bridge he once built with his 2,5 year old son. The two columns on the bridge were not the same size, so to make the bridge level again Klotz started to look for an additional block to put under the shorter column. But by the time he'd found it and turned around, his son had already solved the problem by removing a block from the longer column. That's when he realized that our natural tendency to add things isn't always the smartest way forward.



That's especially the case when you realize that adding stuff always comes at a cost. If you want to add a new feature to your digital product, you need to not only build it but also test it, document it, produce training material, handle support requests, figure out how to include it in your pricing and how to demo it, find a way to market it and so on. That's why

focus and simplicity matter, right from the beginning when you start creating your strategy.

The musical equivalent to this is Suzanne Vega's classic 'Tom's Diner'. Vega originally conceived it as a piano song, but since she didn't know how to play the piano she decided to release it a cappella (vocals only). This turned it from what would have been just a very nice song, into something truly magical. Now you could argue that the big breakthrough for 'Tom's Diner'

came from the 1999 DNA techno remix which added a beat and some other layers. But just compare these two versions and tell me which one is the strongest for you.

Another great example of 'less is more' simplification is Johnny Cash's rendition of 'Hurt' by Nine Inch Nails. While the original is already quite sober and intimate, Cash simplified the song even further into a mesmerizing musical experience which turned it into a global hit.



The powerful music video for Hurt shows an old Cash doing away with excess: "You could have it all, my empire of dirt"

Now, don't be fooled: Simplifying your strategy is in fact a lot harder than making it more complex. It requires you to know exactly what you're aiming for and what will make your product catch on with your audiences. Take out the wrong elements and everything will collapse. But if you succeed, you will have a much stronger, more manageable foundation to build upon.

This basis and way of working will allow you to carefully extend your product one step at a time (call it a roadmap if you will) without risking feature- and scope creep. You could compare it to a song like Elvis' 'Suspicious Minds', which gradually builds up, layer by layer, and in which every layer adds a little extra to the experience: first, we hear just the guitar and bass supported by just a little bit of hi-hat, then the vocals come in, next the drums get more solid on the snare and are joined by the strings in the chorus. Then, after the chorus, the brass section sets in, and the backing choir adds another layer of 'ohs' and 'ahs'. A fantastic build-up that shows you don't have to give everything away right from the beginning.



SON
SIMPLY
AND
FOCUS

HOW TO SING ALONG
DIGITAL PRODUCT STRATEGY SONGBOOK – EPISODE 4

01
SUZANNE VEGA
TOM'S DINER

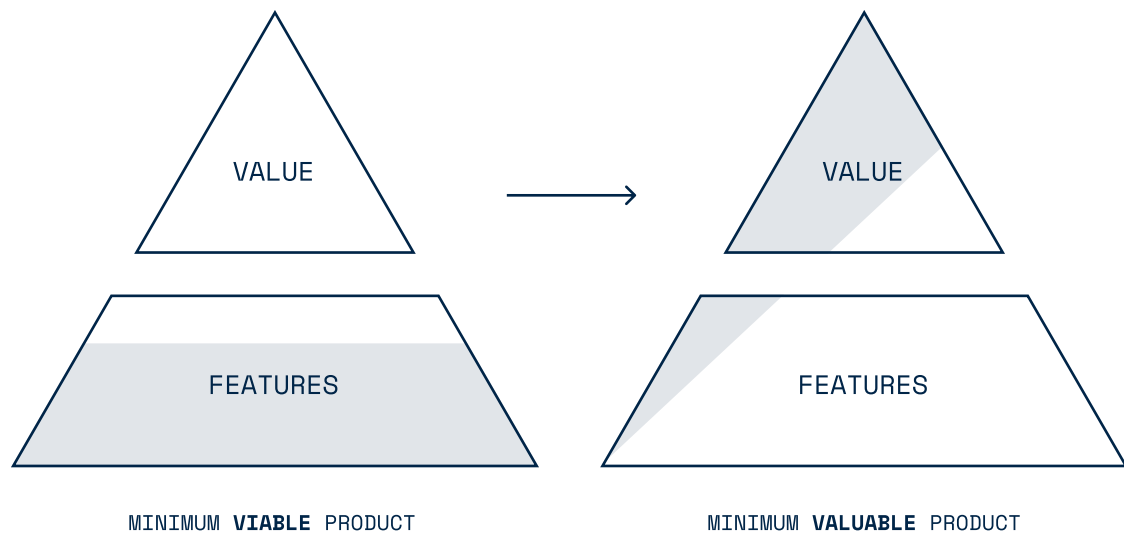
02
JOHNNY CASH
HURT

03
ELVIS
SUSPICIOUS MINDS

We already came across some examples of simplicity: remember the product vision template? The sheer simplicity of it forces you to focus on what really matters. There's no place to hide. If you need too many words, or find yourself using a lot of lingo, something's not right yet and you need to further clarify your strategy.

Like we said, simplicity and focus also express themselves through your product roadmap. You would want to start with an MVP version of your product that offers the simplest version of your value proposition.

Officially, MVP stands for 'Minimum Viable Product'. At icapps however, we like to talk about 'Minimum Valuable Products'. Same abbreviation, but a totally different ballpark: By launching only the bare viable minimum, you won't win over people's hearts. Only by putting something out there that offers real value to both your users and your brand, you have a good shot at succeeding and you create a solid foundation to build upon. In the end, it's a product strategist's job to guard over what the V really stands for. (And no, we should not replace MVP with MLP as in Minimum Lovable Product, because a fling doesn't take you to the altar.)



This kind of value-based focus should also be the starting point for the rest of your roadmap: What value can and/or should be delivered at what point in time?

NEED SOME HELP TIDYING UP YOUR STRATEGY OR ROADMAP? GO TO [ICAPPS.COM](https://icapps.com)



EPISODE 5 ON HOOKS

01
BEE GEES
STAYING ALIVE

02
QUEEN & DAVID BOWIE
UNDER PRESSURE

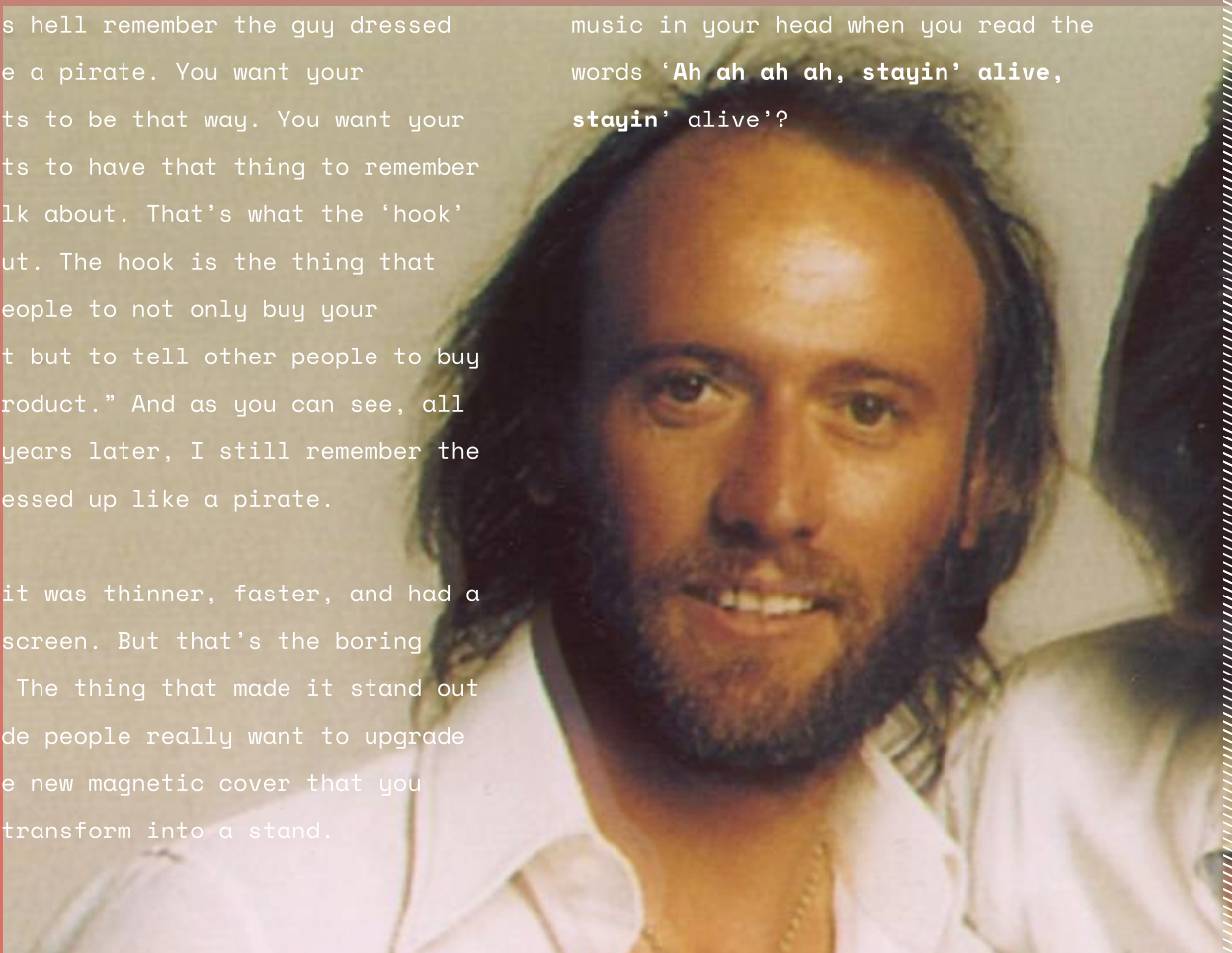
03
THE REMBRANDTS
I'LL BE THERE FOR YOU

At “The Next Web conference” way back in 2011, I witnessed a keynote by Mike Lee, founder of Appsterdam and an Apple Design Award-winning product engineer. He entered the stage dressed as a pirate, after which he started talking about the ‘future of technology’. Near the end he addresses why he did his talk in a pirate costume: “After this conference, you probably won’t remember the names of the speakers. But you will sure as hell remember the guy dressed up like a pirate. You want your products to be that way. You want your products to have that thing to remember and talk about. That’s what the ‘hook’ is about. The hook is the thing that gets people to not only buy your product but to tell other people to buy your product.” And as you can see, all these years later, I still remember the guy dressed up like a pirate.

Sure, it was thinner, faster, and had a nicer screen. But that’s the boring stuff. The thing that made it stand out and made people really want to upgrade was the new magnetic cover that you could transform into a stand.

That’s the real hook. Or think of the stories feature that Snapchat introduced and got everybody, well..., hooked on the app.

Songwriters love hooks. It’s what, just like in your strategy, grabs the attention, draws people into the music, and makes it memorable. It’s the foundation of every single hit ever produced. Don’t you instantly hear the music in your head when you read the words ‘Ah ah ah ah, **stayin’ alive, stayin’ alive**’?



Another Bee Gees ‘hook’ was their iconic white outfit

And when you hear the iconic two-note bass riff that leads in 'Under Pressure' by Queen and David Bowie, can you resist to start tapping your foot? But maybe the most iconic hook is the hand clapping in 'I'll Be There for You' by The Rembrandts, the theme song of the TV show 'Friends' (which was actually added later on because the original drum fill was missing when they were creating the TV version of the intro).

While hooks will draw initial attention to your product, the real key is of course to keep people hooked afterward and stimulate long-term engagement. The marketing catchphrase that probably most aptly describes this is "come for the X, stay for the Y". Where the X stands for the apparent value of your hook and the Y for the discoverable value that might only be noticed after first use.

A good example of this is Gmail. When it first launched, people were drawn to it because of its free storage space offering. Later on, they kept on using it for its search, conversation view, and spam filtering. The same principle applies to Dropbox: the apparent value clearly was the shared folder, but afterward, users discovered the other strong points like painless sync, backup, and mobile access.





BOOKS

HOW TO SING ALONG
DIGITAL PRODUCT STRATEGY SONGBOOK – EPISODE 5

01
BEE GEES
STAYING ALIVE

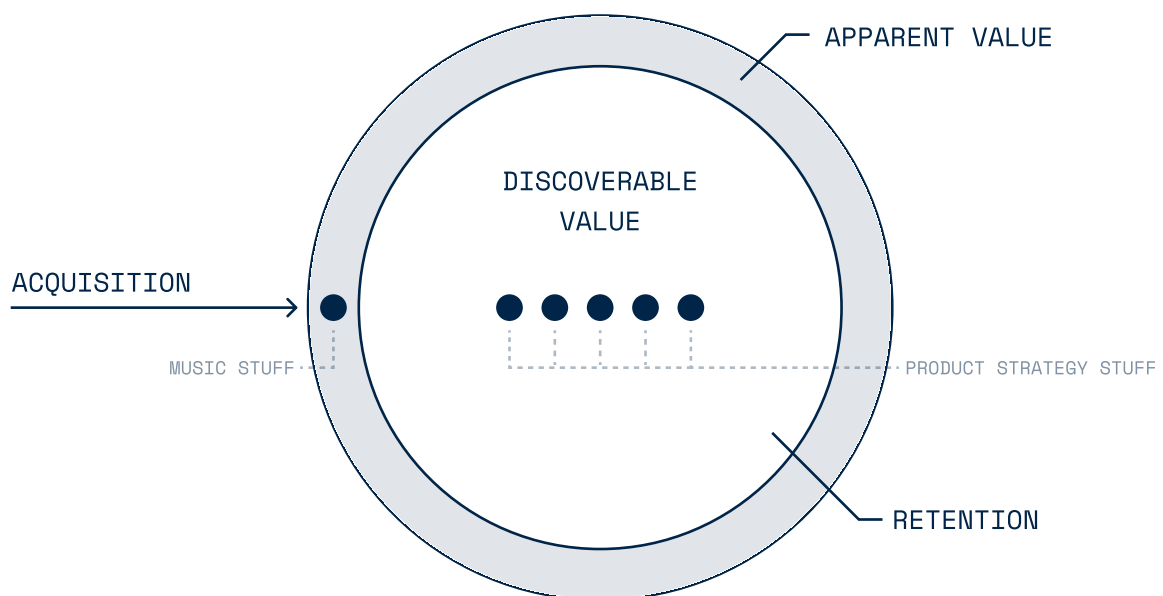
02
QUEEN & DAVID BOWIE
UNDER PRESSURE

03
THE REMBRANDTS
I'LL BE THERE FOR YOU

When you create your product strategy, be mindful of what value is apparent and which is discoverable.

- Apparent value is the kind of value that is easy to explain and gets users to sign up. It fixes a pain-point customers already experience. It's typically better, faster, and cheaper.
- Discoverable value is the kind of value that appears when benefits are delayed or when a product requires users to develop new habits (which takes time). It also appears when many slight improvements combine to make a big difference in the experience. This is what keeps people around.

Although it might not always be possible to have both, it is useful to label your propositions accordingly and take it in consideration when building your product roadmap.



Balancing apparent and discoverable value throughout the roadmap is part of a product strategist's role. For example: If your product has a wealth of discoverable value, but little or no apparent value, you could offer a free trial version. Or if, oppositely, a product has mostly apparent value, think about integrating upfront payment.

But what to build first if your product offers both? If you'd ask Apple, they'd say to start with the apparent value. At least, that's what they did when launching the iPhone. When the iPhone appeared, it was packed with apparent value: a music player, web browser, and maps. The TV ads were focused right on these features and worked great. Over time the iPhone grew to include a huge ecosystem of apps. So users, wanting anything from games to finance, could dive in and discover value targeted right at their interests.

Now you may have noticed that this is indeed very close to marketing. That's exactly why it is so useful to get marketing on board as a stakeholder right from the beginning.

NEED SOME HELP BALANCING APPARENT AND DISCOVERABLE VALUE? GO TO ICAPPS.COM



EPISODE 6 ON CO-CREATION

01

PRINCE

I COULD NEVER TAKE THE PLACE OF YOUR MAN

02

NICK CAVE

WHERE THE WILD ROSES GROW

On the iconic 'Sign 'O' The Times' double album, almost all parts were played by Prince himself. It was a one-man-band masterpiece showing a true genius at work, resulting in gems like 'I Could Never Take the Place of Your Man' and 'The Cross'. This is actually also the go-to way of working for many strategists today. Many strategists are lone wolves hiding in their den until they're ready to come out and present their work. And although this way of working might turn out more than fine for some of the greatest minds, reaching out to others who excel in what they do is not a sign of weakness, but au contraire a sign of great strength.

That's why we at icapps believe in co-creation and workshops at certain (though not all) points in the process to shape a product strategy. It not only adds valuable insights from other experts, but it also helps greatly in getting everybody involved from the beginning and setting a joint direction.



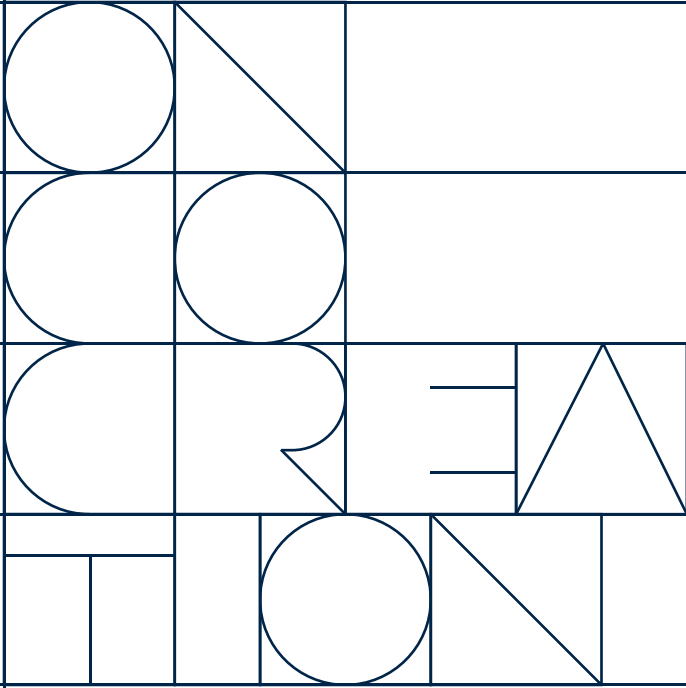
Eddie Van Halen and Michael Jackson performing 'Beat It' live in 1984

This brings me to the key point of co-creation: selecting the right people. Of course, the key stakeholders of the project want to have an impact on the strategy, as they should. But you might also look for other voices that can create a balance in opinions or add different perspectives. Picking the wrong people, or failing to get the noses pointing in the same direction will however potentially breed a monster like the Lou Reed and Metallica "Lulu" album. This 2011 collaborative album was once aptly described as "Lou Reed talking over Metallica playing boring". No need to explain any further why we didn't choose to include it in our songbook :-).

When you do however carefully select the right experts, it is equally important to fully let them play their roles. For example; When producer Quincy Jones asked Eddie Van Halen in the early '80s to play a guitar solo on Michael Jackson's 'Beat It', the legendary guitarist sat down in the studio and asked Quincy Jones what he should play. At which point Quincy said to him: "I'm not gonna sit here and try to tell you what to play. The reason you are here is because of what you do play." This is exactly what you should be comfortable with telling the people you are co-creating your strategy with.

One of the most beautiful, unexpected collaborations in the music industry is without a doubt 'Where the Wild Roses Grow'. This ballad brought together two extremes from the music industry: Nick Cave, the dark lord of Australian rock, and Kylie Minogue, the former child star pop princess. By joining their obvious strengths, they managed to create a song that topped many charts. So don't be afraid to pull together opposites. It might just work out better than you'd expect.





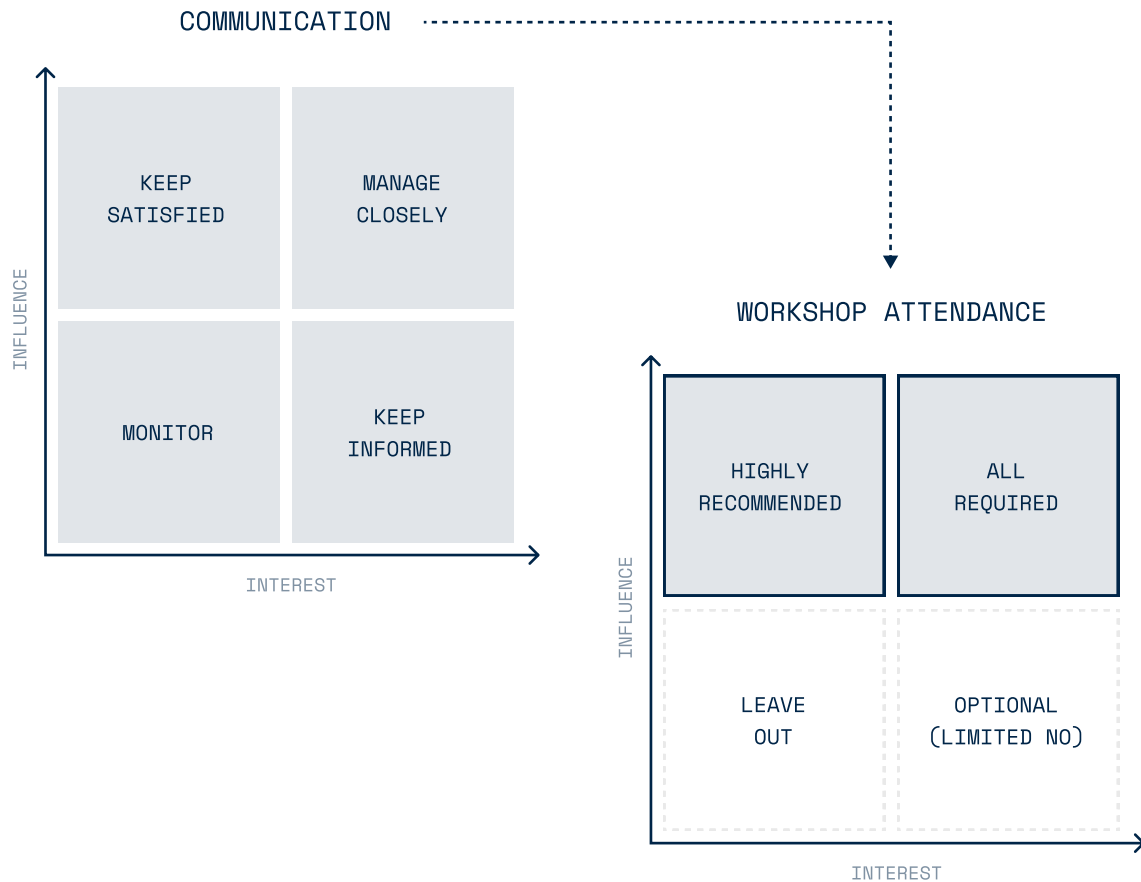
HOW TO SING ALONG
DIGITAL PRODUCT STRATEGY SONGBOOK – EPISODE 6

01
PRINCE
I COULD NEVER TAKE THE PLACE
OF YOUR MAN

02
NICK CAVE
WHERE THE WILD ROSES GROW

If you haven't done it yet, the first thing you'd want to do is to list all your internal (C-level executives, product owner, product manager, designer, developer, ...) and external (customers, investors, partners, ...) stakeholders for your project.

Next, you map them according to influence and interest. This is typically used to prioritize the stakeholders and guide your project communication. But you can also employ it to determine which stakeholders you really should try to get on board for your workshops:



Once you put together your main stakeholder team, start by outlining your workshop agenda. Don't just put everyone together to brainstorm in the wild. That will almost never provide you with the wanted outcomes. We've all been there.

Instead, lean on the best practices of service design workshops to guide your audience step by step through the thinking process, do your research beforehand, figure out what all stakeholders are expecting, and make sure you have a capable workshop facilitator present.

When done right, co-creation workshops are a very powerful tool that can align stakeholders and reduce weeks of thinking into just a couple of (very intensive but also very fun) days.

WANT MORE INFO ON OUR CO-CREATION WORKSHOPS? GO TO [ICAPPS.COM](https://www.icapps.com)



EPISODE 7 ON VALIDATION AND MEASUREMENT

01
BJÖRK
HUMAN BEHAVIOR

02
THE POLICE
EVERY BREATH YOU TAKE

In 'Human Behaviour', Björk sings "If you ever get close to a human and human behavior, be ready, be ready to get confused. There's definitely, definitely, definitely no logic to human behavior". Sadly, as a strategist, human behavior is your job. So you need ways to get 'deconfused'.

That's where validation comes in.



Validation is crucial. It's like the military saying goes: "No plan survives contact with the enemy". Your users are -obviously- not your enemy, but the idea remains: don't assume to know how your audiences will react. This aligns with that other old saying: "When you ASSUME, you make an ASS out of U and ME". Listing up assumptions during the strategic process and validating them with your audience via user interviews or observations is key to any successful strategy.

Musicians have of course the advantage of having lots of contact moments with their audience at concerts. So they can use those opportunities to test out new material.

Radiohead testing new material at the 1996 Alanis Morissette tour



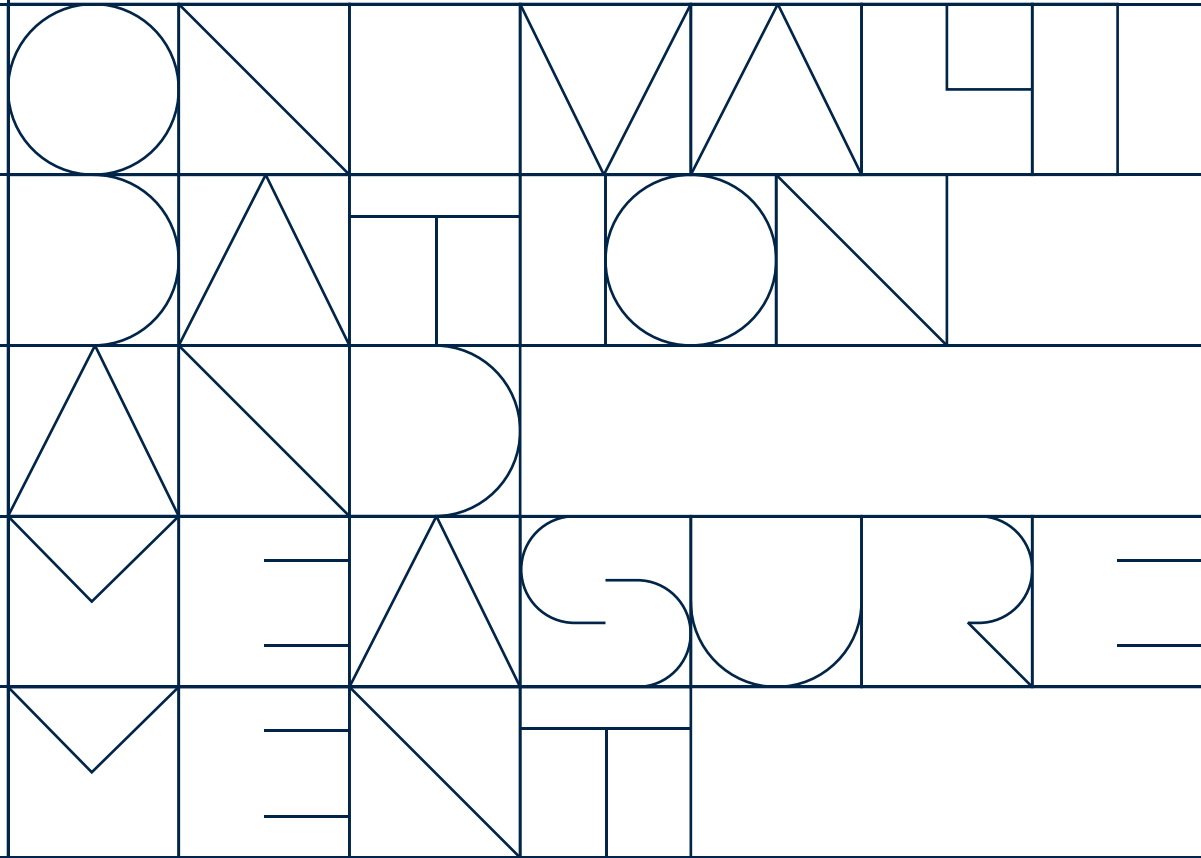
When I attended the Werchter festival in 1996, I heard Radiohead perform a very early version of 'Paranoid Android', which would later appear on the album 'OK Computer'. It was around that same time that they toured as an opener for Alanis Morissette. During this tour, they played the song a lot, which allowed them to finetune it long before they recorded it. When they played this live, it would often go on for 15 minutes or more.

Now, when a product already exists, you can also use more quantitative data to support your strategic decisions. Providing of course that the right KPIs (key performance indicators) have been tracked corresponding to your product vision. That too is part of a strategist's responsibility. Because without the proper data, you will be

sailing blind and not be able to adjust your strategic course when necessary (no, we will not be adding Rod Stewart's 'Sailing' to our songbook for this).

What we rightfully can add however is the 1983 hit 'Every Breath You Take' by The Police. At first hearing, it sounds like just another love song. But it is actually quite a nasty song about an obsessive stalker watching your every move. It's about surveillance and ownership.

You don't want to be that person. So when setting out your strategic measurement plan, be mindful about what data you capture about whom and follow the rules of 'privacy by design'.



HOW TO SING ALONG
DIGITAL PRODUCT STRATEGY SONGBOOK – EPISODE 7

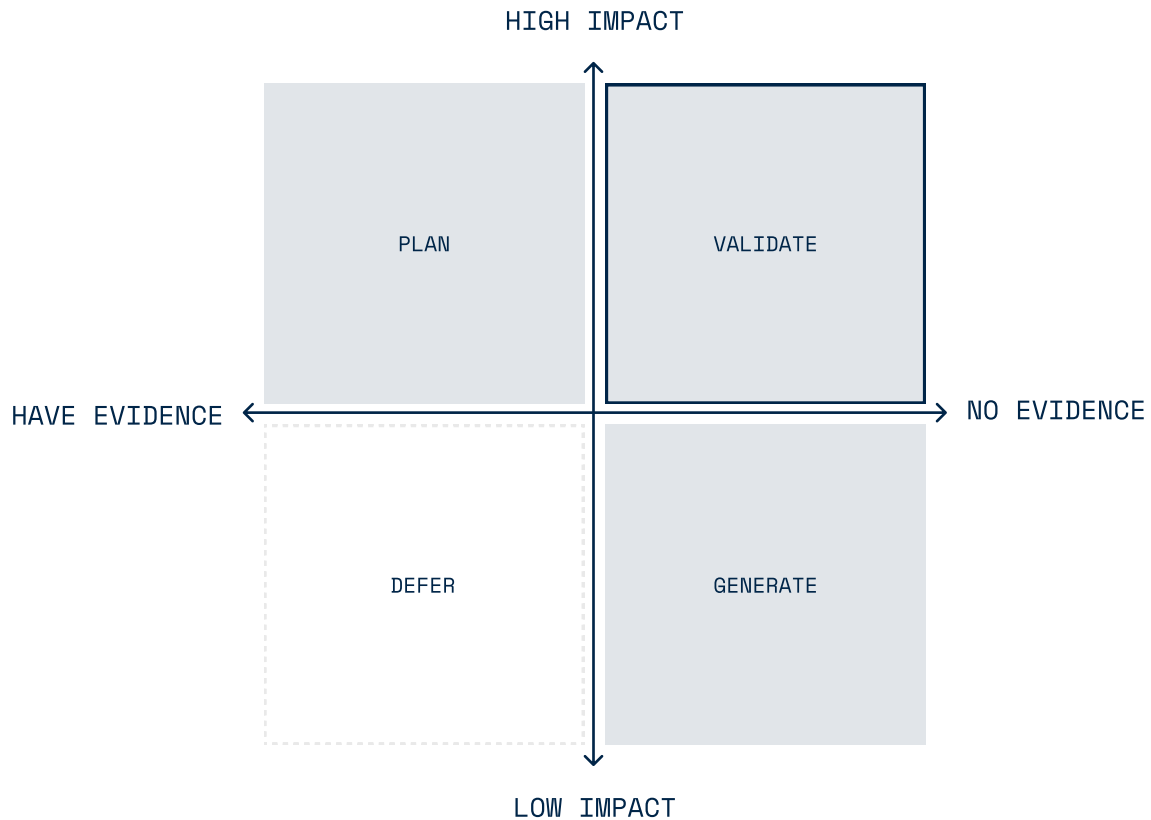
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Assumptions are a strategist's worst enemy. Disguised as friendly, believable truths, they undermine your story and put your whole strategy foundation at risk. That's why it is crucial to be very aware of them throughout the strategizing phase, to list them, assess them and, most importantly, validate them.

To start assessing assumptions, map them out according to impact and available evidence:



Everything that ends up in the upper right corner (high impact but no real evidence), clearly needs validation via further desk research or by conducting interviews. And obviously, you'd want to do this before you start building your strategy, rather than afterwards.

But validation does also play an important part in the final stage of strategizing. Once all that hard work has come together to shape this beautiful, clear, and consistent strategy for your digital product, it is indeed very tempting to start building right away. Don't. Restrain yourself for one more minute, and make sure you validate the product-market fit of your value proposition first, via for example:

- A concept walkthrough based upon a clickable prototype or a mash-up
- A call to action like a simple landing page or a validation survey
- A simulation in which you, for instance, manually perform the tasks that your product will do automatically.



Finally, before you start building, you should think about how you will measure the impact of your strategy. Otherwise, how will you know (and prove to your stakeholders) that your approach works? And how will you know where and when to adjust along the road?

So you need a clear measurement plan right from the beginning, that lists all your product objectives and translates them into KPIs that can be tracked via your digital solution. This plan will also greatly help the development teams so they can integrate all necessary measurement tags, as well as opt-in screens.

KPI DEFINITION CARD

OBJECTIVE

(STRATEGIC PRODUCT OBJECTIVE TO MEASURE)

METRIC

(WAY OF MEASURING THE OBJECTIVE)

TARGET

(WHAT SCORE DO WE WANT TO ACHIEVE?)

TIMEFRAME

(TIME BY WHICH TO REACH THE TARGET)

BENEFICIARIES

(WHO WILL USE THIS KPI?)

NEED SOME ASSISTANCE WITH VALIDATION OR MEASUREMENT? GO TO [ICAPPS.COM](https://www.icapps.com)

THIS DIGITAL STRATEGY SONGBOOK & PODCAST CAMPAIGN WAS PRODUCED BY OUR LOVELY COLLEAGUES:

Geert De Laet - Digital strategist

The star of this campaign is definitely our Digital Strategist, Geert. The one who combined his two passions, music and digital strategy, into one great piece of content; the Digital Strategy Songbook. A genius mind, a great facilitator, a born pianist, a great person. All in one.

Maarten Anckaert - Back-end developer

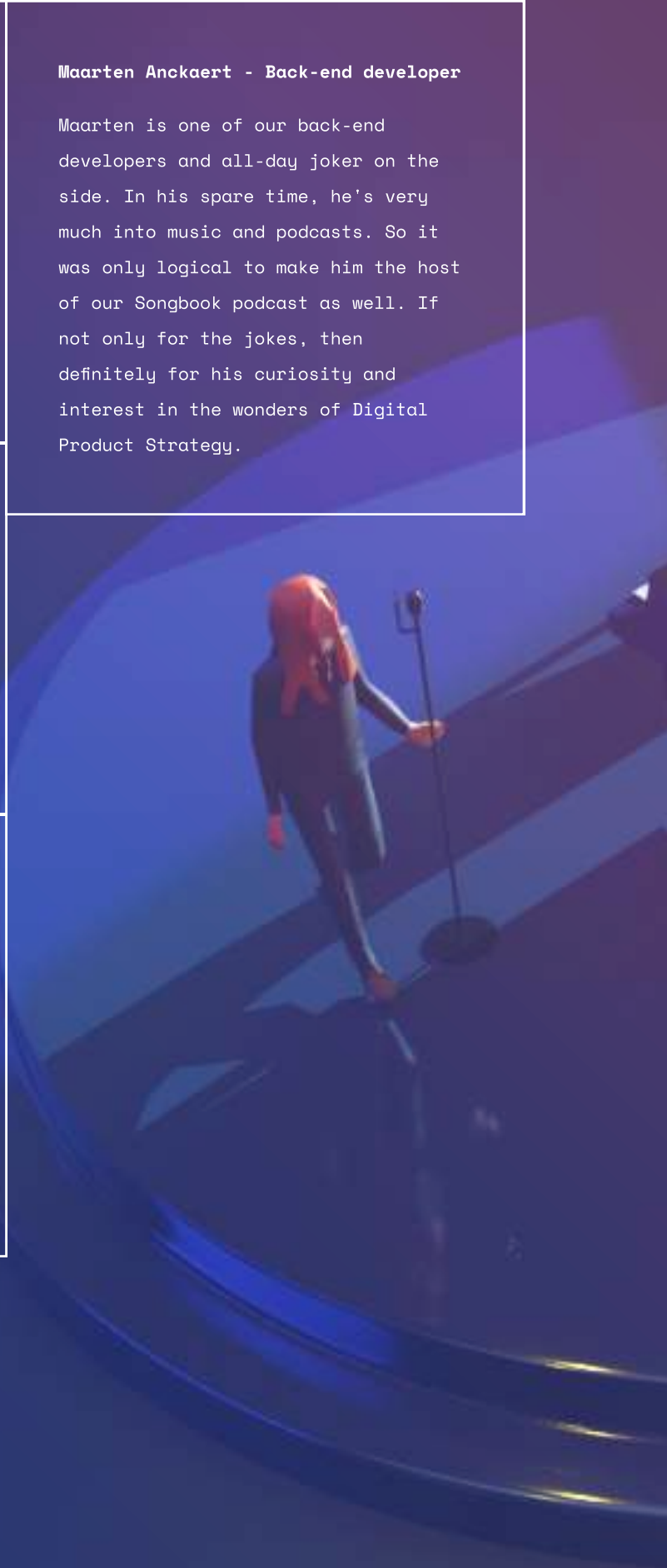
Maarten is one of our back-end developers and all-day joker on the side. In his spare time, he's very much into music and podcasts. So it was only logical to make him the host of our Songbook podcast as well. If not only for the jokes, then definitely for his curiosity and interest in the wonders of Digital Product Strategy.


Ruben De Jaeger - Front-end Developer

Ruben is one of our interns in front-end development. A little bird told us he also knows how to handle sound systems and audio equipment. Talking about multi-talented people, right? Ruben absolutely smashed it!

Sjoera Roggeman - UX designer

As a UX designer, Sjoera was one of our beloved colleagues for over 6 years. Although she never really sang at the office, she has the voice of an angel. Since we wanted to create this campaign with an icapps crew, we politely asked her to get on board. And well, she rocked it!





Digital product strategy is a creative process. Just like songwriting. And although the outcomes are very different, they share quite a number of mechanics and base principles. In the end, product strategists and songwriters both want to engage audiences by delivering something they believe in. They want to make a connection and build meaningful relationships that last.

For that, we need a clear, authentic vision. We need to be empathic with our audiences and take their (and our) context into consideration. We need to keep it simple and focused (subtract rather than add) while providing hooks to draw their much-claimed attention. And this can only be achieved by working together with the best and validating your ideas.

Only by learning to balance all these elements will you be able to create truly successful digital product strategies.