

Book review: Product development and management body of knowledge: a guidebook for product innovation training and certification

by Allan Anderson, Chad McAllister and Ernie Harris

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Product Development and Management Body of Knowledge: A Guidebook for Product Innovation Training and Certification, third edition, written by Allan Anderson, Chad McAllister and Ernie Harris, is a monumental work in the realm of product innovation. Published by John Wiley & Sons in 2024, the book serves not only as a guide for professionals seeking New Product Development Professional (NPD) certification but also as an academic and practical text containing an integrated framework, management models and best practices that have been proven in the global industry for more than 4 decades. The background of this book is inseparable from the great role of the Product Development and Management Association (PDMA), an international organisation that since 1976 has been the main axis of standards development and certification in product innovation. Through a research- and practice-based approach, PDMA brings together thinking from across industries and disciplines to create what is known as the Body of Knowledge (BoK). This third edition – often referred to as BoK3 – strengthens the integration of business strategy, development processes, product design, market research, and organisational culture management into a coherent and comprehensive narrative. “The BoK is founded on a broad spectrum of independent research . . . over the past 50 years” (p. xii), states the book’s introduction.

The three authors have complementary backgrounds. Allan Anderson is a professor emeritus from Massey University, New Zealand, who has spent more than 40 years in the field of product innovation. He is also the author of the first and second editions of BoK. Chad McAllister, PhD, is a widely recognised figure in the product management community, a university educator, and host of the podcast “Product Mastery Now.” Meanwhile, Ernie Harris is a key figure in the development of the PDMA ecosystem internationally, including its expansion into Asian and Middle Eastern markets. The three of them present this book as a collaboration between academics and practitioners, making it both analytical and applicable (pp. vii-viii).

Structurally, the book is divided into seven main chapters. The first chapter discusses the basic concept of product innovation management, explaining the cross-functional complexity involving various parties internal and external to the organisation. Product innovation is not understood simply as the result of creativity, but as a combination of ideas and realisation (“Innovation = Creativity + Realisation”, p. 4). This chapter also emphasises the importance of a culture of innovation and product life cycle strategies from development to withdrawal from the market. The second chapter delves into strategy, which pivots the direction of product development. “Open Innovation extends innovation resources beyond the boundaries of the organisation” (p. 97). The author’s main argument is that today’s companies must go beyond their internal boundaries and integrate various external resources to remain competitive. This approach



is complemented by discussions on sustainability strategies, Porter's Five Forces framework, and the importance of integration between technology and marketing strategies (pp. 74–100).

The third chapter discusses portfolio management, which is how organisations select and balance innovation projects based on strategic value, risk and market potential. In this chapter, readers are introduced to various project selection tools such as Scoring Models, Strategic Buckets, and Expected Commercial Value (pp. 143–148). Emphasis is also placed on the dynamics of portfolio management in the context of Agile and Hybrid methodologies, reflecting the need for flexibility in the face of market uncertainty (p. 149). The fourth chapter focuses on the innovation process. From the classic Stage-Gate model to contemporary approaches such as Lean Startup and Hybrid Agile-Stage-Gate, the book reviews the advantages, limitations, and context of application of each process. The authors even include an in-depth discussion of the concept of “Jobs to Be Done” as an approach to understanding customer needs from a functional and emotional perspective (pp. 196–199). An important sentence in this section states that “There is no single right process, but rather the right fit between process and context” (p. 199).

The fifth chapter reviews aspects of product design and development. In this chapter, emphasis is placed on the two main phases of conceptualisation and technical realisation, each complemented by methods such as Design for Manufacturability, Design for Sustainability, and user testing. In the midst of global sustainability challenges, this discussion is particularly relevant given the focus on the Triple Bottom Line: People, Profit, Planet (p. 244). The sixth chapter is about market research. The book elaborates on the vital role of market research in every stage of innovation, from idea generation to post-launch evaluation. The methods discussed include focus groups, ethnographic studies, alpha and beta testing, and the utilisation of big data and biometric analysis (pp. 261–274). The authors remind us that “Market research and voice of the customer are integral to product innovation” (p. 282), underlining the importance of customer engagement from the start.

The seventh chapter deals with innovation culture and teams. This is where the human dimension of innovation takes centre stage. The book emphasises that “Success is dependent on people, the culture of the company, and the environment that is created to foster innovation” (p. 298). The chapter also highlights the challenges of leadership in cross-functional teams and managing virtual teams, which are increasingly relevant in the era of remote working. Finally, the book presents Appendix B and C, which are invaluable, as they contain real-life case studies of Outstanding Corporate Innovators award-winning companies such as Global DairyCo and Stingray Digital, which provide concrete illustrations of the application of the principles in this book (pp. 359–386).

Critically, the book has major advantages in terms of comprehensiveness and cohesion. The systematic presentation of material from strategy to working teams demonstrates a deep understanding of the complexities of innovation. The weaknesses are the heavy use of technical terms without much simplification for the general reader, as well as the limited explicit discussion of the context of innovation in developing countries. From a scientific point of view, the book enriches the innovation literature by bringing together conceptual approaches and field practices. The integration of models such as the Innovation Management Framework (p. xiii), the Quartz Open Framework (p. 9), and various quantitative tools shows that innovation is not just creativity, but a system that can be taught, measured, and optimised.

In conclusion, this book is highly recommended for professionals involved in product management, innovation managers, strategy consultants, lecturers, and graduate students. It is not just a certification guide but also a workbook and a source of inspiration that deserves to be on every innovator's shelf, whether in the lecture theatre or the boardroom. As the final page of the introduction asserts, “Doing the right innovation and doing innovation right is the foundation of sustainable product success” (p. xix).

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