THE FOUNDERS PRODUCT STRATEGY BENCHMARK 2025

Thank you for taking the time to share your insights and experiences with us four months ago. Your participation has been invaluable in helping us understand how Entrepreneurs and Product Managers approach product strategy and growth.

As a Product Strategist and Innovation Management Consultant, I've spent the past three years working with Startups and MNCs to understand their product development and growth strategies. Through these engagements, I've witnessed fascinating approaches to innovation management.

One particularly inspiring example: a multinational corporation that launched "Failure Fridays" quarterly, where they identified ideas that didn't work out and publicly honored the employees behind them. Rather than discouraging innovation, this practice showed their workforce that every idea mattered and was genuinely evaluated. The result? Idea submissions jumped from 1-2 per month to 10, as employees felt empowered to think boldly and contribute freely.

In today's competitive landscape, organizations must continuously seek fresh ideas, while we as individuals must commit to constant innovation and learning. This survey was designed to capture real-world perspectives on how product leaders navigate these challenges.

The following summary synthesizes the key findings from your collective responses. I hope you'll find the insights as valuable as I did, and that they spark new ideas for your own product journey.

Thank you again for your contribution to this research.

Warm regards,

Harinath Pudipeddii
Product Strategy & Innovation Management

325, 4th Cross, Banaswadi, Bengaluru 560 043
+91.907 0 907 907

98/3, Albert Coates Lane, Melbourne VIC 3000
+61.439 221 811

www.StudioNAVAKA.com
harinpv@StudioNAVAKA.com

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This benchmark study surveyed 33 product leaders, founders, and executives to understand the current state of product strategy practices in 2025. Respondents included Founders, CTOs, CPOs, Product Managers, and Product Owners from various organizations.

Key Findings at a Glance

Strategy Documentation Gap: Only 33% have living, consistently updated strategy. 36% rely on inconsistent notes, and 9% have no formal documentation.

Informal Decision-Making Dominates: 67% make product decisions through founder intuition, customer feedback, or informal processes rather than structured frameworks.

Validation Relies on Qualitative Methods: 58% validate strategy through customer interviews and informal feedback, with only 30% using systematic experiments and data.

Growth vs. Stability is the Top Constraint: 49% struggle most with balancing growth initiatives against operational stability.

Market Positioning Help Most Needed: 46% would seek external help first for market positioning and differentiation.

Agile Strategy Updates: 58% treat strategy as a continuous, living process rather than periodic reviews.

DETAILED SURVEY FINDINGS

PARTICIPANT PROFILE

The survey captured responses from diverse product leadership roles, with founders representing the largest segment (either as solo founders or in combination with other roles). This mix provides a comprehensive view across different organizational positions and responsibilities.

Role Distribution	Response %
Founder (including multi-role)	42%
CTO	21%
Product Manager	12%
CPO	12%
Product Owner	6%
Other	7%

HOW PRODUCT STRATEGY IS DEFINED AND DOCUMENTED

Key Insight: Only one-third of organizations maintain a living, consistently updated product strategy. This represents a significant opportunity for improvement in strategic discipline.

Strategy Documentation Practices	Response %
Inconsistent notes/slides	**36.4%**
Living strategy updated across org	**33.3%**
Structured document/framework	**21.2%**
No formal documentation	**9.1%**

Analysis:

- The 36% with inconsistent documentation suggests ad-hoc strategy development that may lack coherence.
- Combined, 45% either have inconsistent or no formal strategy documentation.
- Organizations with living strategies are more likely to adapt quickly to market changes.

STRATEGIC FRAMEWORKS IN USE

Key Insight: Nearly one-third rely on informal, intuitive decision-making. Even among those using frameworks, there's significant fragmentation in approach.

Framework Usage	Response %
Informal/intuitive process	**30.3%**
Multiple frameworks	**21.2%**
OKRs and prioritization matrices	**21.2%**
Jobs-to-be-Done + ICE/RICE	**15.2%**
Custom framework	**12.1%**

Analysis:

- The 30% informal approach suggests reliance on experience and gut feeling.
- 12% developing custom frameworks indicates sophisticated product thinking.
- Multiple framework users (21%) may benefit from streamlining their approach.

FEATURE PRIORITISATION APPROACH

Key Insight: Two-thirds of organizations prioritize through customer feedback and founder intuition rather than structured, data-driven methods.

Prioritization Methods	Response %
Customer requests/feedback	**33.3%**
Founder/leadership intuition	**33.3%**
Data-driven with metrics	**18.2%**
Structured scoring (RICE/ICE)	**15.2%**

Analysis:

- Equal split between customer-driven and intuition-driven approaches.
- Only 18% use rigorous data-driven prioritization.
- This suggests potential for improved prioritization discipline.

COMPETITIVE DIFFERENTIATION STRATEGY

Key Insight: The most common strategy (42%) is targeting underserved segments, though 27% are still developing their differentiation approach.

Differentiation Approaches	Response %
Targeting underserved segments	**42.4%**
Still developing strategy	**27.3%**
Proprietary technology/data	**15.2%**
Network effects/switching costs	**9.1%**
Faster/cheaper than competitors	**6.1%**

Analysis:

- Blue ocean strategy (underserved segments) is most popular.
- 27% still developing differentiation indicates significant opportunity.
- Only 9% leveraging network effects - potential missed opportunity.

STRATEGY VALIDATION METHODS

Key Insight: Qualitative validation dominates, with 58% relying on customer interviews and informal feedback loops.

Validation Approaches	Response %
Customer interviews/informal feedback	**57.6%**
Systematic experiments/pilots/data	**30.3%**
Investor/mentor feedback	**6.1%**
No formal validation process	**6.1%**

Analysis:

- Heavy reliance on qualitative methods may miss quantitative signals.
- 30% using systematic methods shows maturity in this segment.
- 6% with no validation is concerning and risky.

BALANCING DATA TYPES IN DECISIONS

Key Insight: Most organizations (36%) use ad-hoc data combinations without systematic integration processes.

Data Balance Approach	Response %
Ad-hoc combination	**36.4%**
Primarily qualitative	**24.2%**
Systematic integration	**15.2%**
Primarily quantitative	**12.1%**
Limited formal research	**12.1%**

Analysis:

- 36% ad-hoc approach suggests decision quality depends on the situation.
- Only 15% have systematic integration - significant maturity gap.
- Combined 48% favor qualitative over quantitative methods.

STRATEGY REVIEW & UPDATE FREQUENCY

Key Insight: Over half (58%) treat strategy as a continuous living process, showing high organizational agility.

Review Frequency	Response %
Continuous living process	**57.6%**
Quarterly reviews	**27.3%**
Rarely (when things go wrong)	**9.1%**
Annually/fundraising cycles	**6.1%**

Analysis:

- 58% continuous review indicates mature agile thinking.
- 15% reviewing rarely or annually are at high risk of market misalignment.
- Quarterly reviews (27%) represent good balance for many organizations.

CHALLENGE IN EXECUTING STRATEGY

Key Insight: Execution speed and scale (36%) edges out team alignment (27%) as the top challenge.

Execution Challenges	Response %
Scaling and execution speed	**36.4%**
Aligning team/stakeholders	**27.3%**
Differentiation from competitors	**21.2%**
Lack of clarity on priorities	**15.2%**

Analysis:

- Scaling challenges indicate growth-stage companies in the sample.
- 27% alignment issues suggest communication gaps.
- 15% with unclear priorities links back to documentation gaps.

CONSTRAINTS IN EXECUTING STRATEGY

Key Insight: Nearly half (49%) struggle with balancing growth initiatives against operational stability—the classic scale-up dilemma.

Execution Constraints	Response %
Growth vs. operational stability	**48.5%**
Limited funding for experiments	**21.2%**
Talent acquisition/execution	**21.2%**
Market education/development	**9.1%**

Analysis:

- 49% growth-stability tension is the defining constraint.
- Funding and talent tied at 21% each - classic resource constraints.
- Only 9% cite market education - suggests established markets.

EVALUATING GROWTH OPPORTUNITIES

Key Insight: No single dominant approach emerges, with methods fairly distributed across customer journey mapping (27%), opportunistic approaches (21%), and financial modeling (18%).

Growth Evaluation Methods	Response %
Customer journey/beachhead strategy	**27.3%**
Opportunistic (inbound/partnerships)	**21.2%**
Focus on current market	**18.2%**
Financial modeling/scenarios	**18.2%**
TAM/SAM analysis	**15.2%**

Analysis:

- Diverse approaches suggest context-specific evaluation.
- 21% opportunistic approach may miss strategic opportunities.
- 18% focusing only on current market indicates conservative growth stance.

AREAS OF EXTERNAL EXPERTISE REQUIRED

Key Insight: Market positioning and differentiation (46%) is the clear winner, followed by roadmap clarity (27%) and pricing strategy (24%).

External Help Priorities	Response %
Market positioning & differentiation	**45.5%**
Roadmap clarity & prioritization	**27.3%**
Pricing & monetization strategy	**24.2%**
Investor story & scaling strategy	**3.0%**

Analysis:

- 46% seeking positioning help confirms earlier differentiation challenges.
- Roadmap clarity (27%) links to prioritization gaps.
- Pricing strategy (24%) represents untapped value potential.

STRATEGIC RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the benchmark findings, here are the priority areas for product leaders to focus on:

1. Formalize Strategy Documentation

- Move from ad-hoc notes to living strategy documents.
- Implement quarterly strategy reviews with stakeholder alignment.
- Create accessible strategy artifacts that teams can reference.

2. Adopt Structured Decision Frameworks

- Implement RICE or ICE scoring for feature prioritization.
- Balance intuition with data-driven decision making.
- Establish clear prioritization criteria aligned to strategy.

3. Strengthen Market Positioning

- Develop clear differentiation strategy beyond underserved segments.
- Consider building defensible moats through network effects or data.
- Articulate unique value proposition that resonates with target customers.

4. Balance Qualitative and Quantitative Validation

- Complement customer interviews with systematic experiments.
- Build analytics capability for data-driven insights.
- Create feedback loops that combine both data types.

5. Address the Growth-Stability Paradox

- Create dedicated innovation budgets separate from operations.
- Build platforms that enable both stability and experimentation.
- Consider two-track approach: core business + growth initiatives.

6. Optimize Pricing Strategy

- Conduct pricing experiments to capture maximum value.
- Align pricing with customer value perception, not just costs.
- Consider pricing as a competitive differentiation lever.

STUDIO NAVAKA

Studio NAVAKA is a boutique product strategy and innovation consulting studio that partners with organisations to design, refine, and manage winning product strategies while architecting custom, practical internal innovation systems that actually get used.

Learn more at www.StudioNAVAKA.com.