



# Radical Product Thinking with Radhika Dutt



Product leader, entrepreneur and author Radhika Dutt shares insights on creating better products to meet your customers' needs.



**Radhika Dutt**

**James:** James Schramko here. Welcome back to SuperFastBusiness.com. This is Episode 869. Today, we're talking about product design. I've brought along a special guest, Radhika Dutt, welcome to the call.

**Radhika:** Thank you for having me, James.

**James:** And today as we're recording, it's a pretty special day because you've just published your new book, which I'll mention now, because already people are going to go off and buy it, knowing my audience, [Radical Product Thinking: The New Mindset for Innovating Smarter](#). And it's just been published after three years of labor and toil, congratulations.

**Radhika:** Thank you. Yes, it has been a labor of love. It's taken me this long, because I wanted to make sure that I was framing it right. This was more than a book about just products. My goal was to help us build or apply this in ways where we're really using this approach to be able to create change wherever we want to really create change. But it gives us a methodology to create change very systematically, not just, let's try something and see what works.

**James:** Yeah, I really enjoyed reading bits of the book that sort of highlight where we're getting some new ideas based on what most of us have been exposed to. I would say, a fair percentage of our audience, for example, have read books like *The Lean Startup*. And we have a lot of online savvy people in our community who are doing iterative marketing.

They're really keen on optimization, and split testing, and tuning into their analytics and making incremental changes. And I loved your concepts in the book, especially around how that might be keeping you smaller than you really could be. And I'm sure we'll go into that, and perhaps talk about the different stages. There's five elements of radical product thinking that I thought were interesting.

## **Why our current guest is on the show**

Just before we do that, I want to let you know why you're here and let my audience know why you're here. We have this podcast, right, it's been going for a while, obviously, we're up to 869 episodes, which still fascinates me, the fact that anyone would want to even listen to me that long is astounding.

**Radhika:** It's a wonderful podcast.

**James:** It's mostly part to the guests, right? The spotlight is on you today, because you're the expert on this topic. And what I recognize, right, I'm always advocating for my clients. I want them to succeed. Even the podcast listeners, who will listen and never pay a cent, just listen for free, I'm okay with that because more people listen to this podcast than end up buying [my programs](#).

But they will go and buy the books of my guests, and they'll buy programs of other people. And that's great because they're on their journey of transformation. But as the advocate on behalf of my clients, and listeners, I want to round out our skill set, I want to add next-level abilities and transformations to our audience.

Now we get a lot of people pitching to come on the show, they want to come on the show and talk about their stuff, obviously, it's good marketing for them, it's a great opportunity. And my audience buy things. But what my team does, they collate this spreadsheet. And they put in all the people who have approached us and asked to be on the show. And they go and review the person, they check their background, they have a look at what they've been up to. And if it's a good fit for our audience, that's sort of my first line of defense.

If it's any good, they'll float it to me to have a look at. And I'll tell you that we get inundated every day, and this spreadsheet is big. And I say no to almost everybody. And I've only said yes to two people. You and one other. And the reason I said yes is because I had a look at your book. I've gone through the book.

Luckily, I got forwarded a nice early advanced draft, which is a lovely professional courtesy. And I like what's in the book. And it's important because I think your topic is just to the side of what my audience are fully aware of. I think they're doing elements of what you talk about without even knowing they're doing it.

## **What we want to happen today**

And what we want to do today is I want to put some labels on things and identify to them, like put the X-ray over what they're already doing, and say, Here are the actual labels for what you're already doing. And here are things you're probably not aware of that could help you do it better. That would be my goal for today. If we could do that, then we will win. We'll win today.

And by the way, I noticed your book is number one new release on Amazon, which you must be pretty excited about.

**Radhika:** I am. And you know, I love your goal for what you described you want to get out of this for your audience. You know, what you said about marketing, and one of the things that I think is really relevant and that you said is something on the side that isn't really kind of put front and center for the marketing people, we've learned, for example, with Lean Startup, that the way you put things in the market, or the way you discover what's working in the market, it's all about, you know, put something out there, try it out.

And then you know, you see how it's working, and then you try something else, you make improvements, right? And what happens is, over the last decade, our tools for being able to do this analytics and the data, etc., they've gotten so much better. We have more of the stability to try things at a faster pace to see what's working.



But here's the problem, right? And in the book, I describe it as iteration is like having a fast car. A fast car definitely helps you drive faster. But you know, as we know, from driving, driving fast is only useful when you know where you're going. And so what I've found is that, in my experience in building a company, I've been in marketing too, and I'll share some of my frustrations as a marketer myself, having had all these different roles, what I found was, it's incredibly hard when you are just driving and you don't know that end destination.

And so you feel like you're spinning your wheels sometimes. And so this is why the book is about how we can actually set a very clear direction for where we want to go. And then it's great to drive fast. And so to give you the example from my experience as a marketer, I remember being at a startup where we had set out with this audacious goal, we were going to be the next VISA of the world, right?

And along the way, we discovered, you know what, actually being the next VISA of the world is really hard because you have to acquire merchants, and you have to acquire consumers. So then, you know, we said, Oh, let's pivot. That's, by the way, the other word that everyone has heard so much of, more than everything else.

**James:** I'm sick of the word pivot.

**Radhika:** If it doesn't work, just pivot. And so yes, we pivoted. Instead of trying to be the next VISA, we pivoted to loyalty solutions provider for merchants. But then, you know what, we discovered, hey, that's a really crowded market. So we pivoted again. We pivoted to being a credit solutions provider for merchants.

Now, the thing is, as a marketer, I personally just didn't know what to write on these brochures anymore, right? And so a lot of marketers might find this that, in their organization, if there isn't a really clear direction, and kind of where you're driving, you drive fast, but then you get really frustrated because you just feel like you're spinning your wheels, you don't know where you're going, you're kind of going around in circles.

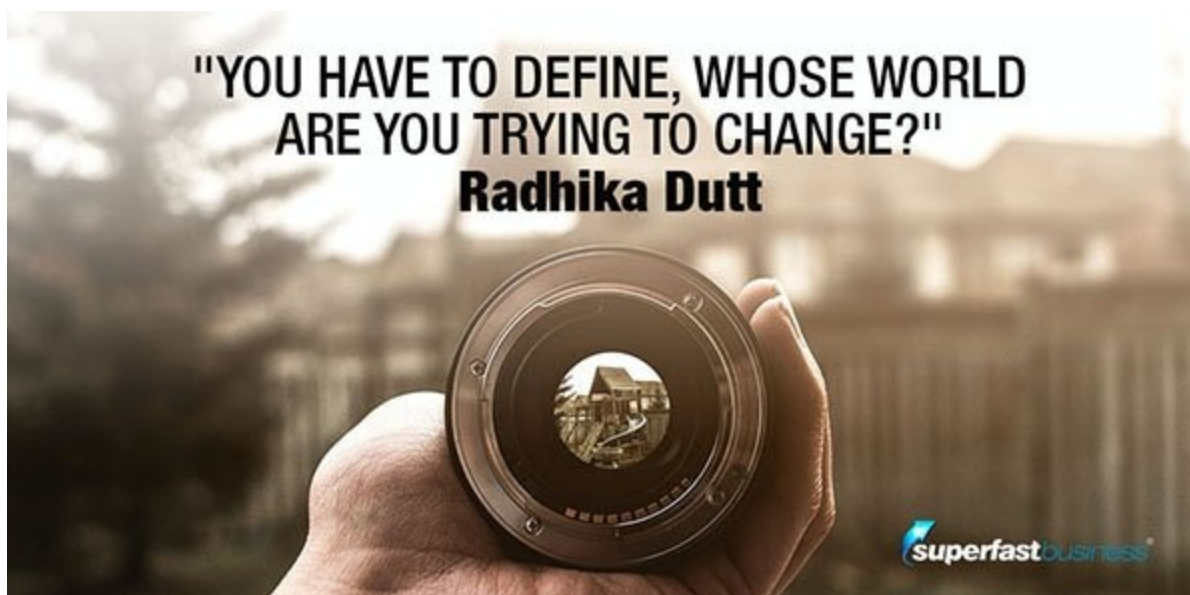
And so the thing about marketing is, one of the biggest things that you're really trying to figure out through all of these tests is, what is it that your customers really need? And so basically, what is the problem that they're facing? And what is your solution that you see that's going to help them out? And so that's really what the vision boils down to.

## What is a good vision for your company?

One of the biggest challenges that I realized in my career is that starting point of what we've learned is good vision has been so fundamentally flawed, because we've learned until now that a good vision, you know, it's a short slogan, people confuse a tagline with a good vision. And so we hear that a good vision is this big, hairy, audacious goal or a BHAG.

For years, we touted General Electric's vision of being number one or number two in every market as being a great vision. And it turns out that's absolutely flawed. The reason is this - that sort of a vision of being the leader, or to reinvent blah, those kinds of visions, they don't tell you, what exactly are you solving? Like whose problem are you solving? And what is their problem? And what's the world you envision? Without knowing those details, then we move into this fast execution and start to spin our wheels.

And so one of the first things I talk about in the book is how we can build a really good vision. And what I mean by a good vision is that it's not about your business goal. And this is kind of key to marketing, you have to focus on what is it that the end user really needs. And that's the starting point.



So first, you have to define, you know, whose world are you trying to change? And every marketer knows this, right? Like, you can't market to everyone, like you're just going to run out of money trying to market to everyone. You have to figure out like, who exactly is that target, and be very specific about defining that.

Now, the second question then is, what is their problem? And it's important to know as part of what is their problem, you know, what are they using today to solve that problem? The third question is probably the most important one to me, which is, why? Why is the status quo completely unacceptable? And if you cannot answer that, there may be no reason for your product to exist.

The fourth question, then, is when will you know that you've arrived? Meaning, what does the world look like when you're done, when you've provided your solution? And then finally, then it's time to talk about your solution. So a good vision has to answer this who, what, why, when and how questions. And that is what a marketer really needs to be able to do any marketing, like this is the kind of crux of what marketers need.

**James:** Well, I think more marketers should watch Noddy then because my two-year-old daughter has been watching Noddy, and they actually have a song around who, why, how, what, when, and then it says, investigate. This is a common theme that comes up, and it does crash heavily into the sort of opposing concept of, I want a membership. Who can I sell it to? Let's talk about that attitude.

**Radhika:** You know, I love that you bring that up, because this is one of those attitudes that happens not just in marketing, but also in building product, right? Very often, I see organizations build a great technology, or founders start with a great technology, and they feel like, Okay, I have a hammer, now I'm looking for nails, right?

And the problem with that, is you run into the Segway problem, which is Segway, you know, if we think about why it took so long for Segway to even find a niche in the market, it was because the reason it was envisioned was to solve the problem of people who are trying to get to work, who basically want to commute to work, but their walking commute to work is too long. And so Segway was a replacement for the walking commute to work.



But if you just step back for a moment, right, you realize, wait, who's commuting to work on foot? Like, there are just so few people who have this problem. So it was basically this technology in search of a market. And this is what happens when we try to start with a product and then say, Who can I market it to?

We really have to look at the problem in reverse, because otherwise, you end up with a Segway that you're then trying to figure out, like, what niche can I sell it to? And finally, by the way, Segway today is successful, because they didn't find a niche. And a niche that they found was, they found that tourists do want to do a walking tour of the city. And that was the one pain point where you're trying to do a walking tour, but you get tired. And so Segway actually works for these walking tours. But aside from that, nobody else really uses a Segway.

**James:** Well, policemen at an airport.

**Radhika:** That's kind of become a meme, hasn't it?

**James:** It has, you know, like you obviously, you go through Singapore. I've seen a couple there and in the US. But one of the roles, you're an adviser to the central bank of Singapore on product thinking, and this is, just to highlight, that's what we're talking about today, is how to think differently about your product.

And I love this, this comes up a lot, because I'm an expert at membership sites, often people come to me and they say, I want a membership site. I'm sold. Who do I sell it to? I'm like, if I look at the people who are most successful with membership sites, they've been solving a problem for an audience where a membership happened to be the great solution to fixing the problem the audience were having. So it worked that way and not the other way around. So we have to be careful.

And usually, a few layers into my questioning line is, well, do your clients have a recurring problem, or a one-time problem? They go, One-time problem. I'm like, so why would they want to pay ongoing? I was taught in my early foundational sales methodology, if there's no need, there's no sale. So this all fits with my model of the world, I like this.

## Local maximum versus global maximum

Let's just talk about the difference between local maximum and global maximum for a minute, because I think that's one of the big ideas of your book that really is worth knowing, because my understanding, what you're talking about here is that people who follow an iterative process end up having a much smaller outcome than what they could have had if they had a vision-led process.

**Radhika:** Exactly. So one of the things that happens is, you know, because we have so many tools available to us for doing measurement, and data, and analytics, and having big data, etc., right? We tend to see, okay, well, what's working? So we start off with a particular idea or a solution, and then we make small tweaks to it to basically improve it.

What I mean by a local maximum is, think of it as a chessboard, and you're reacting to one corner of the chessboard, where pieces are under attack, or you're just focusing on those chess pieces to eat your opponent's pieces, right? Whereas that's not the whole point of chess. That's kind of a very short term way of thinking, and it doesn't lead to the most optimal results.

The better way of playing chess is where you're looking at the whole chessboard and thinking about what's the best move across the entire chessboard. And sometimes, you even give up a few pieces, but you're looking at the best move across to then decide, what are you going to do next? You know, when I talk about finding the global maximum, that's what I mean, playing that game on the whole chessboard.

And so instead of just looking at data, and constantly trying to optimize for the metrics and where you are today, when we really rethink what the problem is, like, what is it that the problem the customer is facing is, and what's your solution for it?

Going to the fundamentals and thinking about that problem, envisioning a solution, really arriving at what is it that's unacceptable about the status quo, and then finding the right solution, that helps you think about this problem at a chessboard level and finding the best possible move.

So you know, instead of just making small tweaks, we can really rethink our product or our solution and find the best possible solution, so you're not just making small tweaks.

**James:** Yeah, I really like this. It's funny, as you say things, of course, we relate to our own situation, which is, you know, part of what I do is relate to how it's affected me. But when I went online, it's just striking how all this time later, I never worried about optimizing my business. I was always more, I would think of it as zoomed out or zoomed in, but I was always more zoomed out.

And I think a lot of what I'm doing, when I'm coaching business owners is, they bring me stuff that I would consider minutiae. They want to know if they should switch this letter with that letter. I'm like, why are we even sending this letter? Or, like, hang on a second, let's just zoom out, I would say that phrase a lot. Let's zoom out, what are we actually trying to do here? Like they're in that little corner with their tiny little tactical question. I'm like, You're not even doing the right strategy. Let's stop.

**Radhika:** But that's such an interesting observation. And I think this is what happens, whether we're building products or doing marketing, the thing is, our everyday tactics kind of take over our lives. The everyday actions and the minutiae that you're talking about, that's kind of predominant. And we're thinking about the short term business needs, and we get focused on that.

And exactly, as we zoom out, that's really what we need. Because those everyday details, if you're able to connect those to a vision and strategy, if those details are driven by a vision and strategy, obviously one of the most happy coincidences as a result of that is that your day ends up feeling more meaningful, because it adds so much more meaning to all the tactics that you're working on.

You feel like you're actually achieving something as opposed to just, you know, okay, what, should I do this or that in the newsletter? Well, if you connect, you know, how is that relevant to my strategy? What is it that the user needs in terms of the strategy? Why are they reading my newsletter? What is my solution for them in the newsletter? What is that design that's really helping them solve some pain that they have?

And then you know, what is my special offering for them? And then finally, like, you know, in terms of delivery medium, is this the best possible medium? What comes out of it? You start to think about all these details, in this comprehensive way, the strategy, and then you're translated into those tactics and the details, whether it's a newsletter, or perhaps an SMS message or something.

**James:** That's where they get pulled into all different directions. Like, in the online marketing space, like, one of my keys has been sustainability. I'm stronger than ever now at this stage in my online business career than ever, and a lot of people are just strewn on the roadside. They come, they go, like it's churn and burn.

Because they get distracted, they start getting hooked into things like vanity metrics, I want more followers, or I need more downloads. I got to build my email list. They've gone from their clear vision of what they're trying to do to some little tactical enclave where they go, This is my objective, and then everything just stops.

It's like, I had a rant this morning, Radhika, that one of my clients wanted their contractor to run screen capture software. And I'm like, they just don't get it. Firstly, it's none of their business. They're a contractor. They shouldn't have any say in that whatsoever. But secondly, what fear-based or lack of management or ability is causing them to need to compensate with that by wanting to screen capture everyone who works for them, like they've completely missed the whole point.

I would not want to work for that person, I would leave that person. And if I did, I would put in the absolute minimum effort, I'd use malicious obedience as part of my repertoire, because I would hate that employer. And I would want to get out of there with every fiber in my body. And I would leave as soon as possible, which is what's happened, coincidentally, with this guy forever.

He's never had a high-performing team, he's never got the results he wants. And that's one little tactical reason why. So I see this all the time where people don't have a clear thing. And you had a great example about an airplane company in your book that I thought might be worth sharing, where they sort of got steered off track a bit.

**Radhika:** Yeah, and by the way, vanity metrics for me is also a rant that you're triggering. You know, we tend to focus on those vanity metrics, because those are the popular things to focus on. And the reality is, those popular metrics carry assumptions that may or may not be right for your business.

**James:** They're so not true. I'll give you an example. I'm not famous. It's nice of you to come on my not-famous show, right, because I don't have a huge following, I'm not big on any platform, I'm not world famous with anything in particular, right? I just have a great audience who keep turning up and listening to this show.

And I have a handful of members who provide me a fantastic income, because I'm helping them in their mission. So what I do know is people who have huge email, it's like 800,000 email databases, or they have a million followers, when I get under the hood of their business, and I see what's going on, I actually make more profit than most of these people. It's astounding how inefficient it is.

And I'll have to hand some credit back to Peter Drucker, because early on in my business career, I read his material, because, you know, he was an absolute legend. And he said it's about doing the right things, not doing things right. So it sort of falls back to the person obsessed with having more followers or whatever, or more email subscribers, or more downloads, they might be missing the point.

And this is probably a strong message for people listening to this, you know, if you're listening to this, and you think that's the scorecard, think about it differently. Let's see if we can get in there under the skin.

**Radhika:** Exactly. And you have to derive one of the right metrics for your business. And it has to be based on, what is your vision, what is your strategy? You have to think about your vision and strategy as hypotheses. Your stake in the ground and your metrics are helping you validate it, is that working or not?

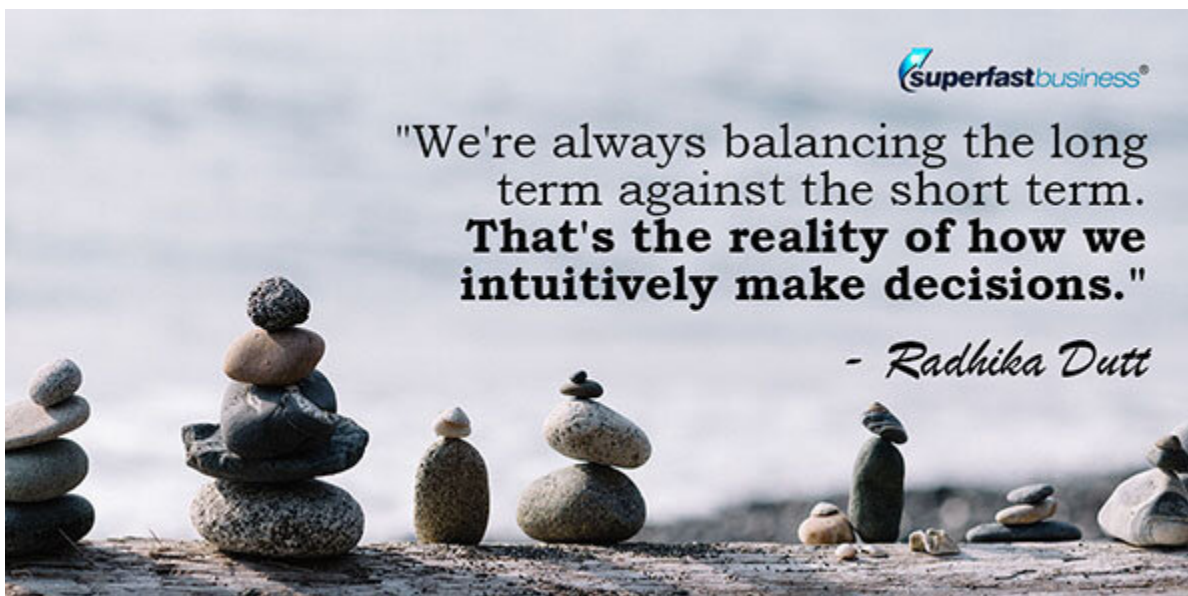
And so what you measure because of your strategy is going to be very different from someone else who has a very different strategy. And so the important thing is to not fall under this peer pressure of, these are the vanity metrics that I have to measure.

**James:** Its, if you think you need to start doing funny dances on TikTok, then you're not clear on your vision, that's what I think. And they're for some people, there's like only one person I can think of where that's a good idea for them. They're really good at that. And that's their thing. I've seen a couple of business people, you know, sadly start doing things that are way outside their wheelhouse, like they're clearly not clear on their vision.

## An approach to prioritization

Now you've mentioned two of the five elements. Vision, strategy, I've just sort of pre alluded to prioritization, that's really close to my heart, because that's where the bulk of the work I do. I have a book too, it's called [Work Less Make More](#). And the underlying focus of that is, weed out all the things that don't matter whatsoever, and only focus on the things that matter.

I 80:20 the 80:20 down to 64:4. Two thirds of our results come from four percent of the things that we do, which fascinates me. How do you approach prioritization? You talk about balancing to the force.



**Radhika:** Yeah, for me, you know, and I think this is kind of what we do intuitively when we're prioritizing, right, we're always balancing the long term against the short term. That's the reality of how we intuitively make decisions. So in the radical product thinking way, I use that intuition, but just make it explicit. Let's actually draw it up on a whiteboard and just talk about how we're making those tradeoffs so that everyone on our team makes the same kind of tradeoffs or, so that you don't have to do that micromanagement that you were talking about.

You know that person who has to do the screen captures is because they don't feel like they trust their team, right? And instead of doing these screen captures to know what they're doing, if you're able to convey your intuition, you give them autonomy to be able to be that high-performing team, that's why you need to, like, so explicitly convey, how do you make tradeoffs and build that same intuition in your team?

And so, the way I convey this tradeoffs in the book is using an x and y axis. So the y axis, you think of that as your vision, that's the long term. And the x axis is survival. That's the short term, like that's the urgent business need. And maybe, you know, for your company, the most urgent business need, if you're a small company, is maybe financial, like you need money to survive.

**James:** Solopreneurs exist in the survival thing and they very rarely get out of it. That is absolutely a plague in the area that I work, survival mode. And I teach about no compromise. And I'm obviously at the other end of the spectrum, I'm way out of survival mode. I'm in, I-can-do-this-forever mode, and have a great life.

I surf every day. I work with the clients I love. I interview guests that really interest me and who are specialists at topics that my audience need to hear about. So I'm fortunate about that. But I'm glad you're speaking to that. I guess we want to get out of survival mode as soon as practical.

**Radhika:** Exactly. And, you know, by the way, if you're out of the survival mode, like in the mode that you're describing, survival and that x axis might be different for you. For you, you might be thinking of the short term as, maybe it's a better life, right? Like, continuing your better quality of life.

**James:** Oh for me, its health and fitness and well-being. The priority for a lot of people, let's face it, is I need money. That's it. And once you have money, and once you have time, which is really where I help people, get time back, it's like, Oh wow, there's this whole next layer of relationships. Who do I want to spend my time with?

And survival in terms of longevity, yes, would I like to be healthy, happy and fit and live 100 years now, instead of just worrying about paying for my next food bill, right? And then you talk about next dimension stuff, like legacy and what happens after you? And you talk about that in terms of impact.

Lots of the people you talk about, for example, Steve Jobs and some of the other founders, they have built products that have out-survived them. We're still using Apple, I'm talking to you on an Apple. The guy's not here anymore, but his stuff is, because he had a really big vision.

**Radhika:** Yeah, exactly. I think, just in terms of going back to this vision versus survival, point is like, sometimes we have to think about doing both, right? Things that are good for the vision, and it's helping us make money. Those are the easy decisions. But if we're always focusing just on that, we're still always being in that survival mode, always thinking about the short term.

So sometimes, we have to do what I call investing division. That's where, maybe you know, you can't do it too often, right? But it's good for the long term. And in the short term, maybe it's not helping you. This is why you might be investing in your business, you might be doing something that, let's say, builds out a few features, etc., you're investing, but you know, this is kind of what you need to do so that you can move out of the survival mode.

And then sometimes, you're doing something that's good for survival in the short term, but it's not really good for the long term. And that's what I call taking on vision debt. So it's basically, if you keep doing a lot of this, you're really going further and further away from your vision, and you incur the disease that I call obsessive sales disorder, where you keep doing this and at some point, you feel really lost, you kind of don't know what you stand for anymore.

You're like, Oh, you know, we add a new feature to do this type of membership, we're also adding this feature to do blah. And you know, the customer's just left kind of confused, like who are you again? And what are you trying to do? So that's obsessive sales disorder.

**James:** That's an awesome one, like, there's someone in my market at the moment who's lost their way so much that they've just scrapped everything and just tried something completely new, because they just ran out of everything, just, I'm lost, I'm in the desert, like, find the nearest town, restart again.

So it's very common - burnout, overwhelm, overload, because we're in a fairly dynamic market. And obviously, the world is experiencing massive change right now just due to pandemics, policies, there was elections prior to that. There's a lot of disruption and change, pushing people's buttons and causing them just to be tired.



The amount of people I speak to that are just absolutely physically exhausted by their business and trying to adapt and change or whatever, again, I think it's maybe some of them don't have such a strong vision that pulls them through that.

**Radhika:** Exactly. And you know, especially as entrepreneurs, and when you're in small companies, what you're doing requires so much persistence, that energy. And when you don't have that clear vision, when you're just focused on tactics, as humans, like, we thrive on having a clear purpose, and without that, especially during the pandemic, etc., it's so easy for fatigue to set in.

**James:** Yeah, we're burning up a lot of energy just staying alive.

**Radhika:** Exactly. And so, you know, basically, we have to think about, like, how often am I taking on vision debt and doing something that's further away from the vision? How often am I able to actually invest in the vision that I'm getting out of survival mode? And so there's no right answer for what's the right balance for your company or your organization. It's just that, it's important to talk about it and think about it, and think about how many things you're doing in these different quadrants and find the right balance for yourself.

## The cautionary tale of an airline

**James:** I opened up a loop before about the airline company, I feel like we should complete that or someone will email me and say, you didn't ever finish the story about the airplane company.

**Radhika:** That is very true. So the story of this airplane company is, it's about focusing on constantly the short term and just milking their product, instead of thinking about the long term and the global maximum. So the story is about Boeing. You know, we've all heard about the Boeing 737 Max crashes, unfortunately.

But you know, one wonders, well, why did they even build the 737 Max? How did things go so badly wrong? So it turns out that, Boeing 737 was a platform that they had for about four decades. So for 40 years, they had been iterating on this platform. And every time, they would make a small tweak to it, and just keep reusing the same platform.

And so they were actually thinking of building a new plane, that was the plan, like, everyone was very clear that, okay, we're starting to run out of steam on the 737 platform, it's time to build a brand new plane. But the problem was that, you know, that costs a lot of money. So they were pushing that off for later, let's just keep milking this cash cow.

What happened, unfortunately, was, Airbus came along with a competing product. And this product was 20 percent more fuel-efficient. And so some of Boeing's most ardent customers decided, you know what, we're going to add Airbus to our fleet. And that was Boeing's wake-up call. So they decided, oh, my God, we have to do something.

And so they decided, let's just take the 737 again, and we'll just put bigger engines to make it more fuel efficient. Well, it turned out that putting bigger engines on this plane, which had very low frame, actually made it aerodynamically unstable. And so that meant that when the plane was at cruising altitude, that it was prone to stalling.

So they had to create software to prevent that stalling, and the software would point the nose downwards to prevent stalling. Well, unfortunately, it turned out that the software just didn't quite work well. They didn't have enough redundancy. And their entire system actually still doesn't have enough redundancy. And that is why the two crashes happened with Lion airways and Ethiopian.

And so what's unfortunate, right, is this was an iterative approach to product development, as opposed to a vision-driven approach, which is what they really needed. They needed to, at some point, just rebuild that plane instead of continuing to just milk that cash cow. And this is a danger that happens so often when we keep just focusing on optimizing our financial metrics and continuing to make those small changes, when we really need to step back and think about, what problem are we solving?

**James:** It's like the client who keeps testing and tuning their Facebook ads and Facebook ads and Facebook ads, and then the acquisition cost eventually becomes too high, and they have to turn it off. And they're like, now what? This is so common, it's ridiculous. Or their Facebook account gets blocked. We call it slapped or banned.

But I talked about, it's so dangerous building on someone else's platform. And I have this concept of [OwnTheRacecourse](#). But a lot of people get seduced down the pathway of being too dependent on any one system. And that airplane system is a classic example where it's compensating and compensating then trying to fix it and fix it and in the end, it's not effective. So milking it too much, gosh, that is such a common thing.

## Disease as an analogy in product creation

I was wondering, just, it was kind of funny reading in your book about words like comorbidity. When you were writing the book in the beginning, obviously, you had no way of knowing that that phrase would be so popular in 2021. Talking about diseases, did you at any point think, oh gee, I might change the wording of this or the idea, or it's just too far down the track?

**Radhika:** No, it wasn't about too far down the track. I think the problem is, I talked about these product diseases, which, you know, the example that I gave, a VISA, and I was trying to do the VISA and kept pivoting, that's a disease I call pivotitis. The other example I gave was obsessive sales disorder. But yeah, there are seven diseases I talk about in the book.

But the reason I decided to stick with the name is that, you know, there just really was not a better name. I find that truly, these are diseases that we just kind of catch accidentally. It just feels like these are contagious, you know, there's so much peer pressure to do things in a certain way.

Everyone you're talking to is doing marketing, Oh, yeah, we're trying this, we're A/B testing that and blah, blah, you know? It's all about data, etc. But we're not really, like nobody says, Oh, you know, I've been working on this vision, I've been working on this strategy. That's not kind of what we talk about the most, you know? And so, these diseases are just very contagious, and they make good products go bad.

And so, given how much it's like a disease, and the fact that you catch so many of these diseases together, just really felt like the right analogy, despite COVID.

**James:** If it is the right analogy, it's a good use of it. And it's nice to have another way to talk about it. So this is Episode 869, I'm having a chat to Radhika Dutt. Your book is out now. You can find out more about it at [radicalproduct.com](https://radicalproduct.com). The book is called Radical Product Thinking. And it's number one. Wow!

## A sum-up of the episode

So let's just have a sort of a summary here. What we're really hearing is that if we keep milking a product and fine-tuning it, and focusing on the little stuff, then we might end up missing out on where we could have been if we had more of a vision process. In the book, you talk about the different stages, there's five different phases that we go through - your vision, your strategy, your prioritization, execution and measurement and culture.

We've touched on some of those. I want the listener to go and get the book, obviously, go and get the book, because it's going to help you be a better product designer. And this is something we don't talk about as much as we could. I'm thinking about it all the time. It's fully one quarter of the thing I work on, is the way that we structure our products and the strategy around it, like pricing and strategy is one of the four choosers on my homepage.

It's not the most popular one, but it probably should be. It should be one of the more popular ones, because if you're being very effective, and milking a thing, but you're really missing out on the bigger play, then that would be a shame, wouldn't it?

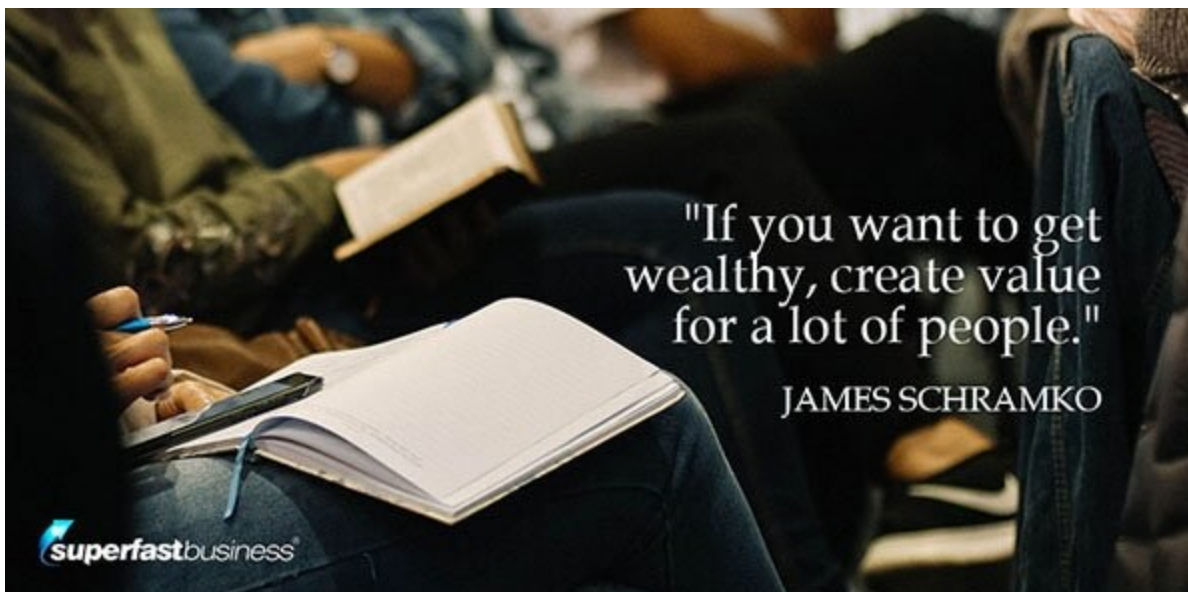
**Radhika:** Yeah. And it's funny to me that you say that, you know, pricing is not the most popular one. And, you know, I've found something very similar. What happens often is, we say, you know, first I'll build up my product, I'll start to market it. And then I'll figure out pricing and monetization and what's the right business model, etc., right? Like, we leave those questions as an afterthought.

The reality is that those are such important questions that the way you design your product, it really needs to be baked into your entire product, like the analogy that I use in the book is, you know, it's like building a house. I build a very different kind of a house if I'm targeting a two-person new starter home versus a four-person family with two little kids, like I don't put white carpets in that sort of a home.

You build based on your audience and you think about your business model, is this a high end or not? And you know, how you're going to price it, all of that is baked into the product. And so, to me, what you said is a really important point that this pricing and that sort of your whole business model strategy can't be something that's left as an afterthought, like, Oh I don't really need that, or, I'll figure it out afterwards.

**James:** Well, it'd be like someone saying, Hey, I've just acquired a building supply shop. I've got hammers, nails and some timber and a bit of land here. Let's build something. And then afterwards, they're like, Okay, who can we sell it to? That's crazy. If you know who's going to buy that house before you lay down the foundations, you've got much more chance of success. And it's such a good way to think about it.

When I'm thinking about my own business, I'm always thinking about my customer. How can they be better off? That's my first starting with, how can they be better off? Because I know as a byproduct of that, that if I want to succeed, all I need to do is help other people succeed. I mean, that's one of those old self-help books, right? Is it Napoleon Hill, or one of those guys talked about it?



But it's true. Create value. If you want to get wealthy, create value for a lot of people. And how do you create value for them? You solve their problems, you help them be better off. Now that's my starting point. And it's like, what do they have problems with or need to be better off with that I'm actually really good at that I could help them with?

And then I think, how could I structure that in a way that really gets them an amazing result, that also is sustainable for me? There's no point in me setting it up in a way that works really well for them, but I can't continue to do. There's no way setting it up that is working fantastically well for me, but they don't get the result. What you end up with is something like I've ended up with SuperFastBusiness.

This podcast here, the coaching community, to the side of that is where I help people be better off. That works for them, and it works for me, and I've found it after a lot of adjustments. But it was always focused on the customer outcome and then me being able to meet that, not, I want to use this piece of software, or I need to have this particular line in my email.

So it's been a really refreshing conversation here. What sort of soundbite would you like to leave in the mind of our listener today, Radhika?

**Radhika:** You know, one of the key things that I talk about in the book is, a lot of these ideas, once we talk about them, they sound intuitive, right? But what I found was, even though I had kind of learned some of these things through hard experiences, the tools to actually do these things was the hard part.

And so in the book, I offer tools, then we can actually do each of these steps very systematically. So for example, when we talked about the vision, I actually have a fill-in-the-blank statement so that you don't get stuck on the words, because one of the things that happens most often is, we know we have to write a vision, and everyone goes into a room, and you come out with a vision that sounded very much like what you started off with, right?

And so the idea is, this actually gives you a tool so that you have a fill-in-the-blank statement, you're not going to get stuck on the words, you're actually working on answering the who, what, why, when, how questions. In terms of strategy, it guides you through, like what are the four questions you need to answer.

So we do a lot of those steps that you talked about in terms of thinking about the customer, the value you're bringing in, what's your solution, etc., we do all of these steps in a very systematic way. So my whole goal with this book is that, I want us to change how we build products, how we create change in the world through our products, but being very mindful and systematic about creating that change, so that we don't waste our efforts in just trying different things, so that we have a very clear process for being efficient and effective in creating change through our products.

**James:** That's amazing. So helpful. I'm going to be doing that exercise myself, filling out those templates and readjusting. I've actually been planning a change to my own business later this year. And I've been slowly thinking about it, not rushing. And every conversation I have with a client, every forum post I answer, every guest I have, it's shaping my vision of what it needs to look like, but it's going to be so good. I want to have the best product.

Luckily, I've got good [products](#) so people don't leave, which means I don't have this survival emphasis on getting new customers all the time or needing to have lots of followers. But you coming in on this show and sharing your wisdom has been really beneficial to me from a self-interest point of view.

But also, I know if someone's listened this far into the show, they're definitely a radical product thinking convert. Thank you so much, Radhika Dutt. We'll put this up at Episode 869. There'll be a show notes summary if you want a recap of what we talked about. We will transcribe it. We'll put a link to [radicalproduct.com](http://radicalproduct.com) where you can go over and check out more information. Thank you for coming along and sharing, Radhika.

**Radhika:** Thank you so much for having me. This was such a fun conversation.

**James:** Awesome.



Create offers that resonate  
with your target audience,  
with James's help

[CLICK HERE](#)