



# **Continuous Discovery & Planning Best Practices**

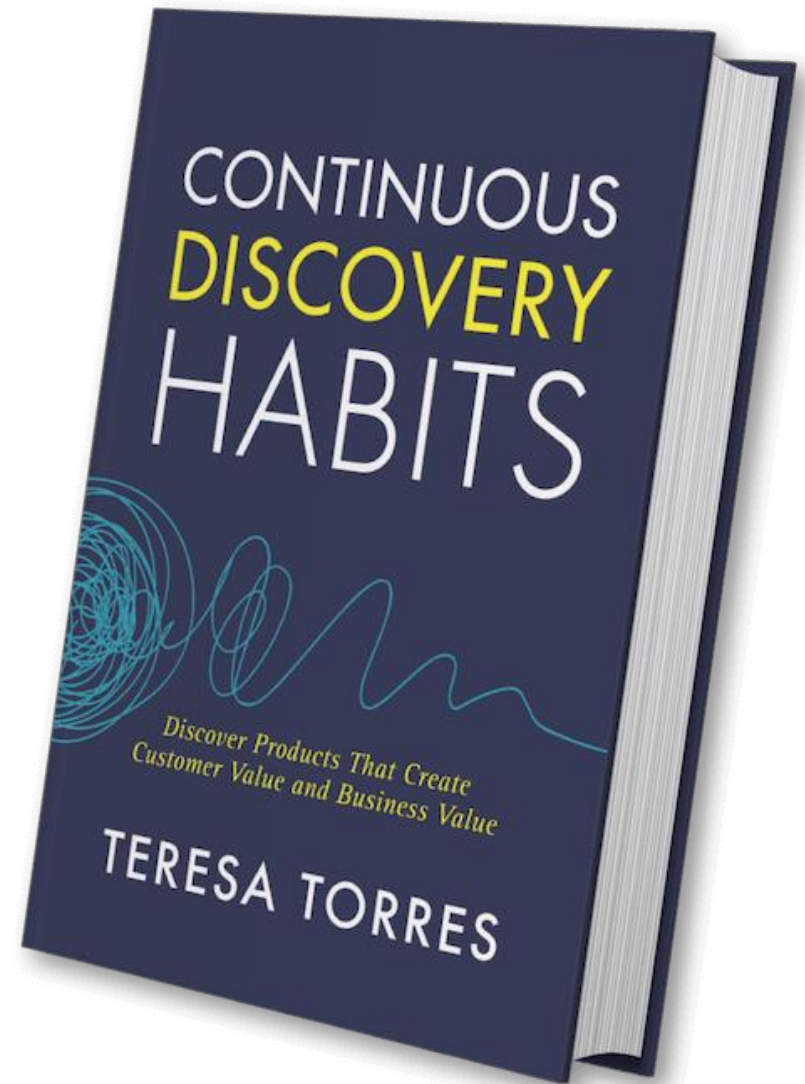


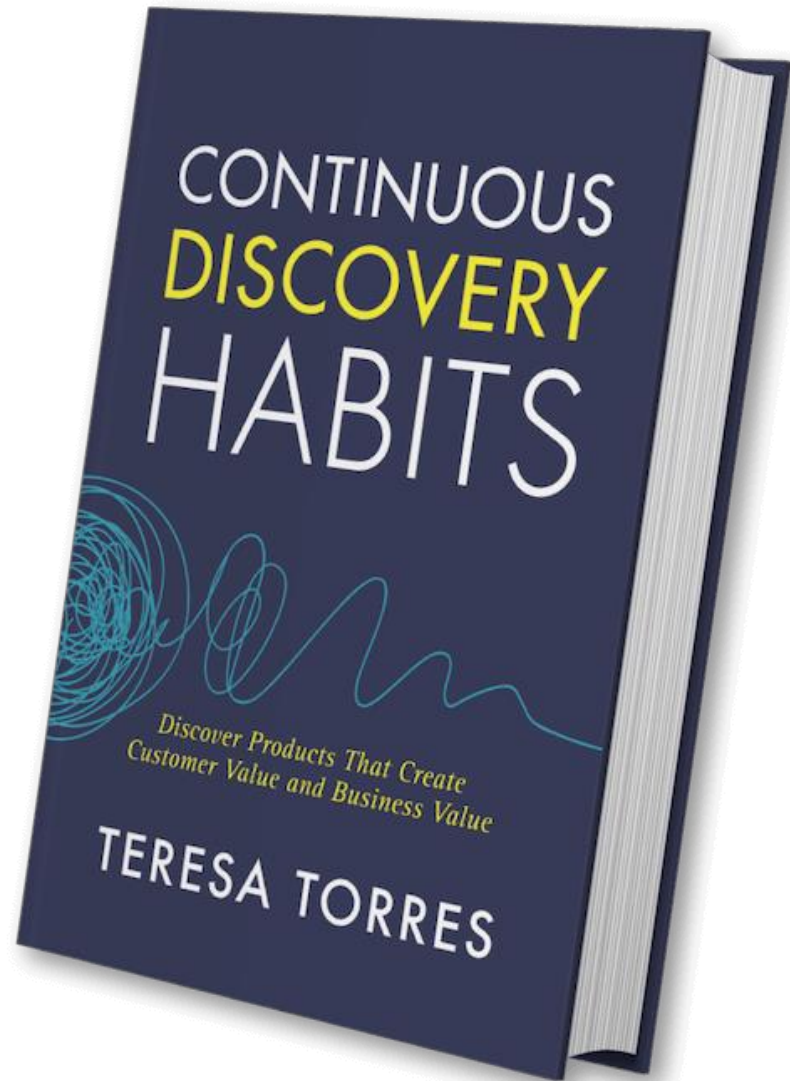


*Reminder: Start thinking of 1-2 features, problems, ideas, or requests on your roadmap for our hands-on lab portion of today's workshop!*

“At a minimum, **weekly touchpoints** with customers **by the team building the product** where they conduct **small research activities** in the pursuit of a desired outcome.”

Teresa Torres, *Continuous Discovery Habits* (2021)





If you can define something, you comprehend it.

Let's begin with the definition of **Continuous.**



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# What do we know about software systems? Are they (select all that apply):

0

Linear

0

Nonlinear

0

Complicated

0

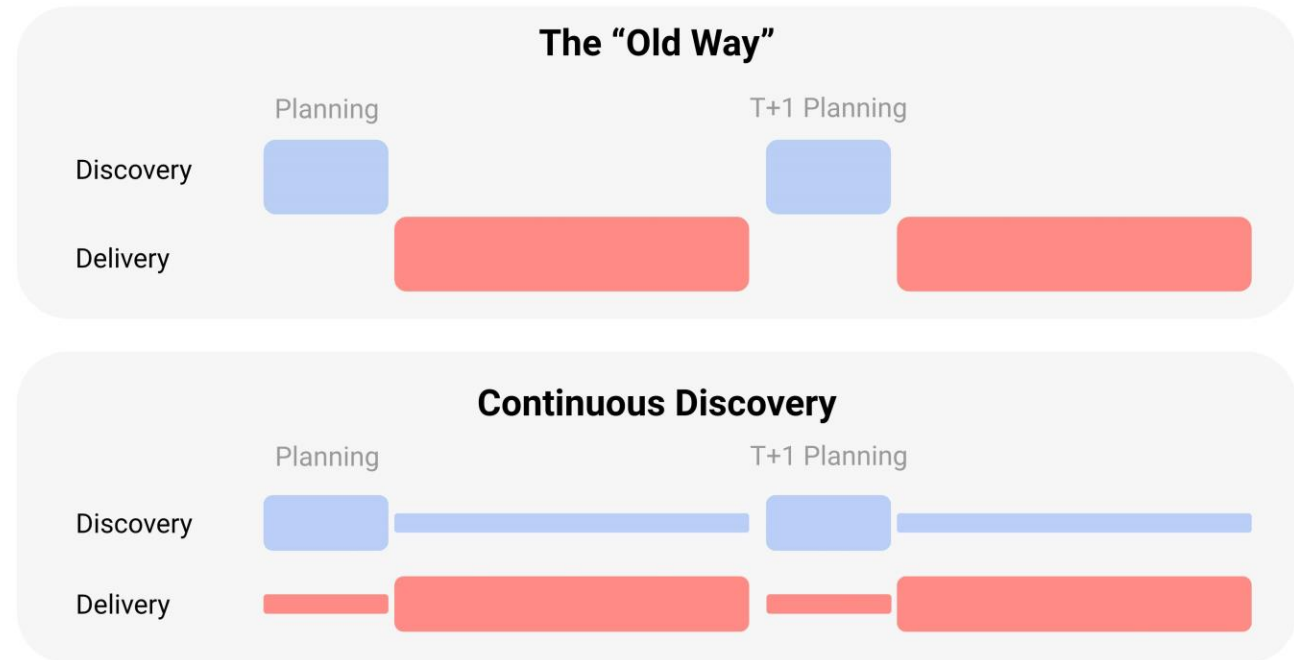
Complex



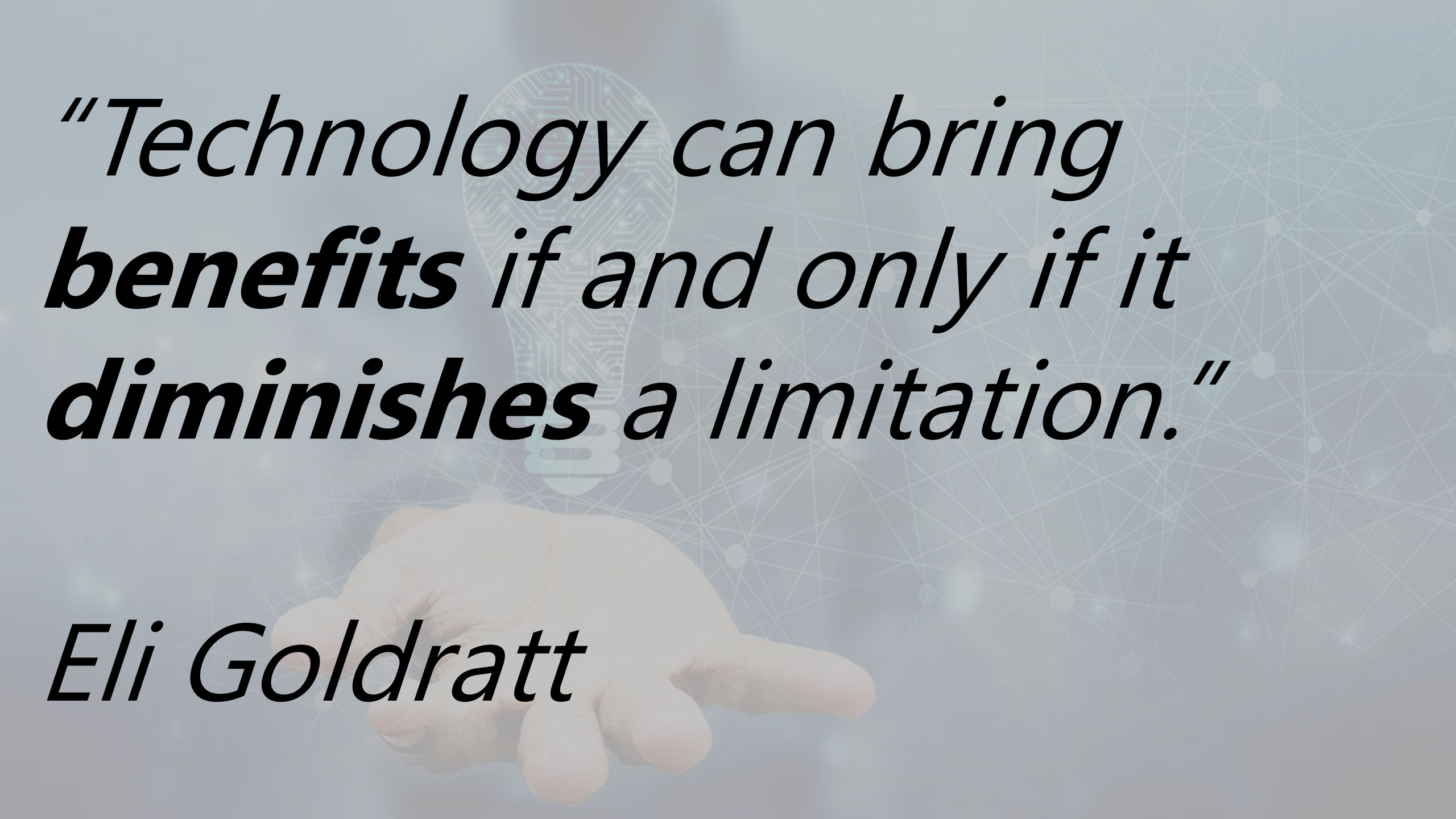
# Let's Define: *Continuous*

- Software is an evolving social system with no end
- Complex social systems are fluid and changes yield unpredictable outcomes
- Continuous discovery is vital, not just at project start (Systems Thinking)
- Critical to make data influenced decisions amidst trade-offs
- **Only 6.4% of features drive 80% of user clicks (Amplitude 2024)**
- "Any improvement not at the constraint is an illusion"  
- Theory of Constraints

How PMs Spend Their Time...



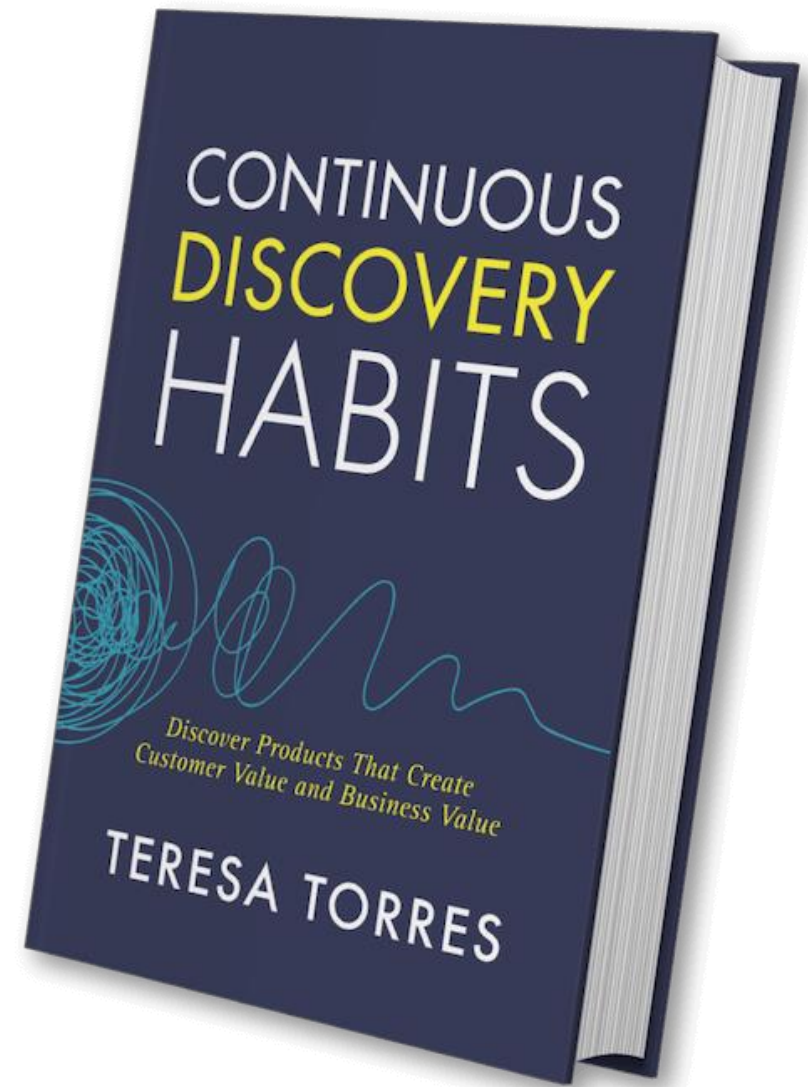


A hand holding a glowing lightbulb with a circuit board pattern inside, set against a background of a network graph.

*"Technology can bring  
**benefits** if and only if it  
**diminishes** a limitation."*

*Eli Goldratt*

Let's continue  
with the  
definition of  
**Discovery.**





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# Which type of discovery activity produces the strongest evidence?

PRODUCT DISCOVERY

- Subject Matter Expert (SME) Interviews
- Surveys
- A/B Testing
- Focus Groups
- Usability Testing



# Let's Define: *Discovery*



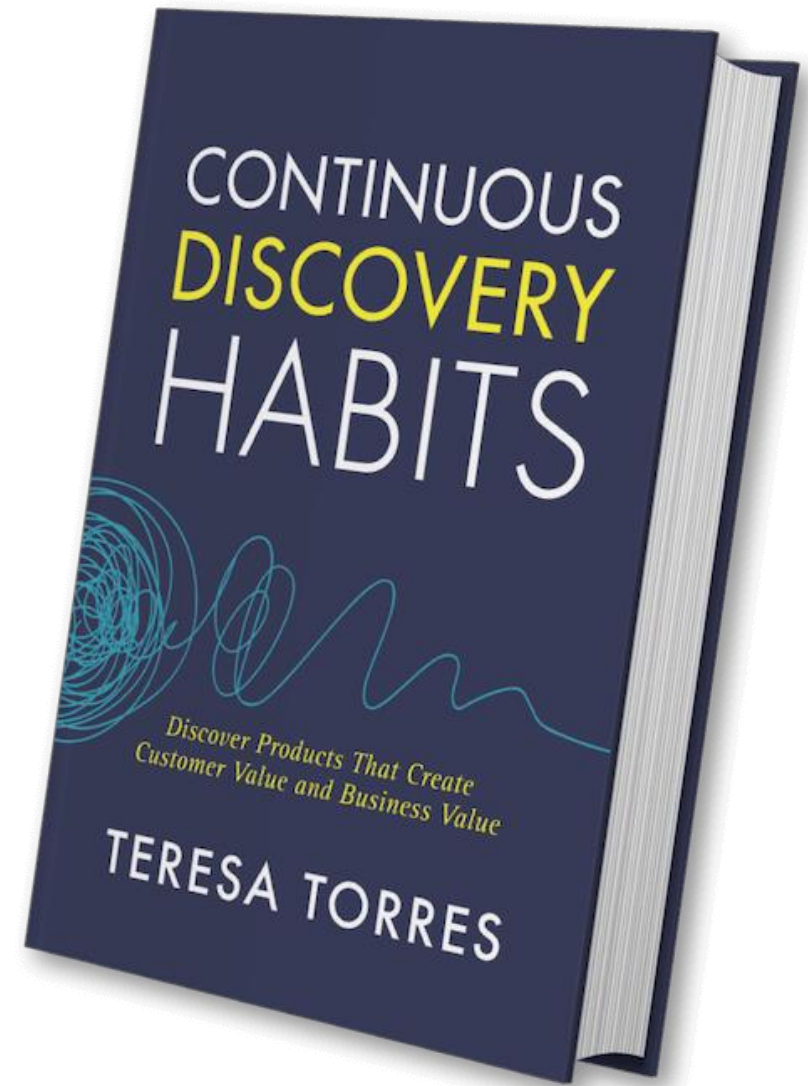
- "Think like a researcher!"
- Small research activities to test our riskiest assumptions
- Reduce uncertainty as much as you can before you build anything (**remember our depressing 6.4% success rate?**)
- Utilize unmoderated user testing (prototyping) and one-question surveys
- Transition from "wait staff to doctor" (order taking to problem diagnosing)

***Top teams are running 10-20 discovery activities per week***

*"...to quickly separate the good ideas from the bad. The output of **discovery** is a **validated** product backlog."*

*Marty Cagan*

Let's bring it  
home with the  
definition of  
**Habits.**



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Which of the following blockers of innovation and product discovery culture are teams experiencing today? Select all that apply.

0

Short term/quarterly focus of leadership

0

Linear, rigid processes

0

Execution and project-based KPIs

0

Rewards systems geared toward execution

0

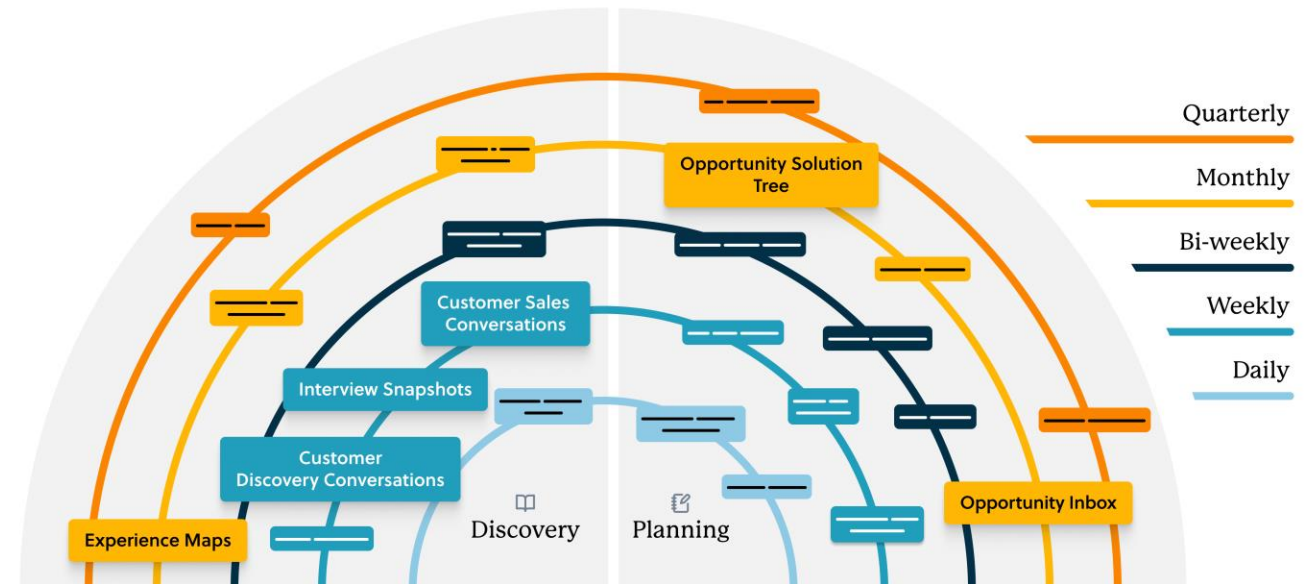
Innovation is seen as a black box





# Let's Define: *Habits*

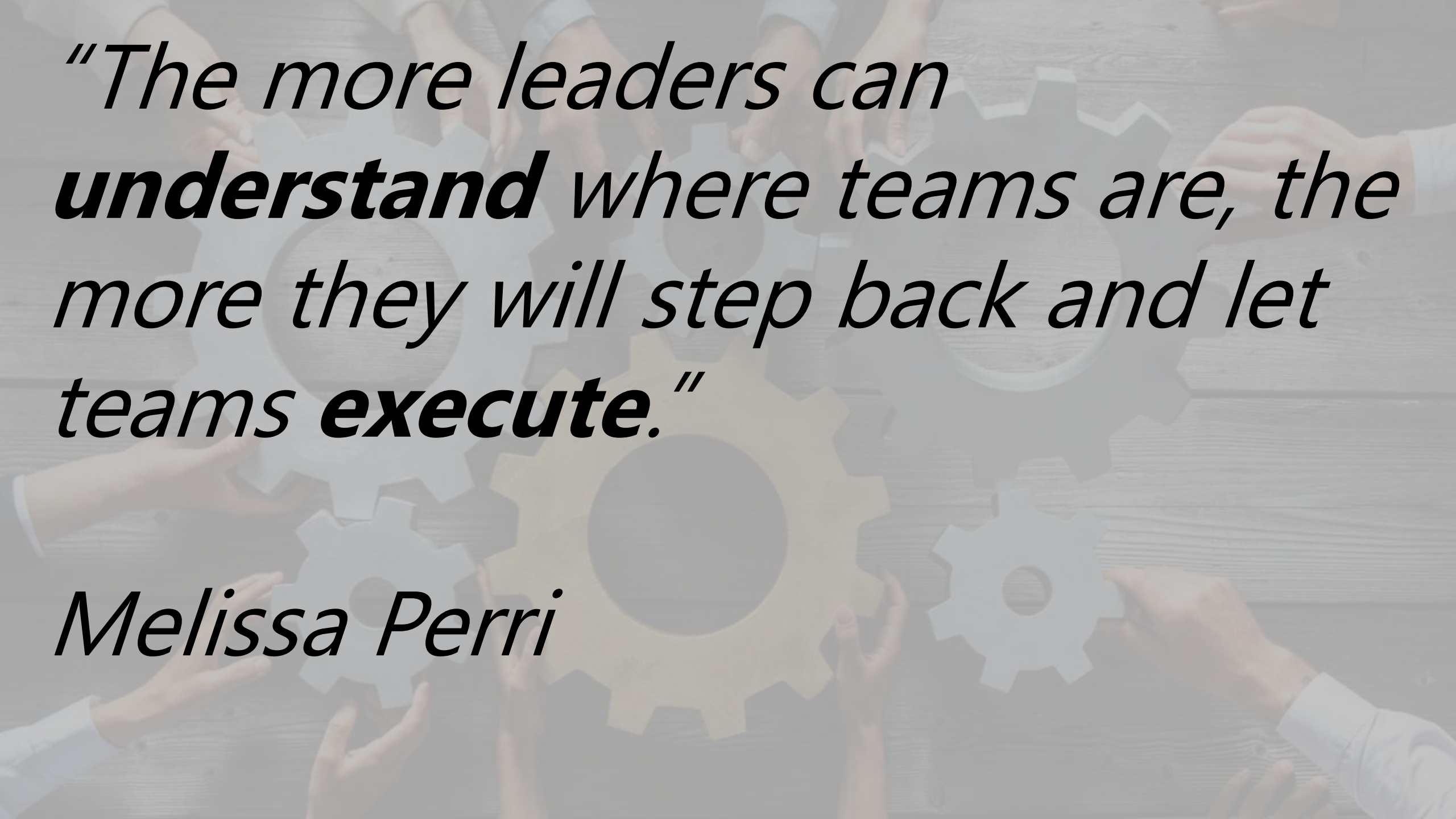
- "Culture is what you do."
- Consistent, repeatable work practices
- Begin with product trios (product, engineering, design) and customer conversations
- "Work backwards" with the end in mind (Amazon PRFAQs)
- Reflect regularly to close the learning loop to build the muscle
- To become a top performing team, emulate one
- Deliberate practice leads to automatic behaviors



\*Not Pictured: Learning and Execution

SYNAPSESTUDIOS

***You have more power than you realize!***

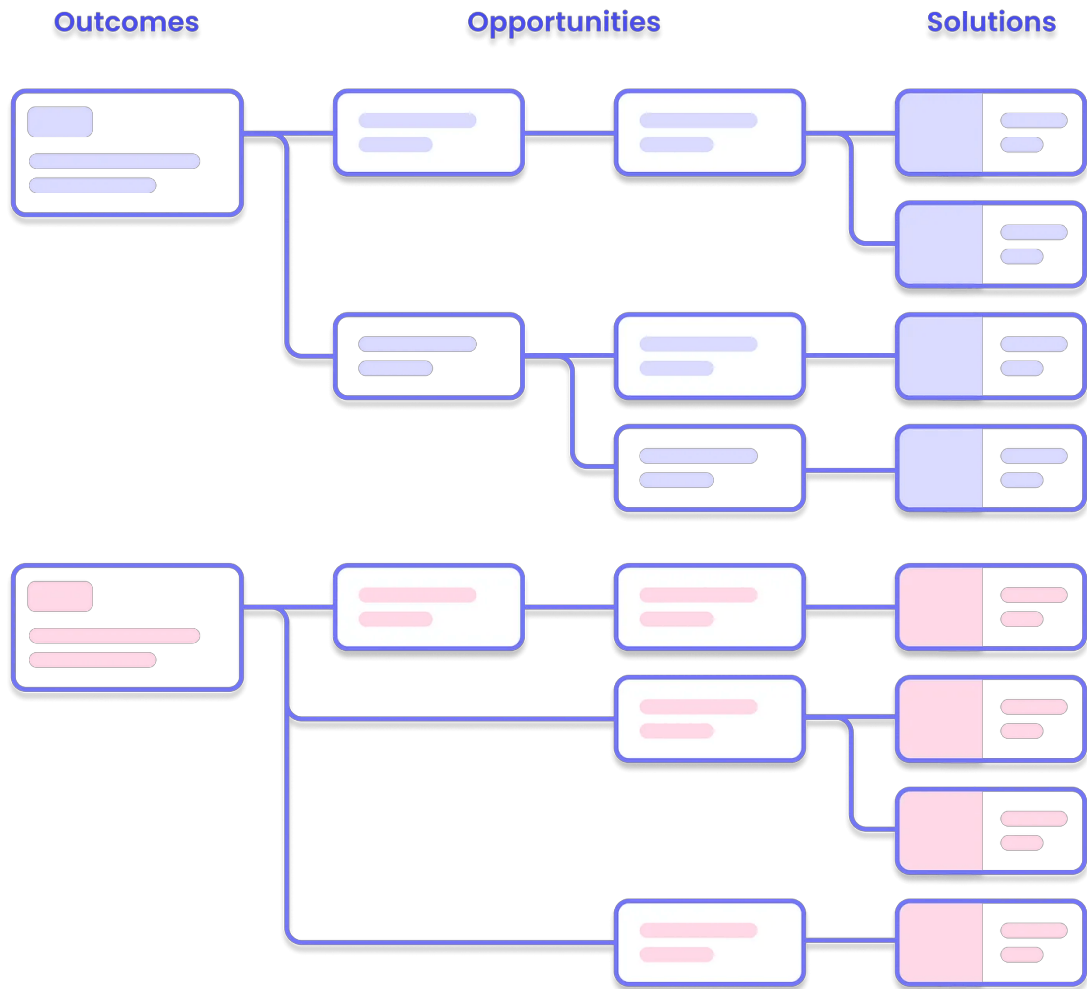


*"The more leaders can  
**understand** where teams are, the  
more they will step back and let  
teams **execute**."*

*Melissa Perri*

Artifacts are  
the output of  
Continuous  
Discovery

1. Experience Maps
2. Interview Snapshots
3. Opportunity Solution Trees



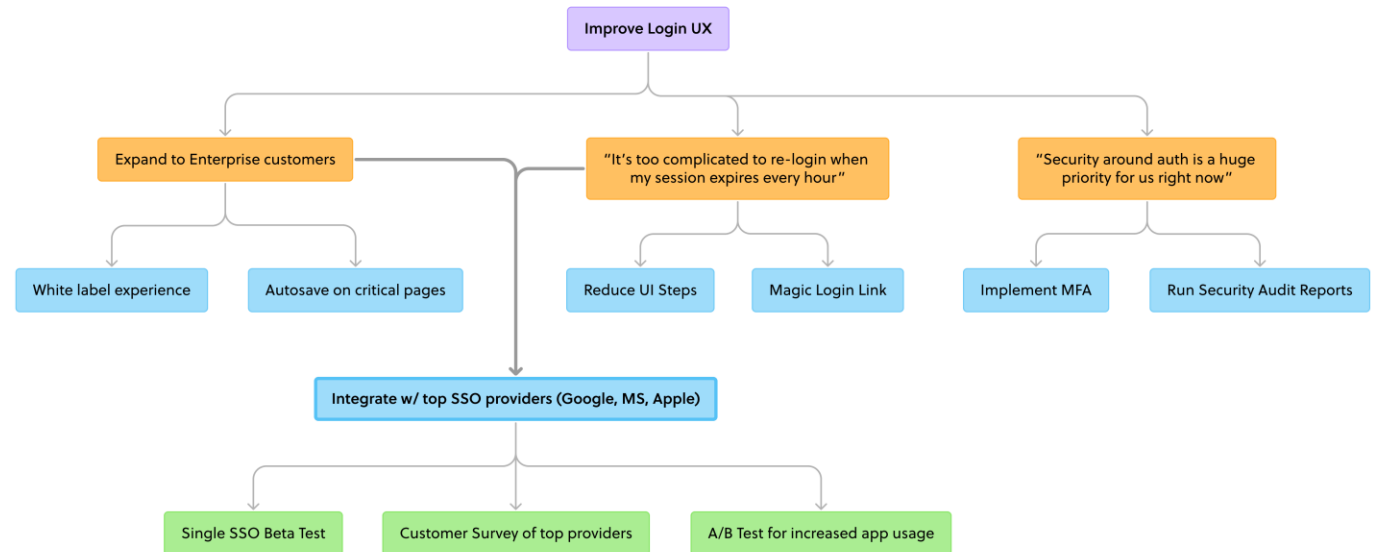
# Opportunity Solution Trees

*"A problem **well stated** is a problem **half solved**."*  
- Charles Kettering

*"If I had an hour to solve a problem, I'd spend 55 minutes thinking about the problem and 5 minutes thinking about solutions."*  
- Albert Einstein

# Artifact: Opportunity Solution Trees

- Focus on specific customer opportunities that align with desired business outcomes
- Connect our work with customer outcomes to add value
- Move away from ambiguous definition of customer value to shape the value equation
- Using a tree structure to visualize the problem space and show logical connections to the solution space
- Deceptively simple, create a new OST snapshot periodically to build the muscle
- Strong OSTs frame solutions as choices to improve our decision-making
- Supports continuous discovery mindset to “escape the build trap”





# Lab – Hands On Practice! (15 Minutes)

Work solo, or you may choose to break into small groups of 2-3, select a roadmap or backlog initiative to focus on, build out a simple 3-level OST from the item chosen.

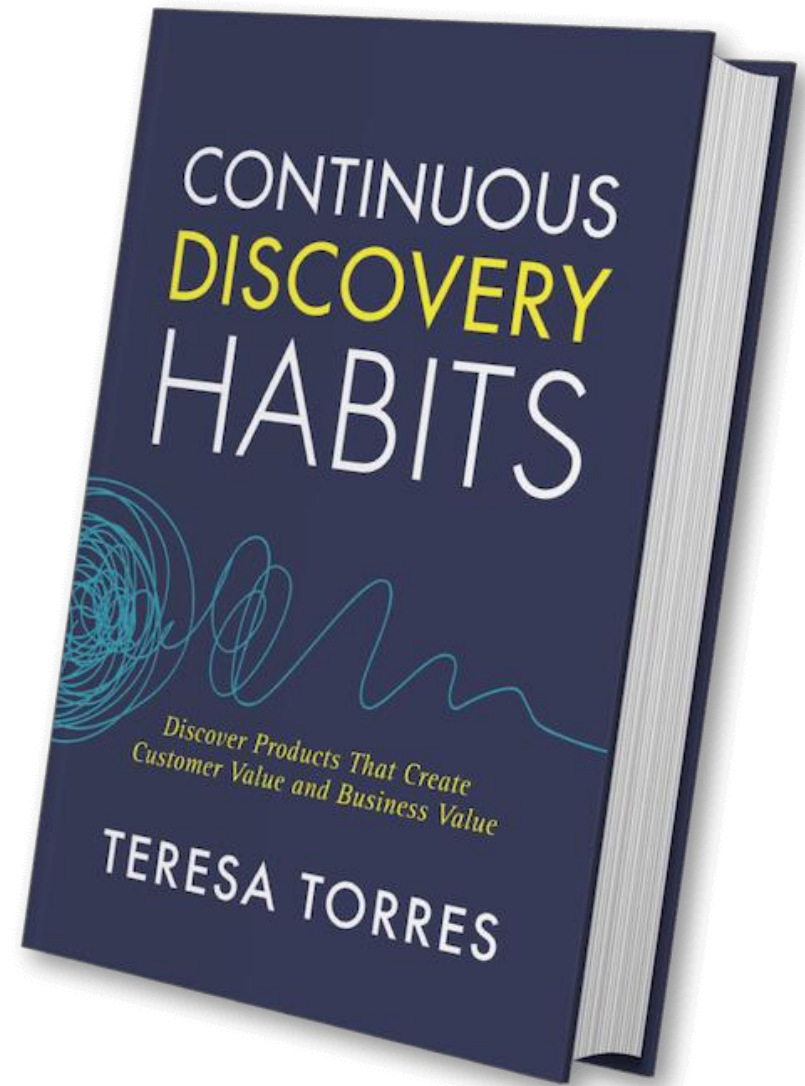
1. **Outcome** – What goal, metric, or measure of improved customer behavior or business result does this most closely relate to?
2. **Opportunity** – What customer pain point, problem, or need does this satisfy that may lead to our desired outcome?
3. **Solution** – What other features, workflows, ideas, or initiatives can we try to address this opportunity?

Move on to additional roadmap items to build out one simple OST per outcome until time runs out. *These are challenging! If you only work through a single branch of a tree, this is OK. This takes practice to build your OST habit.*



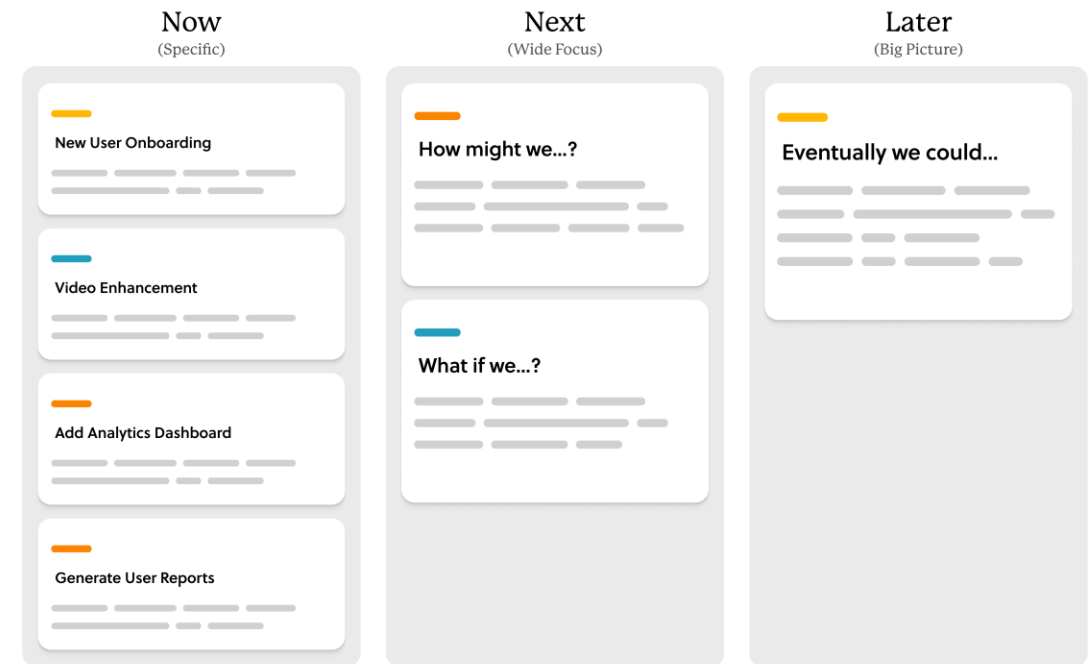
Create your OST here: [Figjam Opportunity Solution Tree Workshop Template](#)

Using  
Continuous  
Discovery for  
**Planning Best  
Practices**



# Putting It All Together for Planning

1. Work backwards from real customer needs/**outcomes** as cross-functional teams
2. Conduct ongoing **discovery** to distinguish signal from noise to uncover our biggest problems
3. Generate **assumptions** and uncover **opportunities** from Experience Maps and Interview Snapshots
4. Shake loose **ideas**, compare, and surface choices with Opportunity Solution Trees
5. Frame ideas and solutions as **hypotheses** to support an experimentation mindset
6. Reflect results of discovery in **outcome-based roadmaps**
7. Sequence and balance outcomes to tell a **coherent story** (and fund your roadmap)
8. Communicate with **confidence and evidence** (because discovery!)



*"The key is not to **prioritize** what's on your schedule, but to **schedule** your priorities"*

*Stephen Covey*



# Why is working continuously *so* important?

"Teams with strong user-focus have **40% higher organizational performance** overall and **20% higher job satisfaction.**"

2023 State of DevOps Report (Pg 17-19)  
*Google Cloud, survey from 36,000+ professionals worldwide*



# Thanks!



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What 3 words come to mind when you reflect on this workshop?

focus leader

creative

bold

fast

inspiration

transpiration



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## Please rate the following statements based on how strongly you disagree/agree.

I learned something new from this session.

---

I will be able to take what I learned today and apply it in my day to day responsibilities.

---

Attending this session was a good use of my time.

---

I would consider this a fun and engaging session.

---

Strongly disagree

Strongly agree

