

## Episode 65: AI Series: Case Study Fanatics with Subha Shetty

Rashmi:

Welcome to Women in Product Shuba, and we are so excited to have you here today.

Subha:

Thank you, Rashmi. It's very nice to be here too with you.

Rashmi:

Yeah, this is actually a special episode I think for us because I think we are looking at two parts here to glean from your experience. One is how the whole gen AI is being used within fanatics itself to drive some of the internal efficiencies with respect to product management, which we've never talked about before. And in this step that's what I'm really excited about and also how it's actually helping your customers as well. So really excited for these two parts that we would be covering. And to begin with, Shuba, my most favorite question, just to understand everybody's background and perspectives are so different coming into product management. Tell us about your product management career, how you got started and what has really been the pivotal moments for you?

Subha:

Thank you for asking Rashmi. So if I had to summarize my product management career ethos, I would say it's learning and being really passionate about customer experiences. I have consistently taken and been given opportunities, which were in different domains. I had to learn things from scratch, new technologies, and also expect it to kind of transform it with potentially very tough stakeholders in terms of an ecosystem around. I was very fortunate to actually develop my product management chops in a company like eBay almost 20 years ago where there was a lot of investment in product management. And I also got to learn product management from some great leaders who remained some of my mentors and Bell Bushers even now, I also taking a step back, really believe in leveraging everything that we have as a product manager, which is product ux, data architecture, engineering, to really and now AI to create really great customer experiences.

So that's the thread and the ethos across my product management career. And I think some of the pivotal moments have been, gosh, copying and patenting.

Amazon's one click checkout for eBay, launching Walmart grocery from like zero to \$200 million. And I believe it's a multi-billion dollar industry right now just within Walmart, seeding fanatics, first robotics facility and many, many more initiatives that I was very fortunate to be a part of. But if you really ask me what were the key pivotal transformative moments, it's all been related to people. It's hiring great teams, great people, assembling teams, and really cross-functional, diverse teams, getting tough stakeholders aligned, learning from relationships across the board. So if I had to look back, I mean I love the product launches that I was fortunate to be a part of, but it's

the teams and the people that I have built that remain the greatest memories for me.

Rashmi:

Loved how you said, not only just do the product management function, but really even transform it. I just love the way you talked about that. And now since this is about fanatics, tell us more about fanatics and what really excited you with the company and your role to begin with.

Subha:

Yeah, so Fanatics is really at an inflection point. I mean, it's really started off as a sports commerce company and now it is a company that has a solution for wherever and whatever you are a fan of. So even music and entertainment. So we have businesses in betting, gaming, collectibles events. We're poised to be one of the leaders in terms of commerce. So there is so much diversification that's actually happening in fanatics and so much growth, which makes it very exciting. And then as VP of product in the commerce division, I think I have the unique opportunity of balancing growth, innovation and transformation at many levels. And I think that's what keeps me up at night, but also that's what excites me about the role in terms of the impact that I'm able to create. So here I've built teams from scratch and I'm really passionate about just bringing these teams to create great customer experiences for our fans. Again.

Rashmi:

That's amazing. And before we go a lot more into the product management team and how you've actually thought about using AI and things, tell us a little bit more about the product management function itself within Fanatics, given it's doing a wide variety of things and loved how you put it as anything that is associated with the fan per se. So

Subha:

Product management in fanatics is an evolving function, and this is not unique to fanatics. Any retail company that you see, product management is evolving because these companies are primarily business driven and business led. Most retail companies are merchandising brand operations, m and a partnership led and fanatics is not an exception in that. So in a way, the product management function is evolving and it has a lot of opportunity in terms of what it can do to be able to really grow the business. Ironically, my role in fanatics is very different from the other roles that I've done before. I come from a core consumer UX background and the front end experience of the site is the only one that I don't own. So my teams lead supply chain planning operations, the in-store experience for our fans and for our associates and our really transformative B2B solution where we also allow the targets and the Walmarts to place bulk orders from fanatics. So kind of like B2B marketplace and the entire verticalization that actually is the USP of fanatics, if you may, the product design and the manufacturing piece. So talk about learning and learning new

domains and areas. This has been a very steep learning curve and continues to be so even after a few years here.

Rashmi:

Yeah, I think when you were just saying that, I was just thinking about the team within your team, the different hats I think or the different domains that each of the PMs are actually playing because it's so varied and it's so interesting. I think more from an end-to-end perspective, so that's great. And yeah, thinking about the situation a year ago, a little more than a year ago at the beginning of last year when chat PT was released to the public, how did fantic go about leveraging such gen AI tools for internal productivity? Walk us through your starting point and what happened since then.

Subha:

Yeah, it's a great question, Rashmi. And before we get into chat, GPT and Gen ai, I'd like to take a step back and help us imagine when mobile technology was all the rage with the proliferation of smartphones. I remember product managers, engineers were all scrambling to put decades of work on platform and the web on a screen interface. And I mean literally every application is mobile optimized, if not mobile led. And the revolution right now from a gen AI and chat GPT standpoint, although you could definitely call it possibly a bigger revolution or an evolution, the learnings remain the same. When you look back on how we enabled that mobile transformation for all of our products, I remember we had to learn a lot about what mobile technologies strengths, where limitations, where it required us to hyper prioritize what feature set would go in because you have a limited form function and it really required us to develop much deeper collaboration with our engineering and UX counterparts.

In a way, I don't believe this is very different that way. It does require us to still employ those same values that we did a decade earlier, which is prioritization again, knowing what the customer wants and needs and being able to deliver that and really stronger partnership internally amongst our teams between product UX and engineering, which then allows product leaders like myself to really focus on the business stakeholder relationship, focusing on evangelizing and influencing the stakeholders and building and assembling these teams that would deliver these cross-functional solutions. So taking a step back, I think that's the context I think we should not forget and we should take confidence in the fact that we went through a revolution. We actually did great, we learned a lot, and this is again one of those that I think is a great opportunity for us to go back to the basics if you may, right?

So to your point and your question of how are we using gen AI to be able to improve productivity, the starting point was when my head of engineering and I actually noticed that our product velocity was actually decreasing. So not just through the burndown charts that we were seeing, but epics were getting longer, they were getting longer to complete, they were getting longer to write. There were a lot of nests and dependencies and a large part of it could very well be the fact that our platform is getting more complex. And so there are just more dependencies to

account for. But the fact of the matter is that we were taking longer to launch X, that took a much less time possibly like a year ago for the same amount of scope. And so we really went back to the teams and asked them what is the problem and how can we help?

And my teams gave me some great feedback and the two feedback specifically that they gave me was we're spending way too much time writing and rewriting Jira stories and the is that we're spending way too much time executing and managing meetings. Let's just take those two things as a PM and I'm sure PMs listening to this can empathize across the board. If we map the amount of time that we're actually taking to write and rewrite Jira stories right now to what we did a year or two years ago, most of my PMs tell me that they're spending 20, 30% more time and because they're spending more time writing and rewriting these Jira stories, they have less time to spend on the data with the customers, with the business stakeholders. And because of that they have to rewrite the stories again, which then they have even less time. So this is a vicious cycle that needs to be stopped. The second is meetings. I mean, I think we can all empathize with the fact that we have way too many meetings and when it comes to managing and executing meetings efficiently, I see product managers across the board putting their hands up saying, Hey, let me try to make this more efficient, which is everything from setting the agenda for this, managing the meeting to time, publishing the meeting notes, the follow-ups, the roles and responsibilities, et cetera. This takes a lot of time.

So once we identified what the problem was, I think the next step was to see if there were any tools out there that could actually help solve these problems. Obviously for the meeting, I think the biggest solve would've been just been to have fewer meetings. But again, when you're in a business led company, sometimes your calendar is not yours and you have to actually attend some of the meetings which will also then end up adding to your calendar, but you're also adding to more time and organization that you need to do. What I noticed was that a couple of my PMs were actually already tinkering with a few solutions, so we didn't have to go very far. There was a PM that was actually tinkering with the Ian copilot that was launched at that time and copilot actually promised that it would write for second level Jira stories with some level of training in a much more condensed time.

At the same time for the meetings a PM of mine, she was experimenting with this solution called Otter. I would see this Otter assistance that would actually come into every meeting and I would see that her meeting notes summarizations were very professional but also done very quickly. So we were almost sitting on our solutions, if you may, Rashmi. So what we decided to do is say, Hey, let's take this tinkering by one or two people and actually experiment with it a little bit more and see if there is some value that we can get out of it. So it involved. I think my biggest contribution to this was carving out some time and space for the team to be able to think through an experiment with using atian copilot for writing Jira stories and to be able to sponsor some usage of order AI to be able to help invite it to meetings so it can actually summarize and follow up.

There is another tool that we used called Fellow, which has this really interesting and fellow is great for organizing small meetings and one-on-ones it Republishes

agendas with some prompts. And the coolest feature that I like about fellow is that if there is no agenda, it'll cancel the meeting. So this goes back to the just having fewer meetings is actually one of the biggest solve that we can do. And I think with a few weeks of tinkering with these solutions across the board, Rashmi, we were able to get to a place where we saw significant productivity gains for the PMs to free up their time to not having to write Jira stories from scratch in the kind of order and structure that the engineering team members and the QA team members wanted. And also PMs told me that an average meeting of 60 minutes takes them about 60 to 75 minutes to actually all the operations around it, whether it is free meeting prep in terms of agenda, et cetera, or if it's post-meeting summarization roles and responsibilities follow up took them now 15 minutes to be able to do that.

So imagine time that opens up for you to be able to go back to what as PMs, we really joined this job for which is I want to solve customer problems, I want to improve my business, I want to understand the data a little bit more. So I think that's the biggest, I think across the board productivity gain that Gen AI tools can offer. And it really started off with understanding the signals that my team was telling me and getting their feedback and just carving out space for them to be able to tinker and experiment with some solutions.

Rashmi:

Yeah, that's the greatest quality I think of a really good product leader and a product executive and thanks for sharing that and clearly associate with the two major parts of the core PM skills, which is a dream many times to your point with the JIRAs and the meetings, and I would call myself as a meeting junkie because that's what you wear pretty much. I think this is such an excellent example. And while you were helping your team carve out the time for them to kind of experiment and really see the outcome, was there any other resistance that you faced or the team faced per se? Because this is again, a new technology, you're adopting a new technology. Is this okay for an enterprise? Is this secure and things of that sort? Was any kind of resistance from a technology standpoint or even from a stakeholder standpoint?

Subha:

That's a great question. Rashmi and any new technology, especially something as widely publicized as generative AI has various different connotations. People take various things from it. While somebody is concerned about the technical risk of it, another stakeholder is concerned about the privacy risk associated with actually giving our data to the LLMs. If we're say using an inflation copilot or Chad GPT, another from the finance department is worried about costs. I mean these tools are not cheap to use and we hope that they will be in the next few years, but at this time where it stands right now, it is a budget line. So there are so many, I think various aspects of what people take out of what a generative AI solution would be, both good and both good and bad. But I think the biggest possibly, I wouldn't say hindrance, but actually the learning that we actually developed is our own perspective of what realistically the tool can or cannot do.

I think we within technology and product, and maybe I should speak for myself to start off with, I like to see the glass half full. And so I expect sometimes that this tool would actually solve this problem magically, and there is no magic solution to a problem to get to a place where you can use an atlassian copilot and chat GPT in a safe and secure and cost effective manner to write your first level Jira stories takes about a quarter if not a little bit more time. So it's the time, it's the carving out that space, which is probably the biggest without any impact to the longer term roadmap, which is probably the biggest challenge that we faced across the board as product leaders though, I think we need to be the first line of defense on any other issues like privacy, cost, et cetera to our team and allow the team the creative freedom to be able to experiment with these tools a little bit so that we can all learn from this process because there are more chances of this not working the way it's expected than actually the fact that it be, than actually it would work exactly as expected.

So I think that was the biggest, I think learning across the board, Rashmi not the external stakeholder input or feedback, et cetera, it was just our own learning in terms of the capabilities of what it could do and the time that it could be available at. We obviously had to make some reprioritization on the roadmap, but we've all made Reprioritization on the roadmap. It happens constantly. It's nothing new the product managers need to do, but it was developing a realistic understanding of these tools.

Rashmi:

That's awesome. I think that's very well said. There is definitely a reprioritization of roadmap because when the team is involved in trying to make their lives better in order to help the customers better, there's definitely the balance. Anything else you would like to talk about for some of the teams and product leaders who are now looking at how do I embrace these tools? How do I work with these tools and things? Any other advice that you would give them because you've really been through the process from day one, figuring out what should we be doing and listening to your team and thinking about the solutions.

Subha:

No, thank you for that. The question Rashmi, I think one of the things that was also very clear to me is that I needed to broaden the scope more than what we're doing within the scope of my role at Fanatics. So what I also did is actually take this problem statement, take these solution options, and also discussed it with a few product management leader peers that I have and ask them if they also faced the solution, if they were also using some of the tools that they were, gave them some ideas and went through almost a quote tinkering process with at least two or three very strong peers that I used to connect with on a almost weekly basis when we were going through this process. And I think through that, I think all of us learned in terms of developing, again, a more realistic picture of what these tools can actually do.

And we kind of narrowed in on these same tools, atian, copilot and chat GPT for writing the Jira stories and using order and fellow to manage your meetings across

the board more effectively. But what I would say is I think one of the biggest learnings in terms of the considerations while using these tools that I think every product manager at every level, whether you're a product manager or you're a VP of product should get better at is just evaluation of risks. And we think of risk as possibly the last option when we're considering a solution because obviously we're all focused on what that UX is going to look like, et cetera. I think with this evolution of this technology, given it is new given it is changing rapidly, there is so much to learn and there is so much to actually make sure it really is applicable for your customers and business because more often than not, it could not be, and it is perfectly fine if there is not a fit.

So when I say evaluation of risk, I mean three types of risk. The first is technical risk, will this really work or not for this specific use case? The second is business risk, will this actually improve our outcomes? Can we attribute the improved outcomes to this change and can we align the stakeholders? And then the third is risk. Will this actually be worth the effort? And as product leaders, the two areas where I spend most of my time is aligning the stakeholders and making sure it is financially a viable solution for the company. So there's a little bit of a divide and conquer between my team and myself, but at a very high level, I think product managers across the board when they're looking at these new gen AI tools, especially to improve their productivity with even some of the solutions that I mentioned is very important to evaluate the risk overall technically business wise and financially.

Rashmi:

That's very well said with respect to the risk per se here.

Switching gears here with respect to now how gen AI or using AI itself and machine learning, how is fanatics looking to drive better customer outcomes? Because now you have these technologies here, you've used it internally, you've kind of understood some of the risks or gone through understanding some of the risks. So let's talk about some of the use cases, the initial use cases that you and your team thought about where AI could really help or gen AI could really help. And tell us through your thought process of how did you come up with those use cases and how do you think they were the right use cases to begin with?

Subha:

Yeah, it's a great question. Rashmi. There is a two part question that you're also asking. The first one is that whole lifecycle related to AI and machine learning, and the second is related to specifically gen ai, AI and machine learning has been around forever. It's not a new technology. So especially I think retail companies, if they're not using it for their customer service operations, their inventory planning and forecasting, their warehousing operations, they're already behind. So most every retail commerce company right now operates its customer service and support via first line of defense is always a chat bot, and those are all ML and AI technologies that have been around for a very long period of time. And so fanatics is not new in terms of using that, but what I'm really proud of is the fact that it does use these

technologies in these areas to be able to make the customer experience even more seamless.

Another area that I think most companies use it at and fanatics again is not new, but we use it very intensely in that is the area of safety and privacy in the world of cybersecurity, fighting, crime, fraud, trust and safety as what it's actually called is a very key area where AI and ML is truly driving that industry from a product and solution standpoint. Let's talk about gen AI because I think that's the newer shinier object that we're all trying to kind of wrap our heads, heads and hands around. And I think there are a couple of areas which are emerging as really great use cases for fanatics and possibly this can be for any retail company, any commerce company has products. Products are attached to certain catalogs. Catalogs need to be refreshed, reinvented all the time to be able to be relevant. Products itself need descriptions, pictures, 3D pictures, videos, et cetera.

This earlier used to be an army of people to be able to maintain these catalogs, maintain the accuracy and recency of these catalogs, write the product content descriptions, et cetera. And I doubt if any product marketing person actually took up a product marketing job in an e-commerce company because they loved writing product descriptions. I mean, I have not met a product marketing person like that. They joined the company because they wanted to craft better go to market strategies. And so what gen AI tools can do, especially the dollies and the SOAs of the world, which are advanced level apps in the chat GP store can create great product descriptions from scratch, really update it to be more emotional and create really great product imagery of various kinds. So this really frees up the marketing teams to be able to focus on more higher value go to market tasks for them.

So I think that's one area where is a great win-win because customers kind of get the language that they're looking for, the format of the items that they're looking for, like 3D images, videos, et cetera, which are all possible to kind of generate with SOA given the right prompts. And it also really frees up some of the internal teams to execute more higher value tasks. So that's one area we feel is something that we'll develop as we go along. The second is on the B2B side of things, it's amazing to onboard a B2 B seller, a B2B buyer, sorry.

So somebody like a Rashmi sweater shop who wants to buy a thousand jerseys from fanatics takes us months because of all the financial, legal regulative, regulative steps that need to be gone through and completed for us to be able to really onboard this buyer and ship the first order to them. Now generative AI is not just an input output. There is a new technology within generative AI called agent workflows where you can actually set up multimodal tasks over a period of time. And so with the right inputs, again, it'll actually generate a project plan for you. So I think any B2B onboarding is a great opportunity to be able to use these agent workflows to be able to help simplify onboarding of your B2B customers. And anthropics Cloud is really the leader in the agent workflow space. Just recently they've launched so many new products, but cloud two, which was the product that we were ticketing, is a good enough product for us to be able to match with our B2B buyers to onboard them through this process, which used to take them months and now takes less than a couple of weeks.



So these are I think the two areas where we're seeing a lot of great feedback, but again, I take these solutions and go to my product management leader peers discuss whether they're seeing the same problems, whether they can tinker with this. And it's really great to see that some of the feedback that I'm receiving is more on the positive side in terms of, yeah, I mean agent workflows can really solve onboarding issues. So we're thinking if it can solve onboarding tasks, which is like a multimodal project management, kind of like a workflow, what other things can it do?

Can it solve long change management flows and processes within the company? Ken Rashmi, who is an inventory planner for this retail company, is now going to use a new digital tool on her handheld that change management process for Rashme earlier used to be a link to a SharePoint document with a hundred steps, but now can actually be a programmatic Claude interface that she logs into. And Claude can walk you through the 10 steps that you need to do to be able to complete your change management and use that handheld technology more effectively for your job. So I think that's the fundamental change in thinking in terms of how we're looking at agent workflows and really transforming any long workflow based projects with either our customers or with our internal stakeholders that we can simplify so that again, product managers, marketers, et cetera, have time to focus on more higher value tasks and bettering the prompts and improving the quality of these workflows, et cetera. I think that's one of, for me, the most exciting innovations in gen AI is how these agent workflows can actually be set up.

Rashmi:

Yeah, I would definitely take that solution if I were the inventory planner for the change management. Thank you. I would definitely take that solution I think to make my life easier. So yeah, that was a great segue and I think you talked about the catalogs there as well. I think search is set an important criteria. If I'm searching on fanatics for anything that I want and if things are not catalog correctly, then that completely dismisses my experience per se. So that is such a important and critical use case. I think that you talked about, you touched on this a little bit. I would love to dig a little more deeper into this qualities or the skill sets now for the PMs who might not be working on AI products and now who are working using these AI technologies for betterment of the workflows and the use cases, what do you think have been the most important qualities even within your team per se, or any PM per se that needs to kind of possess now in order to adapt and utilize AI or gen AI per se for their customer workflows?

Subha:

Yeah, it's a great question Rashmi, and I think there is a two prong kind of answer to this as I mentioned. I think the two specific qualities that I think PMs I look for in my PM teams to better and use gen AI tools specifically are better management of risk and better storytelling and communication with possibly much less information and data than they had before. I think overall I would say those are the two top most things, but if you really take a step back Rashmi, it's really going back to the basics of

product management of why we all came into product management for, but maybe with a little bit of a different lens in an approach. I came into product management because I love to learn new things, I love to expose myself to new things and had a framework of how I approached getting up to speed on becoming an expert on a topic and then transferring that skill to another area for instance.

So learning is a huge aspect of every PM There is, I think potentially going to be a situation where there will be a haves and have nots from a gen AI and experience and a mindset standpoint for PMs. And so we all want to be in the haves category and for that, one of the ways to break that is to really learn as much as possible. And if you don't know where to start with Andrew ING's course on Coursera, he has some great content out there which is great for a first level and that will open your eyes to what else you want to learn and where do you want to go deeper on? Do you want to get deeper on prompt engineering? Do you want to know how to task-based LMS work? Do you want to know how agent workflows work and your interest will develop from that?

And you can then tailor your knowledge accordingly. But start with Andrew Wings on Coursera and keep learning. The second is this is not just gen ai, but we all need to dog food these products. So use some tools daily. I use this tool called Motion because it helps me plan my tasks, not just work related, but actually also home related. And it gives me a nice calendar where it actually adjusts these tasks. So by midday I've eaten the frog, done some of the most important things and then I feel much more relaxed through the end of the day. And motion is an AI task, scheduling software. We've used order, we've used fellow Chad, GPT, atlasian, copilot if you are more technically inclined, the GitHub copilot, I've some great things from my engineering teams on. So use these tools. There are lots of gen AI tools out there that you can use and it's a lot easier to go to your VP and ask for a \$20 a month budget for fellow or order than ask for a \$10,000 Claude Anthropic.

Kind of like a license for three months to tinker, right? So start small dog food. The products use these tools on a daily basis to develop a better understanding of those. And then the third is again, coming to the basics. Spend more time with your customers, spend more time on the data, spend more time with your stakeholders. By doing that, I think we will develop a better understanding of where the more important use cases are, where the business problems are, and then with our understanding of these gen AI tools, either by doc fooding it or reading about it, we'll be able to develop a better match. And wouldn't it be so great if we actually go to our VP of product and are able to say, and I love these situations when my PMs come to me and say, it's just taking me way too long to organize these meetings, can I just use order to be able to organize this?

And the answer is an absolutely yes. Let's see how this will pan out. I'm taking way too long to write this Jira story. Can I tinker with Atlasian copilot? The answer is a yes. And so I think coming up with the problem statement and the solution with some experience and allowing some time to experiment is actually a great way to get things done. And then my job as a product leader then becomes creating that space, carving out that time, prioritizing this on your goals and in your career graph for instance, in terms of growth and learning. So I think those are really the ways in

terms of what I would say PMs need to be ready for this. There is some change in terms of front loading the risk evaluation. There is some change in terms of practicing the communication and storytelling with much less data and information. But the others are really the basics of why we joined product management for continue learning it dog through the product, ask for a small budget to experiment with it and then start from there.

Rashmi:

Right. No, I think that's such a great culture of experimentation, right? It's easy to say, but a lot of times just how organizations are set up, you might actually not get the time to experiment. I think this is such a great quality of a leader as well, I would say shuba, for letting your teams drive some of that and bring it back to you. So that's amazing.

Subha:

Thank you for saying that. Rashmi, also on that thing that you mentioned, I think PMs should maybe doctor the products where they're spending the most time on and which is the most inefficient for them. I just brought two examples to the table, which my PM said in terms of Jira stories and meeting organization, it could be something else. It could be doing customer interviews and the consolidation of all of that information. I mean, I recently went to a conference and I used order, I pulled out my order and I recorded the conference discussions and after every conference discussion or would send me a summarized list of here are the key takeaways from this panel discussion. It was wonderful. So I feel like whatever is your pain point or whatever is taking you time away from spending time with customers, business stakeholders, data, try to optimize that with some tool that I'm sure there is out there in the market so that you can get back to the basics of, again, why we started doing product management and drive really more value from this role.

Rashmi:

I think that's such a great example because I think when we go to conferences, of course we are so mesmerized with every other session out there. By the time you come back home, I've pretty much forgotten everything I've heard. And now if you have to summarize notes for each of them, very quick short summaries, I think it helps for the information to kind of seek better and stay better, I feel, than just gone with the win kind of a situation.

Subha:

Yes, absolutely. And in fact, even we should probably do a case study with Otter because I'm talking about OT so much, but Otter was actually able to recognize accent differences, dialect differences between the diverse panels that we had in a much better way than even I could have. And so it really freed me from taking notes to really then just listening and learning and understanding and connecting with the people and knowing that this tool is going to summarize and give me the

insights later. So if customer feedback is your pain point, take a meeting AI assistant with you and allow it to work and see what the results are for yourself. Right,

Rashmi:

Right. No, that's awesome. And one question that you talked about, one aspect that you talked about with respect to the different risks that were involved here now while looking at some of these use cases for your customers with respect to the catalogs or the onboarding and the agent workflows, how did you and your team and even the extended engineering team deal with any of the ethical issues or biases within the system, and how did you think about mitigating them? What was your thought process around that?

Subha:

It's a great question. I think this is something that I think all of us are learning and evolving as product leaders on this. I think it really starts off with, because at the end of the day, we all want our information to be safe. We want the recommendations that are being provided by this generative AI tool to be unbiased. We want this to be in a way that is also relatable to a wide variety of customers across B2C and B2B. So it's a pretty tall order in terms of even what we were expecting. And so I think what was important in that situation was to really then start small and figure out if it would work for a specific use case end to end, and that we would not only maintain or ideally increase the quality of the customer experience for that specific user or specific set of users, but at the same time not compromise the quality of the data that we were actually going to do.

So for instance, let me give you another example from another company actually, which is really inspiring. The company is called Carvana. We've all heard of Carvana. It's a marketplace. We use cars. They recently published about a million videos about a car talking to its buyer, about its journey of them coming together, and they sent it as a thank you note to all of the million buyers that have been on their platform so far. And it was the sweetest. It had a very honest and a very clean kind of language to it. There wasn't anything and from the name and from the address, et cetera, you can glean a lot of information about a specific user, their ethnicity, race, age, et cetera. But this model kept it very clean and very simple and really talked about what an emotional connection this card had to be in the hands of this owner and that it was really looking forward to great rides in the future.

I think the example that I saw was somebody in Long Beach buying the car. And so the car talked about, I'm looking forward to beach rides and with ocean views. And I think that's the connection that we would want to ideally establish. We want to establish a delightful connection, a personal connection, but at the same time keep it clean and simple and unbiased. And this requires one, starting small and seeing if it will work with a certain set of users, but then expanding it to users. And I think this is where some of the technical skills are important in terms of we need to know how prompt engineering actually works at some level. So taking a course on that would actually be really great for product managers and understanding how the prompts that we build and the data that we actually feed these gen AI tools, what kind of

results we get back. We're also looking at from a fanatic standpoint, we don't use the more commercially available chat GPT and apps. We're looking at more enterprise models which have a lot more independence in the content that is produced, and also security in terms of the data that is behind it. So I think that's another thing to consider consumer use case versus a business use case.

Rashmi:

That's very interesting. Thinking about a bit more in the future, what do you think now is, or in the future, would the product management function or how would it actually evolve in this era of ai? What's your thought on the future of product management function per se?

Subha:

Yeah, I just want to reiterate the things that I mentioned in terms of what product managers should look for. I think generative AI will revolutionize product management and there will be a clear distinction between the haves and the have-nots. We have to try and stay in the haves, and that comes from doing a few things. One, learn, learn as much as you can. Two dog food, the products as much as you can, and develop your own understanding of what these tools can help you with. Three, as a product manager at work, if you are spending time on any tasks that you quote believe are inefficient and taking you away from your core abilities to focus on the data, the customer, the problem, the business stakeholders, see if there is a gen AI tool that you can use to be able to solve those problems. And then I think the last thing I would say is really practice communication too with these Gen AI tools. Use chat GPT to rewrite your emails, your product content. Again, going back to dogfooding the product, but really practice communication because we are living in a world where product managers and leaders will be required to communicate the benefits of this technology with much less information and data. So practicing that communication at various levels is a key skill that will be front and center for all product managers moving forward.

Rashmi:

Yeah, thank you for sharing that. I think this is so insightful. Thank you so much for sharing your examples and your experience