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This semester working on Buho Investments has been a rollercoaster, but I can say without any question that leaving this class with a fully working launched product (for which people are willing to pay!) is one of the most fulfilling experiences of my time at HBS.

Throughout the experience of ideating, concept testing, building, user testing and iterating this product I got a pretty good sense of what it's like to be a Product Focused Founder and a Product Manager.

I think I very much am the Product Focused founder that I'm talking about. I found a problem worth solving for a particular persona and defined a vision for it. Almost immediately I had a solution in my head and was ready to start building it, but thanks to the process guide rails which pretty much forced me to talk to customers and test my assumptions with them, I realized that the solution in my head was way different than the solution that our target persona wanted.

After iterating on the solution itself and having built lo-fi wireframes which resonated with potential users came the next big challenge. Finding someone to build it within budget and defining the technical specifications. I was not nearly close to qualified to do either of those. Thankfully, the PM101 umbrella was really helpful to tackle both issues. Less than 6 months later right now I feel like those were practical skills that I've acquired and that I take with me forward into my professional career.

Finding a developer was one of the most interesting parts of the project. We interviewed over 10 developers, sourcing them in every possible way: from online specialized sites, from non specialized sites, from referrals, from our own networks and from the course roster. The discovery of what a wide range of potential solutions exist in terms of cost, specific expertise and style of work was daunting at the first. By means of screwing up in a couple of those early meetings we quickly realized that WE needed to drive to conversation by having a perfectly defined request and perfectly defined budget. This helped us frame the conversations in a more productive way and we ended up choosing Yash to build our product. He fit all our criteria. He's a generalist, was within budget and most of all really understood what we were trying to build. My inner Product Focused Founder was happy and ready to go!

Little did we know that he was working with another 4 HBS teams. (We knew he was working with someone else, we didn't know it was that many teams!!!) This dynamic is what made me feel like I was a Product Manager in a larger organization.

One of the main things I learned about this role is just how complicated it is to manage a remote non-fully dedicated development team. From my previous work experiences I considered myself a competent manager, but managing Yash and his team proved to be a completely different animal. The dynamics of not being able to fully dictate the pace of work, of competing with other teams for airtime and of working with a team on an inverse time-zone, all coupled with not being

technically competent to evaluate the quality of the code made for a very challenging management experience.

However, I'm really proud of the progress we made. Our relationship with Yash evolved as we learned about his working style, strengths and weaknesses. I don't really remember which one of the class guests kept mentioning: "common sense is not necessarily common practice", but I think that could very well summarize the issues that had to overcome. Issues as simple as check in cadence, version control, tracking of requests and approval of new features derailed us for a while but after solving them by using a simple shared spreadsheet things started getting better and better.

Right now, as we're closing in on the "final" version of our MVP our work together is a lot more nimble and efficient because we finally have this fundamentals right. It's not rocket science, it just requires diligence and supreme organization and prioritization skills. Simple to say, hard to execute on - especially when you are trying to strip your product to the bare minimum requirements and have to let so many amazing features for the next version of the product because the bandwidth / budget simply can't be stretched further or because the core of the product needs to be de risked and battle tested first.

Looking back on this experience, and looking forward to what lies ahead in the road I can say that what I like the most about PM roles is the balance of how empowering and humbling they are at the same time. The balance of technical prowess, IQ and EQ is something hard to find in other roles. The all encompassing responsibility of making sure everything is aligned around a product is thrilling. The design, the engineering, the marketing, the sales they're all in the end the product owner's responsibility. But at the same time, success depends on the rest of the team because a lot of the times the PM is not ACTUALLY executing on all of this things, he/she needs everyone else to be onboard and convinced of the vision and the tradeoffs that are being made to get to the desired end state.

Thanks a lot Julia and Christina! I hope you know you're not getting rid of me anytime soon.