Using experimentation to unlock growth opportunities

**Based on a presentation by Patti Chan,
VP of Product at Imperfect Foods**

Small teams can experiment, too

Product development has come a long way in the past 30 years. First, there was waterfall development, which was a linear process where companies decided what was best for their users. Then, agile development, which was more user-focused than waterfall. Now, many large companies have started improving their products through experimentation, which uses data to let customers decide what's best for them.

Netflix, for example, takes product experimentation so seriously that they have an entire 300-person team dedicated to it. Smaller companies have been constrained by a lack of resources in the past, but that's changing with the help of new tools. Imperfect Foods only has ten people on their product team and they are constantly running experiments.

So, how does Imperfect Foods make time for experiments while still focusing on the day-to-day requirements of managing a product? They focus on high-value experiments.

Three ways small teams can run high fidelity experiments

Patti believes that the size of her team is not a disadvantage for experiment-led product development. Instead, she views it as a competitive advantage. Here's how the product team at Imperfect Foods experiments:

1. LEAN ON PARTNER TOOLS FOR EXPERIMENTS.

When you're operating with a small team, you won't have time to build your own testing and analytics platforms. That's fine because technology has caught up. You can use partners to help you get the data you need.

Imperfect Foods uses three tools to gather and store data for their experiments:

* Mode is their business intelligence tool.

* Amplitude gives them behavioral data.

* Snowflake as their data warehouse.

Their experiments are run by:

* Split helps with feature flagging.

* Unbounce for A/B testing.

* Tasty for experimentation.

All of those tools are tied together through Segment, which gives them a central hub for their data.

> " **The confidence we get from knowing that our solution not only fits a spec but solves for a real customer need is invaluable.** "
>
> - Patti Chan

2. FOCUS ON DISCOVERY EXPERIMENTS.

Most companies run *optimization* experiments, which are best used to eke out every bit of performance from a product. Those are fine for small improvements, but large improvements come from *discovery* experiments.

Discovery experiments are ideas that are not yet proven. They usually come from reviewing trends in your data, customer surveys, interviews, or just a hunch you have from knowing your customers. At this point, you don't know if they're good ideas, but a discovery experiment will help you find out.

Imperfect Foods had a hunch that adding a "never send" feature to their product would improve their retention. This feature gave customers a way to say, "Never send me Brussels sprouts." They built a basic version of it and tested the feature with a small section of their user-base.

Imperfect found this feature increased retention by 21% for customers who used it. That gave them the confidence to fully build it and roll it out to their entire user-base.

3. EXPERIMENTS CAN IMPROVE INTERNAL TOOLS, TOO.

Just because a tool isn't customer facing doesn't mean you shouldn't experiment with it. Internal tools can also impact your customer, even if your customer never directly interacts with it. That's why you should experiment with the tools your customer-facing teams use.

Imperfect Foods' customer care team often gets calls from customers asking about the status of their orders. When that happens, the customer care associate needs to sort through multiple tools used by different departments in the company to find the order. The customer care associate was almost always able to find the answer, but it took a few minutes.

Imperfect's product team experimented by making all of that information available within a central main customer care tool. They tested the new feature with a small number of associates and monitored the results. When they noticed that the time to resolve customer calls was improving, the product team built out the full feature and rolled it out to their entire customer care team.

How Segment can help

Along with the tools that Patti mentioned, Segment integrates with a number of A/B testing and analytics tools. You'll also want to look at:

• Business intelligence tools

• Feature flagging tools

• A/B testing tools

• Data warehouses

Those tools will help you experiment without having your engineering team build new pieces of software.

Keep reading to learn more

- **How Imperfect Foods built a culture of experimentation and increased customer retention**

- **Reducing a 40% drag on your business: How Houseparty experiments**

- **How VWO used product analytics to increase new feature adoption and reduce churn**