

ZEREN



THE ART OF SCALING

# Growth Strategies for Product & Design Success



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Head of Product and Design

A conversation  
with Dan Dalton, Head of Product and Design, Flock



# Growth Strategies for Product & Design Success

01

## Reflecting on your tenure at Flock, how have your past experiences equipped you for spearheading the product and design teams during this phase of growth?

Flock announced its Series B on my first day with the business, so it was technically a Series A when I joined. Which made it the earliest-stage company I had ever worked directly at. Every company is different. Flock as a freshly minted series B was more mature than companies I've worked with who were similar and slightly later stages.

What I have found helped me settle in was the fact that I've had exposure to a lot of different types of organisations at various phases. I've been able to develop a tool kit of approaches in how I work and how I set teams/functions up based on the specific context of that business. I've seen and mentored product leaders who have worked at some amazing organisations, the type of organisations that smaller companies wish to model. But they failed because they tried to replicate what worked at their previous company.

People are hired for their experience but people also fail because of it. Or specifically, their inability to adapt that experience to a new environment. I've worked with some phenomenal product and design leaders AND I've had opportunities to learn in the deep end and make my own mistakes in smaller organisations. I think that helped me because I've had the chance to learn what great looks like at really successful companies like Pendo and cut my teeth on my own at previous much smaller companies.

02

## What are the essential tools in your toolkit at Flock?

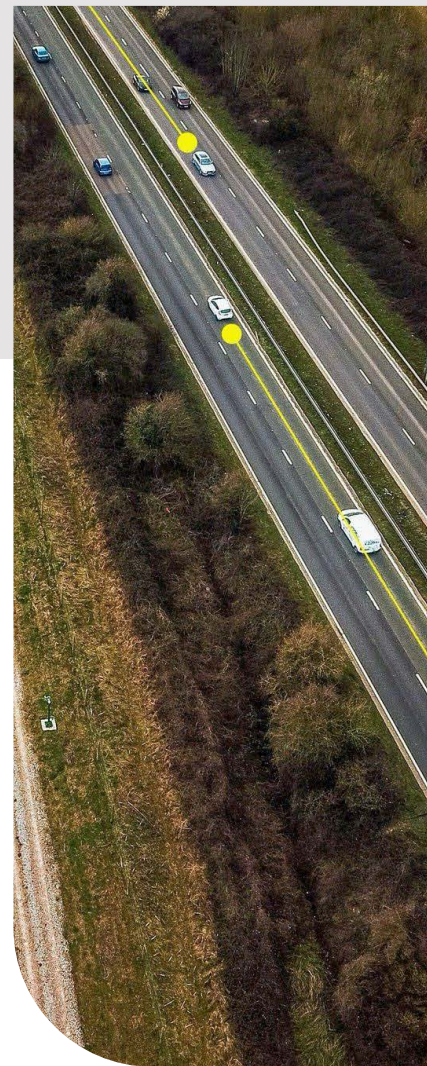
An essential in our toolkit at Flock has been in our Discovery process. We lean into Opportunity Solution Mapping quite heavily. This is also something I used at my last company, Pendo, which was just acquired by HiBob.

The aim was to implement a lightweight system to identify opportunities in a way that ensures you fully explore the problem space with a focus on outcomes, leads to clear priorities, but enables you to be flexible on the solutions you pursue. Being flexible on the solution enables us to hyper-focus on the outcome we want to create for our customers, but be pragmatic about how we create it and weigh up the investments we make.

03

## Can you share an opinion you had when joining Flock that has since changed?

When I joined Flock I was quite opinionated about roadmapping. I brought with me quite a purist/academic view of roadmapping. What they should look like, what they should not be used for, etc. Flock was mature in a lot of areas when I joined but equally some areas where it needed maturing, roadmapping was one of those areas.



I initially tried a roadmapping and planning cadence that worked really well at some previous companies (which were B2B SaaS) but it was quite heavy on people's time and opened up quite deep rabbit holes in conversation about quite granular details, which was not solving the primary problem I needed to solve at that point which as strategic alignment on our larger bets and overall direction, not reviewing individual feature plans.

So I adapted the process into a much smaller group of key stakeholders where our primary objective was higher level direction and intentionally leaving more granular details to our squads and their stakeholders.

Its not perfect, but my primary goal as a Product Leader is strategic clarity and direction, and this approach has solved that for us so far.

## THE ART OF SCALING

04

### In what ways do you incorporate user feedback into the product development cycle, especially as your user base expands?

We have developed quite a deep Voice of Customer Program in the year that I've been here.

Our team pushes continuous discovery practises where we have a constant stream of first-hand customer insight coming into the organisation.

We have several channels serving the VoC program which include direct customer contact through channels like WhatsApp groups where we have multiple

'Design Partner' customers who collaborate with us very closely, we run qualitative surveys and polls using in-app tools, we have customer research calls running constantly which are informed by our research priorities, our cross-functional partners in our customer support and success teams record most of our customer interactions which also feed into our research analysis, and we have various sentiment based streams like CSAT and NPS.



**"Our team pushes continuous discovery practises where we have a constant stream of first-hand customer insight coming into the organisation."**

05

### How have you leveraged AI as a tool in your scaling toolkit?

We have leveraged AI in a few ways but the core themes are

- Enhancing our day-to-day productivity
- Ensuring consistency in user experience
- Innovating our core product

For day-to-day productivity we are leveraging AI to help in the creation of product specifications, breaking down epics into user stories and the creation of delivery-focused assets which are generally time-consuming.

In user experience consistency, we have a custom bot which we have trained extensively on our brand guidelines and tone of voice which we use to ensure consistency of copy and customer-facing communication. We have various audiences for the types of product, marketing and support assets we create which are done by various areas of the business. This AI-driven approach streamlines content creation processes, reducing the need for extensive editorialising by

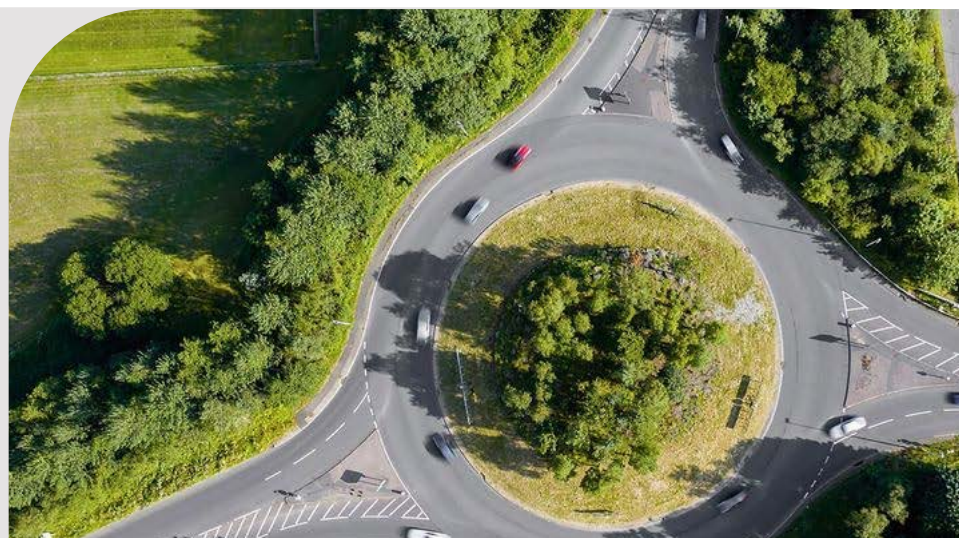


**"For day-to-day productivity we are leveraging AI to help in the creation of product specifications, breaking down epics into user stories"**

stakeholders and allowing the team to be more self-sufficient and agile.

Finally, to help us innovate in our core product, Flock analyses hundreds of millions of miles of telemetry data. We are using AI to analyse specific behaviours such as speed and driving patterns.

This data informs AI-generated risk reports, which in turn influence our insurance pricing models. Higher-risk drivers are identified for targeted improvements to reduce their risk, fostering safer driving practices and directly leading to cheaper insurance premiums and a quantifiably safer world. This data-driven approach positions Flock not merely as an insurance provider but as a proactive and pioneering safety partner to our customers.



### What are the principal differences when transitioning from a Series A to a Series B business?

Every company is different. But a common theme I see in this transition is how the structure of the business evolves to cope with the larger demands a new funding round brings.

I liken Series A companies to Pyramids. The structure typically is a wide base of operational people whose primary remit is 'doing', and a sharp, small and very focused tip of leaders (often the founders) who dictate the direction and 'strategy'. This structure is effective early on but becomes a critical bottleneck and operational issue as a company grows.

Moving into Series B, I see the need for a rebalancing of decision-making power, which I liken to a sandwich. In my view, a good sandwich is a light on the top and bottom (the bread) and all the value is in the middle 'the filling'. In this view, you have a light layer of lower-level tactical 'doers' and a light layer of

high-level purely 'strategic drivers'. The aim here is to develop a strong, actionable core or middle layer within the organisation. This layer is crucial because it combines the ability to think strategically with the capability to execute those strategies. It's about having a team that's not just focused on high-level ideas or ground-level tasks but can bridge the gap between the two.

The transition also requires a shift in leadership style. At the Series B stage, leaders are encouraged to step back from day-to-day tasks to focus more on strategic thinking and 'build a proper team'. However, this doesn't mean completely detaching from execution. Instead, it's about fostering an environment where leaders can provide guidance and strategic direction while empowering their teams to take charge of executing these strategies, but are not so far removed from the details that the pace of execution that fueled the growth of the company disappears. In this phase, hiring becomes critical to the success of a company. It's about hiring people

who are capable of both thinking and executing.

This balance is becoming increasingly important in the current market, where the ability to swiftly move from strategy to action is a key determinant of success. As companies navigate from Series A to Series B, the emphasis on finding and nurturing talent that can contribute both strategically and operationally becomes the difference between the success and failure of an organisation.

I think particularly in the current market there is a large reset to this way of thinking. Today, there's a clearer recognition of the importance of blending strategic vision with practical execution capabilities. This change is reflective of a more nuanced understanding of what it takes to scale successfully in a world where access to capital is much more dependant on success and results. This just highlights the need for companies to adapt and evolve their internal structures and leadership approaches to meet these new expectations of investors.

## Optimise your business with the right Product leaders

Our team of experts specialise in finding and hiring the leaders your team needs to succeed.

Contact us today to transform your product leadership and drive growth.



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