

One Knight in Product - E107 - Crystal Parker

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SPEAKERS

Jason Knight, Crystal Parker



Jason Knight 00:00

Hello, and welcome to the show. I'm your host, Jason Knight. And on each episode of this podcast, I'll be having inspiring conversations with passionate product people. If you like the sound of that and want to hear from me and some of the finest product thought leaders and practitioners in the world, why not head over to [OneKnightInProduct.com](https://www.oneknightinproduct.com) where you can sign up to the mailing list? Subscribe on your favourite podcast app or follow the podcast on social media and guarantee you never miss another episode again. On tonight's episode, we talk about getting into product. Not those difficulties you're having because you've forgotten your password. But taking that first step and getting your first job in product management. We talked about some of the ways you might optimise your approach, the sorts of things you should concentrate on the sorts of things you should absolutely avoid and some of the ways you might get into a company in the first place and then make that internal move you've always wanted for all this and much more please join us on One Knight in Product. So my guest tonight is Crystal Parker. Crystal's a championship wrestler turned chemical engineer, turned product manager and career coach who's now attempting to grapple with the often asked question, how does someone get into product these days? A while back Crystal caught Twitter's attention by tweeting about how she landed her first product manager role by avoiding any product management costs at all. Just studying a bit of UX watching a five minute video on agile and finessing the rest. So I'm looking forward to tales of delicate prioritisation and skillful backlog juggling. Crystal's tweet led to praise for many and surprising criticism from some but she's pushing past the haters and using them experience to help people from non traditional backgrounds into tech and product. Hi Crystal. How are you tonight?



Crystal Parker 01:35

Hey, Jason, I'm doing really good. How are you?



Jason Knight 01:37

I am fabulous. Thank you very much. It's good to have you here. So before we talk about

coaching, or indeed that tweet, let's talk about your day job. So you're a product manager at Spear Education. So what problem to Spear Education solve?

 Crystal Parker 01:50

Yeah, so Spear Education is a dental education company that is based in the US. So we're one of the leading providers for continued education for dentists after they finished dental school and they're practising working with patients. So we have two main parts to the business. One side is the traditional educational products elearning, all ad tech. And then there's another side that's focused on Analytics, which is their analytics tool, basically, to help practices go to that next level of growth, to look at their data, analyse how their practices performing, and see what needs to change what behaviours we can change in order to help them get to their next goal. And I work with the analytics product.



Jason Knight 02:32

Right? So you're building some kind of platform that unlocks key insights that they can use to, as you say, work out how to optimise, I guess or, or grow their practice. But does that mean that you're looking very much at a kind of BI tool with lots of configurability and ability to mash data around as much as they want? Or is it a lot more focused on canned reporting and things that you know will be useful for them, but with very little configurability?

 Crystal Parker 02:57

Yeah, so we definitely like to joke around about the fact that a lot of people know the medical industry is years behind as far as technology upgrades go. And then the dental industry is even further behind the medical industry. So we have identified for we have several dental experts and several clinicians that are on our staff. And we've identified a set of key metrics that are pretty much like standard across the board, the practices that we see that are performing at optimal metrics. And just like high performance rates, there's a few key metrics that we can look at pretty much across the board that's common for general practices everywhere. So right now we do kind of have more of a standardised tool. But we have the consultants that really like tailor the approach that goes along with the tool itself, to really help the practices, identify their specific pain points, and deliver solutions that will help address their specific needs are also constantly working on innovating and just bringing the industry up to speed and just innovating for what the latest version of our product will be. So we're definitely bringing it up to speed. Right now we're working on some really cool stuff that we have in research on how we can transform this platform and really give that a lot of that like flexibility and like more like customization back to our practices.



Jason Knight 04:21

sounds really interesting. But are you working then directly with the dentist themselves? Are you working with like, what we would call over here like practice managers or surgery managers, or the kind of administrative staff like who are you actually doing your discovery work with and and who are you working with directly?

 Crystal Parker 04:36

So one of the things that I really love about Spear is that they have like a really good emphasis on getting to understand our users. So we do have the business that we are and it's a business to business product. So with that we work directly with the dental practices all over the nation. We even have some international offices that we work with as well on the elearning side. So we like to foster very close relationships with our clients. And I'm very fortunate to work in a product organisation that really like places a high emphasis on getting to meet your user and like, observe them firsthand. And I myself did not have a background in the dental industry when I started here. So it's very exciting for me, I've been able to go to two dental practices so far. And definitely there's more to come. And just being able to observe the dentist office, like firsthand, observe all of the inner workings, how the team dynamics, how everyone works together, what their pain points are, the different things they have to deal with to serve their patients effectively, just really getting being able to understand them. So I really like enjoy that aspect of the job. And like really like getting to know our users closely and just working with them like a bit more directly.



Jason Knight 05:56

If you got your own white coat on the hanger, so you can pop that on whenever you need to go into one of the surgeries.

 Crystal Parker 06:02

Definitely not qualified. Although I have been watching a lot more dental videos in general. I know a lot more about dentistry than when I first started, but definitely not enough to start offering myself. My lead my lab coat back in. Yeah, maybe one day.



Jason Knight 06:22

And you say obviously, that you don't have a lot of expertise, or you didn't have a lot of expertise in the dentist side before you started, which is obviously Fair enough. And there's obviously conflicting opinions about whether you need to have industry expertise, or whether you can learn on the job and whether product management skills are important. But did you have any analytics expertise specifically? I mean, obviously, you've been working in engineering before. So I guess there's some analytics in there. But was the analytic side something that you kind of took to pretty easily? Or did you have to do a lot of learning on the job for that as well?

 Crystal Parker 06:52

Yeah, so I would definitely say I have a strong analytical background, just from my previous career with chemical engineering. So that kind of definitely laid the foundation for that transition. But in terms of building analytical products, this is definitely my first one. So with that, there definitely is a lot of additional research that I have to do outside of work just to learn

more about the industry trends and what goes into really designing a helpful analytics tool. Because I think that's like the biggest challenge, you have to find that balance of providing data, but also providing meaningful data and equipping the user with enough information for them to make something out of it, instead of just being overwhelmed with all the numbers on the page. So I think that's definitely like the biggest challenge coming into it with not having a strong background in that. But as a product manager, you know, like, that's just kind of like the nature of the job. Yeah. And I also would say that, something that's very key for me, and my success so far in this role, and something maybe mindful of is just bringing in the experts when they're needed. So just making sure that I'm having the right people in the room for different conversations. And just really utilising like all the resources that I have at my disposal.



Jason Knight 08:10

That makes a lot of sense. And I think it's interesting thinking about the vanity metrics that you were kind of alluding to there. But that's something that we normally think of as product people as things that we're going to be asked to provide to somehow justify some decision that we're making, even though it really doesn't, and it kind of feels like that, but it just reflected them back on the users themselves. So again, a cautionary tale for anyone wanting to do any kind of analytics. But let's talk about that tweet. So it got a little bit of attention, and was in fact, the way that you and I connected. So let's just read it out again, just to set the scene. When I got my first product manager role, I hadn't taken a single course on product management, I took a course on the UX product lifecycle, watched a five minute video on agile and finesse the rest. So before we dig into some of the depths of that, why did you decide to go for product management in the first place, given that you didn't have that experience?



Crystal Parker 09:00

I try not to make this background story too long. But basically, I went to school for chemical engineering, as mentioned before, and whenever I first started working as a chemical engineer, I kind of like had the idea early on that it wasn't the right position for me. And as my time in the role grew for, you know, a few months, a few years, I was just confirmed. Those beliefs were confirmed. And I knew that I had to find something different. And something that was a bit more true to me. So I literally went on YouTube and started searching, why I quit engineering and just trying to find any other like someone else that was going through similar experience and like what do you do next? Where do you go from here, type of thing. So I was able to come across this channel called the engineer truth. And on it, the guy was talking about UX design in the product world and digital products and I had never really been exposed to that before. So I started looking into it a little bit more and I was like, oh, like UX design, it's pretty cool. Like I was pretty interested in that. So I signed up, took a three month course for UX design just to like learn like the end to end product cycle. And from a UX perspective, and then I started applying to jobs and networking. So I was networking, I had a conversation with someone and they were like, I'm looking at your resume, you should apply to a product. So like, you should be a product manager, I don't think that UX design, you have the strongest background for that. So I was like, That's a fair point. And then I started looking at product a bit more. And I was like, well give it a try. And initially, when I went into product, I took it as a job just to get me closer to UX. And I was like, hoping to transition to UX. But when I took the first product role, I really loved it. And I was really excited about it. And it ended up being like the perfect job for me.



Jason Knight 10:51

Well, there you go, all's well that ends well seems like a bit of a, an interesting journey, kind of working your way in and then settling in that last little place. That is actually the one that you wanted to be in from the start really. So yeah, that's really interesting. But you had some experience as a business analyst before you went into product management. So I think it's fair to say that, whilst that's not the same, there's definitely some similarities in some of the tasks that you'll be doing day to day, certainly when it comes to sort of backlog management and writing up tickets, they are some of the things that are kind of bread and butter to product manager. But at the same time, you've then gone in for an interview to get that product manager job. Without that experience. Like what was that interview process like for you? Like you talked a little bit about how you prepared for that. But was it the case that you were very clear upfront about the things that you could and couldn't do, and they took a chance on you being able to learn the rest? Or did you have to effectively fake it till you make it and then learn on the job?



Crystal Parker 11:52

I would say the interview process, it was definitely a bit nerve wracking, definitely felt some imposter syndrome, just because I didn't have any direct relatable experience on my resume, or in my past, for that matter. So whenever I was in the interviewer, I was a bit nervous with how the company would respond to me. But I just kept it very honest, I let them know what my transferable skills were, I hadn't been a product manager before. But I also laid out to them all that I knew about the product space. So you know, just really highlighting everything that I learned from the course that I took, highlighting my capstone projects, the different deliverables that I did in that project with that course. And just really being confident in the answers that I gave them to address or to discuss my approach on different product issues, or just like really showed them my knowledge of different product concepts. So I definitely did not lie at all in the interview. I did it really? Yeah, I never recommend lying just because you can get into a really bad situation, if you get hired on the premise that you have a certain skill set that you don't actually have, it can just end up being very stressful for you once you start taking the job. So yeah, so I definitely was upfront and honest with them about my background, and just kind of spinning it in a positive way, just really showcasing to them, the transferable skills that I had the product knowledge I did have, and the fact that if I didn't become a product manager there, I was going to become a product manager somewhere because I was determined for this to be my next role.



Jason Knight 13:22

Nice, that's really good. I think that one of the things that I'd recommend any company do is take those transferable skills and try and hire outside of people that have these traditional backgrounds that we were talking about a little bit in the intro. And as we've spoken about before, like, there are a lot of transferable skills out and about there. And you don't have to just tick a few boxes off of a horrendous job description was probably stitched together out of two job descriptions, like some of the job descriptions you see out there are pretty terrible. So I'm glad that they took that path and then kind of allowed you to flourish from there. But once you were in, how did you then help yourself up your game? I mean, you can't really live off of a five

minute agile video once you're in, right. So when you're talking about finessing the rest, like was that something there where you basically work very organically through the work you were doing and any mentoring you could get on the job? Or did you have any other resources that you went to like either mentors or books or courses or anything that you did while you were in there to actually build some of those skills that you didn't start off with?



Crystal Parker 14:21

Once I actually got the job? I definitely, it was a bit of a shock at first and a big adjustment, because I was like, wow, like I'm a product manager for this to like to happen for so many months. And it actually happens so that after getting over all the shock of everything, I would say I definitely had to put in a lot of additional time outside of work, just to come up to speed with some of the different terms that I didn't understand. So you mentioned that I was a business analyst before but that experience was not quite the traditional business analyst experience. It was a job that I could take at my last or the company before this one just to kind of have like get some IT experience on my resume. But I was only in the role for three months. And I didn't really get to the backlog, because facts are like the roadmap or anything in that position. So in my product management position, that was my first time really experiencing all that stuff. So the five minute video on YouTube definitely gave me a high level understanding, but I had to go a little bit deeper. So I did that by watching additional videos on YouTube, looking up articles, talking to people in the industry, some of the IT or people that worked in it from a previous company that I worked at, and just kind of like asking them questions as well, I definitely, there was a balance I had to find between asking questions at work, knowing like what was acceptable to ask questions on and give me away, for lack of a better word, or a better phrase. So I didn't want to ask a question that would cause everyone to like, look at me and be like, Oh, wait, why did we hire her? Like, she doesn't know this basic thing. So I definitely had to be a little bit more mindful of what I was asking, when I would just try to look stuff up myself, like all the time. So definitely throughout the day, I was constantly googling different concepts different like key like words or phrases that I was hearing just to make sure that I had somewhat of an understanding before asking questions within like with my coworkers, and things like that. And all of that, I would say, like really helped me to navigate the area with a bit more confidence and the new position and come up to speed better. And as far as finessing I would just say like that mainly happened with in those situations where like, I didn't necessarily know if it was acceptable to ask a certain question that I might just kind of gloss over, like I understood what was happening. And then just take a note to myself like, Okay, I have to look this up to make sure that I understand completely in my own time after the situation was over and whatnot.



Jason Knight 16:53

So, yeah, yeah, I think taking copious notes. And like you say, nodding is definitely one strategy to get through that. And I guess that is something that in your current role you've maybe had to consider doing from time to time when you're talking to a dentist, and they start using loads of acronyms and terms and things like that. And I guess whenever you're getting into any specialist industry, that that can be a problem. Yeah. But I think it's also fair to say that the reaction to that tweet wasn't universally popular. And I remember one person objecting to it and saying, this whole conversation just made me nauseous, and unfollowing, everyone who

was positive about that tweet. Now, I never really worked out what was going on there. But is that a one off? Or have you had other people getting kind of invasion that you somehow got into their exclusive club without up know, going into Product University or whatever?

C

Crystal Parker 17:38

Yeah, I would say, overall, there's been more positive feedback than negative, I will say, yeah, like, I personally have mainly encountered positive people, I think that might have been like the only negative tweet or negative like response or reply on the tweet. But I think that there's just something to be said, and like sharing a story like that, just and that's the reason why I did share it just because I feel like sometimes people feel like they have to have all the certifications, or like, take all these courses have their portfolio, like have at least five projects in their portfolio or something like that, just to prove that they're like really ready for something. But I just really want people to feel empowered, and knowing that if you get to a point where you feel like you understand the basic concepts, and you have enough transferable skills to transfer over, then go for it. Like, yeah, you know, the worst thing that you'll hear is no, but you'll never, you'll never know, like, what opportunities are out there until you take that chance until you like, go for it and just put yourself out there and then see what happens with your career and what opportunities will open up as a result of taking that step.



Jason Knight 18:46

Yeah, that kind of leads into the next question that I have then. And that's around some of the coaching that you've been doing. So you've been doing some coaching alongside the day job, trying to get people, we're trying to help people start out in their product careers, getting that first product job. So what was it that made you decide to start doing that? Was that something that came naturally to you, given the route that you took in? Or was that something that you'd always had on your mind? Or is that something that came later? Like, what triggered you to start doing coaching for other people?

C

Crystal Parker 19:16

Yeah, so I'll say like, I throughout my entire life, I've always been a mentor to some capacity. Like back in high school, I was the president of the peer mentoring club, things like that. So I've always definitely like to like help and give back and like just like help those that are younger than me, help them navigate. And I think that might be because I was I have siblings, but we're like almost like all like 10 years apart and I'm the only girl so I definitely felt like growing up like I was the only child at times and things like that. So I felt like I was kind of like navigating the world and life without any guidance. And then I was also the first person in my family to go to a For your university and graduate, yeah, so with that, like using my degree to get a professional job, like it was just a brand new space for me to navigate. And I just felt like, I definitely noticed people that came from a long line of like, their parents had degrees or their grandparents had degrees. Like, I feel like they knew what they were doing and had an advantage over someone like myself that didn't kind of have that same background. So I've always really enjoyed mentoring new hires. And at the companies, I've worked for just different people, even after graduating college, and still working with people that were still in college and just like helping them or helping people throughout while I was in college, like helping them throughout the

engineering programme, which is very rigorous. So I've always been in that type of capacity. And specifically with career coaching. When I got my most recent job, I was very shocked, impressed with how the career search or the job search went. So I had before getting my most recent job, I had taken a two year gap off to raise my son. So he was born like right before the pandemic started. So I took a two year gap off and I just I wasn't sure what was going to happen when I started applying for jobs again. And I wasn't sure like, would I get a lot of pushback, because I didn't work for two years. But at that time, I only had one year of product experience. So it was like, Are people really going to take me seriously or like see me as a competitive candidate, like what types of job opportunities lobby will to get? So I really have like a lot of questions surrounding that, or how long does this process going to take. And there were some things that I was doing, like in the first month of applying, I barely heard back from any companies. But then I just started changing stuff up a little bit. And I started being a little bit more strategic. And then like by the second month, I started hearing back from a lot more companies. And by the third month, it was like pretty much like I could tell if I applied to a company I knew they were going to like contact me back, just from like reading the job description from like, like loading like different things about them. And my background in my resume. And I ended up getting a job within three months, which was like very shocking to me, just from some of the LSA, like horror stories I've heard of like how long, it's taking people to like find a job and how long they're applying how many jobs are applying to, it's crazy, like their jobs are very competitive right now. So basically just like taking all of that information and and seeing how it basically I was able to master the job search process, I feel like Master like interviewing resume, like all of that. And just kind of like seeing how easily it was able to work for me, once I put the pieces together, it made me really want to help other people as well. So I really wanted to get into coaching, because I felt like I had knowledge of something that could help people further their careers and just get that jumpstart and like help them transition if they're coming from a different place or help them find that entry level position straight out of college, and just really give them more support and guidance, if they don't have it from any other source in their life.



Jason Knight 23:11

Which they almost certainly don't certainly to the level that you've been talking about as well. So I think that's a very valuable service, you know, because you don't have to look too far to you know, and you probably haven't looked too far online to see some of the, as you put it horror stories about people going through these stupid job search processes. We all know that product hiring is generally quite, you know, there's a lot of landmines out there. Because no one's really doing it the same way product jobs don't really mean the same thing in different companies, there's a lot of variance in what or how product works in a bunch of these places. So having someone that leads to help people sort of sort the wheat from the chaff and try and help them focus on the right areas. Sounds really, really useful. And I'm sure that you're getting feedback from people that you're helping as well. But are these all people that are starting out in product? Or are you also doing some work with people that are already in product, but maybe either trying to change jobs to a better one or trying to up their career?



Crystal Parker 24:09

Yeah, so I'm working with people that are for the most part are just mainly interested in tech careers. So I am helping them get positions that aren't necessarily like product exactly, but are stepping stones into product as well. So just given certain people's background and like their

experience, educational background, and as well as their professional experience, just like what position is the next position that makes like the most sense for transitioning to a strong product career. And in my opinion, it's not just like everyone can't just go from whatever job they're doing today to being a product manager. I think that's like a hard sell, especially if they're in the non technical area. It takes a little bit more work and just like building up that transferable skill set. So I really work with people to try like help them find like a something that makes sense. Like for a realistic transition, I recognise that like everyone doesn't have a job like mine, like my basically was a product manager, my engineering time, but it was just a physical product instead of a digital product. Yeah, everyone doesn't have the same like transferable skill set, or educational background. So it might take a little bit longer, and it just takes being a little bit more strategic. And one thing that I really do like about that is just like whenever you're transitioning into that position, that's kind of like the interim position until you get to the product side, in that you'll typically clients will typically see like a salary increase, which allows them to devote more time and like effort into additional coursework, and just like growing their skill set, and like learning more about product management, if they do want to get a certification or something they can, like, do that rest assured knowing that they still have a good job where they're like building their skills, they can afford it. And they are still building their network and like growing that as well, and just still continuing to get relevant professional experience. So definitely worked for a variety of roles, we have people that have like, marketing backgrounds, people that are straight out of college with computer information, systems, degrees, people that have business degrees, all types of like different backgrounds, even people that do not have a degree, and just looking at how they can like best fit in Yeah. And I don't be good, I definitely am on the side, like I've, you know, every product manager, I feel like I meet, they all have a different background, like if they have a degree, it's typically like all different. And if they don't have a degree, then they typically have like different like industry experience as well before coming into product. And I don't think that it's you know, a one size fits all type of thing. There's not like one set way. It's more about like the mindset and it's about the way that you think and what you're interested in, like what gets you going to help you become a successful product manager, and less about like the credentials that you have going into it.



Jason Knight 27:00

Absolutely. And as someone without a degree himself, I'm 100% behind that as well. I've, in fact, technically not got two degrees, because I've started and not finished too. So if I can do it, anyone can do it. Yeah, exactly. But is everything bespoke? Or do you have like a crystal Parker five step plan to get into products, like how much of it is bespoke and tailored around these very specific situations of these people? Versus being like a plan that you already have mapped out and inserting those people into that plan?



Crystal Parker 27:31

Yeah, so as far as helping people just kind of like map out their career and like, what's the next best step for them? It's pretty much like one on one individual coaching right now. That's the service that I provide. Yeah. And I love like meeting with my clients just like really getting that understanding of what their career goals are, where they're looking to go, and what they've already done. And like where they can go in the interim, what will help them get, get them closer to it, or just going straight into product as well, that they're like qualified in at that place.

So definitely meeting with them one on one. For now, I am working on a ebook right now, that is kind of just like a more generic template for Yeah. Which is more of a generic template for landing an entry level position. So it's not product specific, it applies to any position with a focus on tech positions. So I definitely think that's something that anyone can just like pick up and buy. So it'll definitely it'll be on my site by the end of this month, which is exciting. When anyone can just pick up and buy that and use the advice. And that's it's advice that I share with my clients. In our individual coaching sessions, we definitely go into more detail on the topics, and I share additional resources on them. But I think everything in the e book will be enough to help people start seeing results.



Jason Knight 28:54

And I'll keep my eyes open and recommend it to anyone that's asking.



Crystal Parker 28:57

Thank you.



Jason Knight 28:58

But if you're looking at ways that people should get into product, then there's presumably some ways that maybe you've tried yourself, or maybe these people have tried before they've come to you that have maybe been a little bit ineffective. Are there any kind of common things that you've seen when people are trying to make that leap into product management that just don't work? And people should stop trying? Is there anything that really sort of sticks out there?



Crystal Parker 29:23

So I'll say the biggest thing that stands out to me that I feel like where people go wrong is in trying to get a lot of certifications, or also just trying to get a level of understanding that I think is to deepen than what's required. So I touched on that a little bit earlier, just by having like, oh, I have to have like five or like 10 projects on my portfolio, things like that. So it's just kind of the paralysis by analysis type of thing. So it's like you're working so hard at getting these certifications, or you're working so hard at building the skill set that you're not actually like using it or Like you're focusing on like the academia aspect of it without actually like focusing on the actual, like the practical application of the concepts. And actually like putting yourself out there and going for it. So I definitely think that as far as certifications go, there aren't any official certifications for product management. So any certifications that you get are just kind of like a plus. But there's nothing that's required to be your product manager. So I definitely think that slows people down sometimes. As far as having projects on your portfolio, I think that's great. But I mean, if you have like, one to three solid projects, I think you can stop there. And then, because a lot of the times like these projects are very like hypothetical, you're not necessarily like applying them to a real world scenario. And they could just be like a lot of like effort that goes into that. Or you could just be slowing yourself down before you before you really give yourself a chance to thrive and like put your knowledge out there. The other thing that I would say that slows people down in the process, or stands in their way, would just be not

being prepared for a product interview. So there are a few helpful resources for like passing the pm interview. And there's a free course on Udacity that I really like. And it's like, I think it's just like Product Manager interview prep. And it's like a free course. But it just kind of like walks you down, like the framework of how a lot of product interviews are structured, and like answering questions or being prepared, because it's, it's a different thought process, I guess that interviewers are looking for sometimes or a specific thought process, I would say like a high level format they're looking for. So if you're not prepared to answer questions in that format, you might just, even though you have the ideas, you have the skill set like you you're qualified for it, and you have all of that, you might not be able to communicate it in a way that they're looking for. And that's something that can stand in between you and your next product position as well.



Jason Knight 32:02

So I'm going to take from that, that there's no part of the university certificates on the horizon, then and you're going to be keeping on the coaching level.



Crystal Parker 32:09

Yeah. For now, I'll keep it on the coaching level.



Jason Knight 32:13

For sure. And you've worked with something like 20 people so far, give or take. So without naming any names, have you had any big early successes, like someone who you helped on that journey, and they're already crushing it, and they've already gone on to thrive, or they still too early in their careers for you to make that judgement?



Crystal Parker 32:29

Yeah, one of my first clients that I worked with, she actually is a marketing manager at Udacity. So wow, that's she's definitely like a big success story. And she has hopes of transitioning into product management. So we're definitely staying in touch with that she came from a more liberal arts background. And then she had also taken a significant gap, I believe it was 10 years off to raise her kids and her family. So yeah, so she's definitely someone that I would say, is definitely a big success. I enjoyed working with her so much she was she was so full of energy. And I think the biggest thing for her and for a lot of my clients just really like helping them to see the value that they have, and what they're bringing to the table. Just because there was a lot that she had did in her career. And some of it wasn't even, it wasn't in her professional career. It was just like side hobby, like a side hustle or hobby, if you will, that she was doing but she didn't have that on her resume. And it's just like all experiences good experience. So really like working with her to incorporate that. And that really, like played a big part in her getting her marketing manager position at Udacity, which was a remote job and over six figures. So that's definitely yeah. A big success. What am I other recent success stories is a recent college graduate. And because she didn't have any experience out of college, like she didn't have any big name internships or anything like that. So she didn't feel qualified to apply to it analyst

position straight out of college. So she was applying to positions that only require like a high school diploma. And I was just kind of like working with her to really realise, you know, you have this degree. And you know, you can get jobs that are at a higher level that will start you off earlier further in your career than if you are to start at a position that you're overqualified for. So from working with her and just really like going over the interview workshops and everything that we did, like she was able to get her it analyst position at GEICO. So she'll be starting that soon. And we're definitely looking forward to that. And yeah, so those are some of the success stories. I've had other people break off into cybersecurity and helped us so far that I'm working with some people now that are looking to go into product as well.



Jason Knight 34:59

Fabulous. Long may it continue. Now I want you to think now about maybe some person who's a budding product manager who really wants to get in. And maybe they've not found you been able to sign up for your coaching yet, but you talked earlier around some of the jobs that they could get to get them closer to put up before then making that secondary leap into products. So what are some of the jobs that you would advise that person to look at or consider as part of that transition?



Crystal Parker 35:29

So I think, I think that's a tough question just because people have so many different backgrounds. So I think it really depends on what a person's background is. So I'd say, I'd recommend to this person that they look at their existing skill set from whatever they're doing, and look at the skill set of a product manager, and then see like, what's missing, like what's missing from their current skill set, like maybe they need to get like a little bit closer to data and get like a bit more involved in that. Or maybe they need to get a little bit more experience with leading cross functional teams or just like working with stakeholders, things like that. So I would recommend that they look at what's missing what they need in order to have like to become a more competitive candidate and product management. And then with their existing skill set, see the opportunities, they have to transition to other roles, that makes sense, and will give them more of that skill that they're missing. So I think that there's a variety of different things they can go to, for a lot of people that do not have degrees, I always recommend CSM roles. So customer success management. Yeah, so those are positions that I feel like are a bit more open to accepting people that don't have degrees. And typically, a lot of people that don't have degrees also have like a lot of good transferable skills for CSM roles just because there's a lot it's very like customer service focused and oriented. So I think that's a good transition just to get more experience working with users. And just building up that skill set of being able to look at data, look at how like your users are interacting with the product. Work with other organisations within the company, when you're fulfilling like any like issues or solving like issues that your clients might have, looking at their contracts, renewals, just like really getting into understand the customer, I think that's a really great position to help transition into product, I would also recommend, depending if you want to be like more of a technical product manager going into some type of like, analytics position, that will just give you more experience with looking at like KPIs and just like really like being able to dig deeper into data just to build up that technical foundation experience that you have with that, I would say, for other people, just or for some other people that might have, if you're like in marketing or anything similar, I think that's a position as well, that there's like a lot of overlap between

marketing and product management. So if you have a background that you feel like you could get easily like transition to marketing, or like you might marketing might be, obviously there's definitely a lower barrier of entry to marketing, then product management. So marketing could be like a good option as well, just because there's a lot of overlap with just like really understanding the product, understanding how to talk about it, you'll end up working with a lot of different stakeholders in a marketing position, you'll also be able to get a lot of hands on experience, just like with the product itself and with users, because you're also looking at data in this role, and just really getting to understand their product in a different way. And you're telling the story of it. Yeah, so you're like evangelising the product, which is similar to like what product managers are doing as well. There's even a position Product Marketing Manager, yep, which is a very similar position for overlap as well. If you're already in the product space, you can of course do like a product owner position, or scrum master position. And those could also like help set you up to transition. And it's just it's hard because it really depends on like what a person's background isn't. And there's like a lot of different positions that make sense to like help transition. So I know I didn't give a top three list of positions, but hopefully that gives an idea or gives people somewhat of a path to follow.



Jason Knight 39:28

Yeah, absolutely. I think it's just important to give people examples of the types of thing they should consider because you know, for some people, it's like our product or nothing and of course, those people are sometimes going to be disappointed. So, I completely agree with this concept of trying to get as close as you can as possible. And you know, partly that could be if you have a product position in a not very good product company, for example, getting a different type of product position in a better company so you can start to learn better and kind of take a sort of sideways maybe slightly down step. Then launch up again. But also yeah, as you say, just getting into one of those product companies in a position, which is close enough to the product team that you're gonna be dealing with them quite a lot. And then trying to then sideways move inside that company is also a really valuable tactic and something that I think more people should try. So 100% agree of you on all of those points. So where can people catch up with you after this? If they want to find out more about your coaching, maybe find out a little bit more about some ways into product or find out when your books actually going to be out?



Crystal Parker 40:31

Yeah, so you can always follow me on Twitter. That's where I'm the most active. So my handle is parkercrystal_. So that's parkercrystal_, and then my website is crystalaparker.com. So in feel free to reach me on Twitter or from my site, and I would love to talk about anything, really.



Jason Knight 40:59

Anything. That's a bold claim. Yeah. Well that's been a fantastic chat. So obviously, really appreciate hearing some of your story and some of the ways that you're helping to support new entrants into the product of a new and I hope we'll all be dealing with those in the future as they start to go through their careers as well. Hopefully, we'll stay in touch but yeah, that's for now. Thanks for taking the time.



Crystal Parker 41:17

Yeah, thanks so much, Jason. I really enjoyed this, it was a lot of fun



Jason Knight 41:23

As always, thanks for listening. I hope you found the episode inspiring and insightful. If you did again, I can only encourage you to hop over to OneKnightInProduct.com. Check out some of our other fantastic guests, sign up to the mailing list or subscribe on your favourite podcast app. Make sure you share with your friends so you and they can never miss another episode again. I'll be back soon with another inspiring guest. But as for now, thanks and good night.