



Objection Handling for Product Managers

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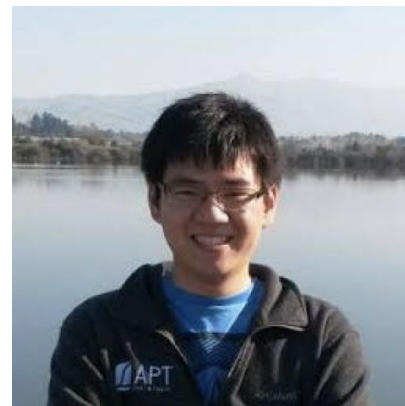
Agenda

- Who are you?
- What is an objection?
- Why does objection handling matter?
- What are best practices for handling objections?
- How can I empower my company to handle objections?
- Q&A

Who are you?

I'm Clement!

- Analytics consultant -> product analyst -> product manager
- Currently leading new business initiatives as a PM at [Blend](#)
- Also co-founder and writer at [Product Manager HQ](#)
- You can find me at <https://www.linkedin.com/in/clement-kao/>



Who are you?

I just published a book on **Breaking Into Product Management**

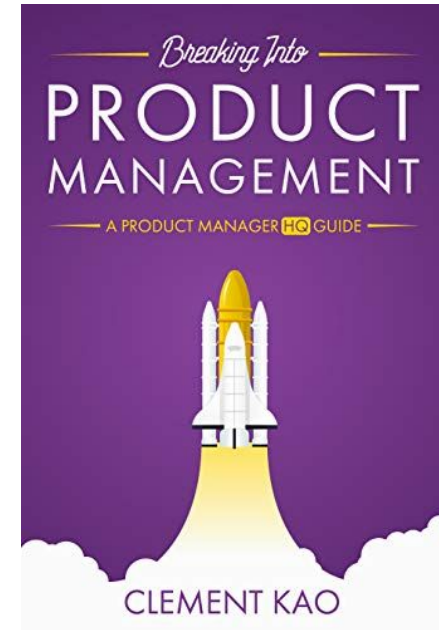
Amazon paperback:

<https://www.amazon.com/Breaking-Into-Product-Management-Manager/dp/1670792714>

Amazon Kindle:

<https://www.amazon.com/Breaking-Into-Product-Management-Manager-ebook/dp/B083F72JR9>

PDF: <https://www.productmanagerhq.com/guide/>



What is an objection?

An objection is *an expression of disapproval or opposition*

Too often, our customers have objections!

- Objections about the product's functionality
- Objections about the product roadmap
- Objections about price
- Objections about implementation details



Why does objection handling matter?

Objections are *natural*

- They're good problems to have, because only committed customers have objections
- If they didn't have objections, it means that your product doesn't actually matter to them



Why does objection handling matter?

But you can't cave to every single request!

Product managers must *prioritize for depth and breadth of impact*, and you can't give in to your noisiest customers

- We have limited resources to build
- Every feature we build has associated long-term maintenance costs

So we need to *learn to say "no"!*



Why does objection handling matter?

How can we say “no” in a compassionate way that builds trust?

Answer: we tell a *compelling narrative* to handle the objection

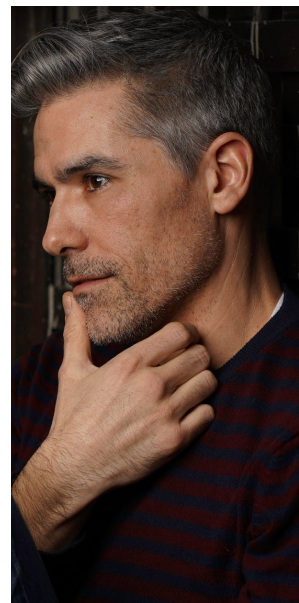
- A good narrative can actually make your customers respect you even more
- Example reaction I’ve gotten: “**That was so thoughtful, that makes so much sense!**”
- Another one: “**See, this is why I have my business with you, you know how to build for impact.**”



What are best practices for handling objections?

The four rules for success:

1. Never shut down a customer ahead of time.
2. Actively listen to their pain, and be truly curious and empathetic.
3. Confirm your understanding of the pain.
4. Tell your story, but tell it from the customer's perspective.



How can I empower my company to handle objections?

The product manager is naturally the best person to address objections, because:

- You know the vision, the roadmap, and the rationale behind the roadmap
- You best understand your own product and its nuances and complexities
- You know what other customers need, and how they've solved their own pains
- You have the most data at your fingertips, out of all your colleagues



How can I empower my company to handle objections?

But you can't always be there to address every objection!

Here's how to scale yourself: *create a list of common objections and example responses for each one*, then distribute this across customer-facing teams (sales, customer success, etc.)

Help your organization keep the following themes in mind:

- Objections are opportunities for customer research
- Tell compelling stories about why we're pushing back
- Clear next steps enable us to reduce customer confusion and to boost our confidence



Summary

Objection handling is part of your job, whether you know it or not!

Thoughtful objection handling means:

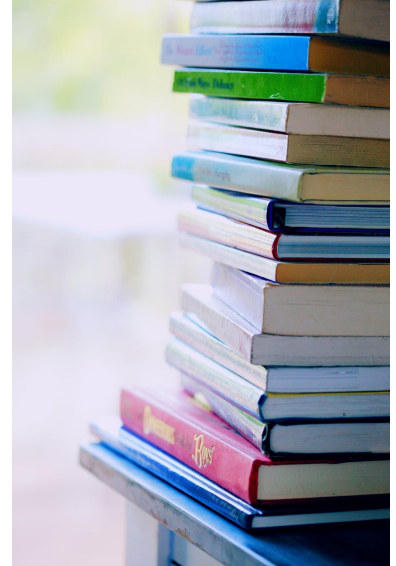
- You learn about your customer's needs
- You maintain focus on what matters, rather than accepting every request
- You create trust and buy-in from the customer, rather than disappointment or anger



Q&A

Additional Readings

- [Objection Handling for Product Managers](#) - Product Manager HQ
- [The Secrets of Highly Successful Sales People: Objection Handling: The Secret Product Manager Handbook](#) by Nils Davis
- [12 Objection Handling Techniques for Sales](#) - Gong.io (2018)
- [The Ultimate Guide to Objection Handling: 40 Common Sales Objections & How to Respond](#) - HubSpot (2018)
- [6 Techniques for Effective Objection Handling](#) - Salesforce (2013)



Other Talks by Clement

[The Nuances of B2B Product Analytics](#) (Product School)

- I discuss why B2B product analytics are much harder to tackle than standard B2C analytics, and how to think through various assumptions and workarounds

[Product Managers Are Also Products](#) (Mind the Product)

- I discuss how product managers can treat themselves as products with roadmaps, and how they can use that to accelerate their careers

[Stakeholder Empathy](#) (Cyclemeets)

- I discuss how to establish empathy with stakeholders as a product manager

[Data-Informed Product Management](#) (Pixelfield)

- I discuss why being data-informed is more valuable than being data-driven, and how qualitative research and quantitative analytics are best paired together

