4 key lessons for innovation success

Coming up with innovative ideas is tough. Keeping innovative ideas on track during development can be even more difficult. That’s why our TAG team follows key rules to accelerate the transition from prototype for product.

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Unfortunately, conversational AI innovation isn’t a light-bulb moment. If it was, our jobs would be much easier.
Instead, designing innovative AI technologies requires a massive amount of problem-solving, organization and collaboration between teams. It’s never a straightforward process, and it’s often time-consuming, but it can lead to great results.

Just look to Nuance Pathfinder for an example. Nuance’s Corporate Research team know first-hand how much manual labor is involved in the design for conversational AI. That’s why they wanted to replace time-consuming processes, such as manual tagging of data and writing dialog scripts, with unsupervised learning technology that could do it for them.

From this challenge, Nuance Pathfinder was born. Nuance customers can now use the machine learning technology to build highly effective dialog models that can be used to support two-way conversations between consumers and virtual assistants.

But it wasn’t a simple task. To reach the finished product, the Corporate Research team worked closely with Nuance’s Technology Advancement Group (TAG), following some key rules to keep their innovation on track.

**Rule one: Stay focused on the business problem**

There’s no use in solving problems that don’t exist, but it’s not always that simple. When you’re deep into a project, it’s easy to lose sight of the challenges that started it.

One way to overcome this is to prototype your product fast and get it out to users. If you’re working on unnecessary issues, they’ll quickly let you know, and they may even offer ideas to bring into the project.

Taking an agile approach to Pathfinder’s development, using tools like Kubernetes and Docker, the TAG team was able to quickly adapt the prototype based on user feedback.

**Rule two: Don’t rush the project**

While accelerating your product into the prototype stage can bring major benefits, it doesn’t come without a few challenges.

You might find yourself with a surprising amount of quality assurance and testing to tackle at the end of the product development cycle. That’s why it’s worth finding the right balance between speed and accuracy to make sure you’re not rushing to market too quickly.
Rule three: Prioritize project management

Product innovation is all about collaboration—from the initial idea-nurturing phase to final testing and rolling the product out to market. That’s why it’s essential to keep effective communication between your teams at all times throughout the project.

With a project manager that truly embeds themselves among the team, it’s easier to overcome challenges, test new ideas, and ensure great team cohesion.

Rule four: Bring your concept to life

Don’t just tell people what your product can do—show them.

Instead of a tedious PowerPoint presentation, people will be much more engaged with your product if you can show them how it works.

It’s the reason Nuance Pathfinder got such a great start. Users got in-depth visualizations about what the platform could do, covering everything from data tagging to live conversation assistance. When users saw the platform in action, it gave them a much clearer idea of how they could use it in their organization.

Keep your innovation on track

The journey from prototype to product isn’t always simple. There are a lot of opportunities to lose focus on the original goal, and that can end up derailing the project completely.

That’s why Nuance’s Technology Advancement Group operates with clear rules to keep the project on track. And after the success of Pathfinder, the team is now working to improve the innovation process itself—looking for new ways to develop a product, from the initial idea all the way to market.

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Tags: AI, Artificial Intelligence, conversational design, intelligent engagement, natural language understanding, virtual assistants

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