

Your Modern Product Discovery Playbook

How modern product teams move faster, reduce risk, and make better decisions without adding headcount.



Who this is for

This playbook is for SaaS founders, senior product managers, and enterprise product leaders who are expected to deliver more with less.

You are under pressure to move quickly. You cannot afford long discovery cycles, bloated teams, or decisions based on opinion alone. You need confidence before committing roadmap, budget, or engineering capacity.

This playbook shows how AI-accelerated UX research and rapid prototyping help you validate ideas fast, reduce guesswork, and create real business optionality. It also explains, at a high level, how much of this work may qualify as research and experimental activity under current US tax law, so you can have informed conversations with finance and tax partners.

This is not tax advice. It is practical product leadership guidance, informed by real delivery work and current legislation. Always confirm specifics with your advisors.



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Founder

The core problem product teams face today

Most teams do not fail because of poor execution. They fail because they commit too early.

- Too early to solutions
- Too early to roadmaps
- Too early to engineering effort
- Too early to sunk cost

At the same time, teams are expected to move faster than ever. Traditional discovery is too slow. Skipping discovery entirely is too risky.

The result is a false choice between speed and confidence.

That tradeoff no longer exists.

The modern solution: AI-native product discovery

AI changes the economics of discovery.

What used to take months can now happen in days. Not because corners are cut, but because the cost of exploration has dropped dramatically.

AI-native discovery focuses on:

- **Turning ideas into realistic, testable prototypes fast**
- **Testing assumptions with real users early**
- **Generating evidence before committing engineering resources**
- **Creating decision-ready artifacts, not slide decks**

This approach aligns directly with how modern tax law defines research and experimental activity in software development, which includes experimentation, feasibility testing, and reducing technical uncertainty

Our 5-Day Discovery Cycle

This is the operational heart of the playbook. It is designed to fit inside real enterprise constraints.

Day 1: Discover the real problem

AI-native discovery focuses on:

- **Align on the business goal, not just the feature request**
- **Identify assumptions worth testing**
- **Define success metrics upfront**
- **Document uncertainties, not requirements**

This is where most teams move too fast. Slowing down here saves weeks later.

Our 5-Day Discovery Cycle

Day 2: Prototype fast and visibly

- Build a functional prototype that looks and feels real
- Focus on flows, decisions, and moments of friction
- Review early with stakeholders to surface blind spots

AI-accelerated workflows allow teams to prototype at a fidelity that used to require full design and engineering cycles

Our 5-Day Discovery Cycle

Day 3: Test with real users

- Conduct lightweight usability and concept testing
- Observe behavior, not opinions
- Review early with stakeholders to surface blind spots

This step replaces internal debate with external signal.

Our 5-Day Discovery Cycle

Day 4: Refine and harden

- Incorporate user feedback
- Resolve feasibility concerns
- Clarify scope and tradeoffs
- Prepare designs for real development handoff

Our 5-Day Discovery Cycle

Day 5: Decide and document

- Ship if ready, or confidently kill the idea
- Capture learnings for future cycles
- Produce artifacts leadership and finance can trust
- Prepare designs for real development handoff

This is where speed turns into confidence.

Why this work often qualifies as R&D activity

Under current US tax law, research and experimental expenditures include activities intended to eliminate uncertainty in software development, including design, prototyping, testing, and iterative experimentation.

Recent legislation has restored flexibility for domestic research activities, allowing companies to either expense or capitalize qualifying R&D depending on elections made in coordination with finance teams.

What matters from a product perspective:

- **You are already doing this work**
- **Structured discovery creates clearer documentation**
- **Better documentation makes collaboration with finance easier**
- **Optionality increases when decisions are evidence-based**

The playbook does not replace your finance or tax advisors. It helps you show up prepared.

What makes us different

Most firms sit in one lane.

Design agencies focus on visuals.

Consultancies focus on slides.

Accounting firms focus on compliance.

Big Nerd Design operates at the intersection.

AI-first product discovery.

Real UX research and prototyping.

Enterprise-grade delivery experience.

Financial awareness without overreach.

The playbook does not replace your finance or tax advisors. It helps you show up prepared.

The work is structured, fast, and grounded in reality. The output is something leaders can act on immediately.

This is not about doing more work. It is about doing the right work earlier.

What you should feel after reading this

Clarity.

Confidence.

Momentum.

You should feel equipped to:

- Ship if ready, or confidently kill the idea
- Capture learnings for future cycles
- Produce artifacts leadership and finance can trust
- Prepare designs for real development handoff

A final note

Speed is no longer your advantage. **Decision quality is.** AI-native discovery lets you have both.

If you are ready to test ideas faster, reduce risk, and build with confidence, this is where it starts.