software studio

unity of purpose

Daniel Jackson

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Conceptual integrity is the most important consideration in system design. It is better to have a system omit certain anomalous features and improvements, but to reflect one set of design ideas, than to have one that contains many good but independent and uncoordinated ideas.

-- Fred Brooks, 1975
The most important aspect of product management is categorizing features into three buckets: gamechangers, showstoppers, and distractions.

- **A gamechanger.** People will want to buy your product because of this feature.
- **A showstopper.** People won’t buy your product if you’re missing this feature, but adding it won’t generate demand.
- **A distraction.** This feature will make no measurable impact on adoption.

Empirically, successful products have one to three gamechanging features, dozens of features that neutralize showstoppers, and very few features that are distractions. Your job is to build an intuition about your space to be able to tell these categories apart.

If you’re doing more showstopper features than you absolutely need to, you’re wasting resources.

If you’re doing more than three gamechanging features, you’re wasting resources. Empirically, few disruptive products are good at a dozen things. Shipping gamechanging features is hard. Three is probably the most you can get away with, and even that is a stretch.

Finally, if you don’t pour enough creative energy into any given gamechanging feature, you’re wasting resources.