

10 Tips for Implementing Continuous Discovery Research from Aura Nelson at KEEN

Continuous discovery entails a product-building team conducting small research activities through weekly touch points with customers.

This approach prioritizes developing a cadence of regularly having conversations with your customers and getting feedback from them.

Popularized by Teresa Torres, continuous discovery offers an iterative roadmap for research teams across departments.

We spoke with Aura Nelson, KEEN's Director of Fan Insights, to learn how she implemented continuous discovery throughout her organization. Read her thoughts below in italics and be sure to watch her recent dscout webinar, [*How KEEN Uses Insights to Build Deeper Connections with Customers.*](#)

1. Start small and scale the process over time

Implementing continuous discovery isn't done overnight. It's okay to start small and iterate.

“Teresa Torres has a quote: ‘Continuous discovery is for product people who want to build products that their customers need and love.’

Start with what you can do and then build from there. We've established a process and we're going to continue to get better and better and build on it.

Once you start seeing the impact, it'll just kind of snowball from there.”

2. Engage leaders across departments for buy-in

It's hard to get much done without getting leadership on board. Make an effort to bring them into the fold and share what impact it will have over time.

“I showed what the process would look like for our teams. I met with key leaders from around the business, the president, the head of product, our CMO, etc., and really started talking about what this could look like. Once I got their buy in, we were ready to roll.”

3. Encourage cross-functional teams to work together

Once the leadership team is on board, bringing every department together on the same page is the next crucial step.

“We have what we call our product quartet—leaders from product, design marketing, merch, and insights. The group works very collaboratively. The strength of our work comes from ensuring that everybody's working in lockstep with each other, and that we're all working toward a desired outcome or outcomes for the season.

If there's one thing that you need to really focus on, it's starting with an outcome. Research is so much more impactful when you're starting with a clear outcome that everyone is aligned on.”

4. Regularly interact with customers for feedback

This practice is at the heart of continuous discovery. Consider the best ways to interact frequently with your customers and product fans.

“Very recently we launched some winter boot research we are kicking off Fall/Winter 2025.

We wanted to really take a step back and understand what was going on with our fans in terms of their needs, wants, desires, and pain points when it comes to winter boots.

We used [dscout’s Diary tool](#) and we talked to our fans about what winter looked like to them and what they’re currently wearing. We talked to them about their pain points, their desires, their needs. We asked them to shop for winter boots and one of the tools that I love for this is screen recording on dscout.”

5. Use technology that enhances customer understanding

Finding the right tools and platforms can make the difference between a messy adaptation of this process and one that works more seamlessly.

“We took everything that we were learning in [dscout](#) and we used [Lucidchart](#) to create inspiration boards.

This is a board that I ask everybody across product design, marketing insights, etc. to start adding to, so not only are we getting input from our fans on this board, we’re also adding images from retail that we see. If we run into somebody and they’re wearing something interesting, or we have an interesting conversation about, you know, what winter boots are for them and why they chose the boots that they chose. We can add that to this board.

We took all those findings from dscout, from our Lucidchart boards, and then we brought that into this opportunity identification workshop. What comes out of these workshops is identifying the opportunities that will most likely achieve our outcomes.”

6. Continuously refine your products and strategies

Nothing is set in stone. Take a look at what's working and what isn't, then come up with solutions for improvement.

“Another thing I would mention is really involving stakeholders and encouraging them to help you improve upon the process. Doing these postmortems and talking about, “How did that work? How did that opportunity workshop feel to you? Is there anything that we could do differently next time?”

Continuing to iterate on the process and involving stakeholders as your teammates is really important.”

7. Make insights accessible to all relevant stakeholders

A transparent flow of information ensures everyone is on the same page and amplifies your customer voice.

“At KEEN, part of being a fan-centered culture is making sure that everybody's connected to the fan. And for that to happen, every scout (participant) has someone representing them.

They're reading through all their responses. They're listening to their videos. Then we're taking those images and those quotes and we're putting it into that inspiration board I mentioned.

*Everyone has access to that inspiration board and we are really involving **everybody**.*

Democratizing research for me really means making sure everyone has a role to play and access to the results.”

8. Prioritize gaining knowledge over immediate success

Implementing this process won't change everything overnight, but it is a long-term investment in the future.

“We have not been able to get to the point where the products that are actually out in the market right now have gone through this process—that’s going to start happening in 2025.

So while we don’t have actual sales numbers yet, there have been a couple of things that we’ve learned throughout the process that have an impact.

One of the areas that I see impact is that there’s been a significant shift in how we talk about the fan, and the importance of fan insights in the go-to-market process and in the brief writing process.

Using the dscout platform to show our fans getting in depth, and showing images of what’s aspirational to them, their influencers, etc. is all embedded into that.”

9. Don’t be afraid to get eclectic with your information

Are you getting all the relevant information possible from your customers? Consider other opinions and perceptions from them that could enhance your insights.

“Everybody has a different perception of style. So basically we take everything that we’re learning, products that they love, products that they hate, and we’re putting quotes from dscout and images from dscout into this board.

This is a board that I ask everybody across product design, marketing insights, etc. to start adding to, so not only are we getting input from our fans on this board, we’re also adding images from retail that we see. If we run into somebody and they’re wearing something interesting, or we have an interesting conversation about, you know, what winter boots are for them and why they chose the boots that they chose. We can add that to this board.

So this is kind of a living, breathing board that we are going to continuously build upon for inspiration for future seasons as well. Developing a process is super important.”

10. Continuously evaluate the effectiveness of your strategies

Are you conducting the right research at the right time, or do you need to plan ahead better for the future? Take a step back to evaluate.

“It’s important to take a step back and work really closely with partners from around the business, to understand what type of research and what type of findings actually has an impact.

So I’ve been really intentional at KEEN about understanding as much as I can about the business, about the products that we’re creating, about how briefs are built. And understanding the timeline for the go to market process. That’s really important to be able to collaborate and talk with teams and understand the cadence.

If you are working on research at the wrong time, it’s just not going to have an impact. So it’s about understanding the cadence, understanding those points at which research really needs to come in order to have the most impact, and understanding what type of information is most essential to them in order to write their briefs.”

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