

The Leading Reference for technology-based products

Product Management Journal

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Welcome

Leading the way for product managers

Whether you work as a product manager, lead a product team or run a business with a product management team, you'd be forgiven for thinking, "I'm not really sure what good product management looks like."

Everyone does it slightly differently. What's needed depends on how things have been set up in your company. However, in our experience, most established businesses face very similar challenges.

This Journal is a little bit different from our previous ones. It's designed to be read from front to back, and it's us 'putting our cards on the table'

It is our view of what world class product management should be in technology businesses.

We expect you will recognize many of the issues in this Journal, and we hope to inspire you to do something about them. Good luck!



Who's who?

The *Product Management Journal* is published by Product Focus as an independent publication for product managers with technology-based products. Product Focus was founded and is run by Ian Lunn (top) and Andrew Dickenson.

The founders continue to deliver many of Product Focus' training courses and reviews alongside their team of senior consultants.

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Product management

Explained in a nutshell

If a company has products, someone has to look after them.

But don't assume that's just the product manager. Responsibility is usually split across different people. There's a lot to do, and a variety of skills are needed.

Part of the job is working out what the right product is for the business. That's about balancing the need to make money with what's technically possible, what customers want, and the impact on different parts of the organization.

Another part is to work with Development and Suppliers to deliver the product. And yet another is working with Marketing and Sales to help sell the product.

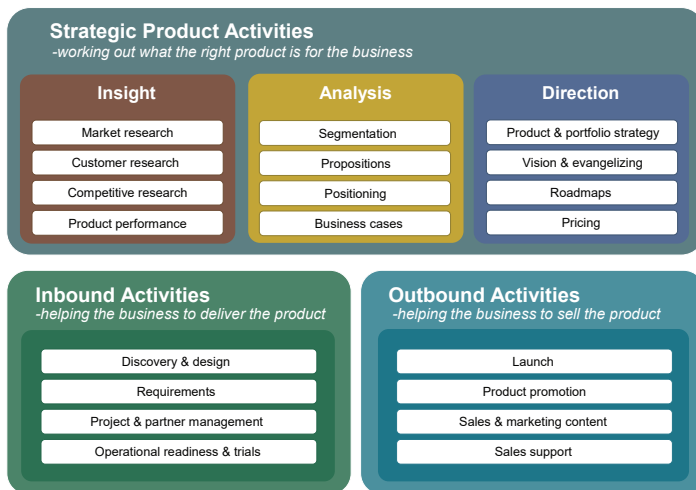


Fig.1 The Product Activities Framework

It's confusing

Product management can mean managing a physical product like a phone, something intangible like software, or a service provided by people. Usually, it's a combination of these things.

To make things even more confusing, no two companies have product management set up in exactly the same way. That means you can't really tell what someone does from their job title. So we use

the term product management to mean anyone in the product team – whether they're working on product development, product marketing, or something else.

And yes, it makes it tough for everyone to know what's going on.



Product activities

One way of simplifying product management is to look at all the different product-related activities.

Our Product Activities Framework (Fig. 1) helps by listing the major product activities for any company that manages products.

We step through this framework with product managers to help them understand their role, but we usually find some confusion about responsibilities and job boundaries. It's one of the big issues in product management.

Product lifecycle

Another way of thinking about things is the product lifecycle. That's the process of coming up with ideas, developing new products, launching them, and managing them once they're 'in-life'.

Finally, it's important to separate out the things you need for a successful product management function – the leadership, organization, people, tools, and processes – from the challenges that specific products have during their lifecycle.

In a nutshell

Product management is the job of looking after the products within a business. How it's structured, the roles involved, and what it's asked to do varies from company to company. It means there is no single right way – however, there is best practice on what works and what doesn't in different situations.

"The biggest risk for a PM is to spend all their time on the operational aspects – there is just so much fire-fighting. But, if you don't set time apart to define the strategy, then you will end up being very busy and still go nowhere..."
Christian Wollner,
Head of Product,
Deutsche Telekom

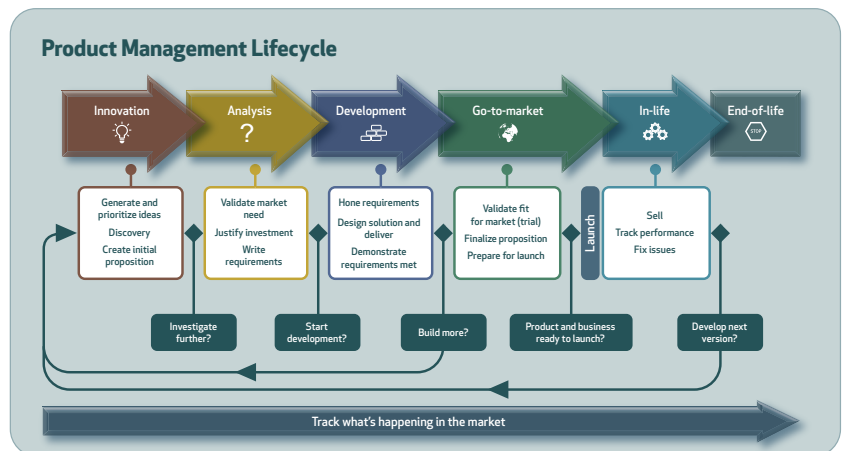


Fig. 2 The Product Management Lifecycle

The big issues

The 5 big issues facing product management

Since the start of Product Focus, we've worked with 100s of companies and thousands of product managers. We've researched and published 14 Product Management Journals, run numerous annual industry surveys, and reviewed the product management in scores of companies across Europe and the rest of the world.

What's interesting is that we find the same issues keep coming up time and time again.

It's about balance

We believe that for most businesses, getting product management right is about balance. There is no perfect answer – no 'silver bullet'.

But sometimes, the balance is clearly wrong. Things are skewed too much in one direction, and that has a major impact on the success of the product team and the company. A different focus is needed. Like driving a car - you need to change your speed and gears to suit the road you find yourself on.

In the following sections, we describe the 5 key issues we see.

1. A lack of market understanding

Product management is about being an expert on the product – right? *Wrong*. It's about being an expert on the product and the market. How can you decide what to build if you haven't found out what's needed?

In most companies we come across, the focus is on being a 'product expert'. There's too little emphasis on understanding what customers and prospects want, how the market is changing, and what the competition is doing.

The job of understanding the market may be split across the wider product team, but even so, we believe all product managers need to understand their customers and the users of their product.



"It's crucial to get PMs in front of customers, pitching their products and capturing questions and requirements directly. They can't only be product experts – they must also reality check their proposition."
Pieter Gillegot-Vergauwen,
VP Product Management,
TomTom Maps

2. Too busy to lead

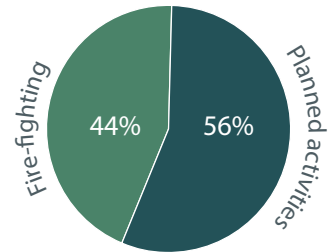
We believe product management is a leadership role – it’s about achieving results by leading and motivating others in the business to deliver the product plan.

But, from our industry surveys, we know that the average product manager spends more than 2 days a week fire-fighting. We think that’s wrong.

It means that product managers spend a lot of their time on the back foot, dealing with problems, rather than on the front foot – preventing them and leading the way.

Some people think that’s just what the job is. Sweeping up the mess everyone else leaves behind; a support function and catch-all for anything vaguely related to the product. We don’t, although we can understand it. Product managers feel responsible for the success of their product and so pick things up – papering over the cracks to keep things running.

Product managers need to break the vicious circle and get ahead to prevent fires from starting in the first place.



Planned vs un-planned

Fig. 3 Planned vs, unplanned activities: 2022 Product Focus survey

3. Poor data and decision making

Companies invest lots of money to bring products to market; however, we constantly talk to product managers who don’t really **Decision making** know how well their products are doing.

Too many companies have woeful product reporting and don’t collect information about the market. And this makes it difficult to spot when things are going wrong.

It means that decision-making happens on gut feel rather than facts, making decisions harder to defend and ‘subject to change’ if someone more senior has a different view.

There’s also the special case where the founder still makes all the product decisions. They probably had a pretty good understanding of the market when they first set up the business and spent all their time talking with customers and prospects. Unfortunately, this insight can soon become outdated as they get caught up in running the business.

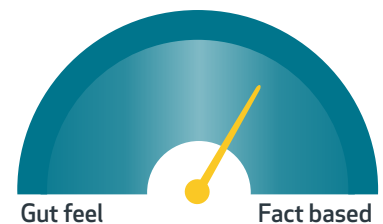


Fig. 4 Moving from gut feel to fact based decision making

CONFUSION

4. Confusion about the role

Because product management is set up differently from one place to the next, there is little consensus about precisely what the role should do. And, if you've only experienced it in a few companies, you're likely to assume that's the way it is everywhere else.

Typically, the role is strongly influenced by the overall company bias or the director it reports to. Product management becomes the support role for the primary goal of the department.

For example, in a B2B company led by Sales, things are driven by the latest customer deal. That sounds fine until you find every new contract requires some custom work. Before long, you've got a dozen different customers and solutions in a dozen different markets, and the latest customer's voice always dominates the roadmap. No one seems to say 'no' to new business or be responsible for making sure that these deals will be profitable in the long term.

And the Sales Director has a view that the perfect product manager should always be available to answer the tough questions her team can't, write customer proposals, and come out on sales trips to explain the ever-changing roadmap.

In a Development-led company, the focus is on great technology, elegant design, and building new stuff. The philosophy is 'if we build it, they will come.' They care about the quality of what they do, but this can slow things down when the priority should be to get to market quickly and sell something that is 'good enough.'

The Development Director needs product management to make sure his team builds the right stuff. So, product managers should be available at all times to answer any questions from their developers. He thinks this must be right as that's what the Product Owner role in Scrum says.

In a Marketing-led company that focuses on marcoms, the emphasis might fall on branding and outbound marketing, e.g., a new website or email marketing campaign. The Marketing Director thinks the perfect product manager should sit with the Marketing team to help craft product messages and collateral.

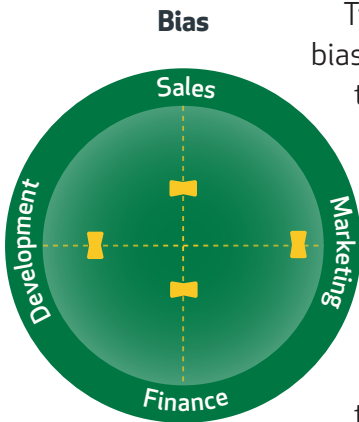


Fig. 5 Having a balanced, unbiased perspective

"Whoever owns Product Management will self-define its goals in their interest rather than look at things holistically. The job of Product Management is to influence the whole business to take a balanced approach regardless of the reporting line."
Nick Ward,
Product Manager,
Rolls-Royce

With Finance in charge, the focus is on the numbers and controlling costs. That means everything has to be justified with a business case, and the only things that get through are low-risk evolutions of existing products. Innovation grinds to a halt. The Finance Director thinks the perfect product manager is someone who can be held accountable for tracking the numbers.

And to a certain extent, they're all right. The problem is product management can't be all things to all people. It needs to do the important bits for everybody in a balanced, unbiased way. And to do this, we think it needs to be its own boss.

5. Uncertainty about how to get stuff done

The majority of product managers move into the job from other parts of the business.

But the role is very broad – no one can effectively cover all the activities without training and experience.

Few companies have internal training courses on how to be a product manager. Many people pick up the skills they need 'on the job'. Lucky ones might have colleagues they can shadow to see how they do the role.

But, learning in this way is slow, and you can make mistakes. And you just don't know if you're using the best tools and approaches to get things done.

Conclusion

So these are the 5 big issues we see product management struggling with.

Is it surprising that many product managers get frustrated, and some are so cynical? They react to things rather than proactively taking the lead. They know they're not doing the job as well as they could. And, they don't feel valued by their business because, to be frank, they're not providing the value they should.

So what are smart businesses and smart product managers doing about it? Read on...

"Product managers spend a lot of time building new stuff that fails in the market. Frequently it's because they misunderstood what was needed or solve a problem that doesn't matter. So always look to validate your hypotheses!"
Danish Mistry,
Head of Product,
Broadbandchoices

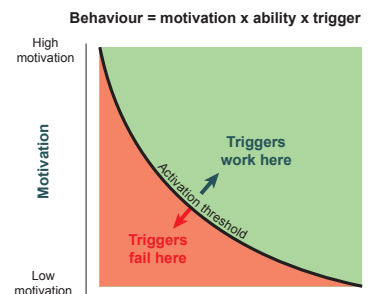


Fig. 6 Becoming less reactive and more proactive

Smart businesses

The 7 things smart product managers and teams do

We've worked with product managers from a huge range of companies and we've learned as much from them as they have from us.

From this experience, we've distilled 7 key things smart businesses and product managers do to put themselves in the driving seat.

7 things to improve product management

1	Making product management a leadership role as well as about getting things done
2	As much focus on understanding the market as being an expert on the product
3	Being clear on what product management stands for
4	Sorting out who owns the different product activities
5	A focus on getting insights and facts on which to base decisions
6	Productizing product management
7	Having a plan to improve things, including investing in training

1. Making product management a leadership role as well as about getting things done

So what does making product management a leadership role really mean? As a product manager, it means getting the balance right between strategic and tactical work.

For most product managers today, there is too much focus on the tactical and not enough strategic work. Having a product strategy is important to get the business aligned with what needs to be done. It moves you into a leadership role. Your product strategy might just be a couple of slides but, in our experience, many product managers don't even have that.



Fig. 7 Balance strategic and tactical activities

As a business, it means product managers should feel accountable for the success of their products. They should be executing the business strategy through their product plans. And they should be empowered to drive product performance (however you want to measure that).

We also think it means product management needs to be a separate function that reports directly to the board – to give a balanced, unbiased view that can help drive company strategy. And from our latest industry survey, we know this is a growing trend. 46% of product management departments now report to the board.

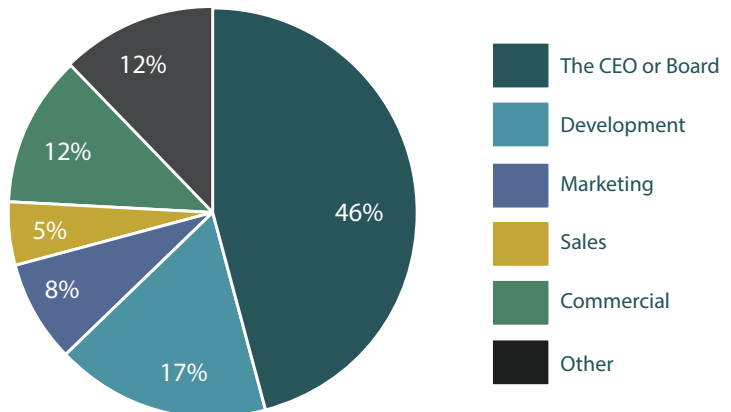


Fig. 8 Where product managers report: 2022 Product Focus survey

Mini-CEO

We often say it helps for product managers to think of themselves as the mini-CEO of their own little business within their company. It empowers them to sort out whatever needs doing to ensure product success.

However, for most, the reality is a bit different. Most product managers don't have anyone reporting to them, their own budgets, or any real control over resources. They get stuff done by leading virtual teams made up from different departments. And so, building relationships, stakeholder management, and influencing skills are key. The meetings, emails, and calls this takes are a huge part of the job.

Once the planning is done, product management becomes the oil in the cogs of the organization – trying to make everything work smoothly. Answering questions, routing queries, clearing blockages so that everyone else can get on with their job.



EXPERTISE

“As a rule of thumb, if I’m giving out information that is probably useful to more than one person, I should be doing it on a one-to-many basis. PMs who agree to individual conference calls etc. – in this simple act of goodwill – are unwittingly ignoring (and therefore not influencing) a far wider group of stakeholders. The phone might ring, but the smart PM has to know when not to take the call!”

Derek Britton,
PM guru

Architect and builder

So product management as a function needs to be both leading within the business – with a vision and plan for its products – and have people who can manage the organization to get stuff done. Both the architects and the builders.

And taking on a leadership role is a two-way street. It’s not handed to you on a plate. Product management has to earn the trust of the rest of the business and build credibility by what it says and does. Also, not everyone wants to be or is cut out to be a leader. That’s fine as long as you’ve got all the bases covered across the product team.

Free up time to work on the business, not in the business

There’s a saying that to build a successful business, its leaders need to focus on how to grow the company and not work on the day-to-day business-as-usual activities.

It’s the same for product management. Product managers shouldn’t be stuck doing activities like raising orders, answering sales queries, or supporting customers.

As a business, it’s about understanding what can be off-loaded to other departments. As a product manager, it’s about rigorous prioritization and diplomatically saying ‘no’ to the less important stuff.

2. As much focus on understanding the market as being an expert on the produce

Over time most product managers become experts on their product, but the business also looks to them to decide what goes on the roadmap.

That means product management spending the time needed to get the insights that will drive long-term plans, as well as help with short-term initiatives. How can you decide what to build if you haven’t found out what’s needed? Smart product managers know that they have to understand the customers and users of their product and their problems. Too many products are developed based on a hunch.

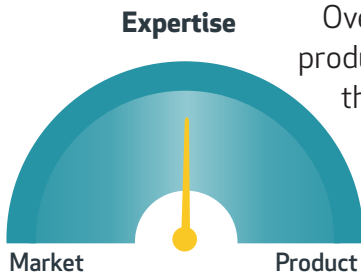


Fig. 9 Expert on the product **and** market

There is a wide range of techniques to help, but regularly engaging with current and potential customers is essential. This usually means meeting them on their home turf or somewhere neutral, so they'll open up and talk to you. That's different from a sales call where the customer sees the discussion as the start of a negotiation. It's also different from being dragged in front of a customer to explain why something has gone wrong.

Once product management becomes the 'voice of the market,' it's in a very influential position.

3. Being clear on what product management stands for

The leading companies we work with make sure everyone in the business is clear on what product management is trying to achieve. This needs to come from the top and be bought into and evangelized by everyone within the product team.

And smart product managers understand these fundamental goals can help them explain what their job is about and why it's important.

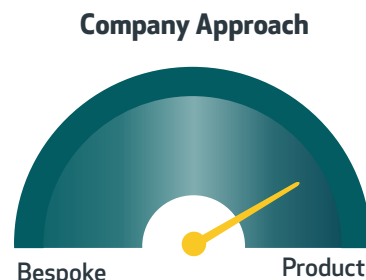


Fig.10 A product approach rather than bespoke work

It's about being the guardian of product rule no.1 – build once sell many times

Many B2B companies do too much bespoke work – they create unique solutions for customers which cost more to build, support, and manage than off-the-shelf products. They lose the economies of scale of a product approach and the profitability that goes with it. That's why a business often pushes to create reusable building blocks or to 'productize' a solution that can be sold repeatedly.

It's about having a balanced view across all the different aspects of the product

It's understanding the trade-offs between the technical, operational, commercial, and user experience aspects of the product and making (or recommending) a decision based on what's best for

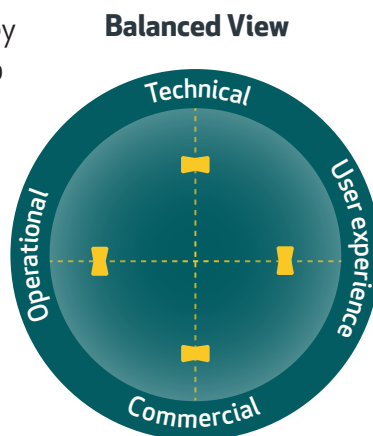


Fig.11 A balanced view across the product for the business

APPROACH

“An ever-present challenge for product managers is balancing investments between long-term and short-term objectives.”
Kimmo Virkki,
VP SRAN Product
Mgmt, Nokia

the company. We say that you don’t need to be the expert on every detail of the product, but you need to be the expert on the ‘helicopter view’. It’s this that lets you make good recommendations to the business.

For example, Development has just said they’ve come across a technical problem that could delay your launch by 3 months. If the operational impact on the support teams is limited and there is no impact on the user experience, it may still make sense to launch because the lost sales from early adopters (the commercial impact) would be huge. As a product manager, you have to be able to weigh up the options and risks and make a recommendation.

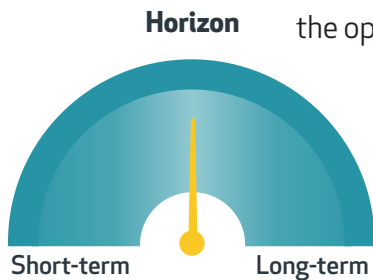


Fig. 12 Focus on the mid-term: a foot in the present and a foot in the future

It’s about focusing on the mid-term – the next 2-3 years or whatever’s appropriate in your business

Someone needs a foot in the present and a foot in the future. You’re rarely starting with a blank sheet of paper. You have an existing product, existing customers, an existing brand, and you need to move from this position.

It’s the job of Sales to hit the short-term revenue targets.

The long-term strategy, i.e., new markets, mergers, and acquisitions, is usually the preserve of C-level management. Product management needs to create and manage the products that Sales can sell, and that will support the long-term strategy.

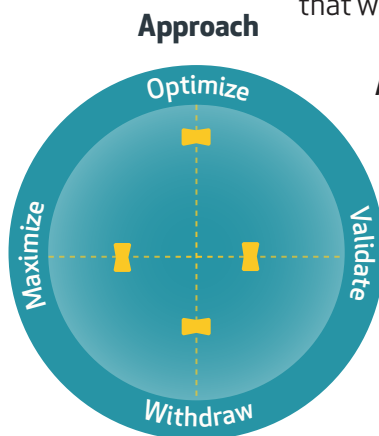


Fig. 13 Decide on the best approach for the product

It’s about deciding what’s important for a product

For existing products with a proven market, the goal of product management is often to *maximize* their performance, riding the growth wave to deliver the best results for the business. At other times, it makes sense to focus on *optimization*, minimizing costs, streamlining processes, and making the most of existing assets.

For unproven products or unproven markets, product managers will focus on *validation* – making sure that there is a viable product and business model. That’s where approaches like Lean Development and Minimum Viable Product (MVP) come in.

When growth has stagnated and optimization has reached its limits, it can be time to *withdraw* a product.

4. Sorting out who owns the different product activities

Although most product managers have a job description that has been carefully crafted by HR, it often bears little resemblance to what is done day-to-day.

Given that the product role is so big, it's often split into multiple functions, such as Product Management and Product Marketing. Also, pricing often gets carved off to specialists.

The question becomes: Who makes the final decision on product-related questions that impact across the whole product?

The answer is either one person should be in charge or all these roles should be working in the same team.

Getting clear on roles and responsibilities is vital, so everyone knows who owns each activity and what is expected of them. It's a product team working well together that's going to be successful.

Product Activities Split



Fig. 14 Sort out how product activities are split

In every company, it's about where decision making sits

How much accountability and decision-making is delegated down the management chain? Are product managers given accountability for the success of their products as they are close (local) to the market, or does senior management cling to the product decision-making? We've often seen product managers 'looking over their shoulder' and overly concerned that their decisions will be undone.

Accountability

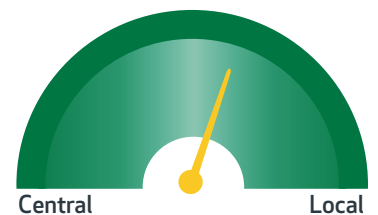


Fig. 15 Sort out where accountability sits

In multi-national companies, it's about the split between what's done centrally vs. what is done in the different markets

Can you get economies of scale by having one product that's used by every market but still keep the agility of reacting to local market conditions?

Do you centralize product management and have product marketing feeding through the local requirements?

In our experience, there is no perfect answer, and in many organizations, the 'pendulum of power' swings back and forth between the center and the local markets.

FACTS

A key factor is the development approach used

The development approach adopted by a company has a big influence on the role and activities in product management.

Many product managers are also 'Product Owners' in the Agile Scrum methodology. Being a Product Owner takes a significant amount of time, and so we recommend that product managers have a proxy working for them in the Development team. Otherwise, it makes it impossible to make enough time to do the rest of the role properly.

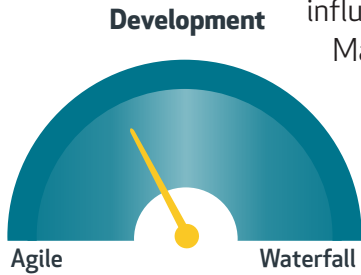


Fig. 16 Be clear on product management's role in development

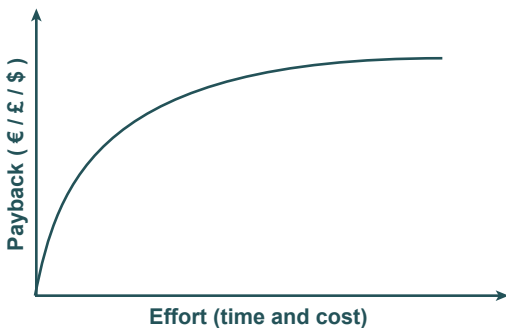
5. A focus on getting insights and facts on which to base decisions

This means prioritizing activities that will give the data to help make better decisions.

For example, is there a process in place to learn from past business cases, gather KPIs for in-life products, and share market insights?

It's not easy. In many businesses, the data is inaccurate, late, missing, or contradictory, and getting to a single version of the truth is a real challenge.

And, there is always a trade-off to make between how much time and effort it's worth putting in for the value of the data you get – the payback curve. You don't want to waste time collecting metrics that give you no useful



insights.

Fig. 17 The payback curve

6. Productizing product management

In our reviews, we frequently find product managers that do things differently from their peers elsewhere in the same company. They run processes differently, create their own document templates, and have unique ways to get the business to follow their lead. That's fine for the individuals, but this personalized, fragmented implementation of product management doesn't scale. When other product managers do things differently, it causes confusion and slows things down. Just as for products, a repeatable approach is more efficient than taking a different approach each time.

What's needed is to standardize the process and tools used. It's about productizing product management. Doing so is more efficient and saves time, allowing product managers to put their energy into things that deliver more value to their business.

7. Having a plan to improve things, including investing in training

Over the last 10 years, product management has become more professional. There is best practice on what works and what doesn't. You don't need to reinvent the wheel each time you do something. There are training courses, books, blogs, and journals.

Smart product managers have a personal development plan to ensure they continue to learn and progress in their careers. And they know the importance of building a network of industry contacts.

And many businesses have a plan to improve their product management – improving the whole function, not just the products in the portfolio. We call this a Roadmap for Product Management. It's an ongoing thing – as the organization, business context, and people change, so must the plan.

Introducing the Product Management Dashboard

The dashboard brings together the key elements that define the style, elements, and behavior of product management in a company (**see next page**).

Take a look at the dashboard with your product team. It's a great way to gain a shared understanding of what's really happening – and to plan what needs to change.

We hope this has been useful and has inspired you to think about how you can grow the value of product management in your business. It shows how smart businesses and smart product managers are putting product management in the driving seat.



Fig. 18 Productize product management

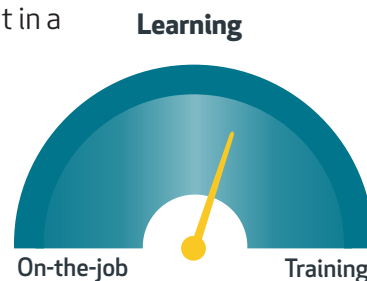


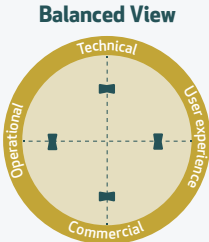
Fig. 19 Balancing on-the-job learning and training

PRODUCT MANAGEMENT DASHBOARD

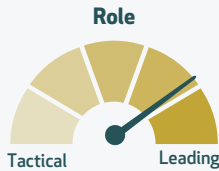
PURPOSE



Over time most product managers become experts on their product but the business also looks to them to decide what goes on the roadmap. This means also knowing about their customers, competitors and markets.

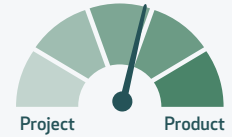


Product management needs to have a balanced view across all the different aspects of the product. This allows them to make unbiased decisions and recommendations for the business. It's not about being expert on every detail but about having the best "helicopter view" of the product.



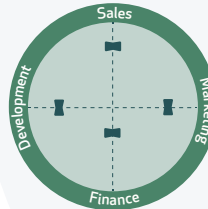
For most product managers, there is too much focus on the tactical. It's about firefighting and responding, rather than being strategic, longer-term and proactive. We believe the role should also be about leading within the business. Driving the product forward in support of the company strategy. A foot in the present and a foot in the future.

Business Model



Many B2B companies do too much project work. It's about delivering tailor-made customer projects rather than reusable products. These unique solutions cost more to build and support than using off-the-shelf products. They lose the economies of scale, chance to build Intellectual Property (IP) and resulting profitability of a product approach. That's why there is often a push to "productize" a solution. The goal is to build once and sell many times.

Bias



What product management does is strongly influenced by the overall bias within a business. In a Sales-led company, product managers can find that the roadmap is always driven by the latest customer discussions. In a Development led company, the focus is on supporting the developers. This is even more marked when product management reports to one of these teams.

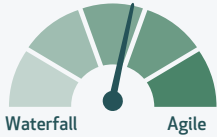
Product Management Dashboard

Each dial on our dashboard represents a key issue that can impact the success of the product management team or department.

Use it to discuss what's going on with product management in your company.

IZATION

Development Approach



The development approach used in a company has a significant impact on product management. Whether it's Agile, Waterfall or some hybrid of the two — product management can get caught in a clash of cultures. And if the product manager is also a Scrum Product Owner, they can be too busy to do the rest of the role.

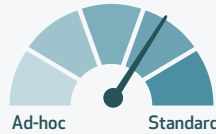
Product Activity Split



Product activities are typically split across a number of departments within a business. Problems arise when it's not clear who owns what, or when there are gaps or overlaps. Most companies have issues in this area and we recommend using our Product Activities Framework to help think this through.

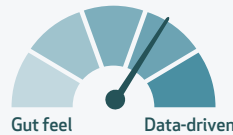
WAY OF WORKING

Tools and Process



Many product managers do things in an ad-hoc way, but it's much more efficient if everyone uses the same tools and processes. Using standard approaches means all the stakeholders understand what's going on, work can be reused and things can be improved over time. It's even better if they are industry best practice.

Decision Making



Many companies have terrible product reporting and poor market insight. That means that decisions are often made by gut-feel rather than by analyzing whatever data is available. Gathering the data takes effort, but without it, decisions are hard to defend and easily overturned.

product managers and

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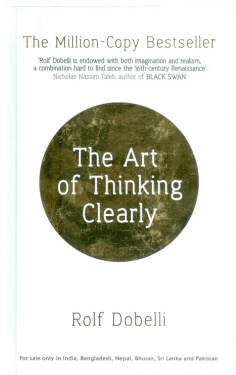
product

focus

The Review

Reviews of great books for product managers

Book Review



The Art of Thinking Clearly by Rolf Dobelli (Sceptre 2013)

“There’s an old adage – never ask a barber if you need a haircut.”
Rolf Dobelli

There is a reason that this book is so popular – it’s very interesting!

In a series of short chapters, Rolf Dobelli categorizes 99 simple errors we all make in our day-to-day thinking. For example ...

Does having an MBA guarantee a higher future income? MBA schools will lure candidates with this promise, but is it just that the type of person who does an MBA will earn more money anyway? This is an example of confusing selection factors with end results. Does Harvard make you smarter, or is it just that the people who get through the rigorous selection process are cleverer?

Another chapter is called “Never pay your lawyer by the hour.” It explores how people respond to incentives by doing what’s in their best interests and the danger of unintended consequences. For example, publishing CEOs’ salaries might not shame them into accepting less – rather, it pushes them upwards as no one wants to be the loser CEO in their industry.

There are various chapters that talk about why everyone wants to believe in a magic formula that successful companies like Facebook, Apple, and Google have and ignore the impact of luck and multiple random factors.

What percentage of guitar players make it to rock stardom – one in a hundred thousand? Behind every popular author, there are 100 who never sell, 100 who have never found a publisher, and 100 who never even put pen to paper. ‘Survivorship bias’ means that journalists and the public are really only interested in success stories and also means that we systematically overestimate our chances of success.

It’s salutary to read all the potential pitfalls in decision-making. Especially because, as product managers, we’re making decisions and trade-offs all the time. To be honest, I found it tough to absorb all the 99 lessons, and it paints a very bleak view of human nature – but there are undoubtedly some wonderful gems of insight.

Have your view

Thank you to everyone who submitted quotes for this Journal. We're sorry there is not room for them all, but some of the best are shown below.

"Engaging with customers is key, but it can be tough to get the insights you need. I'm often in the situation where I'm hearing solutions, but I'm not hearing problems. Without knowing if and why a customer cares, we can't prioritize what to work on."

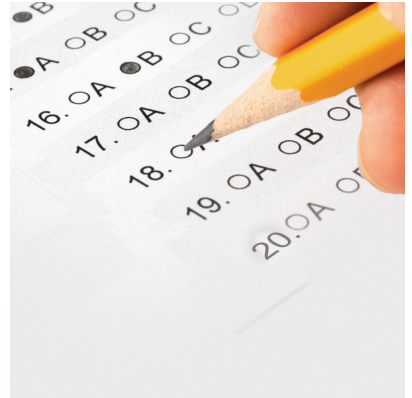
Cormac Duncan, Head of Product Management, CR2

"Don't expect to be liked globally. As a product manager, you are not doing your job if you say 'Yes' to every request for features that hits your desk. If you take every feature on board, you will end up suffering from problems with supportability and upgradability, which could give you much more trouble in the long run. Short-term irritation from your immediate peers is to be expected if you want your product to have longevity and is part and parcel of a product manager's role. Take it on the chin, and remind everyone that it's your job to protect the product at all costs, and remember, if it was easy, they wouldn't need you to do it!"

Ian Morgan, Head of Product, LINKFRESH Software Ltd

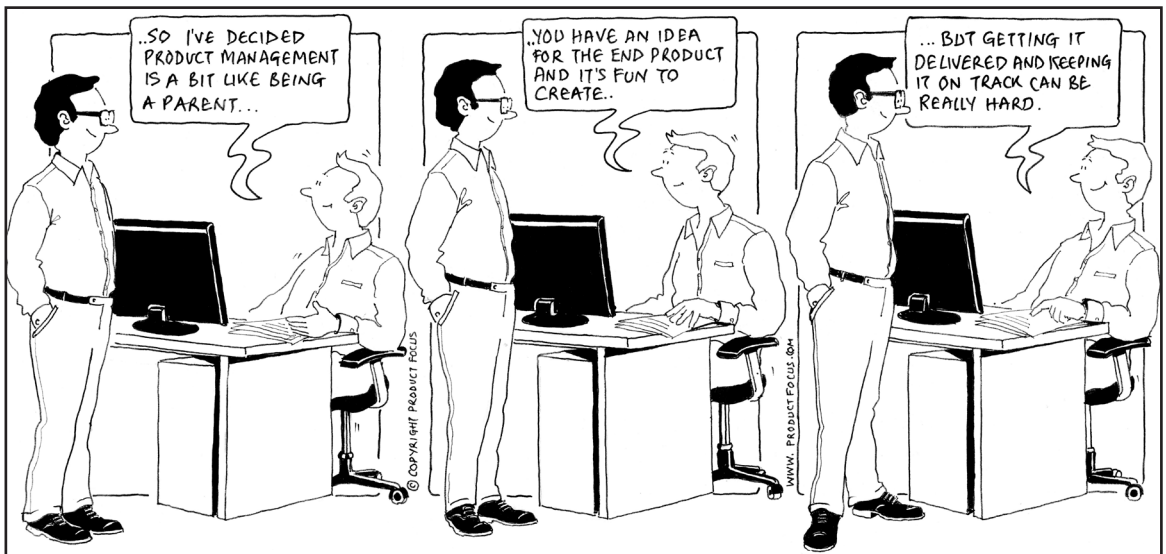
"It's critical that product managers have clarity on their value proposition: (1) who is the customer (2) what is the problem they care about and are willing to pay for and (3) how well does their solution solve the problem compared to the alternatives (if any) customers have."

Sudhi Gulur, Solutions Manager, Product Management, The Boeing Company



Annual Survey

We use our survey to benchmark product management each year. Let us know if you'd like to take part. You can **download the latest results** from our website.



The Insight

But I'm only a product manager

After reading the Journal, as a product manager, you might be thinking:

"I'd like to improve things, but I'm too far down the organization." Or, "I'm really busy and haven't got time to spend on this."

But think again. Why wouldn't you want to use best practice? Why wouldn't you want to do a better job, which means you get more job satisfaction and respect? Why wouldn't you want to get recognition by delivering more value to the business?

The 7 things we recommend are just as relevant to individual product managers as they are to product teams.

You are well placed to know what's wrong, where you can make quick wins, and where changes will take longer to bear fruit.

So take a look at the Product Management Dashboard on pages 18 and 19 – which dials do you think are most relevant to your company, and will using them help you to have a conversation with your manager about how product management could be better in your business?

We know of companies that spent 5–10% of their development effort on improving the performance of the Development team. We rarely see that kind of effort spent on improving product management.

It's tough to calculate a Return on Investment on efforts to improve product management, but it's easy to see that raising the bar on performance can have a broad and substantial impact on the business.

So rather than thinking, "I'm only a product manager," think, "I am the product manager, so I'm going to lead within the business and improve the job that product management does."

Good luck – and please get in touch if you need some support.



"A good business plan forces company leaders to think through the direction they are taking the company. A product plan does the same for a product manager. It elevates them from managing the day-to-day to becoming a product leader."

Jeroen Visser,
Director, Jam ICT

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