product

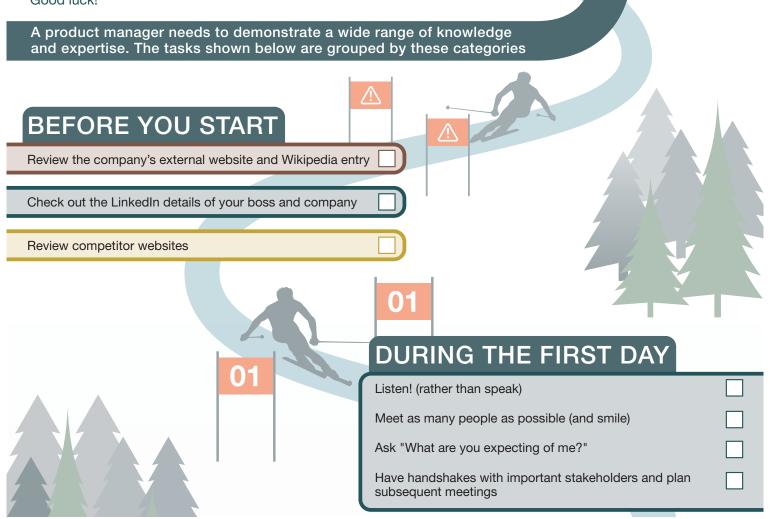**focus**

YOUR NEW PRODUCT MANAGER JOB
WHAT TO DO IN THE FIRST 90 DAYS

When you start a new product management job, it can feel like you're standing at the top of a ski run. It's exhilarating, but also a little scary. You're really hoping not to fall flat on your face.

The first 90 days are critical. It's when you need to get up to speed, demonstrate your ability and earn the trust of your colleagues. After that point, you need to be on top of things – managing your product and delivering real value to your business.

But like a ski run, your first few months in a new job will be over far too quickly. So to help you, we've provided this checklist of what you need to do in the first 90 days.

Good luck!

A product manager needs to demonstrate a wide range of knowledge and expertise. The tasks shown below are grouped by these categories

INSTRUCTION KEY

- Personal Credibility
- Processes & how to get things done
- Understanding customer and market requirements
- Understanding your product
- Tasks that clearly cross multiple areas

BEFORE YOU START

Review the company's external website and Wikipedia entry ☐

Check out the LinkedIn details of your boss and company ☐

Review competitor websites ☐

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DURING THE FIRST DAY

Listen! (rather than speak) ☐

Meet as many people as possible (and smile) ☐

Ask "What are you expecting of me?" ☐

Have handshakes with important stakeholders and plan subsequent meetings ☐

Get your basic tools set up: computer, phone, email, intranet ☐

Plan meetings for the next few weeks ☐

Get hold of the Organization Chart ☐

DURING THE FIRST WEEK

Get on the right internal distribution lists, e.g., weekly development reports, sales reports, press releases, customer support statistics ☐

Find external info sources from colleagues e.g., market intelligence reports, analysts, friendly customers ☐

Identify important internal meetings ☐

Identify the Power Brokers in the company (the key stakeholders you'll need to influence) ☐

Schedule regular reviews with your boss to check you're on track ☐

Get a product demo from Sales. Ask why customers buy and what problems your product solves ☐

Understand the customer buying process – how long does it take and who makes the decisions ☐

Get a product demo from Development ☐

Read the product collateral - as much of it as you can find ☐

Sniff out "Bombs" that are about to explode and determine length of fuse! (issues you'll need to deal with) ☐

Understand the "stated" company strategy and objectives ☐

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DURING THE FIRST MONTH

Organize an off-site lunch with PMs and close teammates ☐

Make no promises & frequently repeat: "I'm here to listen and understand!" ☐

Probe - remember during the first month you can still ask naive questions and get away with it ☐

Have a demonstrable success (preferably by the end of the 3rd week) ☐

- Have your weekly structure defined (meetings, reports, reviews, etc.) ☐
- Understand how things actually work around here ☐
- Use the Product Focus Product Activities Framework to understand who does which product activity ☐
- Understand the approval process for getting stuff done ☐
- Understand the objectives of other business teams and departments so you know how to work with them ☐

- Visit a customer (or several preferably!) with Sales or Account Management (B2B) ☐
- Become the expert on the business requirements for the product. Who's using the product, how and why? ☐
- Get involved in a Sales Pipeline Funnel Review ☐
- Be the Product Owner (or have a proxy) ☐
- Understand the business/requirements of the top 10% of customers ☐
- Understand the revenue breakdown by product(s) ☐
- Do a basic competitive analysis ☐

- Be a participant in a Sprint cycle (if company uses Scrum) ☐
- Review Customer Support tickets with Support Manager ☐
- Review the "Product Backlog" ☐
- Get or create a product dashboard including sales numbers and revenue ☐

- Identify Strengths and Weaknesses of the product ☐

BY THE END OF THE FIRST QUARTER

90

90

- Work out how to prioritize your time ☐
- Work out how to improve the key processes ☐
- Gain approval for a major product development – or at least understand how that works ☐
- Produce a product Business Plan ☐
- Set up your own KPIs (Key Performance Indicators) ☐

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Join Sales on a prospecting call. Listen in on some support calls ☐

Understand customer and industry vocabulary and jargon ☐

Be the Market Expert – know what customers want and what problems they have ☐

Be the Customer Advocate in the business ☐

Be the Product Expert. Have a vision for the product ☐

Have the product collateral/messaging/web content updated and be able to demo the product ☐

Map the existing Roadmap and propose a new Roadmap ☐

If you have multiple products, show them on a BCG or McKinsey matrix to get insights across the portfolio ☐

Calculate the financial performance of your product ☐

Evaluate your personal training needs ☐

90+

BY THE END OF THE THIRD QUARTER

Understand the unique competences of the company ☐

Have the ability to challenge Development work estimates ☐

Have established a network of listening posts in the market to drip-feed insights through to you ☐

90+

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This list was originally generated at a meeting of the **Cambridge Product Management Network** in the UK, led by product management consultant Arthur Meadows. Attended by Cambridge's finest and most experienced product managers, the aim was to produce a "playbook" of recommended steps when starting a new job.

It was developed for someone moving into a product management role in a small B2B software company. However, we believe it's applicable for most people starting a product management job in any business.

Subsequently, this list has been enhanced and refined by Arthur in collaboration with Product Focus.

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