product

focus

2023
Survey of the Product Management Profession

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Introduction

Product Focus is a global leader in product management training and consultancy for technology-based products.

For the past 18 years, we've run an annual survey asking those involved in managing products about their role, salary, day-to-day activities, and big issues. This includes product people at every level with job titles ranging from Junior Product Manager to Chief Product Officer as well as aligned roles such as Product Marketing and Product Owners.

947 people from 50 countries took part in this year's survey. Most were from the UK and Europe (87%), but we had significant numbers from the US and the rest of the world. All the responses for this report were gathered between November 2022 and January 2023.

These insights provide a benchmark to help you understand more about your role and the product management in your company.

For many areas, the survey results represent the norm – not best practice. You can find out about best practice by signing up for our free resources or attending one of our training courses.

US
4%

Europe
87%

ROW
9%
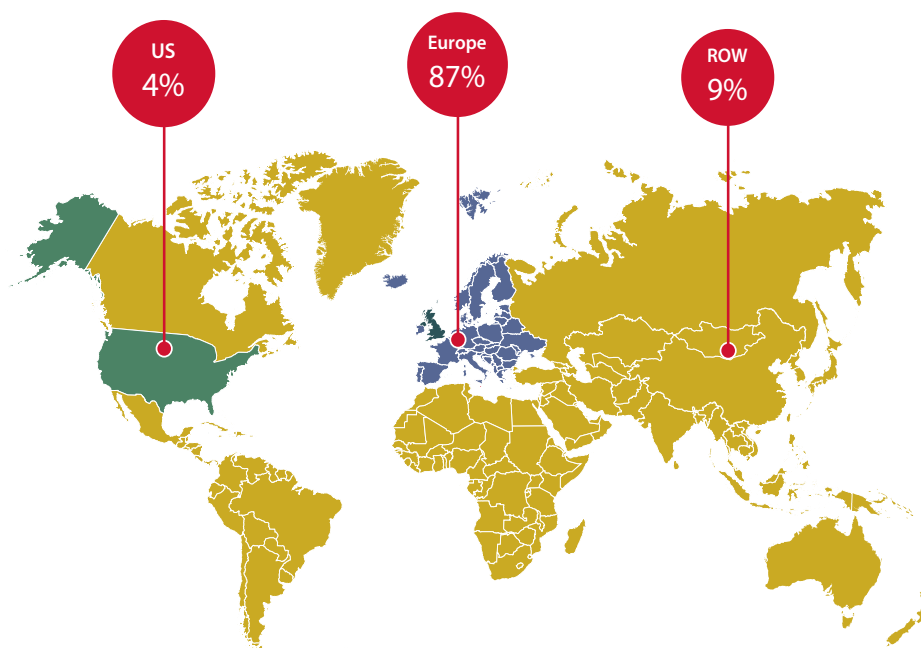
Highlights

01

Spread too thin
Lack of time, too much fire-fighting, or poor prioritization means that many feel they have too much to do. Typically, it's the important strategic product management activities that suffer.

02

Uncertain times
Economic uncertainty and rapid technology change means that product people are under stress. Resilience and adaptability are key.

03

Poorly defined roles
The responsibilities of different product roles are often unclear. Overlaps and gaps create tension and frustration.

04

Vague business strategies
Many companies try to do too much. Others don't seem to have a clear business strategy that links to products. This means many people struggle to prioritize their product initiatives.

From talking to delegates on our training courses, we know that most people are now working from home all or part of the time (and value the flexibility this brings). We also see a growth in the range of industries adopting product management and know that the demand for skilled people with technology experience is strong. Our assessment is that the future for product management is looking good!
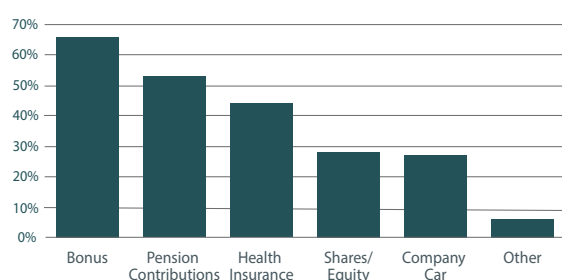
What we get paid

3%

the average salary increase from 2022 to 2023 across all currencies

Those paid in $ are on average paid more than those paid in £ or €.
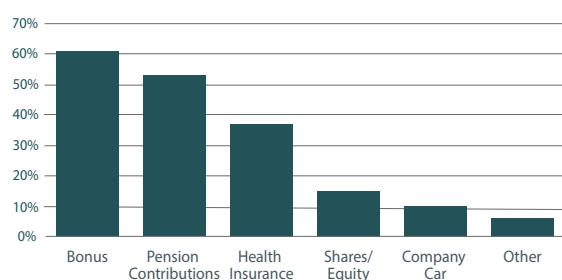
£ (in thousands)

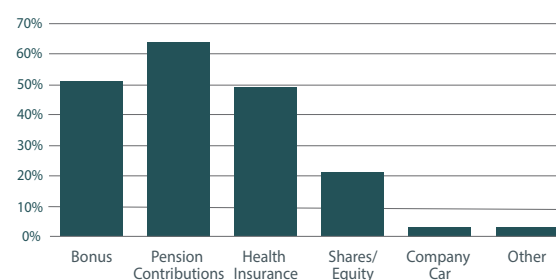Average salaries

2022
2023

£52k
£60k
£75k
£102k
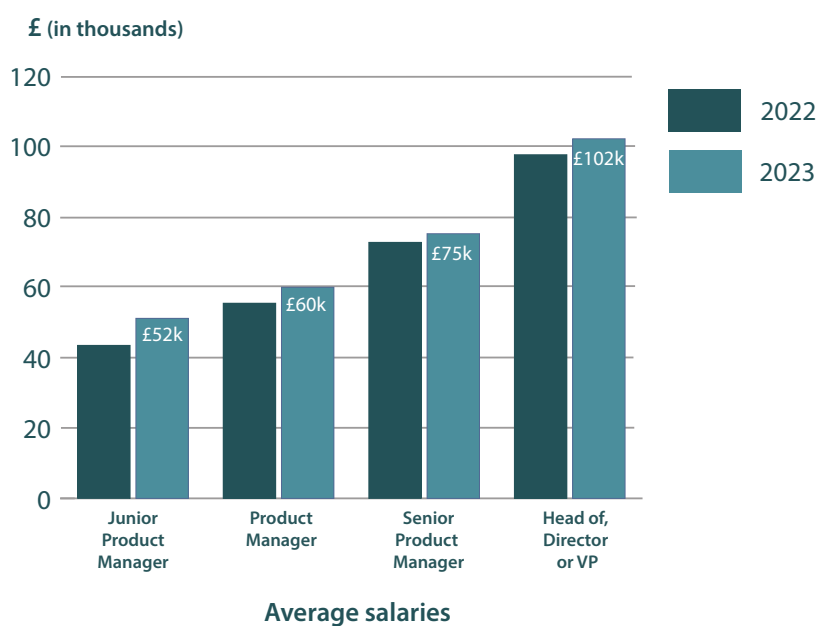
What's in the full package?

Head of, Director or VP
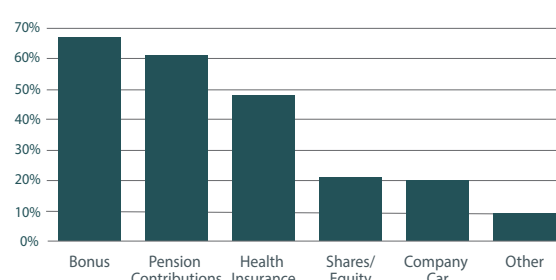
Senior Product Manager

Product Manager

Junior Product Manager

Salaries across the world

£ (in thousands)
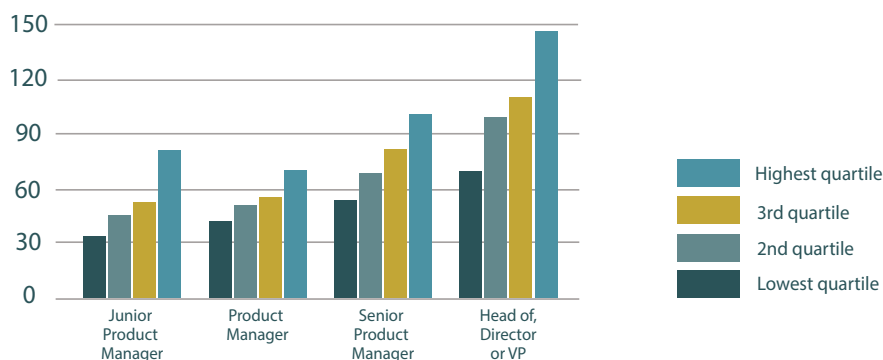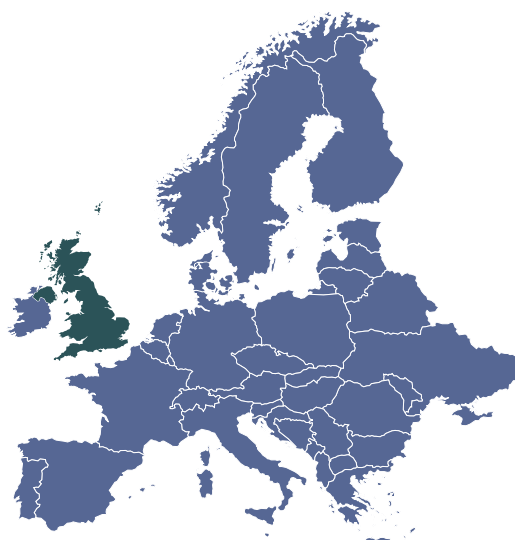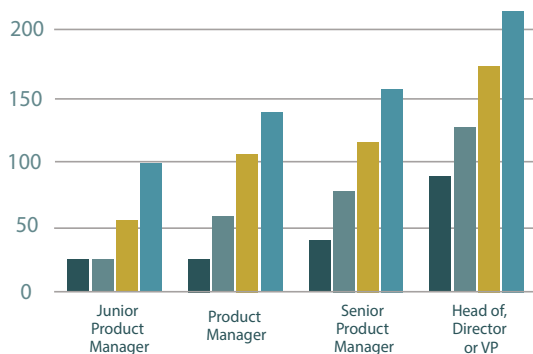
Highest quartile
3rd quartile
2nd quartile
Lowest quartile

Junior Product Manager | Product Manager | Senior Product Manager | Head of, Director or VP

Collated from all those that responded in £

$ (in thousands)

Junior Product Manager | Product Manager | Senior Product Manager | Head of, Director or VP

Collated from all those that responded in $

€ (in thousands)

Junior Product Manager | Product Manager | Senior Product Manager | Head of, Director or VP
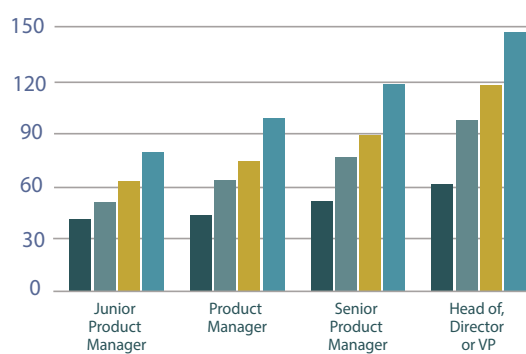
Collated from all those that responded in €

Current role and experience

3

The average number of years respondents have been in their **current** role

There are no major differences compared to last year's data.
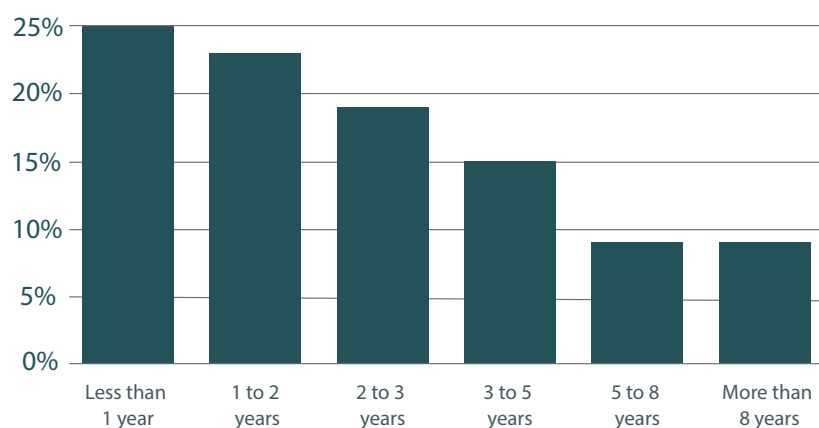
How long have you been in your current role?

Total years managing products

77%

of respondents had more than 4 years' total experience managing products

People build a career in product management. 32% have more than 10 years' experience managing products.

How long have you worked in jobs managing products?

Our background

37%

of respondents say
they have a balanced
background

However there is still a bias to
product managers coming from
a technical background.
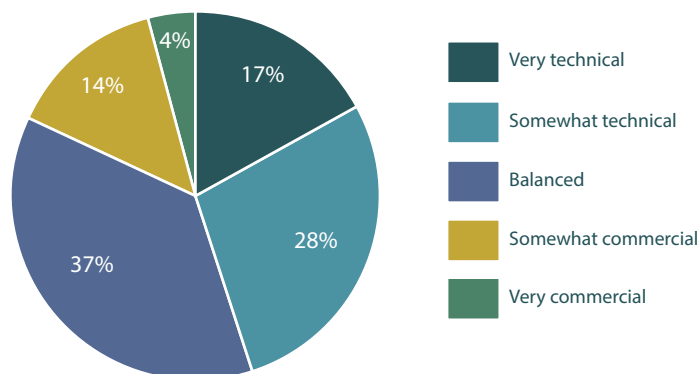
How would you describe your background?

- Very technical
- Somewhat technical
- Balanced
- Somewhat commercial
- Very commercial

17%, 28%, 37%, 14%, 4%

Which industries do we work in?

31%

of respondents
work in
IT services

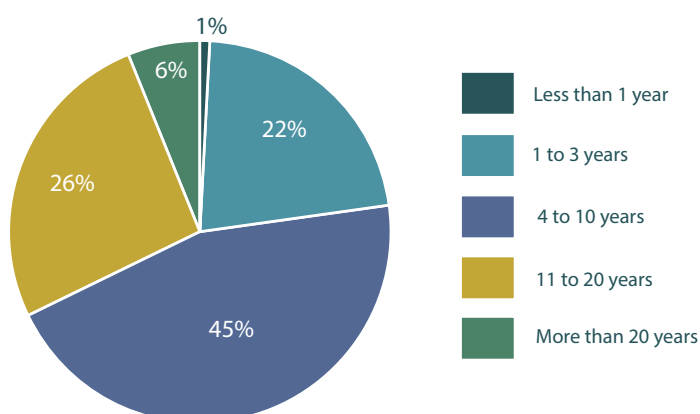Product management is now
accepted across a growing
number of industries (not just IT
services) as shown in the range
of responses we collated.
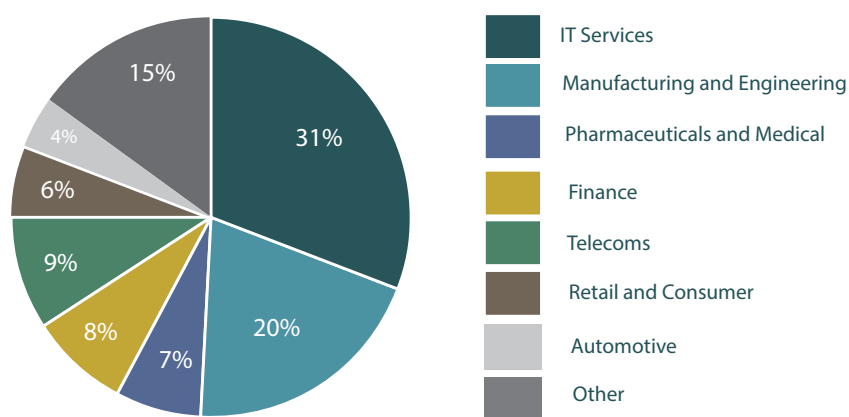
Which industry do you work in?

- IT Services
- Manufacturing and Engineering
- Pharmaceuticals and Medical
- Finance
- Telecoms
- Retail and Consumer
- Automotive
- Other

31%, 20%, 7%, 8%, 9%, 6%, 4%, 15%

Seniority levels

25%

of respondents classed themselves as Head of, Director or VP

40% of respondents manage a team of product people.

Junior Product Manager

Product Manager

Senior Product Manager

Head of, Director or VP

7%

30%

38%

25%
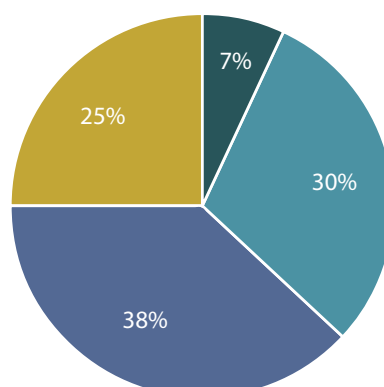
Based on your experience and position in your company, do you consider yourself to be a...

Product Managers in your company

25%

of respondents work in companies with more than 100 people in product management

More than half of us work in companies with 20 or less people involved in product management.

Less than 5 people

5 to 20 people

21 to 100 people

More than 100 people

24%

29%

22%

25%
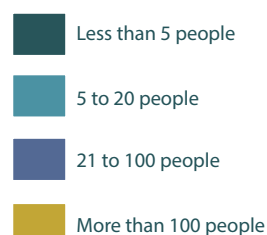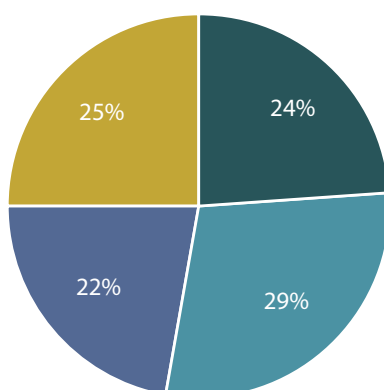
How many people work in product management or product marketing in your company?

Our products and customers

63%

of product people manage software based products

43% of product people have the challenge of managing products made up of a mix of software, hardware, and/or service elements.

Hardware/physical products (49.2%)

Software (63%)

Services (44.2%)

21.1%

8.7%

6.3%

13.1%

26%   15.2%   9.6%
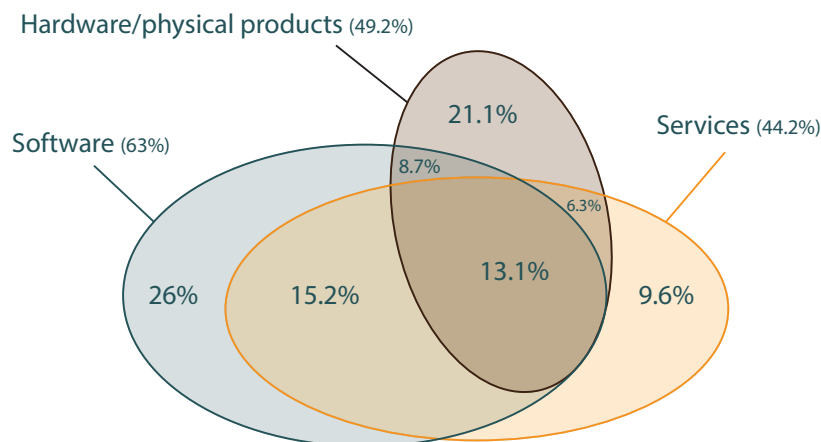
Are your products software, hardware/physical, or services (provided by people?)

89%

of survey respondents look after products sold to businesses (B2B)

24% of respondents have products for governments and other markets.

Internal products (20%)

Business (89%)

Consumer (28%)

3%

2%

10%

5%   6%

59%   15%

Do you work on products sold to businesses, consumers, government organizations, or on internal products?

product focus

How we develop products

56%
of companies use a mixture of Agile and Waterfall development approaches

- Agile — 32%
- Agile-Waterfall hybrid — 30%
- Agile on some, Waterfall on others — 26%
- Waterfall — 12%
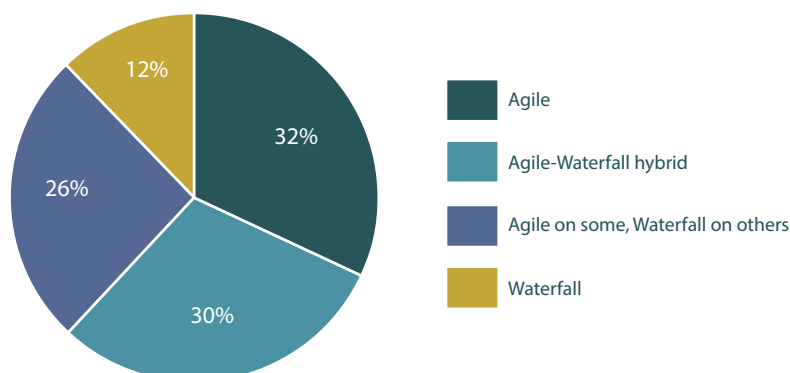
30% of respondents said they were a Product Owner working with an Agile development team.

What best describes the development approach used in your company?

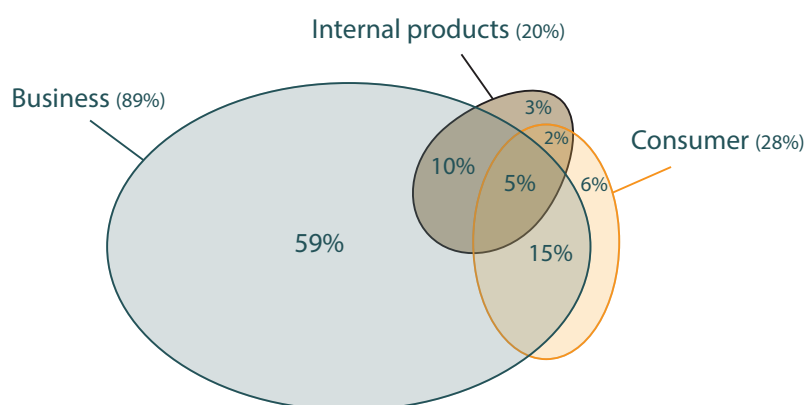# Product Manager vs. Product Owner

32%
work in companies with both Product Managers and Product Owners

- Just have Product Owners — 4%
- Have Product Owners covering the Product Management Role — 3%
- Just have Product Managers — 21%
- Have Product Managers covering the Product Owner Role — 31%
- Have Product Owners working with Product Managers — 32%
- Other — 9%
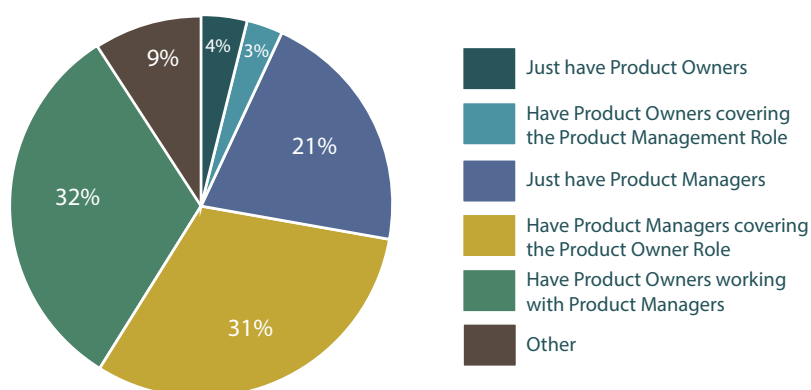
31% of survey respondents work in companies with Product Managers covering the Product Owner role.

If you use Agile in your company do you?

What we value

71%

of respondents say it's seeing the impact of their work that matters most to them

What do you value most at work?
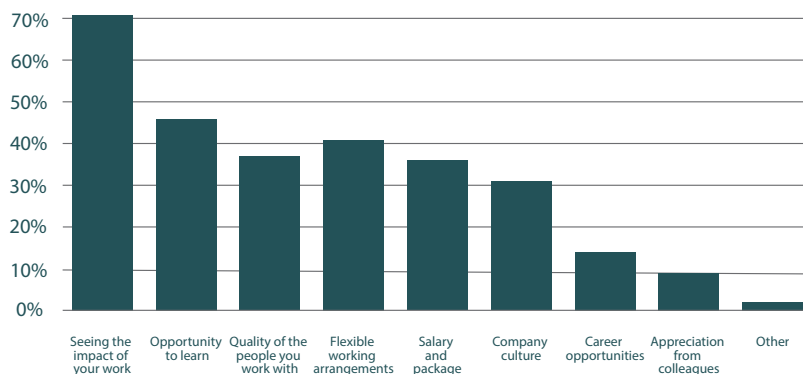
The graph shows the percentage of people who chose each option.

Interestingly, flexible working arrangements have grown since last year.

A leadership role?

68%

of respondents believe that product management is a leadership role in their company

Is product management seen as a leadership role in your business?
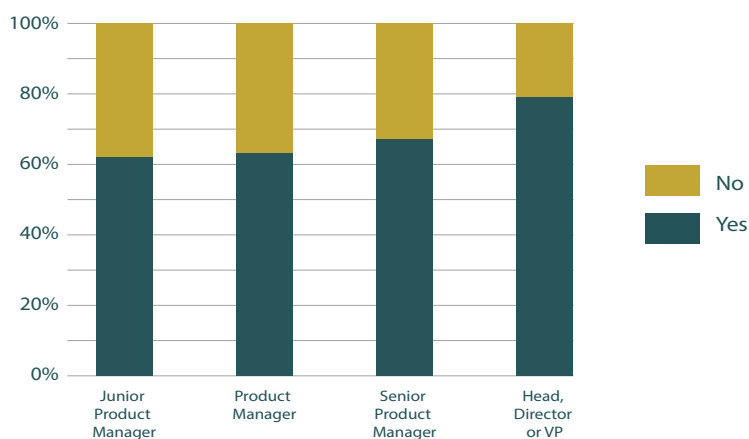
Only 62% of Junior Product Managers consider that product management is a leadership role in their company, compared to 77% of Heads, Directors, VPs, or CPOs.

Reporting

49%

of Product Management teams report directly to the board

We believe the high proportion of Product Management teams reporting directly to the board reflects the value of an independent, unbiased function. We see this continuing to rise year on year.
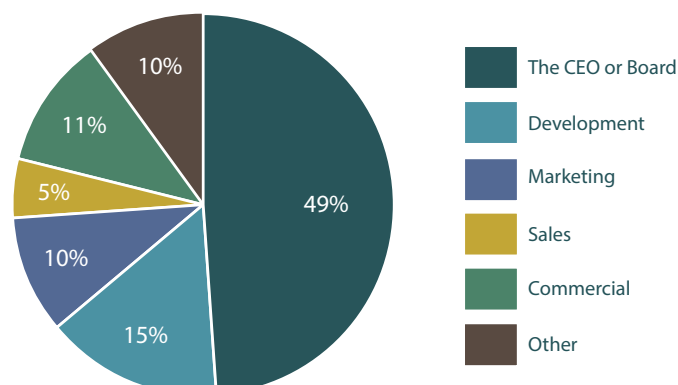
Where does your area report into?

- The CEO or Board
- Development
- Marketing
- Sales
- Commercial
- Other

49%
15%
10%
5%
11%
10%

74%

the most frequently used personal performance measurement is Management by Objectives

Revenue (33%) and profit & loss (20%) metrics are used for many respondents.
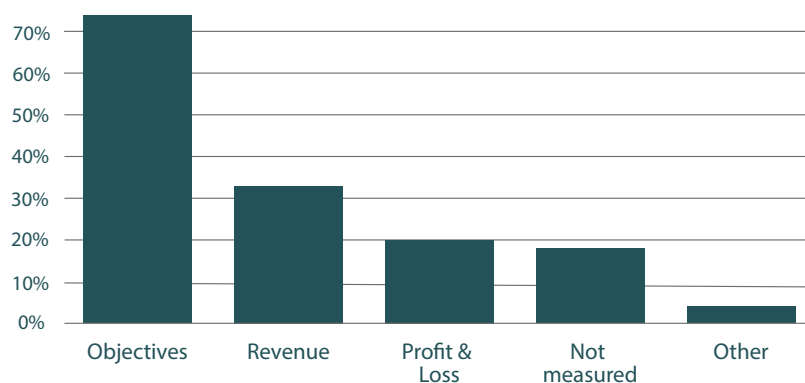
How are you measured?

Objectives | Revenue | Profit & Loss | Not measured | Other

How we spend our time

43%
the amount of time spent on unplanned 'fire-fighting' activities

Planned vs un-planned
- Fire-fighting 43%
- Planned activities 57%

Product activities
- Working out what the right product is 35%
- Helping to sell the product 24%
- Helping to deliver the product 41%
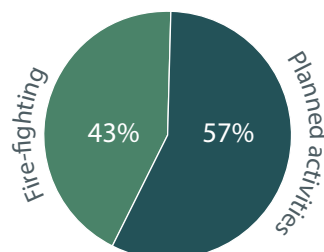
Activity ownership
- Covering others 18%
- Grey ownership 26%
- My responsibility 56%
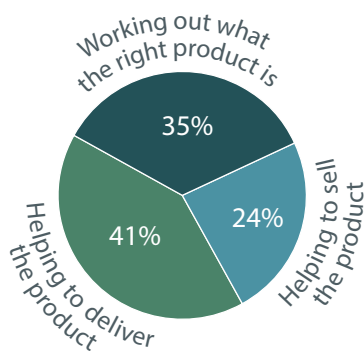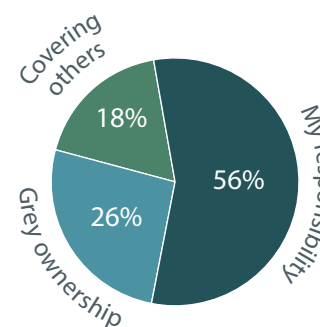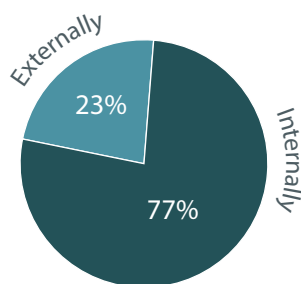
Working Internally/Externally
- Externally 23%
- Internally 77%

Communication
- Email 22%
- Online meetings 37%
- Face-to-face 14%
- Everything else 27%

Project delivery
- Cancelled/on hold 13%
- Late delivery 39%
- On-time delivery 48%

Top 50 Tools Used

Tool	%
Miro	6%
Teams	6%
Aha!	3%
Slack	3%
Azure DevOps	2%
Sharepoint	2%
Google Sheets	2%
Outlook	2%
Google Docs	2%
Google Slides	1%
Trello	1%
Figma	1%
Power BI	1%
Salesforce	1%
SAP	1%
MS Project	1%

Asana
Productboard
Atlassian
Mural
Notion
Zoom
monday.com
Planner
Visio
Tableau
Roadmunk
ClickUp
Lucid
Canva
Roadmap
Target Process
Hotjar
Polarion
draw.io
Evernote
Google Analytics
Kanban
Qlik
Rally
Redmine
Smartsheet
Amplitude
Balsamiq

All less
than 1%

Our survey shows there is a wide range of tools used by product managers - just over 100 were mentioned. The chart shows the top 50 tools. These range from generic office applications to tools for project management, visual design, storage, development management, surveys, presentations, and personal productivity.

In the top 50, the first 5 tools, shown in the pie chart, represent around 54% of the mentions by product managers. The rest are listed in order by the number of mentions.

Top 10 Recommended Tools
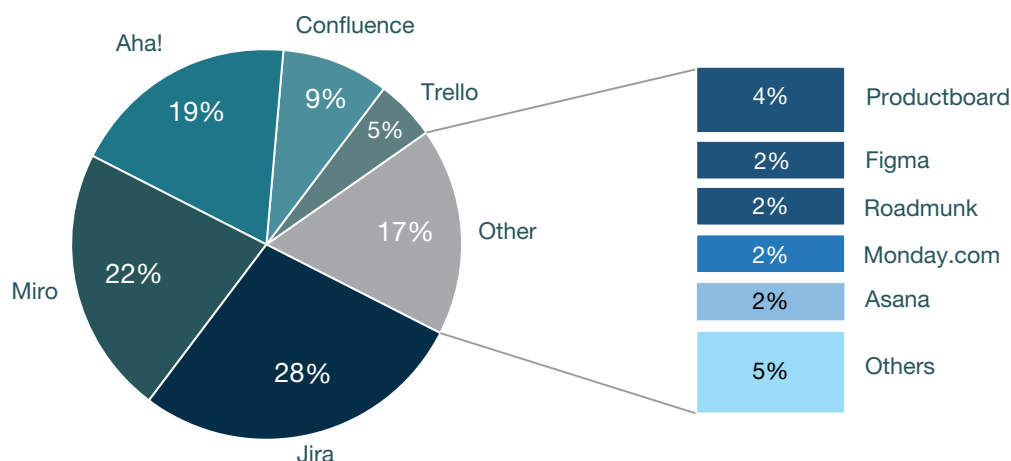
In the pie chart, we show the top 10 answers to the question - is there a tool you would definitely recommend to product managers? It shows Jira just coming out on top.

Miro continues to rise in popularity and has now overtaken Aha! as the second most recommended tool.

Although these may be product managers' favorite tools, apart from Jira, the ones mentioned as most used on the previous page are generic office tools like Excel and PowerPoint. Given their wide availability in business and how familiar people are with them, perhaps that's unsurprising, but it also may be related to their flexibility.

We think generic office tools will continue to have their place for many years to come, but newer tools focused on specific product management activities offer several benefits.

The first is a more efficient way of streamlining and automating common activities such as recording, tracking, and prioritizing requirements. Another benefit is having product information stored centrally and accessible to all. This helps teams working remotely across different locations. A further benefit can be enforcing common and best practice ways of working, e.g., creating standardized roadmaps or analyzing the success of newly released features.

In case you're not familiar with some of these tools, we briefly describe them on the next page.

Top 10 Tools explained

Jira
Jira is part of the Atlassian suite of products and is used to plan, track, and manage agile and software development projects.

Miro
Miro is an online visual collaboration whiteboard for distributed teams.

Aha!
Aha! Roadmaps describes itself as a complete product management suite to set strategy, prioritize features, and share visual plans.

Confluence
Confluence, also from Atlassian, is aimed at teams that need a secure and reliable way to collaborate on mission-critical projects.

Trello
Trello is a visual collaboration tool that enables you to organize, prioritize, and track projects in a flexible way.

Productboard
Productboard is an integrated tool to help product managers build roadmaps, prioritize features, centralize feedback, and validate ideas.

Figma
Figma is a collaborative interface design and prototyping tool.

Roadmunk
Roadmunk is an end to end roadmapping tool for building and communicating your product strategy.
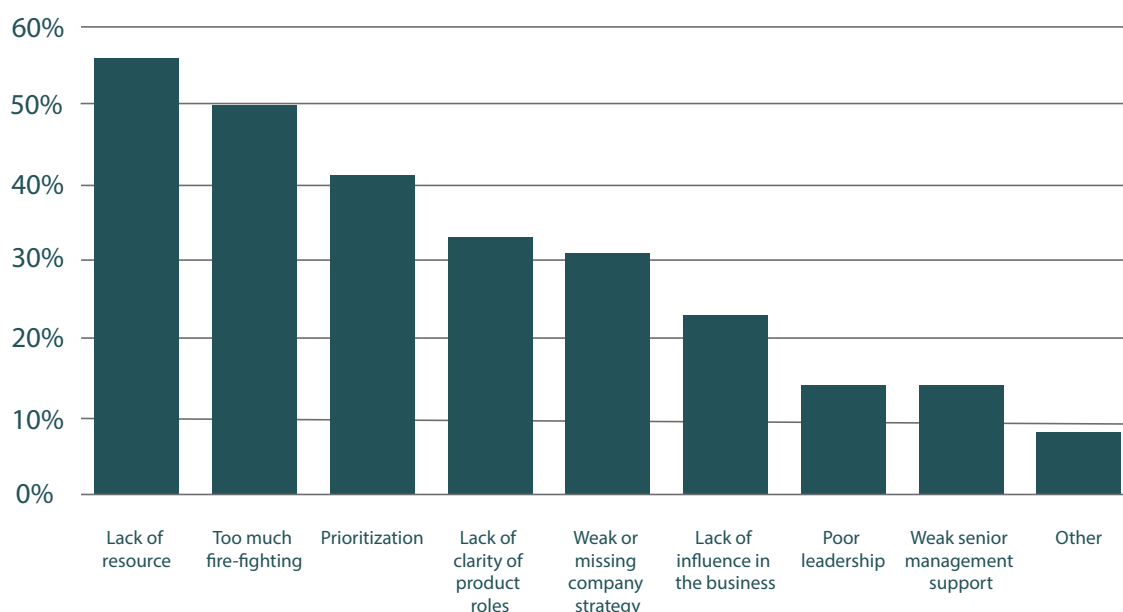
Monday.com
Monday.com provides a wide range of templates focused on agile workflow management for software development teams.

Asana
Asana is a web and mobile application designed to help remote teams organize, track, and manage their work.

The big issues we face

Spread too thin

Respondents ticked *lack of resource*, *too much fire-fighting,* and *prioritization* as the 3 big issues. It's easy to see how these are closely related. Many product managers complain of too much to do and not enough time. Often this means they don't get to do the strategic aspects of the role, for example, getting market and customer insights. However, some of this is down to product managers. The one resource they do have control over is their time and choosing to work on the right things is an important skill.

Poorly defined roles

Around a third of respondents selected the issue *lack of clarity on product roles*. We see a mix of Product Managers, Product Owners, and Product Marketing roles all involved with managing and developing products. In some companies, they all exist, and in others, there is only one role. And, what they do varies from one company to the next. In many businesses, there is a poor role definition with gaps or overlaps which creates tension and frustration. If this is an issue for you, take a look at our Product Activity Framework on .

Vague business strategies

It's also frightening to see how many people ticked the related issues of *Weak or missing company strategy*, *Poor leadership,* and *Weak senior management support*. Most companies try to do too much. And, many don't have a clear business strategy, or it keeps changing. It's often left to product management to make the hard calls on what to do and who to disappoint. Without a clear business strategy to align to, product managers struggle to have influence and get things done.

It's tough out there

The reality check is that most product managers find themselves in difficult work situations. It might be a lack of direction from above, tensions with other departments, or having too much to do. Nevertheless, the chance to have a big influence on a business and the variety of the work involved means that for most, they wouldn't change their job.

What skills will be important?

In the survey we asked respondents what skills do you think will be most important for product managers in 2023?

We analyzed hundreds of written comments to identify the most common skills mentioned. They fell into two roughly equal categories – soft skills and 'hard' product management skills. Within each category we've listed the top 10 key skills mentioned in rough order of priority.

Soft Skills

Stakeholder Management

Prioritization

Resilience and adaptability

Establish and maintaining online/remote relationships with colleagues, customers, and stakeholders

Communication and presentation skills

Self organized and self motivated

Leadership

Emotional intelligence/empathy

Focus

Critical thinking and analytical skills

'Hard' product management skills

Understanding customers and markets

Product Strategy/strategic thinking

Roadmapping

Familiarity with Agile

Working with data/analytics

Identifying market and technology trends

Data driven decisions

Product discovery

Machine learning and AI

Financial analysis

"Becoming comfortable with being uncomfortable"

"Resilience and grit are probably the two that stand out"

"Adapt to future trends (like AI, Augmented reality, Metaverse, low code/no-code etc.)"

Product Activities Framework

Clarifying and explaining what product management does is a key challenge for many product people.

Our Product Activities Framework can help with this. It identifies all the product-related activities that need to take place in any company with products.

Use it to sort out which product roles own each activity, to evangelize what product management does, and think about where you need to make improvements.

You can download our infographic with a detailed description of each activity by signing up for our Toolbox at our website.

Strategic Product Activities
- working out what the right product is for the business

Getting Insight
- Market research
- Customer research
- Competitive research
- Product performance

Analysis
- Segmentation
- Propositions
- Positioning
- Business cases

Giving Direction
- Product & portfolio strategy
- Vision & evangelizing
- Roadmaps
- Pricing

Inbound Activities
- helping the business to deliver the product
- Product discovery
- Requirements
- Design & build
- Operational readiness & trials

Outbound Activities
- helping the business to sell the product
- Launch
- Product promotion
- Sales & marketing content
- Sales support

Product Activities Framework

Stop fire-fighting

product
focus

... and deliver world class product management

Public training courses

- Product Management and Product Marketing for technology-based products
- Build the skills, tools, and confidence to excel in your role
- Attend a live online certified course with industry peers or face-to-face in locations across Europe

Private training for your team

- Improve team performance with customized private training
- Get the whole team using consistent best practice approaches
- Use our online toolbox to access resources and tools when you need them

Product Management Review

- Get set-up for success with a review of product management in your business
- Practical recommendations on how to improve performance, scale, or mature
- Learn how to build a world class product team and department

Leadership

- Learn how to manage a product management function, department, or team
- For anyone leading (or aiming to lead) product management
- Executive briefings to explain the value of product management to your senior team

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Learn best practice and improve performance with the European leaders

If you'd like to discuss product management training, or how we can support your product management function, please contact us:

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✉   **info@productfocus.com**

🌐   **www.productfocus.com**