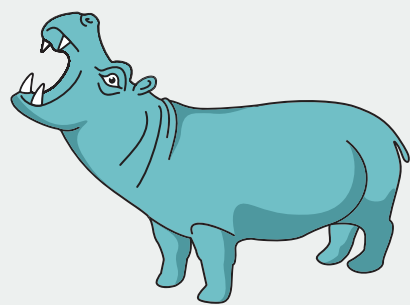# Animal personas in the world of product management

- If you work in product management, you're bound to have come across some of these animals.
- We hope you enjoy them and if you come across any others, please let us know so we can add them to the product management zoo!
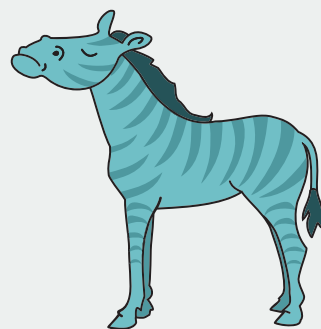
HiPPO
(Highest Paid Person's Opinion)

If you're in a meeting and everyone has an opinion, guess whose opinion is going to win – the HiPPO. They typically have a big mouth and can be dangerous when angry. As a product person, you need facts and data to back up your opinion when battling HiPPOs.


ZEBRA
(Zero Evidence But Really Arrogant)

When working in product management, sometimes you come across ZEBRAs. They rely on their gut-feel and force of personality to get their way. Evidence and logic are good counter measures, but sometimes you have to match their arrogance (some might say aggression) with passion and forceful arguments.
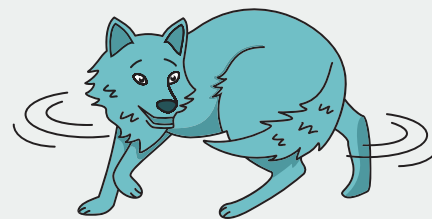

WOLF
(Working On the Latest Fire)

Many product managers are WOLFs. We know from our industry survey that the average product manager spends half their time fire-fighting! That makes it very difficult to find time for important strategic product activities. And, it can be very demoralizing to be always chasing your tail – rather than being proactive and leading.
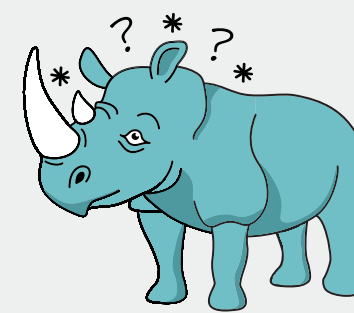

RHINO
(Really Here In Name Only)

We've all met them – managers or colleagues who are RHINOs. They're never around, never seem to make decisions or get anything delivered. If you need things from them, it takes close management and constant checking to get what you need.
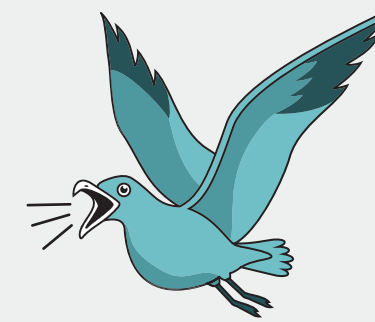
SEAGULL
(Senior Executive that Always Glides in, Unloads and Leaves Loudly)

A SEAGULL is a senior manager who swoops onto a project, unloads their 'value' and leaves just as quickly making a loud noise. They may have good intentions, but they don't have on-the-ground knowledge, and it's the team that has to clean up the mess they leave behind.
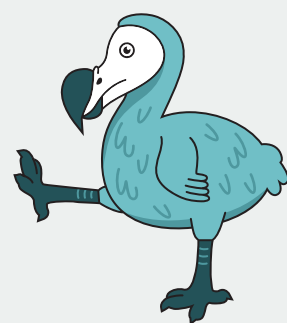

DODO
(Dangerously OutDated Opinions)

You may well come across senior colleagues who have dangerously outdated opinions (DODOs). They don't seem to have kept up with things or realize the realities of the current situation. Don't get too close, as they may soon become extinct.


ViPER
(Vindictive Person Endangering Results)

If you're unlucky as a product manager, you may come across a ViPER. You may not be aware they don't like you, but suddenly and unexpectedly, they turn and bite you. For them, it's personal - they want to damage you and your reputation. Stay well clear of them if you can.
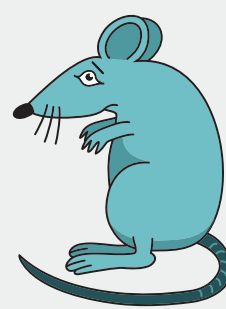

MOUSE
(Muddled Opinions, Usually Swayed Easily)

Some MOUSE managers aren't good at thinking things through and sticking to their decisions. They lack confidence or are too timid. Try to reassure them once they've made a decision and get something in writing to back it up.
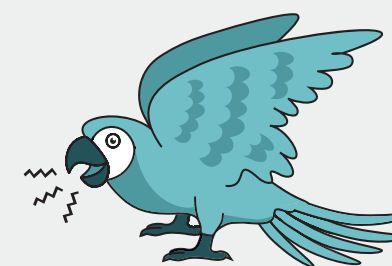
PARROT
(Pretty Annoying and Ridiculously Repeating Others)

In many companies, you get PARROTs. People who don't have opinions of their own and just repeat someone else's – for example, the nearest HiPPO. Maybe it's a lack of confidence or imagination, so try to encourage them to think for themselves.
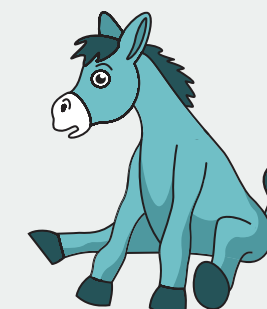
DONKEY
(Data Only, No Knowledge, Expertise or whY)

We all know it's important to have data upon which to make decisions, but sometimes you come across DONKEYs. They have the data but no understanding of what it means. They lack the context, knowledge, or expertise to pull out the insights on which to base decisions.

Sources : ZEBRA (Emily Chiu), PARROT (Kate Netkachova), DONKEY (Phil Hornby). Also see The Seagull Manager by Travis Bradberry.

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