

# ⚠ what is product roadmap

A Product Roadmap is a visualization of the life of your product. It lays out the product vision, and the stages between now and the realization of that vision.

Some of the goals for a Product Roadmap include:

- Communicating product vision to internal and external stakeholders/customers
- Gaining alignment between the different stakeholders
- Providing a clear view of the different aspects of the product development

A Product Roadmap is typically owned, updated and maintained by the Product Manager. Product Managers work closely with cross-functional teams and other stakeholders to gather customer, team and business insights, prioritize initiatives and align the Roadmap with the business goals.

Roadmaps are used by different audiences both internal and external to the product team and the organization. When creating Roadmaps, you need to understand that different audiences have different goals and objectives. For example, the Product team uses the Roadmap as a beacon that guides their work, the leadership teams use it as a strategic tool to align the product with broader business objectives while customers and investors use Roadmaps to keep themselves informed on the product's future direction. We will dive into each of these audiences in detail as we progress through the course.

# ⚠ challenges with product roadmapping

→ for the organization and/or customers

## Overly Detailed or Vague Roadmaps

## Dated Roadmaps

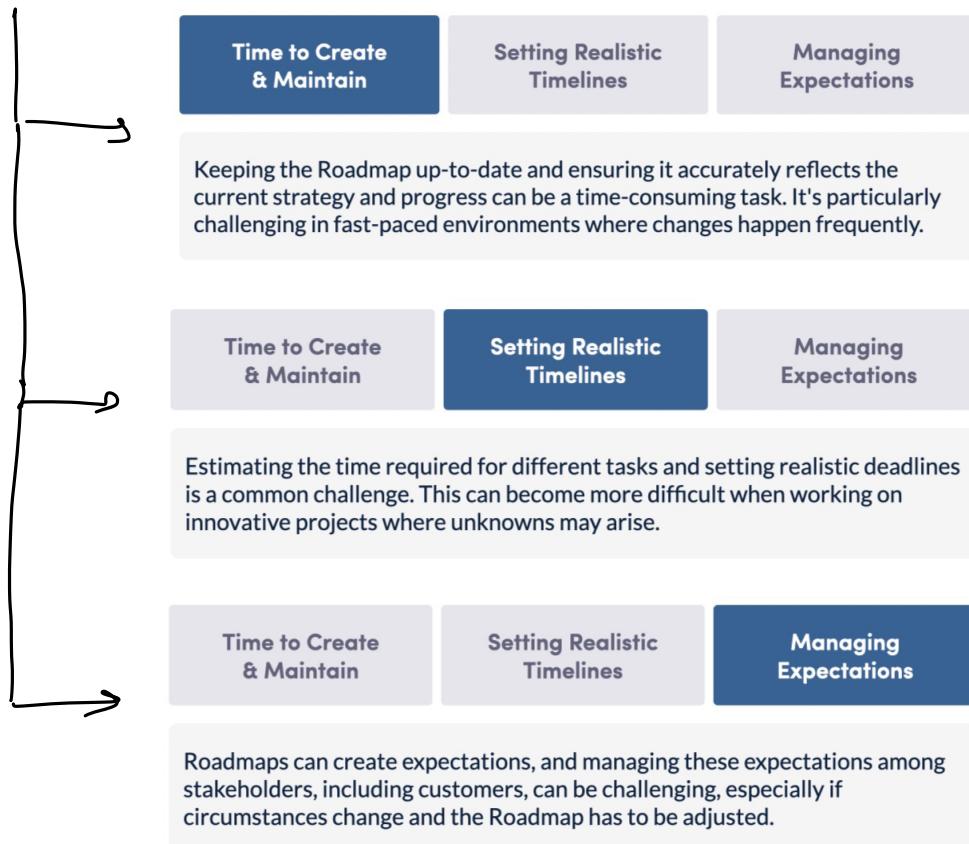
Striking the right level of detail can be tricky. If a Roadmap is too detailed, it can become overwhelming and difficult to follow. If it's too vague, it may not provide enough guidance to the team and stakeholders.

## Overly Detailed or Vague Roadmaps

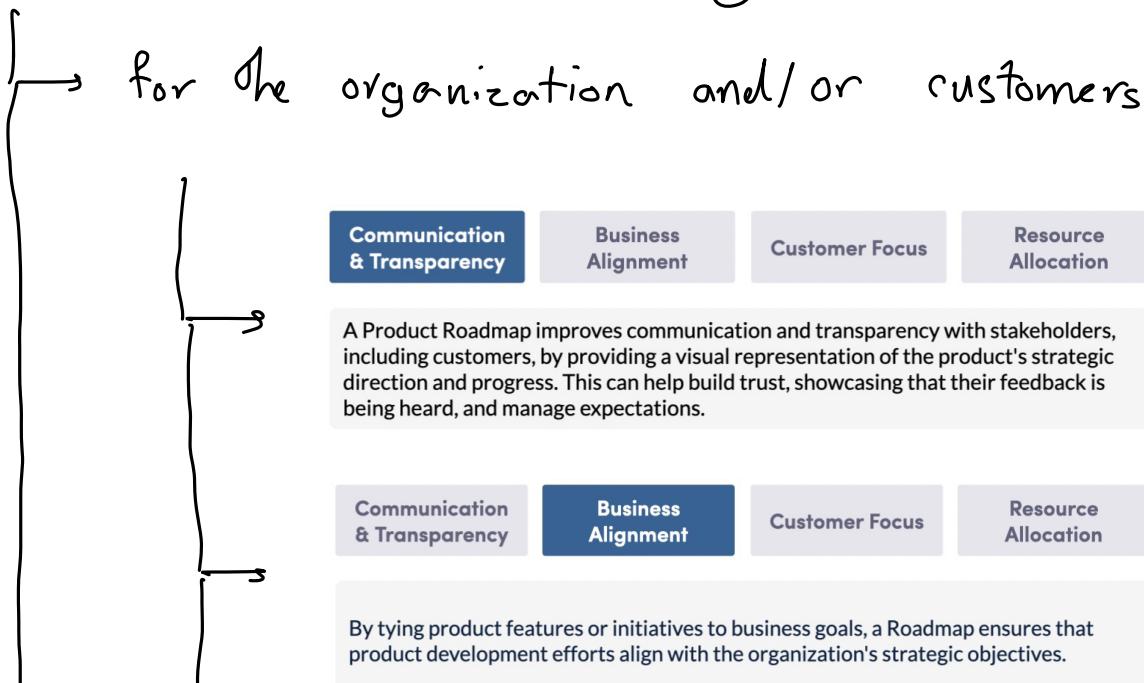
## Dated Roadmaps

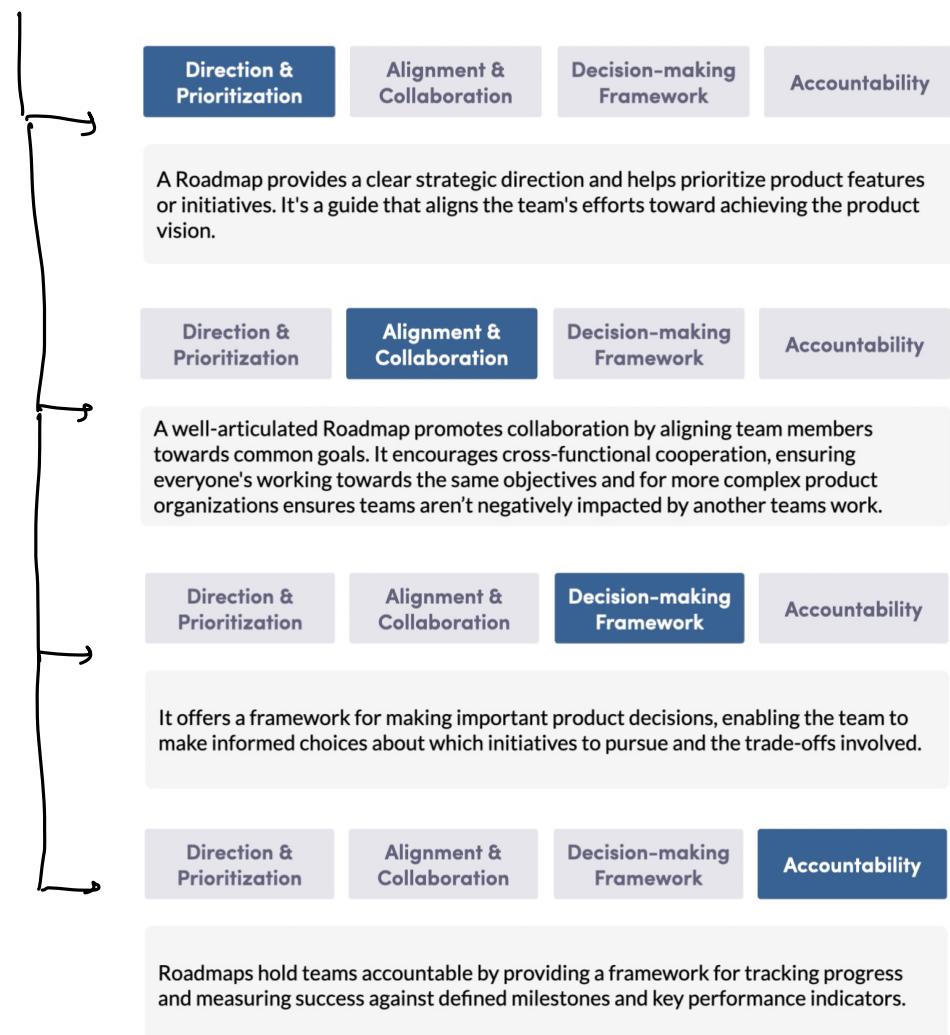
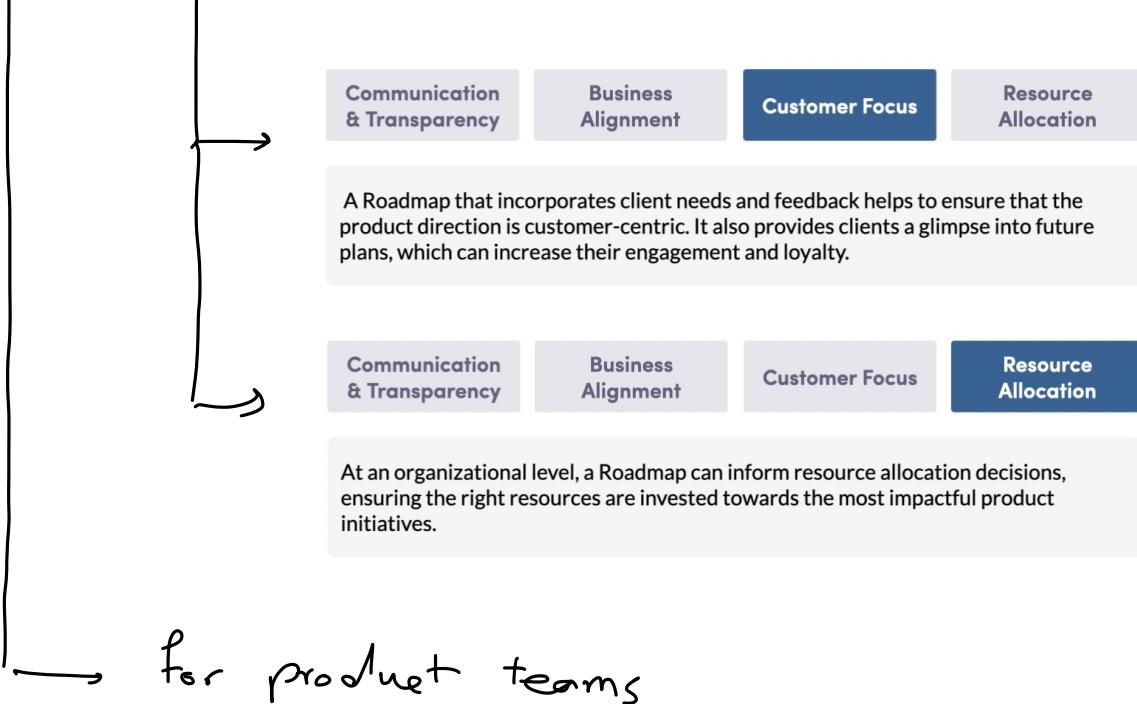
Ensuring the Roadmap is consistently updated and remains current is a significant challenge - as circumstances change, Roadmaps can easily become outdated or irrelevant, making them less useful as a strategic tool and source of truth for the product's direction.

for product teams



## ⚠ Benefits of product roadmapping





A Product Roadmap can be a crucial strategic tool that brings value to product teams, the wider organization, and its customers. It aligns efforts, improves decision-making, enhances communication, and can support a customer-centric approach to product development.

# A 5 stages of roadmapping maturity

An organization or an individual goes through 5 stages of maturity when building Roadmaps. The most basic one starts with the product manager holding all the information to themselves to the most advanced stage where everyone in the organization uses the Product Roadmap as their North Star. These 5 stages are:

## 1. "I Tell You What to Do."

We don't have any Roadmap. The product manager tosses requirements over the wall to engineering, and we don't know why we're building what we're building.

## 2. "Our Product Team has a Roadmap."

The product manager creates an ad hoc release plan, but isn't shared outside the circle of decision-makers. Roadmaps are only created when needed to communicate with leadership, changes frequently, and only lists features - not objectives or larger goals.

## 3. "Our Product Team has a Shared Roadmap about Upcoming Features."

The product team maintains a relatively stable Roadmap which is shared with other teams at our company. We know which features are being built, but we aren't sure what those features are meant to achieve, or how they fit into our larger business goals. Sometimes our product team tells us specific release dates and can't meet those commitments.

## 4. "Our Product Team has a Shared Product Vision."

The product team maintains a shared strategic Roadmap which highlights the business goals they're focusing on, and which features support those goals. Stakeholders can dive deeper into the business context behind each feature. Nevertheless, other teams don't look at this Roadmap often, and our customer-facing teams don't feel comfortable speaking to the Roadmap publicly or conveying our broader goals.

## 5. "Everyone Rallies Around Our Product Strategy and Roadmap."

We all have access to the Roadmap we need, and we all actively refer to the Roadmap on a regular basis. Every person at our organization understands where our product is headed and why, and can evangelize this vision to stakeholders and customers.

# A How to create a successful product roadmap



# △ Product vision and product objectives

Our product vision is our North Star. It's the overarching goal that guides every action we take. It embodies the essence of what we aim to achieve in the long run and the impact we intend to have on our customers' lives. By crafting a compelling and clear product vision, we create a shared understanding of where we're going, which inspires and motivates everyone involved, from our product teams to our stakeholders.

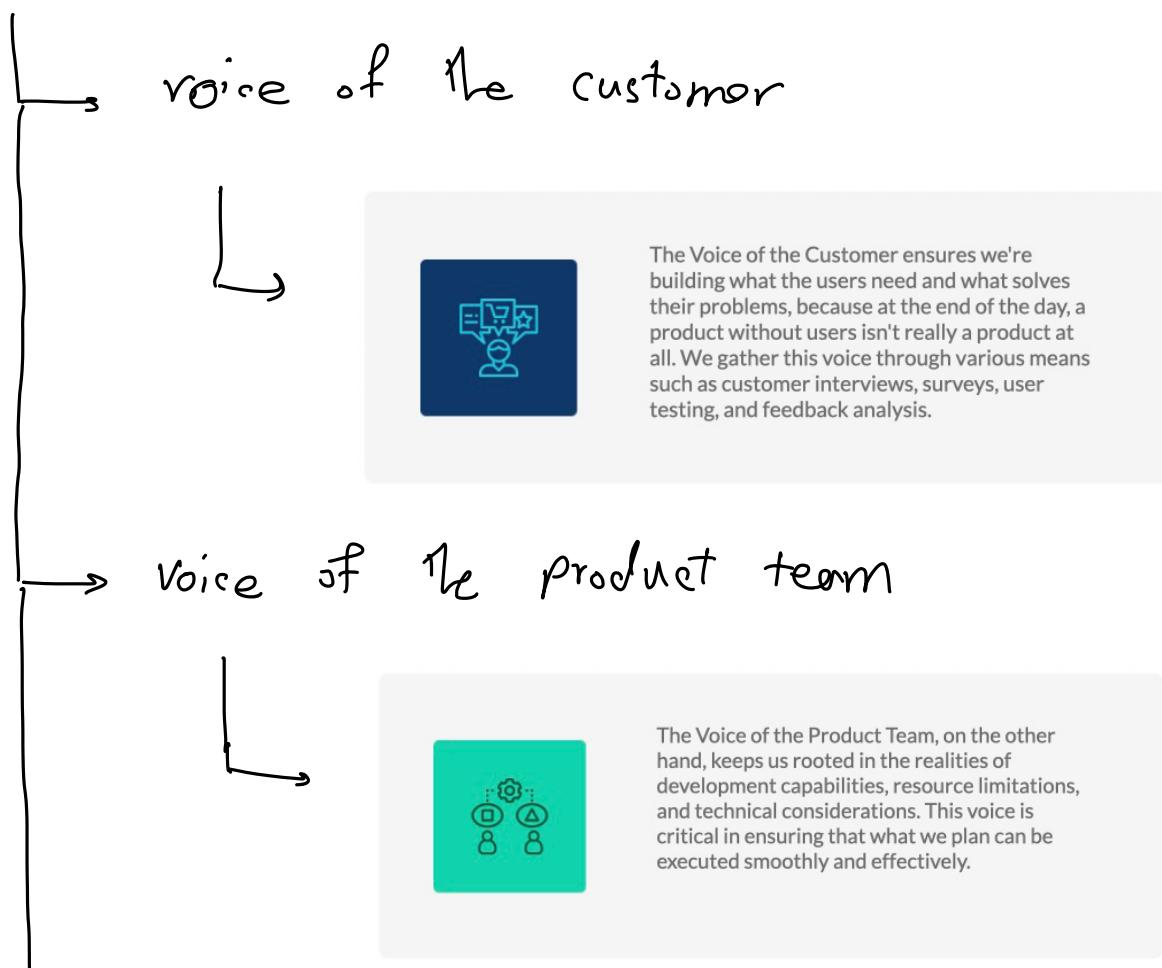
Then we have our product objectives. These are the measurable steps that will get us to our vision. They serve as the guideposts, keeping us on track and making sure our actions and efforts are always aligned with our desired outcome. Setting clear objectives allows us to focus our resources, make informed decisions, and measure our progress objectively.

In essence, a clear vision gives us direction, while our objectives give us the map. Together, they ensure that every feature we develop, every task we prioritize, and every decision we make brings us closer to delivering a product that aligns with our overarching goals and resonates with our customers' needs. Remember, the product we're building today is a vehicle that carries us closer to our envisioned future. Let's ensure it's driving us in the right direction.

**Examples of objectives could include things such as:**

- Increase new user adoption by 40% over the next quarter
- Drive user engagement by 10% during the next month
- Expand the enterprise market segment by 10% in Q4

# △ prioritization factors in product teams



## voice of the Business



The Voice of the Business ensures that our product aligns with our company's vision, strategy, and market objectives. By listening to this voice, we make sure that the product development efforts are in line with the overall business goals, taking into consideration factors like market trends, competitive landscape, financial goals, and operational feasibility.



Balancing these voices is at the core of making data-driven prioritization decisions. It's about using the wealth of information at our disposal to drive our product decisions, rather than relying on assumptions or gut feelings.

## Understanding your audience

Knowing and understanding your audience is fundamental when building a Product Roadmap. Crafting a Product Roadmap involves more than just setting a timeline or defining the direction for your product; it's about effective communication with different stakeholders whose roles are vital to the product's success.

When building Product Roadmap, one common mistake is the creation of a "one-size-fits-all" Roadmap, which often becomes confusing and is hardly used. Instead, different versions of the Roadmap, tailored to specific audiences, are more effective and can be easily set up using tools like Productboard.

## Different types of audience groups to consider

### Product Team

This group includes product managers, designers, and engineers who execute the Roadmap. The Roadmap is more than a plan for them; it is a beacon that guides their work. Their version of the Roadmap should provide a clear direction, timeline, and explanation of why each feature or task is essential. It should also highlight dependencies and how everything contributes to the product's overall vision.

### Leadership Team

This team sets the business strategy, makes crucial decisions, and allocates resources. They use the Roadmap as a strategic tool to align the product with broader business objectives. Their version of the Roadmap should link each product initiative to the organization's goals, helping leadership understand the decision-making process and where resources might be needed.

## Customer-facing Team

These include sales, customer success, marketing, and support teams. They bridge the gap between your product and the customer. The Roadmap helps them understand upcoming features and the overall product strategy, enabling them to communicate future product plans to customers and plan their work.

## External Audiences

These include customers, partners, investors, and other stakeholders who have an interest in the product's direction. The Roadmap communicates your product's future direction, demonstrating your commitment to solving their problems and meeting their needs.

## Development Partners

These are third-party vendors or partners who collaborate in developing or integrating your product. They need the Roadmap to plan their development efforts. It should provide necessary technical information without overwhelming non-technical audiences.



Understanding your audience, their perspectives, needs, and roles, allows for the creation of effective, powerful, and purposeful Roadmaps. As you create or refine your Product Roadmap, consider these audiences' needs and how your Roadmap can best serve them. Testing out your Roadmap with representative groups can also ensure it meets their needs and allows opportunities for further improvement.

## Different types of Roadmaps

Release Plans      Sprint Plans      Now-Next-Later Roadmaps      Kanban/Status-Based Roadmaps      Timeline-Based Roadmaps

The screenshot shows a digital product roadmap interface. At the top, there are tabs for 'Release Plans', 'Sprint Plans', 'Now-Next-Later Roadmaps', 'Kanban/Status-Based Roadmaps', and 'Timeline-Based Roadmaps'. The 'Release Plans' tab is selected. Below the tabs, the title 'Agile Team / Roadmaps / Customer-facing | Release Plan' is displayed. The main area shows two releases: 'Release 1.0' and 'Release 2.0'. 'Release 1.0' contains features: 'Searching, Filtering, & Sorting' (pink), 'Customer Service Dashboard' (blue), 'Port Tracing' (blue), and 'Enter an order' (orange). 'Release 2.0' contains features: 'Invoicing Dashboard' (purple), 'Railroad Tracing' (purple), 'Steamship Line Tracing' (purple), 'Assign owners' (purple), and 'Dispatcher Dashboard' (orange). There are also some small circular icons with numbers (1, 2, 3) near the bottom of the releases.

These are collections of features or functionality planned to be released together. They can be themed with objectives for a clear communication approach. While they may have implicit timeframes, the emphasis is not on explicit deadlines.

## Release Plans

## Sprint Plans

## Now-Next-Later Roadmaps

## Kanban/Status-Based Roadmaps

## Timeline-Based Roadmaps

The screenshot shows a digital Kanban-style board for a sprint plan. It has columns for 'Sprint 1.1', 'Sprint 1.2', and 'Sprint 1.3'. Under 'Sprint 1.1', there are cards for 'Iron Man' (with task 'Enter an order') and 'Flash' (with task 'Searching, Filtering, & Sorting'). Under 'Sprint 1.2', there is a card for 'Black Widow'. Under 'Sprint 1.3', there are cards for 'Dispatcher Dashboard' and 'Customer Service Dashboard'. A sidebar on the left lists items like 'Add value'.

Utilized mainly in Agile development, sprint plans are short-term plans detailing the work to be done within a sprint, typically spanning two weeks. It helps product teams focus on immediate tasks and provides a snapshot of progress towards larger product goals.

## Release Plans

## Sprint Plans

## Now-Next-Later Roadmaps

## Kanban/Status-Based Roadmaps

## Timeline-Based Roadmaps

The screenshot shows a digital board for a 'Now-Next-Later' roadmap. It has three main sections: 'Now', 'Next', and 'Later'. In 'Now', there are cards for 'EDI Order Creation', 'Automated Invoice Approvals', and 'Manual Tracing Button'. In 'Next', there are cards for 'Port Tracing', 'Customer Service Dashboard', 'Upcoming containers', 'Port for activities', '7 day forecast', and 'Enter an order'. In 'Later', there are cards for 'Driver Recommendations', 'Creating from Template', 'Searching, Filtering, & Sorting', and 'Dispatcher Dashboard'. A sidebar on the left lists items like 'Add value'.

These offer a high-level strategic view of priorities in three categories - current tasks (Now), upcoming ones (Next), and long-term plans (Later). Ideal for initial prioritization planning, this Roadmap provides a clear view of immediate, short-term, and long-term tasks without committing to specific timeframe.

## Release Plans

## Sprint Plans

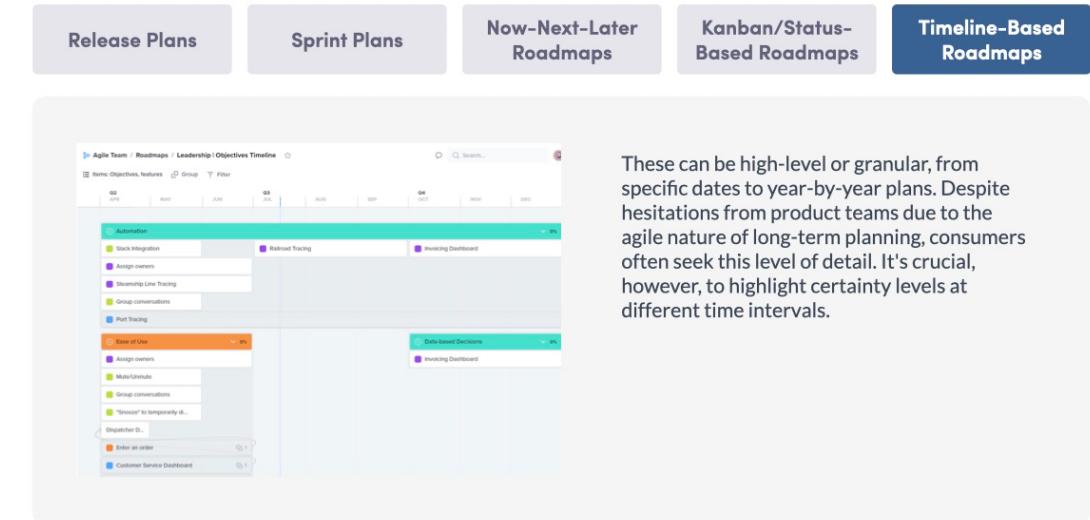
## Now-Next-Later Roadmaps

## Kanban/Status-Based Roadmaps

## Timeline-Based Roadmaps

The screenshot shows a digital Kanban board for a status-based roadmap. It has three columns: 'Under Consideration', 'Planned', and 'In progress'. In 'Under Consideration', there are cards for 'Assign owners', 'Steamship Line Tracing', 'Railroad Tracing', 'Invoicing Dashboard', and 'Change to Enterprise Strategy'. In 'Planned', there are cards for 'Port Tracing' and 'Customer Service Dashboard'. In 'In progress', there are cards for 'Automated Invoice Approvals', 'Warehouse Management System', 'Manual Tracing Button', and 'EDI Order Creation'. A sidebar on the left lists items like 'Add value'.

Borrowed from Lean methodology, these Roadmaps visualize work at different stages. With columns like "In Beta," "In Development," and "Under Consideration," they provide a more granular view of progress without specific release dates.



These can be high-level or granular, from specific dates to year-by-year plans. Despite hesitations from product teams due to the agile nature of long-term planning, consumers often seek this level of detail. It's crucial, however, to highlight certainty levels at different time intervals.



Timeline-based Roadmaps can be further categorized based on their focus. These are:

- Features Timeline:** Focusing on when features will be developed and launched, this Roadmap helps internal teams plan and communicate upcoming releases and allows customers to anticipate what's next. Due to its granular nature, it's best used for high-certainty planning.
- Objectives Timeline:** Focusing on achieving specific objectives over time, this Roadmap emphasizes the "why" over the "what." Depending on communication needs, you can include aligned features or just the objectives.
- Release Timeline:** Similar to Release Plans, this Roadmap visually depicts when different product versions or updates are planned for release, giving stakeholders an overview of the product's future.



Each Roadmap serves a unique purpose and is suited to different communication needs. The choice of Roadmap depends on the nature of your project, the audience you're communicating with, and the level of detail you wish to provide. Properly utilized, these Roadmap formats can significantly enhance your product planning and communication processes.

## A The needs of different audience groups

- Leadership:** This group is typically interested in a high-level view of the product team's work, aligned with the company or product objectives. Two effective Roadmap types for this group are the Release Timeline and the Objectives Timeline. These formats can provide a strategic perspective, outlining how the product initiatives contribute to overarching objectives, without delving into granular details.

*Release Timeline, Objectives Timeline*

- Customer-facing Teams:** These teams, including sales, customer success, marketing, and support, need more detail to communicate effectively with prospects or customers. The Release Plan, supplemented with a Kanban or Status-based Roadmap, can be highly beneficial for these teams. These Roadmaps provide detailed insights into upcoming features and functionalities, enabling these teams to prepare internal and external materials and confidently answer customer queries about upcoming product enhancements.

*Release Plan, Release Timeline, Kanban/Status-based*

**3. External Audiences:** External customers generally appreciate a high-level product vision and near-term expected functionalities. Roadmap types similar to those used by Customer-facing teams can be suitable here. However, it's often best to provide summarized information and avoid committing to specific release timeframes to maintain trust and minimize potential frustrations.

*Release Plan, Kanban/Status-based*

**4. Product Teams:** These teams require granular information about what's being built, how it's being built, the required timeframe, and dependencies between functions and other teams. Several Roadmap types can meet these needs, including Now-Next-Later, Release Plans, Sprint Plans, and Kanban/Status-based formats. These Roadmaps aid in planning and execution, providing a clear direction for the product development process.

*Now-Next-Later, Release Plans, Sprint Plans, Kanban/Status-based*

**5. Development Partners:** For partners who need to align their development efforts with yours, a Release Timeline Roadmap is the most suitable. This Roadmap shows when different product versions or updates are planned, enabling partners to coordinate their efforts accordingly.

*Release Timeline Roadmap*

Remember, while these are common examples, every audience and organization has unique needs. The key is to identify your different audiences and select the Roadmap type that best represents the information they need. This will ensure effective communication and alignment across all stakeholders, contributing to successful product development and delivery.

## common elements of a product roadmap

While the exact components of a Product Roadmap can vary depending on the specific needs of the team and the product, there are some common elements that most Product Roadmaps should include:

1. **Vision and Goals:** The Roadmap should begin with a clear statement of the product's long-term vision and the strategic objectives or goals that the product aims to achieve. This sets the overall direction and provides a guiding light for the team.
2. **Initiatives or Themes:** These are high-level areas of focus or workstreams that are aligned with the product's strategic objectives. Initiatives provide a way to group related activities or tasks and help keep the Roadmap at a strategic level.
3. **Features or Epics:** These are the significant pieces of work required to deliver on the initiatives and achieve the product's strategic objectives. Features should be clearly linked to the initiatives they support to demonstrate alignment with the product's vision and goals.
4. **Timeline:** While some product Roadmaps avoid specific dates (especially for long-term plans) to maintain flexibility, most Roadmaps include some form of a timeline to provide a sense of when work on initiatives and features will begin and end. This can be expressed in terms of quarters, months, or even Sprints, depending on the level of detail required.
5. **Status:** This component provides an at-a-glance view of where each initiative or feature is in the development process. Status indicators can help stakeholders understand what's currently in progress, what's completed, and what's coming up next.
6. **Dependencies:** Dependencies are connections or relationships between different items on the Roadmap, indicating that the progress or completion of one item is contingent on another. Showing dependencies can help teams plan their work better and anticipate potential bottlenecks or delays.

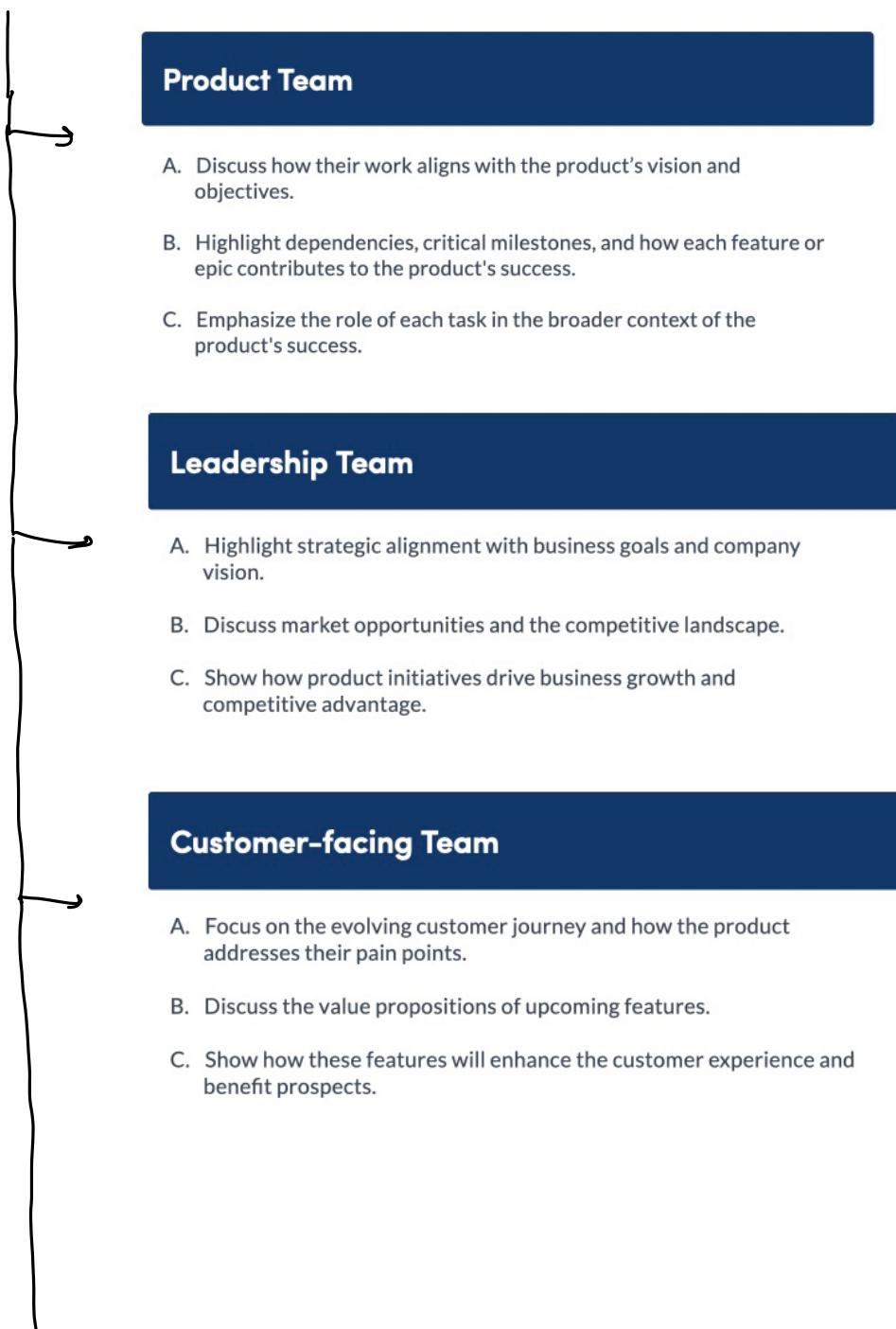
 Remember, a Roadmap is not just a plan—it's a strategic communication tool. The most effective Roadmaps are those that can clearly and succinctly communicate the product's strategic direction and progress towards its goals to a specific audience.

# A What is storytelling?

Storytelling is a powerful tool in any context, and it's especially valuable when presenting a Product Roadmap. A Product Roadmap isn't just a collection of features and timelines; it's a narrative about your product's journey. When you weave a compelling story around your Roadmap, you do much more than just share facts. You:

- Connect with your audience emotionally, which can significantly increase engagement and buy-in.
- Create a clear picture of your product's future, and how every initiative contributes to the overall vision.
- Communicate the rationale behind your prioritization decisions, thereby reducing friction and misunderstandings.
- Inspire your team and stakeholders, fostering a shared understanding and excitement about the product's future.

# A Using storytelling effectively for different audiences



## External Audiences

- A. Focus on customers' needs, their challenges, and how the product will help them achieve their goals.
- B. Emphasize the benefits and outcomes, rather than just the technical details.
- C. Show how the product is evolving to better meet their needs and create excitement about the product's future.

## Development Partners

- A. Discuss how collaborative efforts lead to a robust and competitive product.
- B. Highlight how integration can enhance user experiences or solve complex problems.
- C. Show how alignment with the product Roadmap will result in mutual benefits.

# ⚠ Crafting your story

## Framing the Context of your Story:

- **Subject:** What is your story about?
- **Goal:** What do you want to achieve by telling this story?
- **Audience:** Who are you telling your story to? What are they looking to get out of it?
- **Heart-string:** What is the emotional element or hook that your audience will empathize with?

## Building your Story Arch:

- **Overarching Point:** Set the stage. What are we talking about today?
- **Problem:** What is the problem or opportunity in front of us?
- **Solution:** What is the solution to the problem?
- **So What:** What should the audience take away from your story?
- **Call to Action:** What action should your audience take next?

Remember, regardless of your audience, an effective Roadmap story is not just about "what" you're doing, but "why" you're doing it. It should be a blend of logic—based on data, market trends, and user feedback—and emotion, creating excitement about the product's future and the value it brings. Make your Roadmap story engaging, relatable, and inspiring to gain maximum support and alignment across all your stakeholders.

# A How to integrate roadmap management into your product development process

In the world of product design, there has long been a lack of dedicated software for product management. Product managers often resort to using Excel, PowerPoint, or other inadequate software. In this modern era, the implementation of product management software into your toolkit and operations is crucial for success. This is especially true for Roadmap creation, which is the culmination of the product management team's efforts to construct, refine, and prioritize their product backlog. Without a tool that connects your backlog information to your Roadmaps, you'll continually run into Roadmap-related challenges teams have historically faced. Below are some best practices for integrating Roadmap management into your product development process thus allowing for low effort evergreen Roadmaps.

- 1. Implement a Dedicated Product Management Software:** Begin by integrating a dedicated product management tool like Productboard into your operations if you don't already have one. This software can effectively bridge the gap in your product design process, particularly for Roadmap creation.
- 2. Adapt the Software to Your Existing Process:** After implementing the software, assess how it will merge with and modify your existing product development process (PDP). Tailor the software to suit your processes, not the other way around.
- 3. Map Out Your Feature Funnel:** Define your feature progression from idea conception to product release. Establish clear statuses for every phase of the funnel for easy management and reporting and ensure you are accounting for everything you need to triage, prioritize, and plan out your backlog.
- 4. Document All Relevant Meetings and Ceremonies:** Maintain a record of all key meetings, ceremonies, or events conducted as part of your process, including less frequent sessions like quarterly or yearly planning and review meetings. Ensure that your backlog is being updated as decisions are made.
- 5. Specify Views in Your Product Management Software:** Based on the data needed for different meetings and the potential decisions or changes, create specific views in your product management software. These views can cater to different needs such as triage, prioritization, release planning, and sprint planning.
- 6. Regularly Update Your Backlog:** Ensure your backlog is continually updated, prioritized, and planned out. As a result, your Roadmaps will automatically refresh, keeping them evergreen and in sync with the latest changes.
- 7. Promote Self-Service:** By ensuring your Roadmap is continuously updated, you build trust with your team and encourage a culture of self-service. This minimizes unnecessary back-and-forth communication and allows for more efficient workflow.

# ⚠️ Driving collaboration and alignment across the company

Few ways to drive collaboration and alignment across the company:

1. **Establish a Shared Understanding** of the product strategy and Roadmap. Ensure everyone understands the product vision, goals, and rationale behind the chosen initiatives.
2. **Get leadership onboard** with how you are prioritizing initiatives, how you plan to communicate, and how you will drive collaboration and alignment. By doing this, leadership will help re-iterate your messaging and help remove roadblocks or issues you may face across teams.
3. **Involve key stakeholders** early in the product planning process. Seek their input and perspectives to ensure their needs and insights are considered when prioritizing and planning.
4. **Drive collaboration** through regular meetings, workshops, and/or cross-team ceremonies to foster collaboration, alignment, and exchange of ideas.
5. **Conduct regular share-outs** with relevant teams and stakeholders to communicate the current product strategy, Roadmap, progress, success stories, and value/impact of feedback and ideas provided by team members. Also be sure to record an overview that team members can easily catch up on after all if a picture is worth a thousand words, a video is worth 10,000.
6. **Create a central location for information** where you can provide detailed related to the product strategy, current objectives, Roadmap and other relevant information. Where possible, try to store this information where your team members already are (e.g. Notion, Teams, Confluence, etc.) rather than forcing them to go to a new tool/location they aren't familiar with. The easier it is for them to access, the more likely they are to use it.
7. **Make feedback easy** for teams across your organization. The more complex the "ticket" form or submission process, the less likely a team members will take time out of their busy day to send the feedback to you. Work to find the balance in getting what you need to successfully use feedback provided and ease for the user in providing that feedback.
8. **Celebrate success and learn from failures.** Share success stories and learnings from both successful initiatives and those that didn't go as planned. This encourages a culture of learning, continuous improvement, and growth-oriented mindset. Where possible, provide the data that proves the value new functionality has provided to users/customers, internal teams or the company.

# A Building and maintaining trust within teams

Things you can do to build and maintain trust within teams:

- **'Showing your work'** - Communicating your data-driven process, how you work, and why you are making the decisions you are. Don't operate in a box. Transparency and understanding are a cornerstone of building trust.
- **Communicate the "Cone of Uncertainty"** in the Roadmap. Roadmaps are not static set in stone plans. They are a representation of where we are headed and why. Market conditions, priorities, and unforeseen events can change our Roadmap and when these changes happen it can be very frustrating for customers and customer-facing teams. So communicating this fact is vital but also sharing at what timeframes you have higher or lower possibilities of change can help set clear expectations which will minimize potential frustrations.
- **Meeting them where they are** - it's not just about providing materials to someone but successfully providing it. By making your Roadmap and the contact around it easy to find, consume, and provide feedback around people will be more likely to use it and feel connected to what you are doing and their part in it.
- **Keeping your Roadmap evergreen** - when someone views your Roadmap, they expect it to be accurate. Using a tool like Product-board allow you to keep your Roadmap evergreen as you continually update and prioritize your backlog. However if not using a tool like this, it is important to ensure you have clear communications around when the Roadmap is updated and having a reference on it of when it was last updated.
- **Show that you're listening.** If you spend all this time and effort sharing out your vision and direction, having collaboration sessions, gathering feedback then never show how all that work is being incorporated into what you are doing then it can feel like teams are spending a lot of time and effort to no effect.
- **Calling out initiatives** and/or features in the Roadmap that came from individuals, teams, or customers shows that you are listening and gives credit where credit is due. It can also help to call out top feedback contributors and re-iterate how that information is used to drive decision making. This will encourage people to continue taking the time to provide this vital information.

# A Addressing myths associated with product roadmapping

Roadmaps are a Commitment

The More Detailed, the Better

One Size Fits All

Roadmaps Should Contain Exact Dates

①

A common misconception is that once a Roadmap is created, it is set in stone and must be followed to the letter. In reality, Roadmaps are meant to be flexible and dynamic documents. They should evolve as the product, market conditions, or company strategy changes. They are a guide, not a contract.

Roadmaps are Only for Planning Features

Only the Product Manager is Responsible for the Roadmap

Roadmaps Kill Innovation

Roadmaps are Static Documents

Roadmaps are a Commitment

The More Detailed, the Better

One Size Fits All

Roadmaps Should Contain Exact Dates

②

While it's important to provide sufficient detail in a Roadmap to guide development and inform stakeholders, an overly detailed Roadmap can be restrictive and misleading. It can give a false sense of certainty about future features and timelines. A high-level Roadmap with a focus on themes and goals can be more effective.

Roadmaps are Only for Planning Features

Only the Product Manager is Responsible for the Roadmap

Roadmaps Kill Innovation

Roadmaps are Static Documents

3

Roadmaps are a Commitment

The More Detailed, the Better

One Size Fits All

Roadmaps Should Contain Exact Dates

Many believe that a single Roadmap can meet the needs of all stakeholders, from product teams to sales to customers. In reality, different audiences require different levels of detail and focus. Creating a tailored Roadmap to suit each audience's needs can lead to better communication and buy-in.

Roadmaps are Only for Planning Features

Only the Product Manager is Responsible for the Roadmap

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Roadmaps are a Commitment

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One Size Fits All

Roadmaps Should Contain Exact Dates

4

While timeframes are important in a Roadmap, setting exact dates can create unrealistic expectations and pressure. It's often more effective to provide broader timeframes or use a format such as Now-Next-Later, especially for long-term planning.

Roadmaps are Only for Planning Features

Only the Product Manager is Responsible for the Roadmap

Roadmaps Kill Innovation

Roadmaps are Static Documents

Roadmaps are Only for Planning Features

Only the Product Manager is Responsible for the Roadmap

Roadmaps Kill Innovation

Roadmaps are Static Documents

5

Many people view Roadmaps solely as a plan for new features. However, Roadmaps can and should include other elements such as technical debt, UX improvements, research, and business goals, among other things.

Roadmaps are Only for Planning Features

Only the Product Manager is Responsible for the Roadmap

Roadmaps Kill Innovation

Roadmaps are Static Documents

6

While the product manager often leads the Roadmapping process, the best Roadmaps are created with input from various stakeholders such as developers, designers, marketing, sales, customer support, and even customers themselves. This ensures the Roadmap is realistic and aligned with business objectives and customer needs.

Roadmaps are Only for Planning Features

Only the Product Manager is Responsible for the Roadmap

Roadmaps Kill Innovation

Roadmaps are Static Documents

7

Some people believe that having a Roadmap stifles innovation and agility, locking teams into a set path. However, a well-crafted Roadmap provides strategic guidance and focus, leaving room for innovation and adjustments as necessary.

Roadmaps are Only for Planning Features

Only the Product Manager is Responsible for the Roadmap

Roadmaps Kill Innovation

Roadmaps are Static Documents

8

Roadmaps should be dynamic, living documents that reflect the current understanding of the product's direction. They should be regularly updated and reviewed as assumptions change, new information is acquired, or business objectives evolve.

# Best practices associated with product roadmapping

1. **Set Clear Goals and Objectives:** Roadmaps should align with the broader goals and objectives of your organization. Setting these goals can help prioritize features, efforts, and initiatives. It can also guide your team and stakeholders, providing a clear direction for your product.
2. **Tailor Roadmaps for Each Audience:** Different stakeholders have different needs and concerns. Tailoring a Roadmap to each audience can help you communicate more effectively. For example, leadership may need a high-level strategic view, while the development team may need more granular, tactical details.
3. **Prioritize:** Not all features and initiatives are equally important. Use a framework like RICE (Reach, Impact, Confidence, Effort) or MoSCoW (Must have, Should have, Could have, Won't have) to prioritize what goes on the Roadmap based on impact, effort, and alignment with goals. Ensure your prioritization approach is considering the voice of the customer, voice of the business, and voice of the product team for a well rounded evaluation.
4. **Use Data to Drive Decisions:** Base your decisions on solid data whenever possible. This could come from user feedback, market research, usage data, and more. This helps ensure that your Roadmap reflects what users need and want, not just what you think they want.
5. **Keep it Simple and Visual:** A good Roadmap should be easy to understand at a glance. Use visuals and avoid overcrowding it with too much information. The goal is to convey a strategic plan, not list every task and feature.
6. **Make it Flexible:** Roadmaps should be flexible and adaptable to change. It's a strategic document that guides your direction, but it shouldn't be so rigid that it can't accommodate changes in market conditions, user needs, or business objectives.
7. **Update Regularly:** A Roadmap isn't a one-time document. Regular updates ensure it remains relevant and reflects the current strategy and understanding of the product's direction. Create standard ceremonies or process points for when you will review and make updates.
8. **Involve the Team:** Building a Roadmap shouldn't be done in isolation. Involve stakeholders and team members in the process. This promotes buy-in, ensures alignment, and brings different perspectives to the table.
9. **Be Transparent and Honest:** Avoid overpromising on your Roadmap. Be honest about what you can deliver and when. This builds trust with your stakeholders and manages their expectations.
10. **Tell a Story:** A Roadmap is not just a list of features, it's a strategic narrative about where you're going and why. Telling this story can make your Roadmap more compelling and easier to understand. It can also help to align your stakeholders around a shared vision for the future.
11. **Provide Context:** Help your stakeholders understand why certain items are on the Roadmap. Explain how they align with the product vision and strategic goals. This context can help stakeholders understand your choices and priorities.
12. **Remember to Include Non-Feature Work:** Your Roadmap should include more than just new features. Be sure to account for technical debt, architectural improvements, and research. These items are important for maintaining a healthy product and team, and they can have significant impact on your product's success.
13. **Use a Product Management Tool:** Use a product management tool such as Productboard that allows you to manage your backlog, effectively estimate, prioritize, and create dynamic Roadmaps. This will allow you to build a Roadmap once and with minimal effort have visualizations that are ever-green using the information you are managing on a day-to-day basis as part of your product management process.