
Product Management: Startup vs Enterprise

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Today's agenda

About me

What is Product Management

PM Differences at the Enterprise Level

Gotcha's

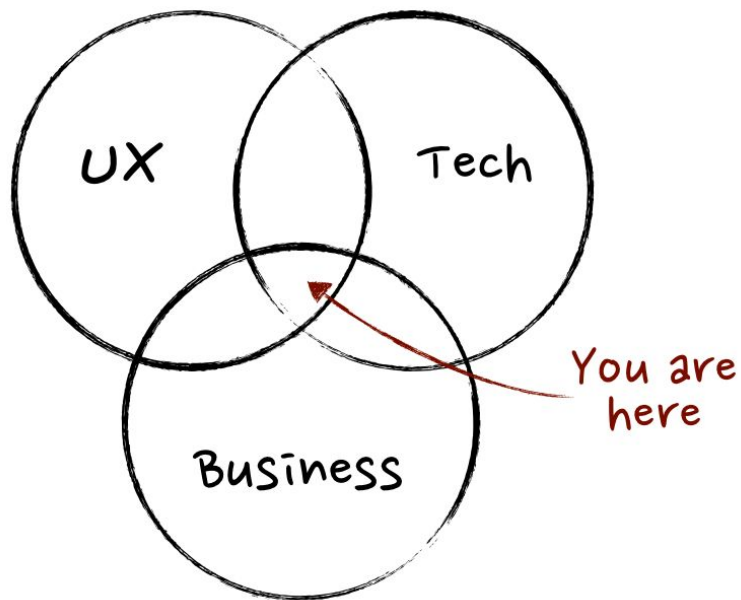
Summary

About me



- Graduated University of Waterloo with a B.Math in Computer Science with a Business minor (2001).
 - Multiple software development internships in Toronto area.
 - Last two internships product & project management at Microsoft HQ in Seattle.
 - 15 years of product / project management across on-prem and SaaS at Microsoft.
 - 2 years at a local product consultancy.
 - Currently Development Manager at FTS.
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So...What is Product Management?



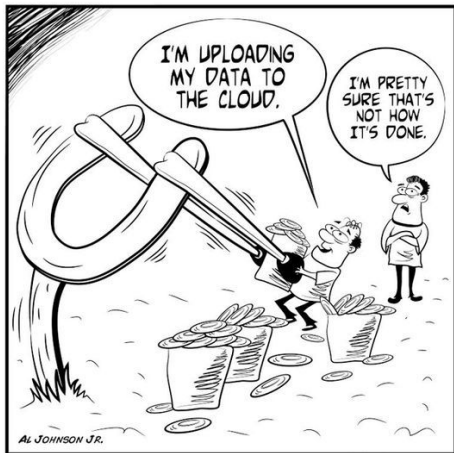
- PM is typically different for every company.
 - A good product manager ties together design and experience, technology and the business. A great product manager is an expert at one or two of these areas.
 - A driving force behind defining a customer focused product via vision, goals, and delivery.
 - PM Loop: Vision > Research > Plan > Execute > Repeat.
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UX and Experience



"Rather than redesign our site to be responsive, we will require our customers to buy bigger mobile devices."

- You don't have to be a "designer" but you do need to try to think like one
 - Does the workflow make sense
 - Are key questions missing, or are there too many questions?
 - Does it "look" well designed to you?
 - Understanding customer mindset when using the UI
 - Are they outdoors on a hill top? Are they under stress? Are they bored and anything that doesn't delight is a reason to stop?
 - Ability to communicate to designers in their language
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Understanding the Technology

- You're not the developer, but you need to ground yourself in technology
 - Developers like to be stretched to try to solve problems they haven't solved before, but they also like to think it's possible
 - You don't have to code, but you need to understand that developers need to, it's a good idea to get a "gut" feel for how long things take.
 - Asking thought provoking questions to encourage the developer to think outside of the box.
- Spec writing (depending on the company)
 - Being technical enough to know there are APIs to call, or help define the APIs in cases of an API based experience
- Ability to communicate in the language of a developer

Understanding the Business



- What direction is business taking the product
 - The CEO or VP likely has some idea they want their business to head in, what's the Vision and Mission of the company/division?
Does what you're building line up?
 - How does your feature set relate directly to the mission or how does it make money for the product/company?
 - Can you sell your ideas to the business and management?
 - ROI, Customers gained/saved, etc
 - Knowing when to stop talking
 - Knowing when to start looking for a new role
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How is PM applied at the enterprise?



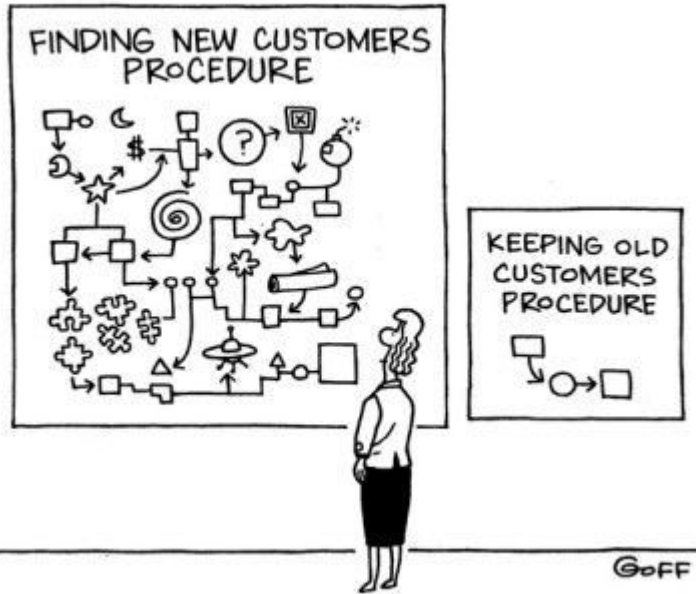
1. Communication, Communication, Communication
 2. Defining who the target customer is, and who it is not
 - a. Including internal customers
 3. User Research
 4. Usability Studies
 5. Politics and private agenda's
 6. Agile vs Waterfall = Scrummerfall
 7. RoadMapping / Planning
 8. Sales involvement - internal and External
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Communicate, communicate communicate



- Evangelizing the vision and goals inside and outside your team. Inside to keep the product on track, outside to create awareness and support.
 - Targeting the communication for the audience.
 - Building out documentation for reference when you're not available, or for people don't know you.
 - Being crisp and not overselling your point.
 - Knowing enough tech to answer "how does it work" questions so devs can keep coding.
 - Working with Internal customers
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Define the customer space



- In a start-up large paying customers usually define product direction, in an enterprise you can pick your customers, and turn others away.
 - Creating persona's communicates to your team who to build the product for.
 - Various user profiles / different roles .
 - Research is required to understand if the target customers set is large enough for profit.
 - Prototyping and MVPs still ensure product viability, but typically not shipped.
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User research



- The product's analytics in SaaS.
 - Asking existing users
 - Behind the one-way mirror focus groups.
 - Standing in the store and asking questions.
 - Getting out of the same town as your enterprise.
 - Tainted views and warped reality.
 - Using social networking.
 - Viewing user feedback view coloured glasses.
 - Site visits or site upgrades/Beta sites.
 - Hiring external agencies for research & mask company name.
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Usability studies



- Often partnered with experts who specialize in Usability Studies
 - Getting “Off Campus” or “Out of Town”.
 - Bring in many participants and give away prizes
 - Outsource to mask the company name / product name
 - In SaaS products, leverage analytics as much as possible, those are your real customers.
 - Simply ask customers in qualitative or quantitative ways.
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Politics and private agenda's



- Teams/Divisions often have agendas for their business.
 - Their charter may not match your charter
 - Executive support for your product and product features
 - Individuals all try to navigate personal careers
 - Who you know.
 - Who's in your network
 - Your personal scope of influence
 - Perfect Engineering vs Customer Desires
 - Engineers rewarded and desire for technically perfect products vs what customers actually want
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Agile vs Waterfall



"This really is an innovative approach, but I'm afraid we can't consider it. It's never been done before."

- General consensus at most enterprises is that Agile is amazing, with some customizations.
 - Typically end up in what I call "Scrummerfall"
 - Waterfall planning for 3, 6, 12 month periods
 - Organized backlog based on this plan
 - Agile in week to week for sprints
 - New features can take up to 2-3 months for approval depending on size
 - Adjusting feature set on the fly is typically frowned upon, upper leaders meet to discuss priorities and decide.
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“Every computer has been equipped with a compass to help keep our team on course.”

Building a Plan or Roadmap

- Specification writing can take days to write, and weeks to sign-off and agree
 - Especially if your idea spans multiple dev-teams with multiple-dev leads
 - Often you can end up writing a market requirements document, a technical specification and then a power point that ties the two together
 - No one has time to read your document, so you have to chase them down and tell them
 - Once leadership is convinced the rest of the team needs direction
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Involvement with sales



- Conferences and Trade-shows, the PM is the technical attendee that helps to advocate and sell the product.
 - Selling your product across the enterprise, specifically elevator pitches with executives.
 - Providing Sales with the technical details and ensuring the sales documentation matches the vision.
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Enterprise Gotcha's



"We'd like to give you this empty cardboard box as our way of saying we'd like you out by three."

- Reorganizations
 - Massive priority changes, ownership changes
 - Cuts & Re-Prioritization
 - Work on something for months or years, and it's done, just like that.
 - Your Career
 - It's what you make it. Seek out mentorship, advice, and job changes every 3-4 years to continue to grow
 - Take advantage of all the training opportunities
 - Network within and outside the company
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Moving & Living in the USA



- Extra work to change countries, don't let the legal department do everything without understanding it
 - US officials will always look down on you until you have residency
 - Immunizations
 - Tax Implications
 - Travel costs to visit family + a lot of your vacation
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In summary

1. Over communicating is your secret weapon
2. Focus on the customer, at scale
3. User Research has many avenues
4. Usability studies done qualitatively and quantitatively
5. Become political, convince people to want to help you
6. Don't expect to follow pure practices, like Agile Dev
7. Prepare to put some thought into long term plans
8. Get your sales pitch on.



And finally, be prepared to have the carpet ripped out from under you. Always keep looking at the big picture.

Thank-you!

Questions? Get in touch >

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