



# Product Roadmaps

A product roadmap is a shared source of truth that outlines the vision, direction, and progress of a product over time.



BY BREE DAVIES

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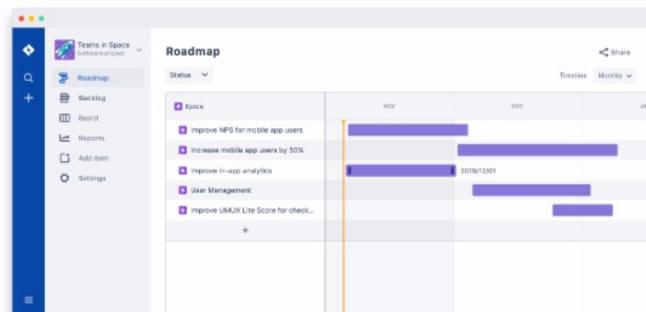
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**Summary:** A product roadmap is a plan of action for how a product or solution will evolve over time. Product owners use roadmaps to outline future product functionality and when new features will be released. When used in agile development, a roadmap provides crucial context for the team's everyday work and should be responsive to shifts in the competitive landscape.

A product roadmap is essential to communicating how short-term efforts match long-term business goals. Understanding the role of a roadmap—and how to create a great one—is key for keeping everyone on your team headed in the same direction.

## What is a product roadmap?

A product roadmap is a shared source of truth that outlines the vision, direction, priorities, and progress of a product over time. It's a plan of action that aligns the organization around short- and long-term goals for the product or project, and how they will be achieved.



While it's common for the roadmap to show what you're building, it's just as important to show why. Items on the roadmap should be clearly linked to your product strategy, and your roadmap should be responsive to changes in customer feedback and the competitive landscape.

Product owners use roadmaps to collaborate with their teams and build consensus on how a product will grow and shift over time. Agile teams turn to the roadmap to keep everyone on the same page and gain context for their everyday work and future direction.

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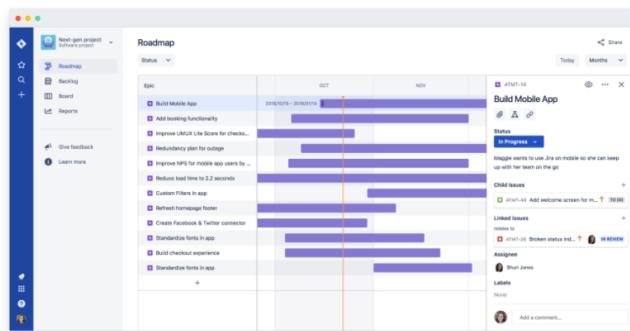
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# Who are roadmaps for?

Roadmaps come in several different forms and serve a variety of audiences:

**Internal roadmap for development team:** These roadmaps can be created in several ways, depending on how your team likes to work. Some common versions include the detail about the prioritised customer value to be delivered, target release dates and milestones. Since many development teams use agile methodologies, these roadmaps are often organized by sprints and show specific pieces of work and problem areas plotted on a timeline.



**Internal roadmap for executives:** These roadmaps emphasize how teams' work supports high-level company goals and metrics. They are often organized by month or by quarter to show progress over time towards these goals, and generally include less detail about detailed development stories and tasks.



**Internal roadmap for sales:** These roadmaps focus on new features and customer benefits in order to support sales conversations. An important note: avoid including hard dates in sales roadmaps to avoid tying internal teams to potentially unrealistic dates.

**External roadmap:** These roadmaps should excite customers about what's coming next. Make sure they are

visually appealing and easy to read. They should provide a high-level, generalized view of new features and prioritized problem areas to get customers interested in the future direction of the product.

## Why should I create a product roadmap?

The biggest benefit of the product roadmap is the strategic vision it illustrates to all stakeholders. The roadmap matches broader product and company goals with development efforts, which align the teams around common goals to create great products.

- **For organizational leadership**, the roadmap provides updates on the status of work and “translates” developer tasks in Jira into non-technical terms and a format that’s easily understood.
- **For product owners and managers**, roadmaps unify teams working on high impact product enhancements and allow them to communicate priorities effectively with adjacent teams.
- **For the developers themselves**, roadmaps provide a better understanding of the “big picture,” which allows team members to focus on the most important tasks, avoid scope creep, and make fast, autonomous decisions.

## How do I build a product roadmap?

To build a roadmap, product owners should consider market trajectories, customer value propositions, strategic goals, and effort constraints. Once these factors are understood, the product owner can work with their team to start prioritizing initiatives and epics on the roadmap.

The content of a roadmap will depend on its audience - a roadmap for the development team may cover only one product, while a roadmap for executives can cover multiple products. Depending on the size and structure of an organization, a single roadmap may span multiple teams working on the same product. An external roadmap will often cover multiple products aligned with one point of emphasis or customer need.

The most important takeaway: create a roadmap that your audience can easily understand. Providing too much or too little detail on the roadmap can make it easy to gloss over, or worse, to too intimidating to read. A roadmap with just the right amount of detail and some visual appeal can earn the buy-in you need from key stakeholders.

## Presenting the product roadmap

The product roadmap needs buy-in from two key groups: leadership and the agile development team. Presenting the roadmap is a great opportunity to demonstrate to key stakeholders that you understand the company's strategic objectives, the needs of your customer, and have a plan to meet them both.

Check out our dedicated page on [presenting product roadmaps](#).

As you move through the project, make sure to link your team's work back to the roadmap to build context. A tried-and-true method: break initiatives down into [epics](#) in the product backlog, then further decompose them into [requirements](#) and [user stories](#). Establishing this issue hierarchy makes it easier for product owners and the development team to make decisions and understand how their work fits into the bigger picture.

## Using and updating the roadmap

As the competitive landscape shifts, customers' preferences adjust, or planned features are modified, it's important to ensure the product roadmap continues to reflect the status of current work as well as long-term goals.

The roadmap should be updated as often as necessary - this could be every week or fortnightly - so that it can remain an accurate source of truth. As we've all experienced at one time or another, a roadmap is counter-productive if it isn't up to date. You'll know if your roadmap needs to be updated more frequently because your stakeholders will start calling you for updates instead of consulting your roadmap. These one-off requests reflect a distrust in your roadmap, and a huge potential time suck.

However, on the flip side, you don't want to spend more time updating the roadmap than is necessary to achieve alignment between stakeholders and within your team. Remember, the roadmap is a planning tool to think through how to build great products. If you're spending time updating your roadmap that you could (and should) be spending on execution, think about changing your roadmapping tool to something more simple.

## Best practices for the best roadmaps

Building and maintaining product roadmaps is an ongoing process to embark upon with your team. There are a few simple ways to set yourself up for success:

- Only include as much detail as necessary for your audience
- Keep the roadmap evenly focused on short-term tactics and how these relate to long-term goals

- Review roadmaps on a regular basis and make adjustments when plans change
- Make sure everyone has access to the roadmap (and checks it on a regular basis)
- Stay connected with stakeholders at all levels to ensure alignment

Ready to make your very own roadmap? Learn more about roadmaps in [Jira Software](#).

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