

PRODUCT MANAGER GROUP THERAPY

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Facilitated by Dean Peters

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PRODUCT MANAGEMENT IS HARD



"product management is hard"



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Why do we Forget That Product Management is a Tough Career ...

<https://www.mindtheproduct.com/2018/05/forget-product-management-tough-career/> ▼

May 14, 2018 - **Product Management is Hard.** ... And that's before you've started speaking to customers, analysing product data, understanding your market, defining your product vision and roadmap, or even managing other product managers.

Why is product management hard? - Productboard

<https://www.productboard.com/ideas> ▼

Jun 20, 2017 - **Product management is hard** to do well, and that requires specialization if one is to excel at it. So the next time someone snarkily asks whether ...

The Five Deadly Sins of Product Management – Noteworthy - The ...

<https://blog.usejournal.com/the-five-deadly-sins-of-product-management-2eb249a0f6...> ▼

Oct 30, 2017 - **Product management is hard** and we must try and avoid the 'sins', which are waiting for us at every corner. Even seasoned PMs fall back on ...



PRODUCT MANAGEMENT IS HARD

But
Why?

First, a little bit about Dean

All views and opinions presented here tonight are solely that of my own, and do not necessarily reflect those of any employer past, present or current.

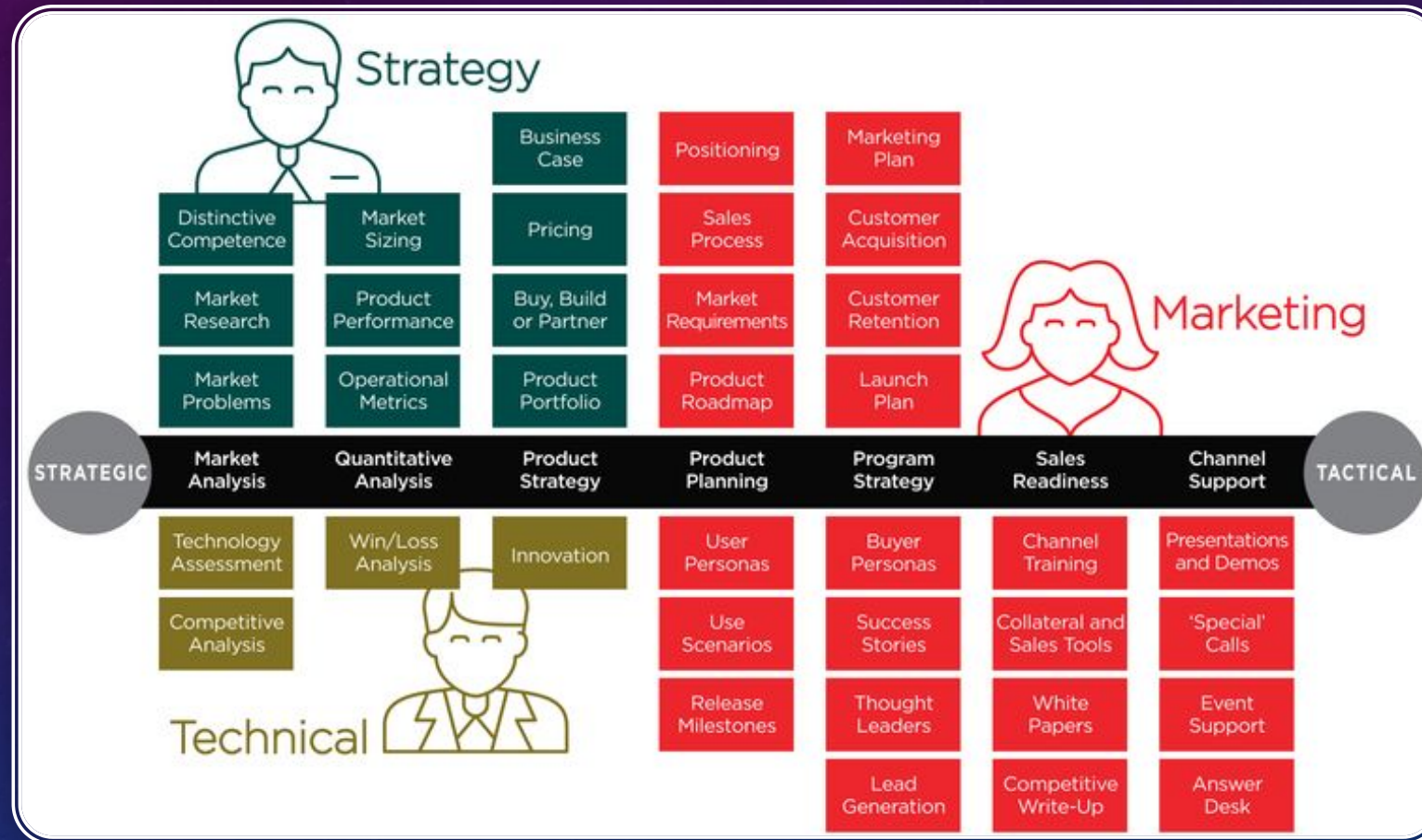
Next, a little bit about the World in which we all work



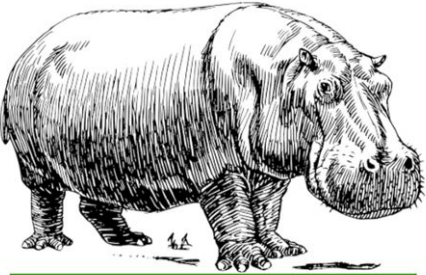
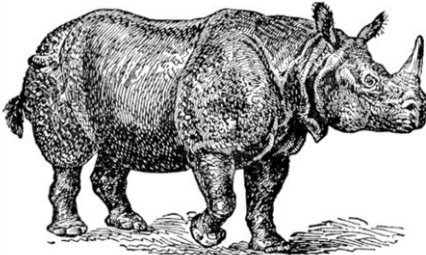


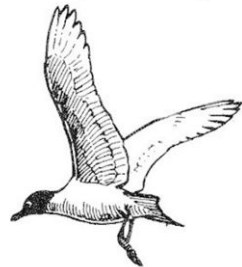
TL;DR

Because of improvements in technology,
we in Product are being asked to deliver
software faster than ever before.

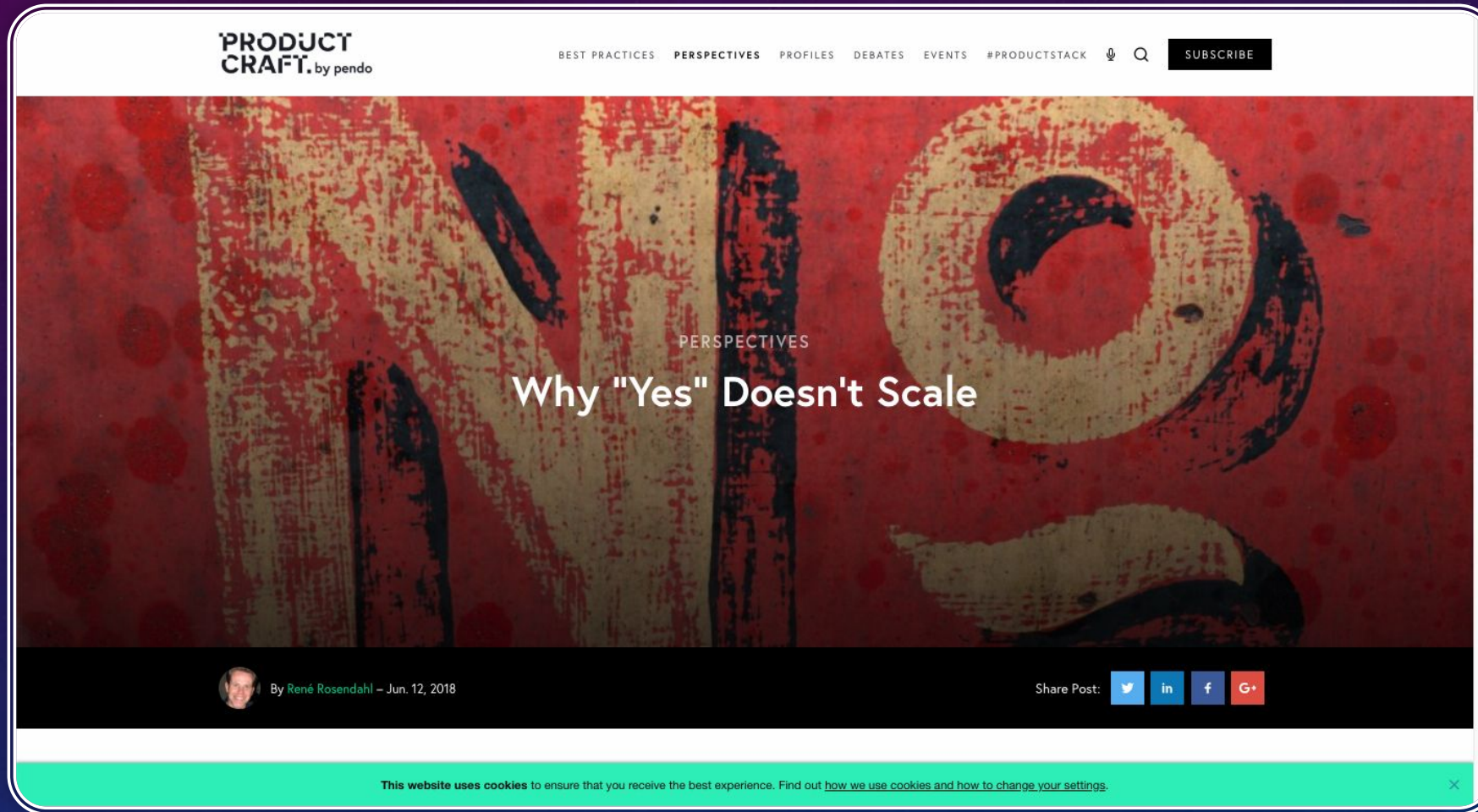
While Wearing 37 Hats



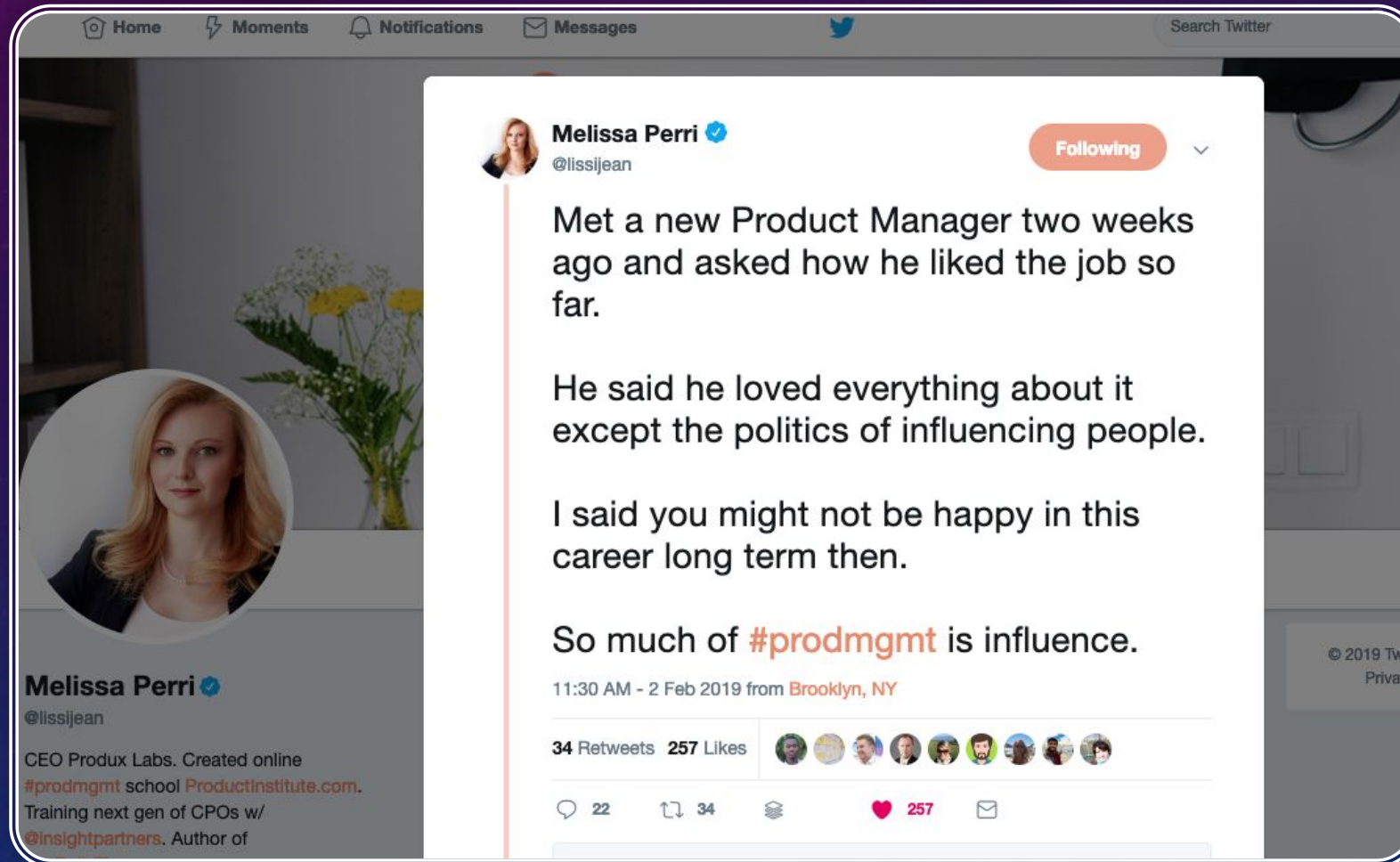
While Haggling Over Prioritization

<p>Whoever has the gold makes the rules!</p>  <p>Part 1 of the Product Management Prioritization Menagerie Series</p> <p>HiPPO</p> <p><i>Highest Paid Person's Opinion</i></p> <p>DeanOnDelivery.com by Jafar</p>	<p>A salesman is got to dream, boy.</p>  <p>Part 2 of the Product Management Prioritization Menagerie Series</p> <p>RHiNO</p> <p><i>Really High value, New Opportunity</i></p> <p>DeanOnDelivery.com by Willy Loman</p>	<p>Ms. Vito, what is your current profession?</p>  <p>Part 3 of the Product Management Prioritization Menagerie Series</p> <p>ZEbRA</p> <p><i>Zero Evidence, but Really Arrogant</i></p> <p>DeanOnDelivery.com by Jim Trotter III</p>	<p>Yippie-Ki-Yay</p>  <p>Part 4 of the Product Management Prioritization Menagerie Series</p> <p>WoLF</p> <p><i>Works on Latest Fire</i></p> <p>DeanOnDelivery.com by John McClane</p>	<p>How to swoop in noisily ...</p>  <p>... dump on everyone ...</p> <p>Seagull Management</p> <p>Part 5 of the Product Management Prioritization Menagerie Series</p> <p>... and leave a big mess!</p> <p>DeanOnDelivery.com by Bill Lumbergh</p>
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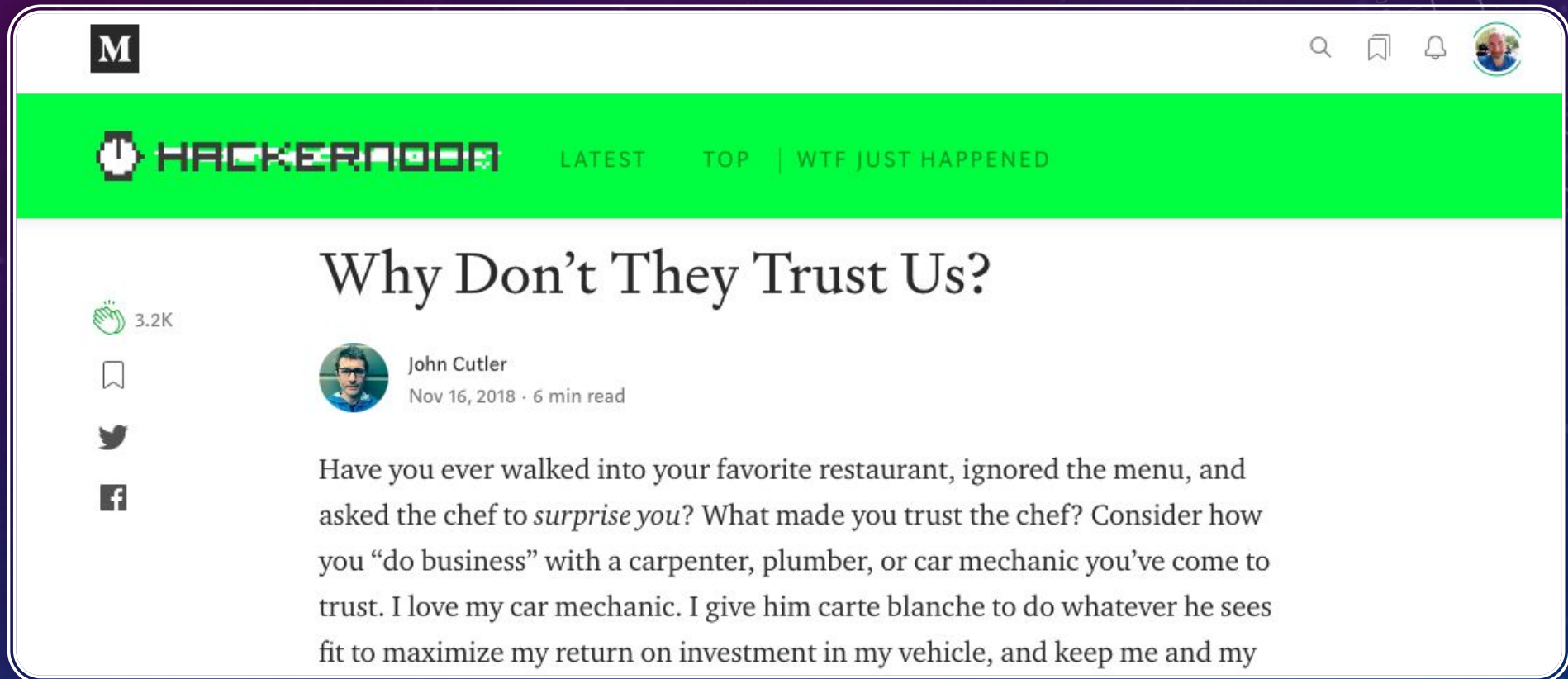
While Having To Say No



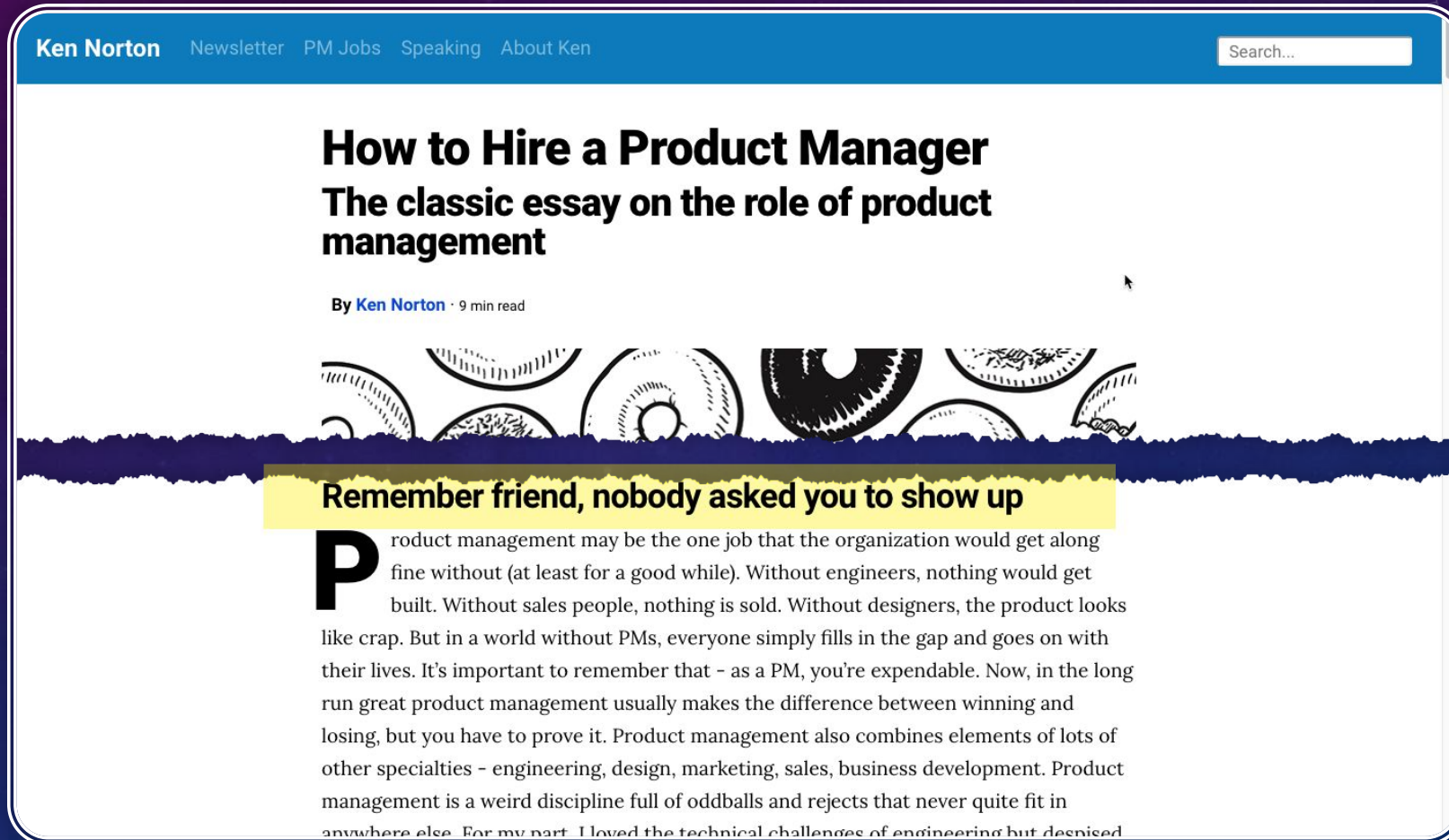
While Navigating Politics



While Building Trust



While Working In A Thankless Role



How to Hire a Product Manager

The classic essay on the role of product management

By [Ken Norton](#) · 9 min read

Remember friend, nobody asked you to show up

Product management may be the one job that the organization would get along fine without (at least for a good while). Without engineers, nothing would get built. Without sales people, nothing is sold. Without designers, the product looks like crap. But in a world without PMs, everyone simply fills in the gap and goes on with their lives. It's important to remember that - as a PM, you're expendable. Now, in the long run great product management usually makes the difference between winning and losing, but you have to prove it. Product management also combines elements of lots of other specialties - engineering, design, marketing, sales, business development. Product management is a weird discipline full of oddballs and rejects that never quite fit in anywhere else. For my part, I loved the technical challenges of engineering but despised

WHAT?

Want some specifics on what's stressing us out?

Medium



John Cutler

Jan 26 · 12 min read

15 Things You Should Know About Product Managers

- The days are frenetic
- We're torn about our role
- We're at the center of a tornado
- We get thrown into the deep end
- We are expected to exude certainty
- We have vastly different roles depending on the company
- We can't make most decisions unilaterally
- We are the canary in the coalmine
- We struggle with the pressure to "ship"
- We often have to play project manager and facilitator
- We come from many different backgrounds
- We are under a lot of pressure from their teams...
- We are always juggling "theory" and real world practice
- We struggle with impossible expectations

HOW?

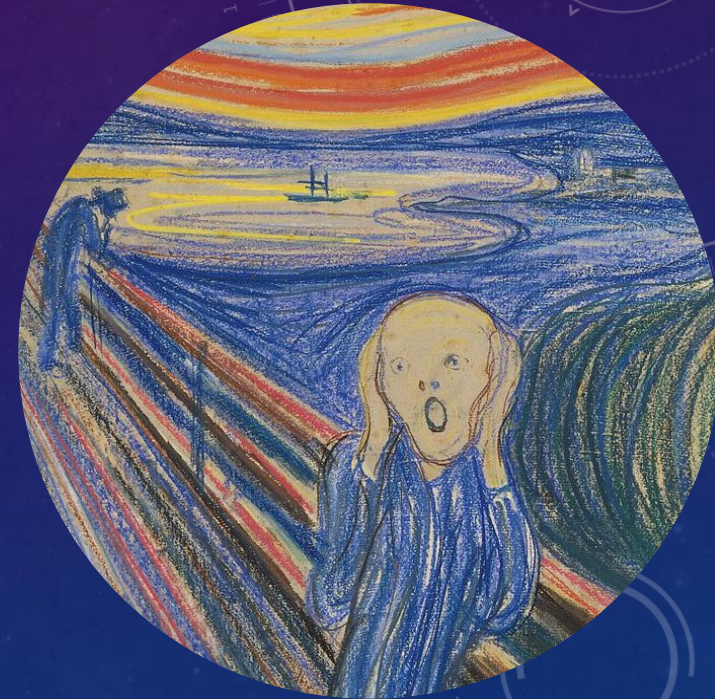
How is it we in product are so stressed out?

PRODUCT MANAGEMENT IS SUPER HARD

To summarize, you are in a vague role, expected to cherish the ambiguity. You are thrown into the heart of the organization, and expected to go 90mph (and be a servant leader, and be a shipper, and be a therapist). You make decisions for other humans, and they're liable to start doubting you when things inevitably don't pan out (because it is hard). You rely on your team, and they rely on you. And you're the wringable neck when it goes sideways.

PRODUCT MANAGEMENT IS SUPER HARD

But it doesn't have to drive you crazy!



First, a little bit about Dean



WHAT TO DO ABOUT IT?

THE DOCTOR IS IN THE HOUSE

STEP 1 - PRODUCT MANAGER, HEAL THYSELF

We spend our days soothing the pain points of others ...

... yet when was the last time someone addressed yours?

STEP 2 – MAKE FRIENDS ACTIVITY

Introduce yourself:

- Hi, My name is 'x'
- I've been a product manager for 'y' years (zero is a completely acceptable answer)
- My biggest or current pain point is 'z'

Re-Introduce the person before you as:

- The first name of my product BFF is 'x'
- They have been in product for 'y' years



STEP 3 – SELF ORGANIZATION EXERCISE

Create Small Teams

- 1 Purple Post-It holder – an 10+ year veteran
- 1 to 2 Orange Post-It holder - a 5 to 9 year product pro
- 2 to 3 Green Post-It holders – 0 to 4 years product experience

Pass the Egg

- Orange Post-It holders must remain silent
- Each of the 4 egg must individually make 4 trips around the circle
- Each egg must be individually touched once by ALL team members
- Eggs cannot be passed to your immediate neighbor
- After, 1 Orange Post-It holder will explain how they self-organized their egg toss

ORANGE POST-IT HOLDER FEEDBACK

- What did you observe?
- What did you feel?
- What did you learn?
- Do you feel more connected?
- Do you feel like the egg passing problem is now a bit less intimidating?

LESSON LEARNED

- It's easier when you work together
- It's even easier when you don't attempt to eat the elephant whole

STEP 4 – PICK-A-PAIN POINT TO TAKEDOWN ACTIVITY

The screenshot shows a Trello board titled "Software Product Therapy March 2019" with a star icon, "Software Product Therapy Trello Board" label, "Free" tag, "Team Visible" setting, and user avatars AB, AW, B, and 47. A "Show Menu" link is in the top right. The board is divided into five columns, each with a title and three cards. Each card contains a text description, a thumbs-up icon with a count, and a Gantt chart visualization.

Column Title	Card Title	Description	Thumbs Up
Prioritization Pain Points	Prioritization Phobias	- Dealing with the HiPPOs and Seagull Managers when their prioritization doesn't necessarily make sense.	5
	Roadmap Identity Crisis	- pushing back on making it a timeline-driven Gantt chart.	4
Agile Related Pain Points	Teamus Tetris	- Rapid shuffling of teams & projects.	4
	Multitaskia Arithmeticiatus	- when you're 1 PO with 2 Teams each each on 3 discrete and unrelated work streams.	4
Technical Pain Points	JiraPhobia	- dealing with developers who refuse to write user stories, including the highly technical ones (or write with no clear acceptance criteria)	3
			1
Stakeholder Pain Points	Fixatation Flashinitus	- an overly developed focus on flashy, sales-pleasing front-end features at the expense of sound infrastructure work.	3
Other Pain Points	Auctoritati Falsitate	- the sad truth about the leadership sans authority that just doesn't happen in some work cultures.	3

Find more pain points on our Trello board at:
<http://bit.ly/ProductTherapyTrelloMarch2019>

SMALL GROUPS DISCUSSION

- Self organize in a group where there is:
 - the Purple Post-It holders switch groups
- Go to the pain-point board
 - Allow the Green Post-It holders to pick a topic
 - Green and Orange Post-It holders can discuss
 - Purple Post-It holders must remain silent
 - Afterwards, Purple Post-It holders will present the conversation to the room

GREEN POST-IT HOLDER FEEDBACK

- What did you observe?
- What did you feel?
- What did you learn?
- Do you feel more connected?
- Do you feel like the pain points are a bit less intimidating?

LESSON LEARNED

- You are likely not the first person whose experienced product management pain points
- Put another way ... you are not alone

STEP 5 – TAKE CONTROL BY TAKING ACTION!

- Art – this includes expression through drawing, music, & even cooking.
- Blog – write about a frustration as if you were coaching someone else.
- Connect – there are a variety of online groups you can join.
- Discuss – Find another product peer you can call, SMS, Slack or meet.
- Exercise – Don't just sit there and stew, put them endorphins to work.
- Forget – Find some activities to take your mind off your worries.
- Gather – Take advantage of all the meetups we have in town.
- Help – There is great joy and relief found in assisting others.

ONLINE RESOURCES

Slack Channels

- [Mindtheproduct.slack.com](https://mindtheproduct.slack.com)
- [Triproduct.slack.com](https://tripproduct.slack.com)
- [Product-school.slack.com](https://product-school.slack.com)
- [Agiledojo.slack.com](https://agiledojo.slack.com)
- [Product-hive.slack.com](https://product-hive.slack.com)
- [ProductCoalition.slack.com](https://productcoalition.slack.com)
- [Pendomonium.slack.com](https://pendomonium.slack.com)

Podcasts

- [Deliver It Cast **](#)
- [ProductTank - Mind the Product](#)
- [This is Product Management](#)
- [Product Hunt](#)
- [How I Built This](#)
- [Product to Product](#)
- [ProductCraft Product Love](#)

READING LIST

Blogs

- [John Cutler – Medium](#)
- [HackerNoon](#)
- [Pragmatic Marketing](#)
- [Under 10 Consulting](#)
- [RomanPichler.com](#)
- [ProductCraft](#)
- [Mind the Product](#)
- [DeanOnDelivery.com](#) *(my blog) ***

Books

- [Escaping the Build Trap: How Effective Product Management Creates Real Value](#) - Melissa Perri
- [Unlearn: Let Go of Past Success to Achieve Extraordinary Results](#)
- Barry O'Reilly
- [INSPIRED: How to Create Tech Products Customers Love](#) - Marty Cagan
- [The Phoenix Project: A Novel about IT, DevOps, and Helping Your Business Win](#) - Gene Kim
- [Product Management in Practice: A Real-World Guide to the Key Connective Role of the 21st Century](#) -
Matt LeMay
- [The Lean Product Playbook: How to Innovate with Minimum Viable Products and Rapid Customer
Feedback](#) - Dan Olsen
- [Lean Analytics: Use Data to Build a Better Startup Faster \(Lean Series\)](#)
- Croll & Yoskovitz
- [The Surprising Power of Liberating Structures: Simple Rules to Unleash A Culture of Innovation](#) –
Lipmanowicz & McCandless
- [Death March](#) (2nd Ed) – Edward Yourdon

LOCAL MEETUP GROUPS

A circular graphic with two thick arrows forming a loop. One arrow is dark teal and the other is light teal. The text is centered within the loop.

Agile Leadership
Network -
Raleigh/Durham
Chapter

The logo for Product Tank RTP, featuring a blue circular icon with three overlapping circles inside, and the text "PRODUCT tank rtp" below it.

PRODUCT
tank rtp

The logo for Product Camp RTP, featuring three red gears of different sizes, with the text "product RTP camp" below them. The word "product" is green, "RTP" is small and red, and "camp" is red.

product RTP
camp

STEP 6 – WHEN ALL ELSE FAILS, REACH OUT TO ME

Here's where you can find me:

- Blog – <https://deanondelivery.com>
- Twitter – <https://twitter.com/deanpeters>
- LinkedIn – <https://linkedin.com/in/deanpeters>
- Podcast – *very soon, let me know you want to be interviewed*

My Pledge to You:

- I may not have all the answers ...
- ... but I'm always glad to listen ...
- ... and your secrets are safe with me!