

# PRODUCT MANAGER GROUP THERAPY

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Facilitated by Dean Peters

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# PRODUCT MANAGEMENT IS HARD



[Why do we Forget That Product Management is a Tough Career ...](https://www.mindtheproduct.com/2018/05/forget-product-management-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)

<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...)

<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?

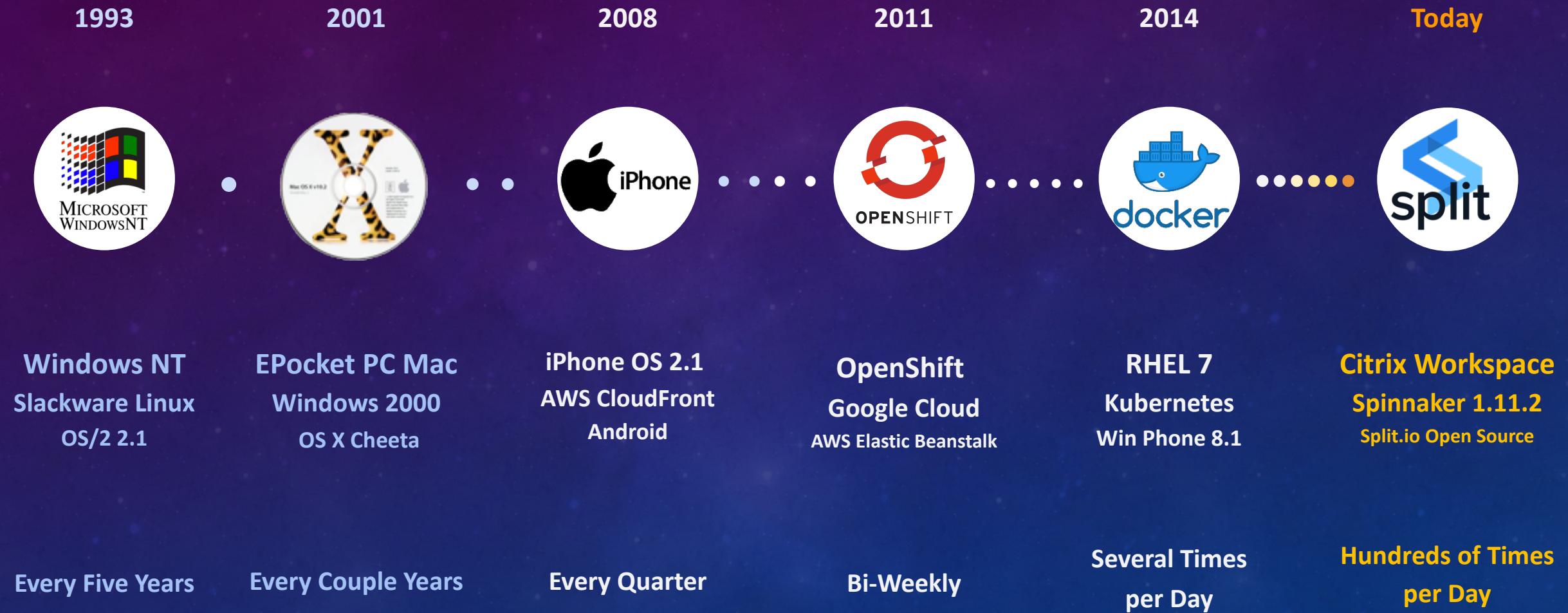
# First, a little bit about Dean

*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.*

# First, a little bit about Dean



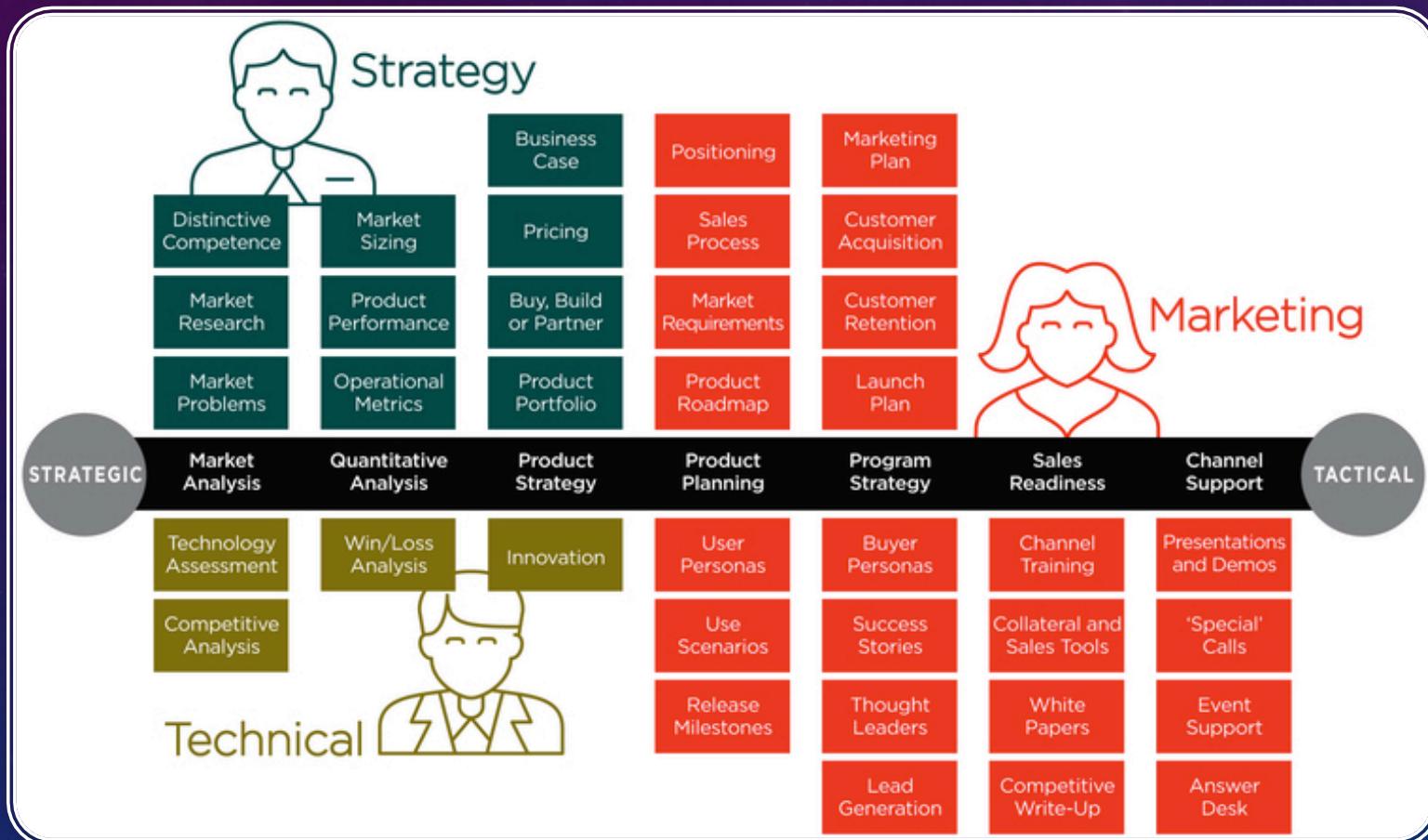
# Next, a little bit about the World in which we all work



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 Haggeling Over Prioritization

*Whoever has the gold makes the rules!*

**HiPPO**  
Highest Paid Person's Opinion

Part 1 of the Product Management Prioritization Menagerie Series

*A salesman is got to dream, boy.*

**RHiNO**  
Really High value, New Opportunity

Part 2 of the Product Management Prioritization Menagerie Series

*Ms. Vito, what is your current profession?*

**ZEBRA**  
Zero Evidence, but Really Arrogant

Part 3 of the Product Management Prioritization Menagerie Series

*Yippie-Ki-Yay*

**WoLF**  
Works on Latest Fire

Part 4 of the Product Management Prioritization Menagerie Series

*How to swoop in noisily ...*

**Seagull Management**  
... dump on everyone ...  
... and leave a big mess!

Part 5 of the Product Management Prioritization Menagerie Series

DeanOnDelivery.com by Jafar DeanOnDelivery.com by Willy Loman DeanOnDelivery.com by Jim Trotter III DeanOnDelivery.com by John McClane DeanOnDelivery.com by Bill Lumbergh

# While Having To Say No

**PRODUCT CRAFT.** by pendo

BEST PRACTICES PERSPECTIVES PROFILES DEBATES EVENTS #PRODUCTSTACK 🔍 Q SUBSCRIBE

PERSPECTIVES

## Why "Yes" Doesn't Scale

By René Rosendahl – Jun. 12, 2018

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# While Navigating Politics

The image shows a Twitter mobile interface. At the top, there are navigation tabs: Home, Moments, Notifications, Messages, and a search bar labeled "Search Twitter". Below the navigation is a tweet card. The profile picture of the tweeter, Melissa Perri (@lissijean), is shown, along with her name and a blue verified checkmark. To the right of the profile picture is an orange "Following" button. The tweet text is as follows:

Melissa Perri   
@lissijean

FOLLOWING

Met a new Product Manager two weeks ago and asked how he liked the job so far.

He said he loved everything about it except the politics of influencing people.

I said you might not be happy in this career long term then.

So much of **#prodmgmt** is influence.

11:30 AM - 2 Feb 2019 from Brooklyn, NY

34 Retweets 257 Likes

22 34 257

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**Section Content:**

**Melissa Perri**   
@lissijean

CEO Produx Labs. Created online  
**#prodmgmt** school [ProductInstitute.com](http://ProductInstitute.com).  
Training next gen of CPOs w/  
**@insightpartners**. Author of

# While Building Trust

The image shows a mobile device displaying the Hacker Noon website. The header features a large 'M' icon, a search bar, a bookmark icon, a notification bell, and a user profile picture. Below the header, there's a navigation bar with icons for a clock ('LATEST'), a person ('TOP'), and a speech bubble ('WTF JUST HAPPENED'). The main content area displays an article titled 'Why Don't They Trust Us?' by John Cutler, published on Nov 16, 2018, with a 6-minute read time. The article has 3.2K upvotes. Below the article, there are social sharing icons for GitHub, LinkedIn, Twitter, and Facebook. The text of the article begins with a paragraph about trusting car mechanics.

## Why Don't They Trust Us?

John Cutler  
Nov 16, 2018 · 6 min read

Have you ever walked into your favorite restaurant, ignored the menu, and asked the chef to *surprise you*? What made you trust the chef? Consider how you “do business” with a carpenter, plumber, or car mechanic you’ve come to trust. I love my car mechanic. I give him carte blanche to do whatever he sees fit to maximize my return on investment in my vehicle, and keep me and my

# While Working In A Thankless Role

**Ken Norton** Newsletter PM Jobs Speaking About Ken

Search...

## 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?

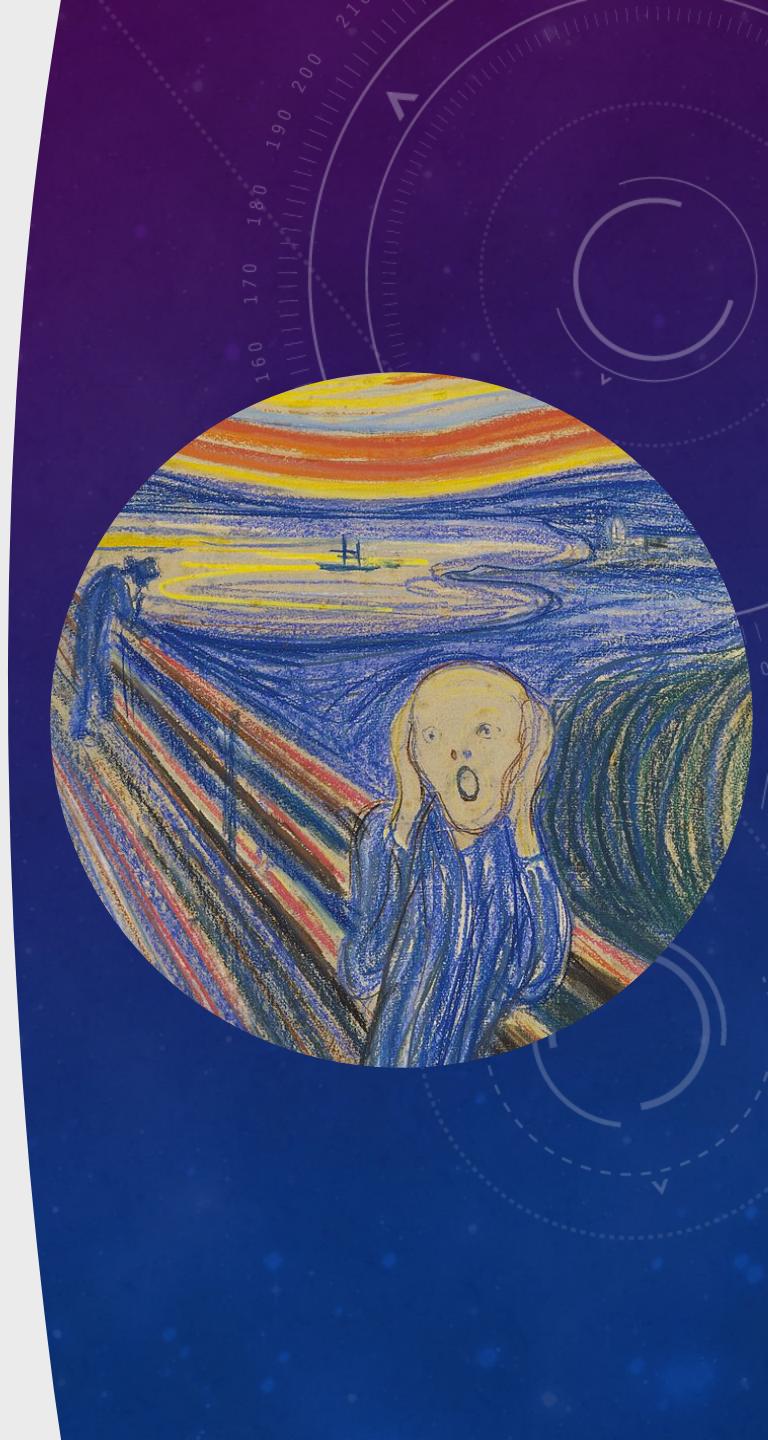
# PRODUCT MANAGEMENT IS SUPER HARD

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!



# WHAT TO DO ABOUT IT?

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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 make 4 trips around the circle
- Each egg must be touched by ALL team member
- Balls 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

Software Product Therapy March 2019    Software Product Therapy Trello Board Free | Team Visible | AB AW B 47 | [Invite](#) | [... Show Menu](#)

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

# 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
- Triproduct.slack.com
- Product-school.slack.com
- Agiledojo.slack.com
- Product-hive.slack.com
- ProductCoalition.slack.com
- 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](#)

## 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
- [Death March](#) (2<sup>nd</sup> Ed) – Edward Yourdon

# LOCAL MEETUP GROUPS

PRODUCT  
tank rtp

product RTP  
camp

Agile Leadership  
Network -  
Raleigh/Durham  
Chapter

## 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 if you want me to interview you!*
- Gmail – deanpeters – at – gmail

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!

