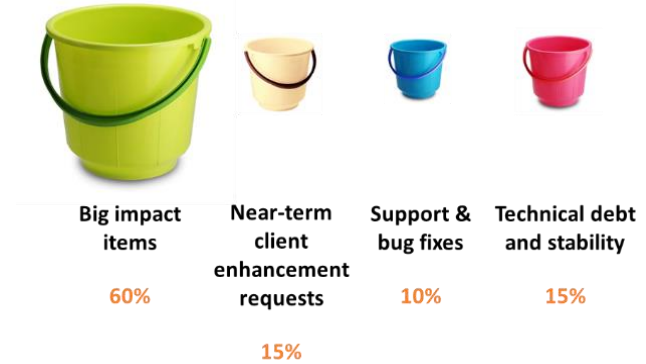*Product tool*

Development buckets

Our development teams often have multiple demands on their time—customer enhancement requests, bug fixes, technical debt, operational support—leaving little bandwidth for innovation and step-function improvement. Our biggest strategic initiatives may get neglected in the rush to meet urgent tactical needs.

Development buckets can help prioritize our engineering team's efforts—balancing their work and ensuring a tight focus on our strategic initiatives and main priorities.

We do this by answering three questions:

1 **What are our major categories (buckets) of development work?** Looking backwards, where have we spent our time? Common categories include big impact items (strategic initiatives), near-term client enhancements, support and bug fixes, and technical debt. Note that these buckets vary by company and product.

2 **How much effort are we investing in each category?** Here we look at engineering time spent or agile points and convert this to a percentage. For example, we may be spending 40% of our time on near-term client enhancement requests.

Big impact items	Near-term client enhancement requests	Support & bug fixes	Technical debt and stability
60%	15%	10%	15%

3 **Going forward, how much do we want to invest in each category?** If we want to ensure that our big impact items (strategic initiatives) get focus, then we may want to put 50% or more on this bucket. We may also reserve 15% for technical debt.

This percentage split becomes our goal. In our sprint planning (development planning), we tag each of our backlog items with a "bucket" label – and work to hit our percentage goals. We may not hit our numbers exactly every two-week sprint, but we try to get very close every quarter.

This tool is powerful and helps us in many ways. It forces product teams to focus on big impact items, limits excessive one-off client requests, and ensures we spend enough time on technical debt and stability (keeping our engineers happy).

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Development buckets

Development categories >>	Big impact items	Near-term client enhancement requests	Support & bug fixes	Technical debt and stability
Percentage of development time	60%	15%	10%	15%
Items	*We use our strategy, roadmap, and OKRs to prioritize these items*	Item 1 Item 2 Item 3 … *In priority order*	Item 1 Item 2 Item 3 … *In priority order*	Item 1 Item 2 Item 3 … *In priority order*

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Development buckets

We determine the right buckets for our product

Development categories >>	Big impact items	Near-term client enhancement requests	Support & bug fixes	Technical debt and stability
Percentage of development time	60%	15%	10%	15%
Items	*We use our strategy, roadmap, and OKRs to prioritize these items*	Item 1 Item 2 Item 3 … *In priority order*	Item 1 Item 2 Item 3 … *In priority order*	Item 1 Item 2 Item 3 … *In priority order*

We work with our engineering team to determine the best percentage allocation

This column wins us customer loyalty and competitive advantage. Allocate a high percent

We put our backlog items into these buckets and prioritize vertically. We don't try to prioritize individual items in one column vs. individual items in another column

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