From enterprise to startup:
how to be successful product manager

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About me

- Spent **6** years at Microsoft as a **Program** Manager

- Joined a startup **3** months ago as a **Product** Manager

- (Recruiting plug)

  - Pulumi is hiring frontend developers (React) and Site Reliability Engineers

  - Learn more at pulumi.com/careers or chat with me

What I've learned

- As a product manager, your job is not about software, it's about people

- To be a great PM, you need to embrace this

2011: Donna joins Microsoft

- There's dev, test, and PM

  - Developers write code and unit tests

  - Testers write integration tests and test harnesses

  - PMs do everything else

The reality

- "Everything else" is actually quite constrained

- Organization expects particular things from PM

- What PMs weren't doing

  - Product/market fit

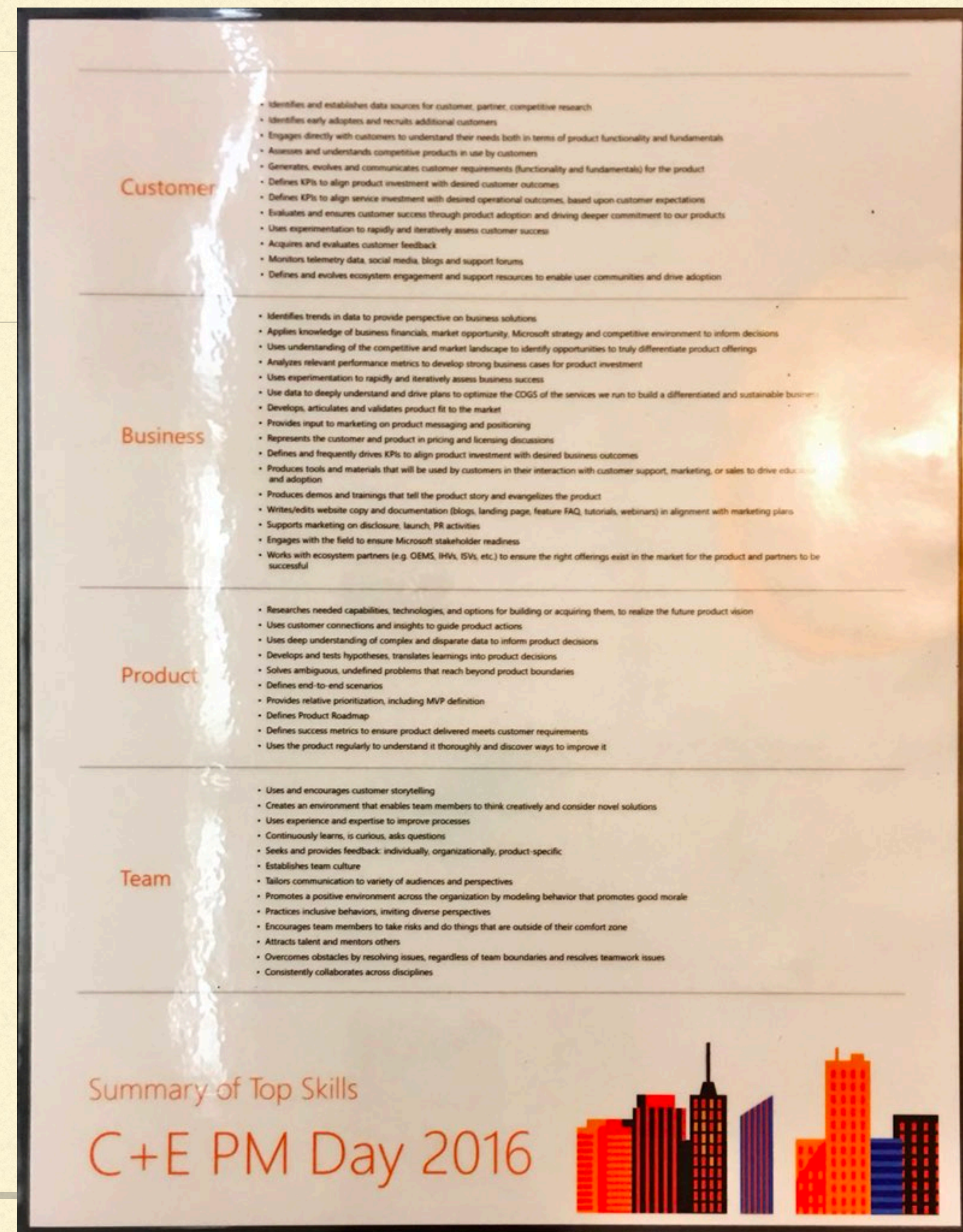 - Input into business decisions

  - Challenging built-in assumptions

2014: Donna joins Azure

- Big news!

- The **Test** discipline is going away

- Also, PMs shouldn't do project management

- Devs are now responsible for managing their own work

- Why the change? Shift from boxed software to cloud offerings

There's no single definition of PM

Some teams do true product management

- I worked on Azure App Service and Azure Functions

- PM leadership realized that product management was the true value add

- Business results made engineering leadership take notice

In a big company, great PMs have to get creative

- Offer a no-friction way to use the product

- Spending engineering budget on marketing expenses

2017: Donna realizes devs don't know what PMs do

- Solution: educate them!

- In the process, I learned what the core of my job really was

- This core holds true, even in a startup!

Engineers see only part of the picture

- "PMs have the whole product in their heads and know how things should work."

- "PMs make sure that devs are doing the right thing and don't mess everything up."

- "PMs tell customers why we aren't fixing their bug."

My definition of PM

- PMs ensure that the team builds the **right product** and that it's **successful** in the market.

Lessons

Lesson: PM-dev partnership is always the key

- As a product manager, your job is not about software, it's about people

- This is true in an enterprise and in a startup

Lesson: factors outside your control have a big impact

- If your organization doesn't care about your product, PMs will have a bad time

- If your organization makes bad business decisions, PMs will have a bad time

- If other teams don't care about your product, PMs will have a bad time

- If your engineering team has problems, PMs will have a bad time

Conversely, on a good team you have a lot of impact

- You influence an entire team or business

- You build products that delight customers

- You discover new business models

- You help uphold a good team culture

- You enable others

Summary

- *Partnership* with engineering is key

- You serve the team, not the other way around

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