# 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 <u>pulumi.com/careers</u> 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

- Identifies and establishes data sources for customer, partner, competitive research
- Identifies early adopters and recruits additional customers
- Engages directly with customers to understand their needs both in terms of product functionality and fundamentals.
- Assesses and understands competitive products in use by customers
- Generates, evolves and communicates customer requirements (functionality and fundamentals) for the product.
- Defines KPIs to align product investment with desired customer outcomes.
- Defines KPIs to align service investment with desired operational outcomes, based upon customer expectations.
- · Evaluates and ensures customer success through product adoption and driving deeper commitment to our products
- Uses experimentation to rapidly and iteratively assess customer success
- Acquires and evaluates customer feedback
- Monitors telemetry data social media, blogs and support forums.
- Defines and evolves ecosystem engagement and support resources to enable user communities and drive adoption

#### · Identifies trends in data to provide perspective on business solutions.

- Applies knowledge of business financials, market opportunity, Microsoft strategy and competitive environment to inform decisions
- Uses understanding of the competitive and market landscape to identify opportunities to truly differentiate product offerings
- Analyzes relevant performance metrics to develop strong business cases for product investment
- Uses experimentation to rapidly and iteratively assess business success
- . Use data to deeply understand and drive plans to optimize the CDGS of the services we run to build a differentiated and sustainable business.
- . Develops, articulates and validates product fit to the market
- · Provides input to marketing on product messaging and positioning
- · Represents the customer and product in pricing and licensing discussions
- Defines and frequently drives KPIs to align product investment with desired business outcomes
- Produces tools and materials that will be used by customers in their interaction with customer support, marketing, or sales to drive edu-
- · Produces demos and trainings that tell the product story and evangelizes the product
- · Writes/edits website copy and documentation (blogs, landing page, feature FAQ, tutorials, webinars) in alignment with marketing plans
- Supports marketing on disclosure, launch, PR activities
- Engages with the field to ensure Microsoft stakeholder madiness.
- . Works with ecosystem partners (e.g. OEMS, IHVs, ISVs, etc.) to ensure the right offerings exist in the market for the product and partners to be

#### Product

Team

Business

Customer

- Researches needed capabilities, technologies, and options for building or acquiring them, to realize the future product vision
- Uses customer connections and insights to guide product actions
- Uses deep understanding of complex and disparate data to inform product decisions.
- · Develops and tests hypotheses, translates learnings into product decisions · Solves ambiguous, undefined problems that reach beyond product boundaries
- · Defines end-to-end scenarios
- Provides relative prioritization, including MVP definition
- · Defines success metrics to ensure product delivered meets customer requirements
- Uses the product regularly to understand it thoroughly and discover ways to improve it

#### Uses and encourages customer storytelling

- · Creates an environment that enables team members to think creatively and consider novel solutions
- Uses experience and expertise to improve processes
- · Continuously learns, is curious, asks questions
- Seeks and provides feedback: individually, organizationally, product-specific
- · Establishes team culture
- · Tailors communication to variety of audiences and perspectives
- · Promotes a positive environment across the organization by modeling behavior that promotes good morale
- · Practices inclusive behaviors, inviting diverse perspectives
- · Encourages team members to take risks and do things that are outside of their comfort zone
- · Overcomes obstacles by resolving issues, regardless of team boundaries and resolves teamwork issues
- · Consistently collaborates across disciplines

Summary of Top Skills C+E PM Day 2016



#### 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

