



The Handy Guide for **Product** People

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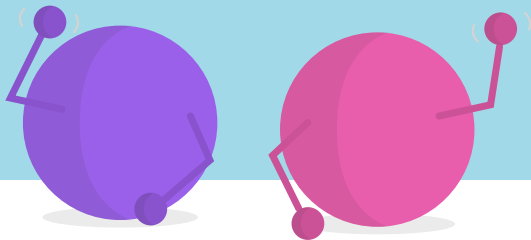
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Hello there!

This is a helpful little guide for product managers.



Shh, here's a little secret: Behind every successful product is a tough and tireless product manager.

They've tamed chaos, customer demands and internal pressures as they lead their teams on a journey to the best possible product.

Inside this book, you'll find well-worn models and exercises taken straight from the back pockets of the world's best product managers (along with a little inspiration from our product superheroes)!

The road to great product management starts here!

The Seven Pillars of Product Management

At the heart of customer, business and technology is you, the product manager. And you have just one question to answer: "How do we bring the best product possible to market?"

Idea Management

Good idea management is about capturing every idea and growing the ones that can move your business forward.

Product Specs

Product specs help you communicate what's important to build. They tell devs who and what they're building for, so they can make the right call.

Roadmapping

A roadmap outlines the problems you need to tackle to reach your product vision. Use it to get a shared understanding of your product strategy.

Prioritization

The market is always changing, and your priorities will change with it. Listen to the data, your customers and your gut, and review your priorities early and often.

Delivery

Small, fast delivery wins! Be available to answer any questions, provide guidance around unexpected changes and test the final release.

Analytics & Experimentation

Always be testing. Hypotheses will help you discover whether your changes have made a difference to your users.

Customer Feedback

Ask questions. Seek out feedback at every possible opportunity to learn about what's working and to discover new problems you weren't aware of.

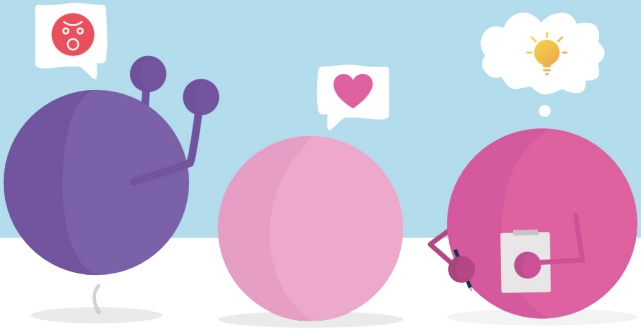
Inside this guide

The best product people thrive by observing and learning, and have tips and tricks in their back pockets to get them through the day-to-day challenges.

Product management is more of an art than a science, and having the right framework on hand, or asking the right questions of the right people, can make all the difference.

In the following pages, you'll find a series of step-by-step exercises to use on your journey to building products people love.

Think Big: Build Product Vision	6
Brainstorm: Make A Product Tree	8
Be Visual: Prioritize Your Roadmap	11
Build Inputs: Product Specs For The Team	16
Get Personal: Meet The Personas	18
Set Up: Set Objectives	20
Get Out: Ask For Feedback	22



Winning products come from the deep understanding of the user's needs combined with an equally deep understanding of what's just now possible

Marty Cagan

Author, Partner at Silicon Valley Product Group

Build Product Vision

Stop everything. Do you have the answers to the following three questions?

- Who is the customer and the end user?
- What's in it for them?
- How do you stand out?

A good product vision captures your *raison d'être* - and will ultimately be the basis for every product decision you make. You can't do this without your exec team. They need to be there to link your product vision back to the wider company goals.

This is also for your own good. If you're ever in a disagreement over your product, you can point back to the product vision to keep the conversation heading in the right direction.

What you'll need:

- Whiteboard with plenty of markers
- Attention and buy in from your execs
- **PRO TIP:** Use ProdPad's product canvas tools

This template is a good starting point for your product vision. Work with your team to fill it in, and then craft it into something compelling and memorable.

For target customer

Who statement of need or opportunity

The product name **is a** product category

That key benefit, reason to buy

Unlike primary competitive alternative

Our product statement of primary differentiation

Template from Crossing the Chasm by Geoffrey Moore

Make sure your product vision passes the elevator test. Can you pitch it in 30 seconds? If not, go back and find a way to refine your vision statement to be more focused and punchy.

Make A Product Tree

The Product Tree exercise is the perfect starting point if you're trying to ditch your timeline roadmap.

This visual format allows you and your team to see the bigger picture of how each strategic step plays out, in the form of branches, roots, and leaves. After all, your products evolve more organically than linearly, as you evolve and iterate on them. At the end of the session, you'll have a representation of your product portfolio aspirations, complete with your team's shared understandings of the scope of the canopy and the depth of the root systems needed to hold it up.

Our friends over at Innovation Games came up with this excellent technique, which is both productive and fun for any team. It translates well to your Now/Next/Later format of roadmap, so that when you are ready to present it back to your team, you've got their full buy-in and you can move forward with confidence.



What you'll need:

- Mini sticky notes
- Whiteboard pens
- **PRO TIP:** Grab a free product tree template at prodpad.com/product-tree

Step One: Print Your Product Tree

Or if you have a white board just draw one.

Step Two: Prepare Your “Leaves”

Write down on sticky notes all the key features you already have in your product, or want to add.

Step Three: Get Your Group Together

Invite people from teams across your company. Aim to have between four-to-ten people per session.

Step Four: Grow Your Tree

Have them add features and ideas to the tree. Leaves on the trunk are existing features, while leaves on the outer edges represent the long-term future. Expect dissent. Encourage it. Take pictures throughout.

Step Five: Discuss Your Tree

Compare the photos of your product tree against your current product roadmap. What will it take to reach consensus?

Prioritize Your Roadmap

Your roadmap is the best way to get to a shared understanding of your product strategy. Use your Product Tree (page 8) as a kicking off point for your roadmap, or start fresh with collecting information about the biggest obstacles in your product's path.

Good product roadmapping means that you're collecting this information from both the top down (your company-level objectives and your vision), and from the bottom up (customer feedback and insights from across the team).

A roadmap is a prototype for your product strategy. It's not meant to be a perfect, unchangeable plan, but instead is a starting point for conversations around what's important to the business, what's useful for your customers, and what's technically feasible.

Roadmap Essentials:

- Time Horizons: Now, Next, Later
- Objectives
- Initiatives/problems to solve
- Product areas/components
- One or many products

Enterprise Engagement

iPad and Mobile Apps

Create a native iPad app for estate agents to use before, during and after viewings.

● iOS Apps

Needs more info

Mobile



6 comments

Internal

What you'll need:

- Colored stickers and whiteboard pens
- **PRO TIP:** Use ProdPad to build a quick & flexible product roadmap that you easily print or share online

Step One: Prepare Your Roadmap Essentials

Divide your whiteboard into three time horizon columns: Now, Next and Later. On index cards, write out a handful of initiatives, in the form of problems to be solved.

Don't worry about getting this perfect - you're just setting the stage for the discussion at this time.

Step Two: Define Scope and Set the Order

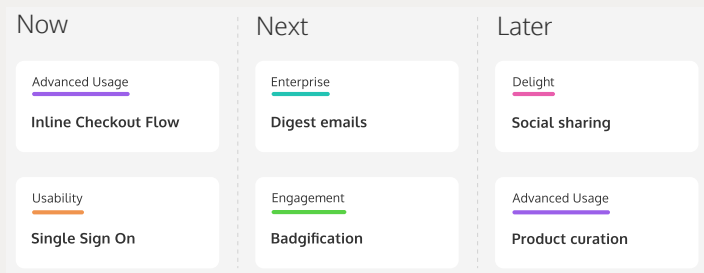
Summarize each card out loud. Keep it super short - you don't need to agree on actual solutions or features at this point.

- **Now:** Being worked on imminently
- **Next:** Move on to these priorities once Now is complete
- **Later:** These are leftover cards that still add value to the vision. These items will be broader in scope than more immediate initiatives

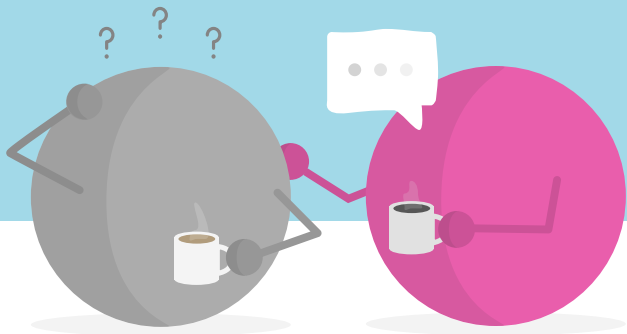
Step Three: Add Color and Context

Use colored dots or stickers to identify cards that fit your specific strategic objectives (i.e. green for 'Revenue' and blue for 'User Growth', etc.).

Add mini sticky notes to 'tag' your cards with product areas or components. Take a step back now and discuss with your team about how it can be balanced or reordered to give a more realistic view of how you'll tackle your product vision.



ProdPad roadmap example



If I've learned anything about managing product expectations in startups, it's this. It's our job to deal with the uncertainty. It's our job to find the right path.

Teresa Torres

Product Discovery Coach, ProductTalk.org

Product Specs For The Team

As a product manager, it's not your job to have all of the answers. After all, your colleagues are meant to be specialists in their areas. It's your job to ask them the best questions!

As you write out product specs, take some time to ask the people working with you for their expert advice. What do they think belongs on those specs? Each of them brings perspective and experience that can help fill in gaps, both big and small.

Here are a few quick and effective ways to make the most of your team's knowledge and skills when creating product specs.

What you'll need:

- Max two-to-three people at a time
- **PRO TIP:** Use ProdPad to link ideas, customer feedback and designs to your specs and push straight to development

Rule One: Don't Ask for Blanket Advice

Your colleagues are much more likely to give useful input when it's relevant and targeted to them.

Rule Two: Make Choices Simple

Which one do they like better? Get them to vote between two ideas. Then you to establish relative priorities and motivate people to get involved.

Rule Three: Focus on Impact and Effort

When deciding whether you have all the input you need, think about two things:

Impact: What value does this bring to the company (Eg. new users/extra revenue)?

Effort: What resources will this require? What does this mean for team members across the company?

Based on input from the team, give each idea a rough score out of 100 for both impact and effort. Gut feel and guesstimation is fine at this point - you can change this as you nail the details.

Meet The Personas

User personas have a name, a face and personal details, but they aren't real people. They're fictional representations of your users that help your team to understand who they're building for.

Building user personas allows you to do product management grounded in user needs, without getting bogged down in the detail of specific customers and all their anomalies.

A great user persona is realistic, easy to visualize, and tied into your day-to-day decisions and processes. They should also be flexible, as you'll adapt your user personas as you learn more about your users!

What you'll need:

- Sketchbook and pens
- Team and user input
- **PRO TIP:** Use ProdPad to link ideas in your product backlog directly to user personas

Follow this template to build user personas for three to five key people from your user base.

Profile Picture: Give them a face! This can be a real picture or just a simple cartoon sketch.

Name: Give your persona a descriptive name to help it catch on - something like Barry Buyer or Sally Spendthrift (definitely helps if it's alliterative).

Description: This should be a short profile, including job title, age range, gender, lifestyle and (relevant) beliefs.

Frustrations/Limitations: What's frustrating them or otherwise slowing them down or keeping them from reaching their goals?

Behaviors: What do they do in their day-to-day lives, what are their likes and dislikes?

Goals: What are their jobs? What does your user persona want to achieve?

Set Objectives

Never push an idea to development without deciding what success looks like first.

Not only does setting objectives help you win support for your initiatives, it helps you align every team you work with to the same outcomes.

The paper trail of hypotheses, data and test results pays off in dividends.

Some product managers might let pride and emotions influence their product decisions. But not you.

You will always have the numbers to back you up.

What you'll need:

- Analytics software and a spreadsheet
- Clear understanding of company goals
- **PRO TIP:** Use ProdPad to establish your vision, goals and success criteria for every product

Think you already have great success criteria lined up? Well, here's a little stress test for your tests:

Does your success criteria:

Use numbers? Are they calculable?

Compare easily across different experiments and over time?

Give you results that help you to make a decision?

Give someone enough details to execute?

Reflect your real objectives (acquisition, retention, engagement, etc.)?

Are you sure your success measurements are not:

Driven by the data you already happen to have?

Geared up for another organization's strategy rather than your own?

Vague actions, milestones or goals?

Ambiguous or shrouded in business speak?

Ask For Feedback

There are many different ways to approach customer feedback, but we particularly love usability testing.

Usability is an incredibly important measure of success both before, during and after new releases. Capturing customer feedback gives you a pile of insight that you just won't get by staring at your own product. This feedback is critical to continuous product discovery, and will help you make sure that you're working on the right ideas and your roadmap is heading in the right direction.

This particular approach is so easy, you could start tomorrow.

What you'll need:

- Pocket-sized notebook
- Incentives for participation
- **PRO TIP:** Use ProdPad's Customer Feedback Portal to capture their comments on your site or app

Step One: Identify Your Guinea Pigs

Think about where the users you want to speak to hang out. You could find them through online forums and communities, but consider meeting up with them in real life too. That's right, put your shoes on and find them.

Step Two: Devise Your Tests

When you're out in the field you need to be able to show participants your product and conduct your tests on a laptop or tablet; so keep your test simple. Plan out your questions in advance and practice to be sure it takes no longer than 20 minutes.

Step Three: Offer a Simple but Effective Incentive

A small, on-the-spot incentive will go a long way in your recruitment efforts. Everyone loves to be treated! Offer them a coffee or a gift certificate so there's something in it for them.

Step Four: Show, Don't Tell

You're not here to make a sale. You're here to listen and learn. So let them do the talking. Control the conversation with questions and gentle prompts.



ProdPad is the world's most loved product management software.

Product Roadmap Tool

Build quick & flexible product roadmaps

Priority Chart Tool

Spot high impact ideas in your backlog instantly

Customer Feedback Portal

Get feedback to help you prioritize your backlog

Idea Management

Grow ideas into product specs ready for development

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Thousands of cool companies ♥ ProdPad.

"ProdPad allows us to have one centralized place all colleagues can go to and drop ideas in. Whether that's the sales person that just came from a client meeting, the finance department or a developer who discovered a new tool which would be awesome to implement. It helps the product team build a better business case in order to improve prioritization."

- Ruben van den Heuvel, Eventbrite

"The ProdPad team is super-responsive to any questions - they really care about their product and about the success of their customers. To be honest, that last item alone would suffice for me to justify why I would recommend ProdPad."

- Mathieu Ayel, HP Software



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This well-worn handy guide sits on the desks of the world's top product managers, and it's about to take its place on yours too. Inside, you'll find a selection of tried and tested exercises that have resulted in some of the world's most-loved products.

ProdPad is product management software for your whole team. Our toolkit supports every stage of product management, from vision to specs to roadmapping, and helps you communicate better with everyone that your product touches.

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