



PRODUCT MANAGEMENT IN AN AGILE WORLD. A Framework for Product Success

A Paper For
Software Product Managers, Product Directors,
Product Owners and all involved in Agile Product Delivery

Product Management Insight

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Product Management in an Agile World A Framework for Product Success

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Situation Analysis

Agile Delivery is widely seen as a positive force for good in the world of software product delivery but as the folk at Tarigo work with product management teams across the world, we see differing levels of success with its adoption within the overall Product Life Cycle.

Typical issues we encounter include:

- A lack of knowledge or agreed understanding about the basic disciplines of Product Management & Agile Delivery
- Lack of clarity on the roles and responsibilities across Product Management and Agile Product Delivery teams.
- The need for improved collaboration across the teams as well as a process that accommodates strategic product objectives with the flexible need to react to customer needs.
- No agreed framework for managing the Product Life Cycle to accommodate key product strategies and commercial objectives through to a continuous agile delivery of products.
- The risks associated with purely customer driven development which can often result in products becoming overtaken by market megatrends, emerging technology environments and new prospect needs.
- Strongly held views that either Agile or Waterfall delivery methodologies are the only choices whereas hybrid approaches may be viable.
- An ill-defined or a missing process that enables the handover from product management to Agile product owner.

As we have continued our engagement with clients we have encouraged approaching the issues in a number of ways. Organisations have often implemented a selection of the ideas laid out in the rest of this paper and many have built them into a continuous improvement process.

Clarifying Roles and Responsibilities

In any organisation that has both Product Management and Agile Delivery teams, confusion can often occur simply because there is insufficient clarity and agreement on what the respective functions, roles and objectives are.

In our experience if you ask members of any software orientated organisation *“What does Product Management do?”* Or *“What is Agile Delivery?”* you will get many *different answers*.

The best performing software product organisations have clarified these roles and responsibilities and ensured they are agreed and well known across the business. Furthermore, we have seen that the following definitions have been successfully adopted by many organisations as a core framework to achieve clarity.

Product Management

One definition of product management that we have found to work well in an organisation is as the Product Custodian and CEO for a product or product line. The role of custodian is to be *“responsible for holding or looking after valuable property on behalf of a company or another person”*.

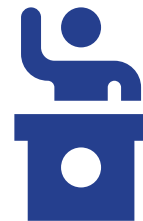
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By *“looking after”* we mean that product management must have broad responsibility for creating & growing the product, and if necessary taking a product to the end of its life.



The term *“valuable property”* emphasises that the product has a commercial value and that such a commercial consideration has a major part to play in the decisions that product management must drive or significantly influence.



And the term of **CEO** is used to identify the role of Product Management being responsible to stakeholders for the product strategies, execution of plans and meeting commercial targets. We find this analogy relevant as all products do have many stakeholders and Product Management has to accommodate those stakeholders from a position of leadership and not as the only owner!

Product Management in an Agile World A Framework for Product Success


In the broadest sense, Product Management has a wide remit. It must analyse and lead or recommend product strategies and releases based on.

- Fundamental market trends such as growth, value, geographies and sectors.
- Technology trends in terms of market adoption, potential integration challenges, emerging platforms or eco systems.
- Competitive environments from existing players in the market to potential entrants and the increasing risk of well-funded “disruptors” not just with a competitive offering but often with an innovative business model.
- Well researched insight into requirements from prospective new customers not just existing customers. Very often they represent a group with different prioritised requirements.
- The organisations need for specific measureable metrics including such measurements as product line P&L, revenues, customer acquisition, customer churn etc.

In terms of development and delivery we have found that the best performing teams are using the above analysis, always supported with evidence, to manage the entire life cycle of a product alongside a strong collaborative working partnership with the agile delivery teams.

Agile Delivery

The fundamental definition for Agile is an approach to make the process of software development lean and effective, and it's seen increasing popularity and success.




At its core, agile is an incremental, iterative approach to delivering high-quality software with frequent deliveries to ensure value throughout the process. It places a high value on individuals, collaboration, and the ability to respond to change.

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The agile development methodology and culture according to the Agile Manifesto follows the following principles.

1. Our highest priority is to satisfy the customer through early and continuous delivery of valuable software.
2. Welcome changing requirements, even late in development. Agile processes harness change for the customer's competitive advantage.
3. Deliver working software frequently, from a couple of weeks to a couple of months, with a preference to the shorter timescale.
4. Business people and developers must work together daily throughout the project.
5. Build projects around motivated individuals. Give them the environment and support they need, and trust them to get the job done.
6. The most efficient and effective method of conveying information to and within a development team is face-to-face conversation.
7. Working software is the primary measure of progress.
8. Agile processes promote sustainable development. The sponsors, developers, and users should be able to maintain a constant pace indefinitely.
9. Continuous attention to technical excellence and good design enhances agility.
10. Simplicity--the art of maximizing the amount of work not done--is essential.
11. The best architectures, requirements, and designs emerge from self-organising teams.
12. At regular intervals, the team reflects on how to become more effective, then tunes and adjusts its behaviour accordingly.



In our experience, a continuous confirmation of the fundamentals of agile to all relevant stakeholders across the business is essential. It helps clarify understanding and provides a strong foundation for a collaborative working environment with product management.

The Product Life Cycle - Collaboration Model:

Alongside clear definitions of the roles and responsibilities it is still very important to recognise that any product success is a highly collaborative venture across the many disciplines. In many cases some of the boundaries are unclear and will in fact overlap!

A very useful approach is to map out the high level product life cycle and overlay that with an indication of where lead responsibilities lie as the product moves across the cycle.

The example below uses our standard life cycle model but could easily be built for any existing process being used. What is important, is to define where “leadership” or responsibility lies, either for one of the functions or when cross over happens. In this case we have shown cross over areas and the teams can agree where leadership lies in those scenarios.

One way to consider this is to imagine both teams being on a bus on the same journey with the same destination in mind. Everyone stays on the bus, but at some stages in the journey one team represents the driver with the other team staying on the bus and advising or helping the driver perhaps on navigation.

Product Management

Agile Development and Delivery

Product Management & Marketing

Discovery & Innovation	Business Case	Planning	Build	Launch	Maintain & Manage	Product Retirement
Investigate all new product and enhancement ideas	Investigate the commercial viability of the product	Work with development through proof of concept	Work with Agile development to keep the project on track	Ensure all launch activities are completed	Ensure continued product success	Ensure a timely and professional product withdrawal
Review market trends	Provide a high-level definition of the product	Review and agree changes to the broad scope/cost/time of the project	Review agile deliverables (sprints) for broad fit within product strategies	Ensure marketing collateral is in place	Find new market/product opportunities	Minimise customer disruption
Present a credible and defensible account to the product steering group	Define the key dates associated with the product	Refine Business case	Review and authorise changes to the agreed requirements	Ensure a timely and successful product launch	Maximise product profitability	Maintain good reputation

From Product Strategies to Continuous Releases

One approach to consider is how the principles of agile delivery can be seamlessly integrated into a comprehensive **strategic** product management framework. The aim of the framework is to align the deliverables from the agile process with the strategic objectives for the product. Specifically this consists of:

- **A Market & Business Strategy** – An evaluation of market-orientated strategic options aligned with the business strategies of the product organisation. This part of the process is based on an analysis of a Market Map, the details of which will be discussed in our next Insights Paper.
- **A Commercial Strategy** – Identifying measurable objectives for the product as it pertains to business metrics which may consist of revenues, units, customer acquisition, customer churn, product P&L etc.
- **Product Strategies** - Guided by the goals laid out above and reflecting the major & high level prioritised requirement from stakeholder groups. This would include customers, prospects and incorporate prioritised feedback from all relevant personas.
- **Product Roadmap Themes** - Based on the Product Strategies above – A Theme is a continuous stream of work designed to deliver against a high level requirement. An example theme could be “Radically improve analytics capabilities”. These can be aligned with Epics in Agile terminology.
- **Product Deliverables** - Consisting of a few or many agile stories and/ or sprint deliverables. Depending on development velocity and other required deadlines. This will result in frequent releases to market, or the deliverables being “assembled” into large product releases.

**This framework is full explained and documented as part of
Product Management Leadership run by Tarigo.**

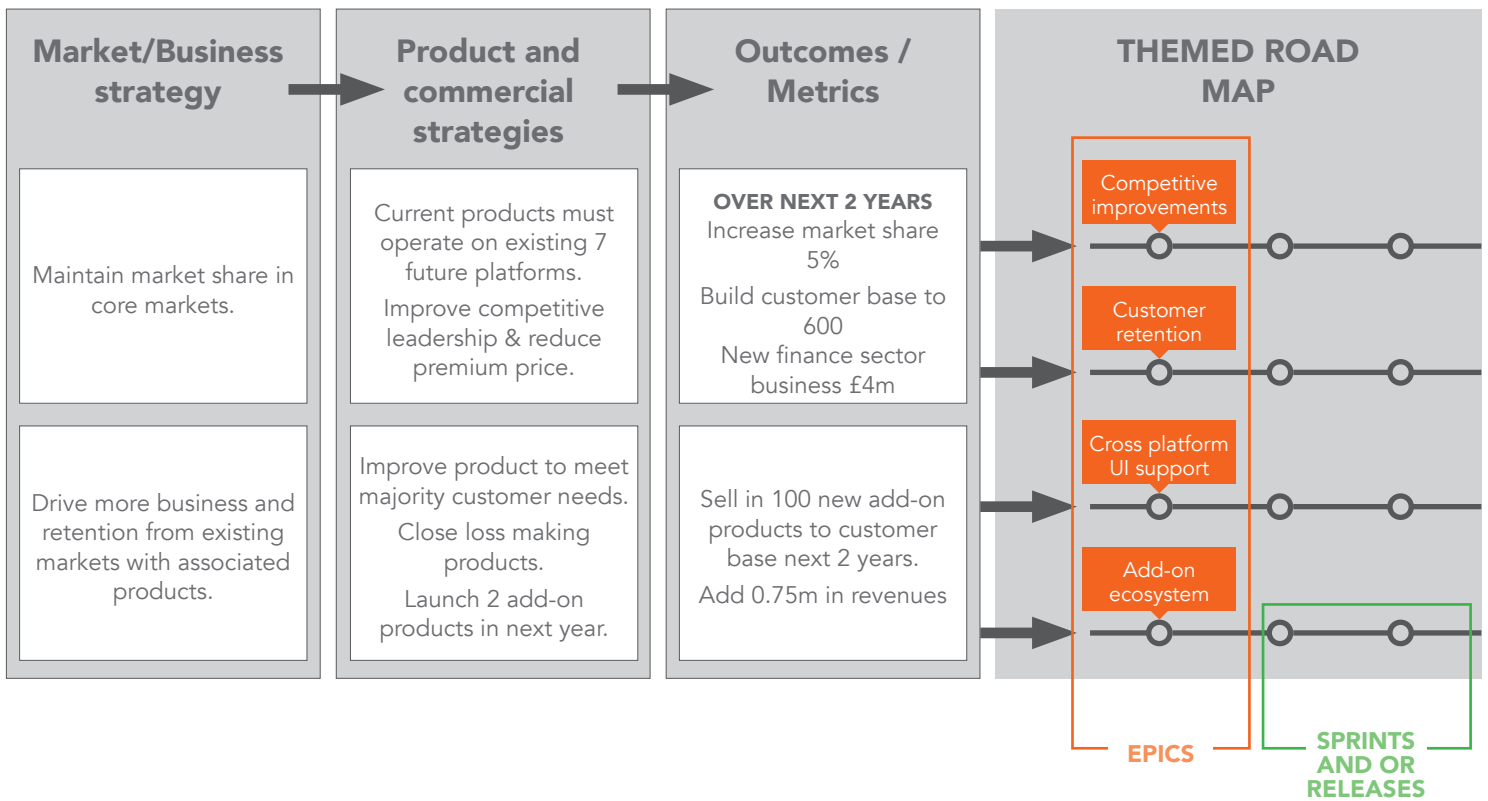
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An illustrative example of this process in action is shown below.

The market and business strategies are set out at the left of the chart.

These inform some of the development strategies for the product, always keeping commercial objectives and therefore the target metrics as a preferred outcome. **These strategies are then blended with more general customer & prospect feedback** (making sure all relevant personas are represented) and are **converted into roadmap themes (or epics)** within which stories are delivered in sprints.

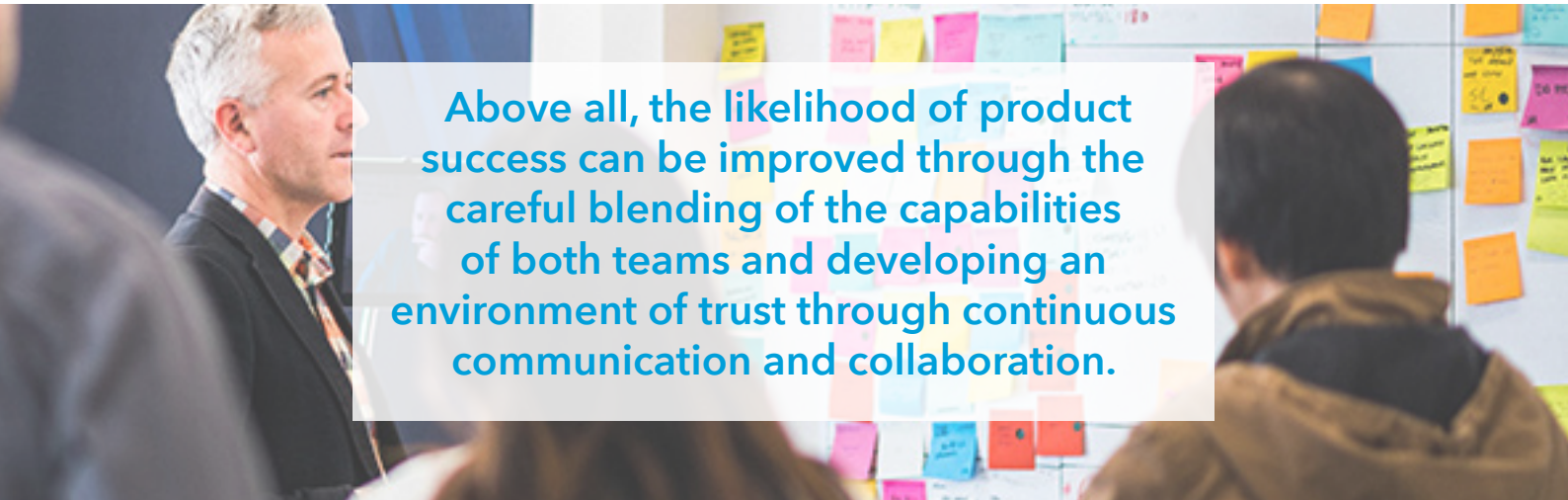


Summary & Conclusion

Product Management and Agile Delivery share a major single objective – to deliver the highest quality products that best meet the needs of their target markets.

The proposition laid out in this paper is that this objective can be met through a highly collaborative approach based on:

- 1) Clarity on the roles of Product Management and Agile Delivery, not only for both teams to understand their respective responsibilities but also to help understanding across all the product stakeholders.
- 2) A clear definition of the product life cycle and where the responsibilities of each function lie in relation to one another.
- 3) The adoption of a framework which can align market driven product strategies with major development themes and an agile delivery process.



Above all, the likelihood of product success can be improved through the careful blending of the capabilities of both teams and developing an environment of trust through continuous communication and collaboration.

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Tarigo

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