Product Management Essentials

Tools and Techniques for Becoming an Effective Technical Product Manager

Aswin Pranam
Dedicated to Ram, Priya, Abhijit, Rex, and the Waterford collective
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About the Author

Aswin Pranam is a product manager, ex-software engineer, and avid technologist. Prior to his current role as a senior product manager in a venture group at a top-tier management consulting firm, Aswin spent time working in technical roles at Google, Boeing, Disney, and IBM. Aswin has a Bachelor of Science in Informatics (HCI) from the University of Washington, a Master of Science in Information Systems Engineering from Johns Hopkins University and an MBA from Carnegie Mellon University. In his free time, Aswin is the founder of elixirlabs.org, a non-profit organization dedicated to building technical infrastructure for NGOs and resource-constrained organizations. To get in touch, please send an email to contact@aswinpranam.com.
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Disclaimer

All views expressed in this publication represent those of the author and do not reflect in any way those of associated organizations, institutions, or groups.
Foreword: Product Management Essentials

Over the course of their careers, many people wonder how they might become a product manager. Perhaps they’re a marketing analyst who would like to have more influence in deciding what products her company will build and sell, a software engineer who wants to work more closely with his company’s customers, or a recent MBA graduate who is trying to find the best way to make her mark in the tech industry.

Whatever your reason for wanting to learn to be an effective product manager, this book can help you towards that goal. It provides a step-by-step, chapter-by-chapter overview of the broad array of skills and habits you will need to excel in the role. You’ll explore the technical foundations underpinning internet-based applications, the basics of data management and analytics, and user experience design principles. Perhaps more importantly, you will also hear great advice from leading high-tech product management experts who are out working every day to bring great products to market.

There are, of course, a lot of skills that you’ll need to learn to become an expert product manager and it will take more than reading a single book to master them all. But you have in your hands a roadmap and starting point for that journey, and a guide in Aswin Pranam who knows what it takes to succeed as a Product Manager. So read on, take notes, learn from the experts sharing their wisdom in interviews and interludes. The best way to get started on your path to becoming a product manager is, well, to get started. Take what you learn here and apply it to the project you’re working on now. And then do it again. With careful study of these principles and deliberate practice, you’ll soon become the expert product manager that your organization needs to bring great things to market. Here is where you start.

Bob Monroe, Associate Teaching Professor and co-Director, MS in Product Management Program at Carnegie Mellon University
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Product Management Essentials aims to condense all of the techniques, teachings, tools, and methodologies required to be an effective first-time product manager into a simple, digestible read. Over the past decade, the demand for technically-capable PMs who can interface with management, stakeholders, customers, and the engineering team has skyrocketed. In fact, top business schools like Harvard, Cornell, and Carnegie Mellon have begun integrating product management courses into their MBA curriculum (or creating dedicated product management degree programs). Although the market requires more product-minded individuals, most people have no insight into the product role, and the position is ambiguously defined to outsiders. The overarching goal of this book is to help you understand the product manager role, give you concrete examples of what a product manager does, and build the foundational skillset that will gear you towards a career in product management.

**Goals:**
- Describe the roles and responsibilities of a product manager
- Understand the skills and qualifications necessary to transition into a product role
- Break down the technical, business, and design knowledge required to be an effective product manager.
- Provide feedback and Q&A-style advice from top-tier product managers in the industry.

The primary audience of Product Management Essentials are individuals who are eyeing a transition into a PM role, or have just entered a PM role at a new organization for the first time. They currently hold positions as a software engineer, marketing manager, UX designer, or data analyst and want to move away from a feature-focused view to a high-level strategic view of the product vision. This publication is an all-in-one cookbook that covers the required foundational learnings to succeed as a product manager, and allows you to get a big picture understanding of the goals and expectations of a product lead.