

Product Management: the Agile Balancing Act?



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Your friendly neighbourhood superhero?

- on-site customer
 - but what if you don't have any yet?
- product owner
 - but what does it mean to own a product?
- product sponsor
 - but what responsibility does a sponsor have?
- product champion
 - but who are you fighting against?



Happening elsewhere...



- **Product management** is the business process that actively manages products throughout their lifecycle. The product manager is the owner or champion of the product in totality and as such managers [sic] it like a business in its own right.

(www.productmanager.co.uk)

- **Product management** is neither R&D nor sales, but the intersection of making it and selling it, says Sam Knox, a former product manager at AT&T Interchange and other high tech firms. Even though you may be "responsible for everything and have authority over no one," it's where the most interesting work is happening, he says..

(<http://featuredreports.monster.com/productmanager/primer/>)

Happening in software companies...



- The role is being recognised
 - slowly!
- It's being fulfilled in many different ways
 - in some projects/companies, better than others
- The agile notions of customer/product owner and so on are underspecified
 - the skills, responsibilities and experience required point to it being a specialist role
- The role doesn't *seem* to be identical to a "physical" product manager
 - though it would be surprising if there weren't correspondences

Think-tank goals



- What does a product manager do?
- How do they do it?
- What do they need to do it?
 - What sort of experience?
 - What personal character traits?
 - What organisational support?
- A job description for a Software Product Manager in an agile development environment

Activity 1 - project war stories



- Already sitting in suitable groups of 4
 - mix of colours
 - avoid joining a group with someone from the same company
- Write a story about a project you've been involved in
 - a project where the product manager/customer role was filled ...
 - ... or one where it wasn't
- Share the story with the rest of your group

Activity 2 - micro-retrospective



- If things went well, what did the product manager do right?
 - Techniques
 - Activities
 - Organisational
- If things went wrong, what would have helped?
 - Was the product manager not effective? Why not?
 - What was missed that should have been done or in place?
- Write these down on cards

Activity 3 - job description



- Use the Job Description grid
- Brainstorm onto post-its into the appropriate section of the grid
 - 3-5 minutes
 - no talking!
- Discuss and organise
 - add/remove items if desired
 - prioritise

Grid - job description



Goals	Responsibilities
Activities	Context

Activity 4 - personal profile



- Use the Personal Profile grid
- As before - brainstorm onto post-its into the appropriate section of the grid
 - 3-5 minutes
 - no talking!
- Then discuss and organise
 - add/remove items if desired
 - prioritise

Grid - personal profile



Character	Skills
Experience	Circumstance

Conclusions and insights



- A clearer view of a product manager in an agile team?
- How do we get better at product management?
 - Developing personal characteristics...
 - Increasing the relevance of the role in our projects...
- How are you going to find a product manager?
 - What are you looking for?
 - What's the most important thing?