



Rothman Consulting Group, Inc.

What Makes a Great Product Manager?

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Secrets of Great Management*

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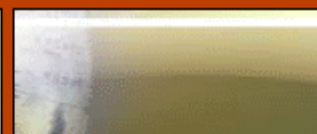
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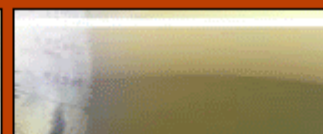
Product Managers: The Rodney Dangerfield of the Organization?

- ❖ Too many people within the organization have differing views of the product manager's role
- ❖ People confuse product definition with:
 - ❖ Product pricing
 - ❖ Product promotion
 - ❖ Product distribution



What I've Seen Product Managers Do

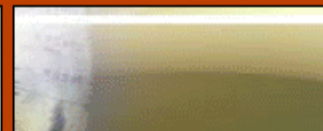
- ❖ Plan requirements for next product/release
- ❖ Support existing products
- ❖ Define requirements for development
- ❖ New business development
- ❖ Write glossy sheets (marketing communications)
- ❖ Develop and present sales presentations (intro to the product and sales training)
- ❖ Listen to customers to understand their problems
- ❖ Close sales
- ❖ Program management
- ❖ Financial analysis of existing and new products (margin control)
- ❖ Product positioning (develop marketing programs and measure effectiveness)



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My Definition of the Product Manager's Role

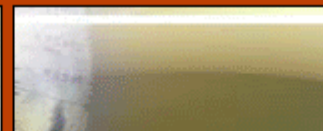
- ❖ Product definition
 - ❖ Plans *product* lifecycle
 - ❖ Prioritizes which problems to solve in a given release
 - ❖ Product positioning
 - ❖ Look for/create business opportunities that fit in the organization's context
 - ❖ May perform program management
 - ❖ Manage a “core team” to continually plan the product lifecycle
 - ❖ For Agile teams, leads/directs re-ranking of requirements implementations between iterations



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Product Manager's Sphere of Influence

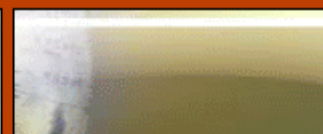
- ❖ Product Managers work across the organization and with customers
 - ❖ With development groups
 - ❖ With test groups
 - ❖ With support groups
 - ❖ With senior management
 - ❖ With customers
 - ❖ With salespeople
 - ❖ With financial people
- ❖ In my opinion, product management (when done well) brings all of the functional areas of the organization together



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Activities and Deliverables

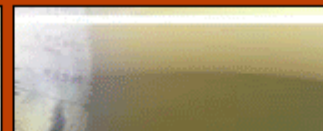
- Elicit problem statements
- Write MRDs or things that look like MRDs
- Prioritize or rank requirements
- Triage defects for a particular release
- Participate in corporate strategic planning
- Plan product strategy
- Work with customers to define problems
- Define and track effectiveness of product positioning



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Essential Qualities, Preferences, Non-Technical Skills

- ❖ Oral communication skills, including questioning/interviewing, listening
- ❖ Written communication skills for a wide variety of writings: MRDs, strategy documents, product lifecycles
- ❖ Facilitation skills (to help make decisions)
- ❖ Planning
- ❖ Analysis
- ❖ The ability to see the system of all the organization's products and how a particular product/idea fits—or doesn't

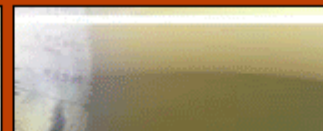


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Desirable Qualities, Preferences, Non-Technical Skills

- ❖ Decision-making and meeting facilitation skills
- ❖ Project/program management

- ❖ If a product manager in your organization is involved with pricing, promotion, distribution, include those skills here.



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Essential Technical Skills

❖ Functional skills

- ❖ Ability to see opportunities, financial analysis
- ❖ If promotion is part of the mix, add the promotion skills here

❖ Domain expertise

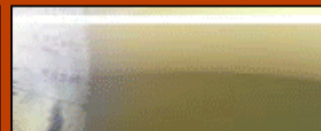
- ❖ Ability to learn the current products (problem-space) quickly
- ❖ Ability to learn the architecture of products (solution-space) quickly

❖ Industry expertise

- ❖ Each industry is unique, so experience in your industry is helpful

❖ Tools/technology

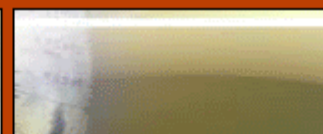
- ❖ Tools for financial analysis



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Characteristics, Part 1

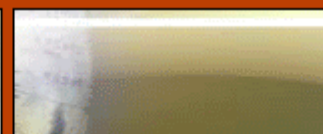
- ❖ Product managers play a balancing act
 - ❖ Balance between perseverance (for a product or new idea) and knowing when to give up ideas
 - ❖ Balance strategic work with tactical work (for self and project teams)
 - ❖ Able to manage details for a current release and see the whole product picture



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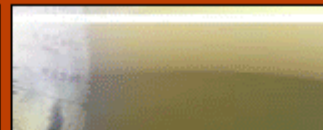
Characteristics, Part 2

- ❖ Able to translate Great Ideas into something concrete for R&D
- ❖ Being able to read the market, to know what stage a product is in, or is about to enter (especially necessary for development and promotion)
- ❖ Persuasive: may act as product advocate to management, product development, sales
- ❖ Synthesizer: take disparate products/events and see opportunities
- ❖ Curiosity: A great product manager is curious about how current customers use the product and how potential customers might use the product
- ❖ Comfortable with both people and ideas
- ❖ Be able to translate intuition into financial analysis (competition, margins, ROI of projects)



References and Resources

- ❖ Wikipedia:
en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Product_management
- ❖ Pragmatic Marketing blog and site,
pragmaticmarketing.com. The entry that prompted me to write this was:
www.pragmaticmarketing.com/productmarketing/topics/05/0508jm1.asp
- ❖ Rothman, Johanna. *Hiring the Best Knowledge Workers, Techies & Nerds*, Dorset House, 2004.



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