

product

focus

YOUR NEW PRODUCT MANAGER JOB

WHAT TO DO IN THE FIRST 90 DAYS

When you start a new product management job, it can feel like you're standing at the top of a ski run. It's exhilarating, but also a little scary. You're really hoping not to fall flat on your face.

The first 90 days are critical. It's when you need to get up to speed, demonstrate your ability and earn the trust of your colleagues. After that point, you need to be on top of things – managing your product and delivering real value to your business.

But like a ski run, your first few months in a new job will be over far too quickly. So to help you, we've provided this checklist of what you need to do in the first 90 days.

Good luck!

A product manager needs to demonstrate a wide range of knowledge and expertise. The tasks shown below are grouped by these categories



BEFORE YOU START

Review the company's external website and Wikipedia entry

Check out the LinkedIn details of your boss and company

Review competitor websites

01

DURING THE FIRST DAY

Listen! (rather than speak)

Meet as many people as possible (and smile)

Ask "What are you expecting of me?"

Have handshakes with important stakeholders and plan subsequent meetings

Get your basic tools set up: computer, phone, email, intranet

Plan meetings for the next few weeks

Get hold of the Organization Chart

DURING THE FIRST WEEK

Get on the right internal distribution lists, e.g., weekly development reports, sales reports, press releases, customer support statistics

Find external info sources from colleagues e.g., market intelligence reports, analysts, friendly customers

Identify important internal meetings

Identify the Power Brokers in the company (the key stakeholders you'll need to influence)

Schedule regular reviews with your boss to check you're on track

Get a product demo from Sales. Ask why customers buy and what problems your product solves

Understand the customer buying process – how long does it take and who makes the decisions

Get a product demo from Development

Read the product collateral - as much of it as you can find

Sniff out "Bombs" that are about to explode and determine length of fuse! (issues you'll need to deal with)

Understand the "stated" company strategy and objectives

DURING THE FIRST MONTH

Organize an off-site lunch with PMs and close teammates

Make no promises & frequently repeat: "I'm here to listen and understand!"

Probe - remember during the first month you can still ask naive questions and get away with it

Have a demonstrable success (preferably by the end of the 3rd week)

Have your weekly structure defined (meetings, reports, reviews, etc.)

Understand how things actually work around here

Use the Product Focus Product Activities Framework to understand who does which product activity

Understand the approval process for getting stuff done

Understand the objectives of other business teams and departments so you know how to work with them

Visit a customer (or several preferably!) with Sales or Account Management (B2B)

Become the expert on the business requirements for the product. Who's using the product, how and why?

Get involved in a Sales Pipeline Funnel Review

Be the Product Owner (or have a proxy)

Understand the business/requirements of the top 10% of customers

Understand the revenue breakdown by product(s)

Do a basic competitive analysis

Be a participant in a Sprint cycle (if company uses Scrum)

Review Customer Support tickets with Support Manager

Review the "Product Backlog"

Get or create a product dashboard including sales numbers and revenue

Identify Strengths and Weaknesses of the product

BY THE END OF THE FIRST QUARTER

Work out how to prioritize your time

Work out how to improve the key processes

Gain approval for a major product development – or at least understand how that works

Produce a product Business Plan

Set up your own KPIs (Key Performance Indicators)

90

90

Join Sales on a prospecting call. Listen in on some support calls

Understand customer and industry vocabulary and jargon

Be the Market Expert – know what customers want and what problems they have

Be the Customer Advocate in the business

Be the Product Expert. Have a vision for the product

Have the product collateral/messaging/web content updated and be able to demo the product

Map the existing Roadmap and propose a new Roadmap

If you have multiple products, show them on a BCG or McKinsey matrix to get insights across the portfolio

Calculate the financial performance of your product

Evaluate your personal training needs

BY THE END OF THE THIRD QUARTER

90+

Understand the unique competences of the company

Have the ability to challenge Development work estimates

Have established a network of listening posts in the market to drip-feed insights through to you

90+

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This list was originally generated at a meeting of the **Cambridge Product Management Network** in the UK, led by product management consultant Arthur Meadows. Attended by Cambridge's finest and most experienced product managers, the aim was to produce a "playbook" of recommended steps when starting a new job.

It was developed for someone moving into a product management role in a small B2B software company. However, we believe it's applicable for most people starting a product management job in any business.

Subsequently, this list has been enhanced and refined by Arthur in collaboration with Product Focus. Arthur can be reached at arthur@stream121.com



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