ATLASSIAN

State of Product 2026

Table of contents

1 FORWARD **A note from Jira Product Discovery's Head of Product**

3 SNAPSHOT **State of Product results**

4 PART 1 **State of product today**

5 The good news: Product teams feel respected, rewarded, and challenged at work

10 Product teams' happy place: collaborating and experimenting to help customers

15 Pressure's on: Product teams are expected to drive profit and business results

18 The AI curveball: Promises and perils

22 PART 2 **How product teams can do their best work**

22 Take an active role in strategy and goal-setting

25 From output- to outcome-focused work

28 Building a culture of experimentation

31 Improve cross-team collaboration to help teams build great things

36 Invest in Product Operations for happier, more effective product teams

TANGUY CRUSSON
Head of Product, Jira Product Discovery, Atlassian

Forward

Welcome to Atlassian's first annual State of Product report!

We're in an exciting new era of product work. Our field is changing more quickly than ever before, and product teams have unprecedented influence and responsibility. I'm thrilled to be sharing this research, which I hope can help us understand the current state of our discipline and benefit from its challenges and opportunities alike.

When I switched from consulting to product management eleven years ago, the craft was still nascent, not well-understood outside the most successful tech companies. The rest of the industry could see that these companies were doing something different, but we didn't know their secret sauce.

Today, there's no secret anymore. **Companies move faster, grow more quickly, and capture greater market share when they empower product teams to work in an iterative, autonomous, customer-centric way.**

This is true for tech companies, but also organizations with core businesses outside tech. Jira Product Discovery's 20,000 customers operate in industries like finance, travel, healthcare, and many more. Over the past few years, it's been so inspiring to work with these exemplary companies, and learn about the different ways they approach the craft.

But as you already know, product work is hard! **Part 1 of this report will show that product teams have so much on their shoulders: pressure to drive profit, responsibility to lead everything from strategy to execution, expectations to build software that users need and value** – and all the while, they must support people in collaborating effectively across functions, from leaders to engineers to marketers.

Product work is interdisciplinary, and product teams are expected to have a vision, build, drive work forward, and communicate effectively. Expectations are high, and it's not surprising so many of us are feeling stressed.

The good news is that our respondents feel trusted and respected by their organizations – most feel empowered to lead or influence product strategy and innovation. This wouldn't have been true five years ago, and yet it's foundational to product success.

As the product management craft matures, we're also finding more ways to support product teams. That's why, to complement our findings, we're sharing knowledge we've gained on our own journey of learning how product teams can work better. **In Part 2, you'll get tips and best practices for collaboration, goal-setting, improving product operations practices, and more.**

We hope you enjoy exploring this research as much as we have. Although we can see there's still much to do, these learnings are also a testament to how far our community has come in a short period of time.

We're in a time of change, and these findings make us super excited for the future. I don't know about you, but I wouldn't pick any other job than product management today. Where else can your work have so much breadth and depth, and drive impact at such a scale?

Let's do this!

Tanguy Crusson
Head of Product, Jira Product Discovery, Atlassian

State of Product results: a snapshot

Product teams **win back up to 2 hours a day with AI** – but still don't have time for strategy

Many product teams think their field has become cutthroat – and **84% worry their products won't succeed**

80% of product teams don't collaborate with engineers early – and 49% find that internal politics hold back collaboration

Profit is the #1 company focus – yet **only 12% of product teams find it rewarding**

90% of product teams get to focus on work they love – their jobs still reflect what drew them to the field in the first place

PART 1

The state of product today

Imagine playing chess in a moving car, or doing brain surgery during an earthquake. These are tricky tasks at the best of times, let alone when the ground is shaking beneath your feet.

That's what life feels like for product teams right now.

Product work is never easy. But right now, product teams are trying to thrive in a turbulent field – and what it means to be on a product team has changed rapidly, too.

Between 2021 and 2023, we saw a widespread focus shift to profitability over growth, alongside a huge drop in investor funding and widespread tech layoffs (though it's not just software-industry teams who've been affected). As if that disruption wasn't enough, the last couple years have brought a tidal wave of interest – and investment – in AI.

Our research uncovered that product teams are under a lot of pressure as they adapt to this rate of change. Many feel burnt out, spread thin, and concerned their field has become more cutthroat and profit-focused in the last three years.

As a further curveball, product teams are now expected to embed AI into their daily work and the products they build. While many are getting a productivity boost, the gains aren't keeping them afloat, and AI isn't yet helping with the high-value tasks they'd like.

Perhaps our most shocking finding was that **84% of product teams are concerned the products they're currently working on won't be successful in the market**. Even as teams are pushed to drive profit, they don't have faith they're building products that can do so.

No wonder product teams are overwhelmed.

84%

of product teams are concerned the products they're currently working on won't be successful in the market.

But despite the upheaval, there's still a lot that's going well. Our respondents feel respected as strategic leaders, and genuinely love the most challenging, collaborative parts of their jobs.

Our take? This is a challenging moment – but one that's full of possibility. Product teams are more respected than ever, but they're navigating a more complex environment, and expectations are high.

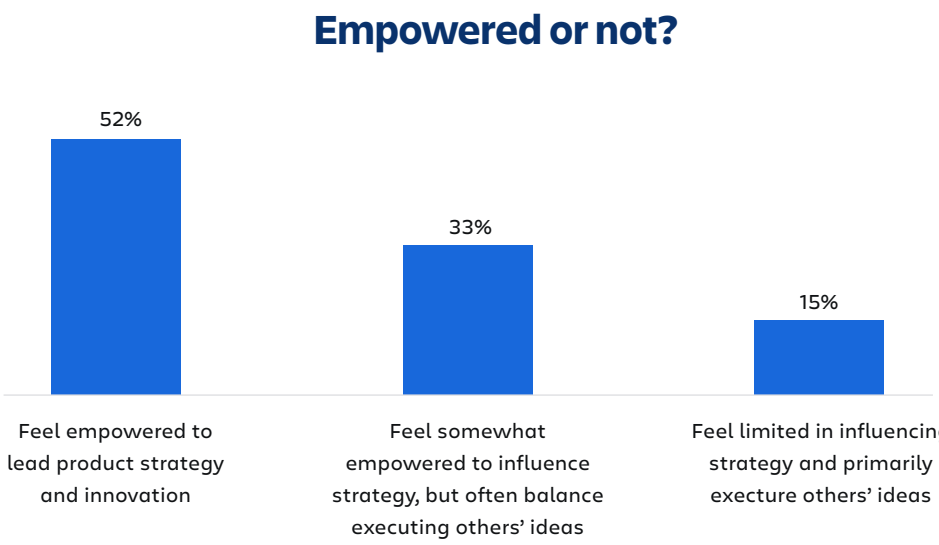
The good news: Product teams feel respected, rewarded, and challenged at work

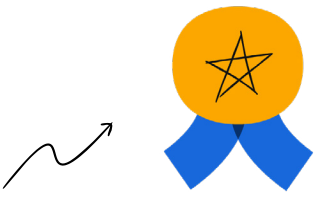
There's a lot product teams love about their work, even as they face seismic challenges. Overall, product teams feel empowered to contribute to company strategy and love going deep on data to meet users' needs.

But it feels like there's never enough hours in the day for the challenging, cross-functional work that lights them up. And even though they love collaboration and experimentation, things can still get rocky, especially when it's time to bring engineering teams into the picture.

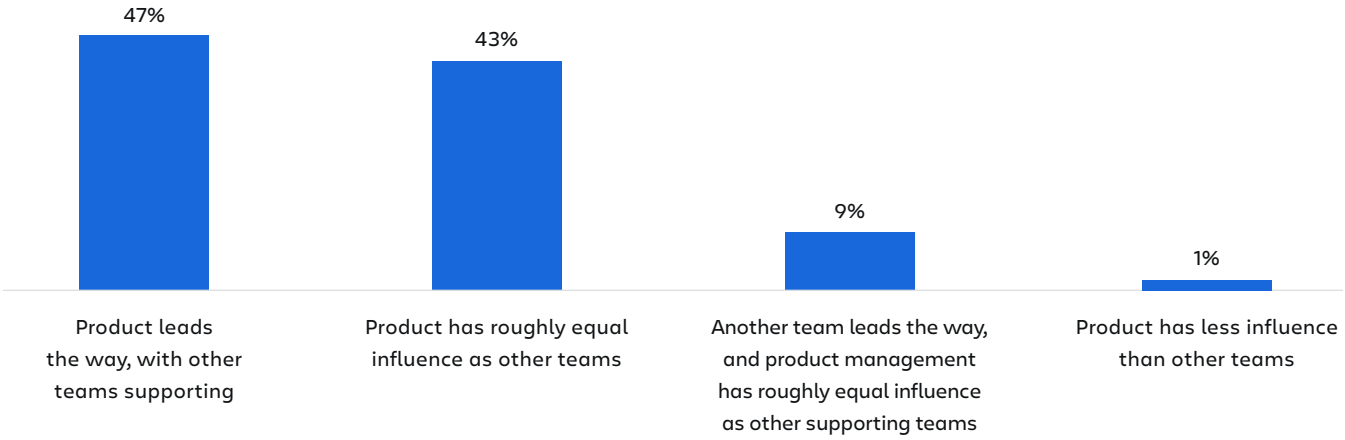
Product teams as strategic leaders

Product teams know their worth – and they believe others know it, too. They feel confident that their roles matter, and they're comfortable taking a seat at the strategic table.





When working with other functions, how much influence does product have?

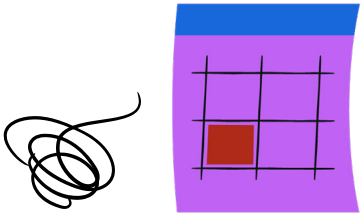


Most product team members (85%) feel empowered to lead or influence product strategy and innovation at their company, and nearly all (90%) of product teams either lead or have equal influence in cross-team discussions. Only 15% feel limited ability to influence product strategy.

Leadership has a make-or-break role in creating these empowered product teams. **Product teams that feel limited ability to influence strategy are 23% more likely to report 'lack of leadership support or buy-in' is a main barrier to collaboration.** That should be common sense – if leadership is supportive of product teams, it's likely they respect the discipline enough to invite their strategic input.

But as we'll see in the rest of this report, the leadership question is a complex one for product teams:

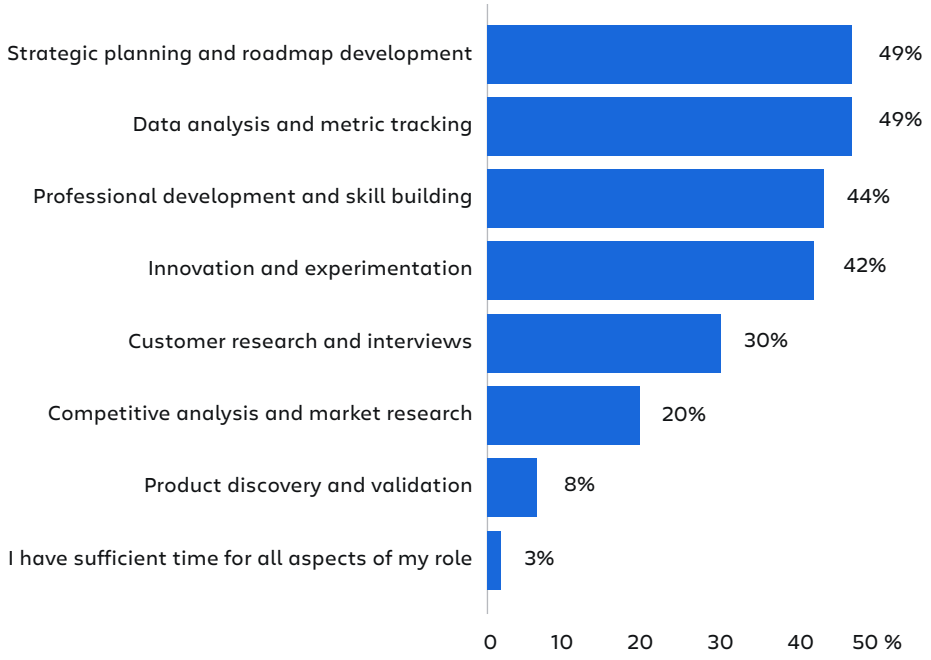
- Even though product teams feel that contributing to strategy is accepted as a part of their role, many still aren't managing to make it a priority in their packed daily schedules.
- Product teams aren't always able to connect their strategic input to business outcomes – driving results like profit is the part of the job they're least likely to find rewarding.



Empowered on strategy – but struggling to find time to make the most of it

Though they love their work, product teams are juggling a lot. Even though they feel empowered to contribute to strategy, they're largely struggling to fit these big-picture tasks into the rhythms of product work.

What aspects of your role are you unable to spend sufficient time on?*



*Respondents could select multiple answers

It's no wonder teams don't have confidence in their products – half of them are flying blind! **Roughly half (49%) of surveyed product teams don't have enough time for strategic planning and roadmap development, and the same amount can't fit in data analysis and metrics tracking.**

49%

of product teams don't have enough time for strategic planning and roadmap development.

The implications here are serious. It's great that organizations trust product teams' strategic expertise – but they can't truly have an impact until they're adequately resourced.

When product teams spend too much time in the daily grind, they'll hop from planning cycle to planning cycle without ever taking a look at big picture. We're not denying that execution is important – but strategy doesn't need to be a burden.

As we'll show in part 2, without too much extra effort, product teams can expand regular planning exercises to take stock of learnings, think about how they apply to strategic goals, and brainstorm ways to apply them moving forward.

Amongst the most common challenge for product teams? Prioritization – arguably, one of their most important responsibilities! Nearly 40% of respondents listed prioritizing features as their most significant challenge.

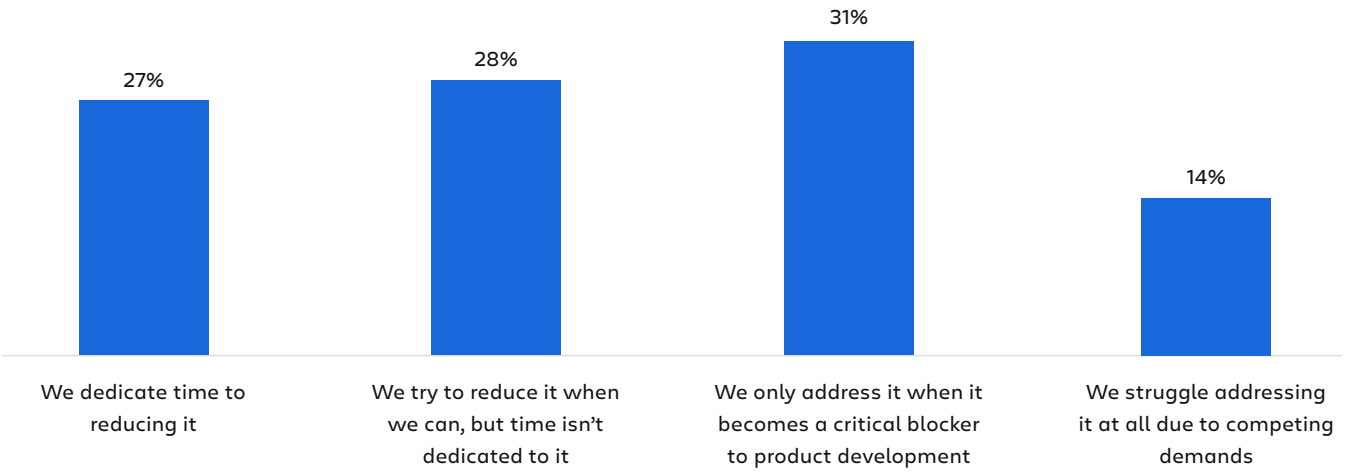
What are the most significant challenges in your role?*

*Respondents could select multiple answers

Unfortunately, it seems like product teams are focused on keeping their heads above water. This is likely one more barrier holding them back from the strategic thinking they'd like to get done.

This reactive, short-term approach to work can also take time away from addressing technical debt. Only 27% of the teams we surveyed specifically carve out time to address tech debt, which can cause issues downstream.

How important is addressing technical debt to your organization?



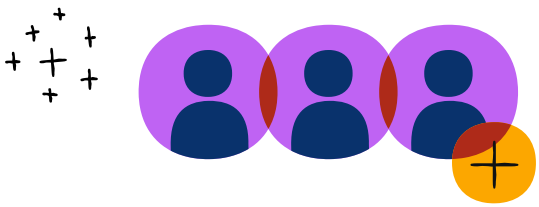
Product teams' happy place: collaborating and experimenting to help customers

Product teams love talking to customers and solving their problems – especially through collaboration and experimentation. Thankfully, those we surveyed do get to stay in this zone of happiness during day-to-day work.

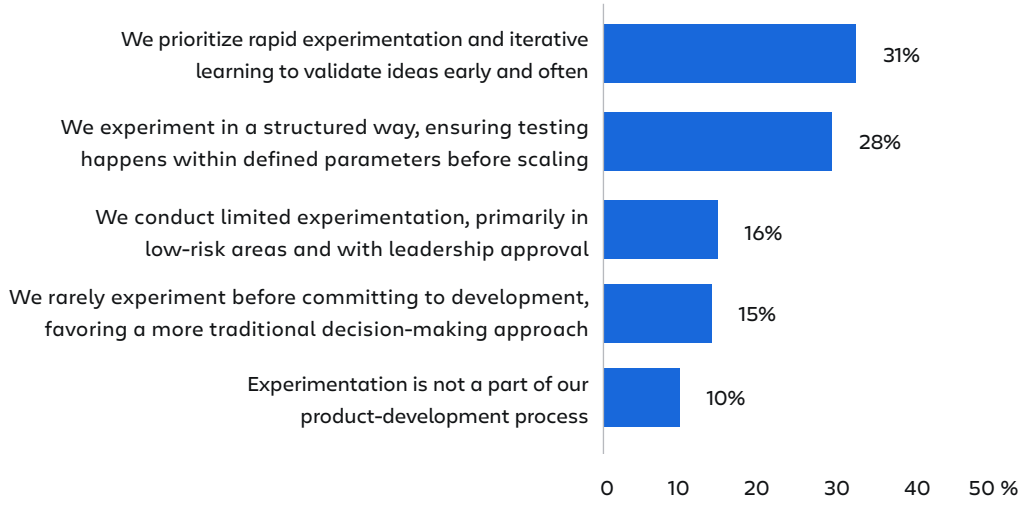
What are the most rewarding aspects of your role?*

*Respondents could select multiple answers

Half of product teams (50%) cite collaborating with cross-functional teams to turn ideas into reality as the most rewarding aspect of their job, and nearly as many love complex problem-solving and digging into user needs.



How does your organization approach experimentation?



While experimentation is widespread, it's still not the industry norm. **40% of product teams do limited or no experimentation. Of the other 60%, only 31% make rapid experimentation and iteration part of their process early.**

Only
31%
of teams make rapid experimentation and iteration a part of their process.

The picture could certainly be worse – after all, about 60% of teams make experimentation part of their process. But in reality, that means many teams are still making bets that aren't grounded in data.

Essentially, teams are being asked to set products up for market success, but they're not equipped with data, and they don't have decision autonomy. It's a recipe for failure and frustration!

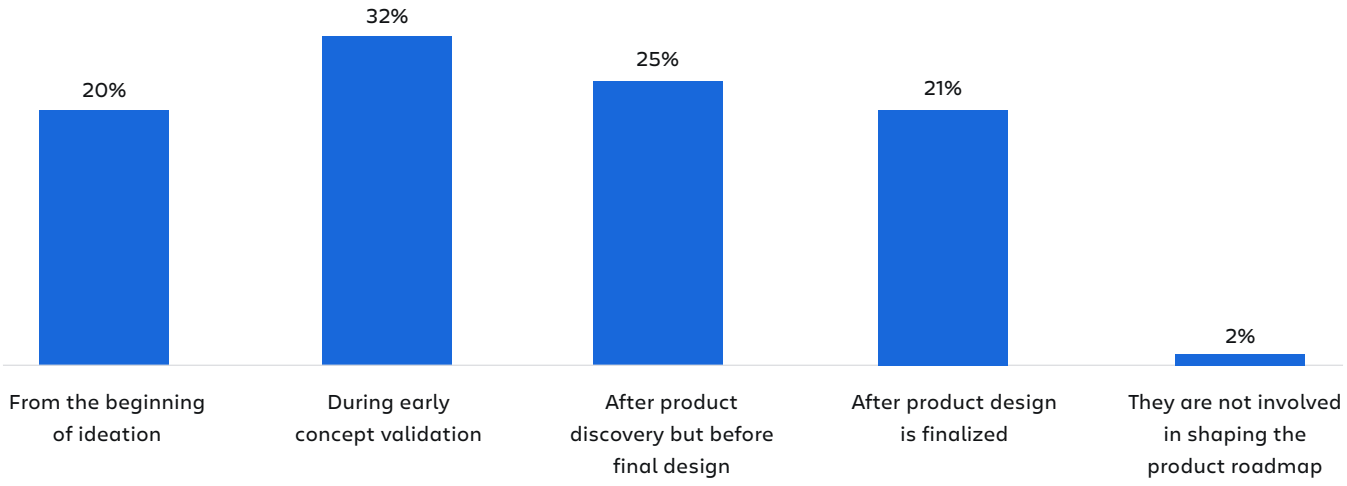
There's room for improvement with collaboration - especially with engineers

Further expanding the experimentation picture, engineers aren't usually involved early in the process. **On most product teams (80%), engineers aren't part of the ideation, and don't define problems or contribute to roadmaps.** Instead, they bring in engineers during concept validation (32%), after product discovery (25%), or after the product design is finalized (21%).

80%

of product teams don't involve engineering in ideation, problem definition, or creating roadmaps.

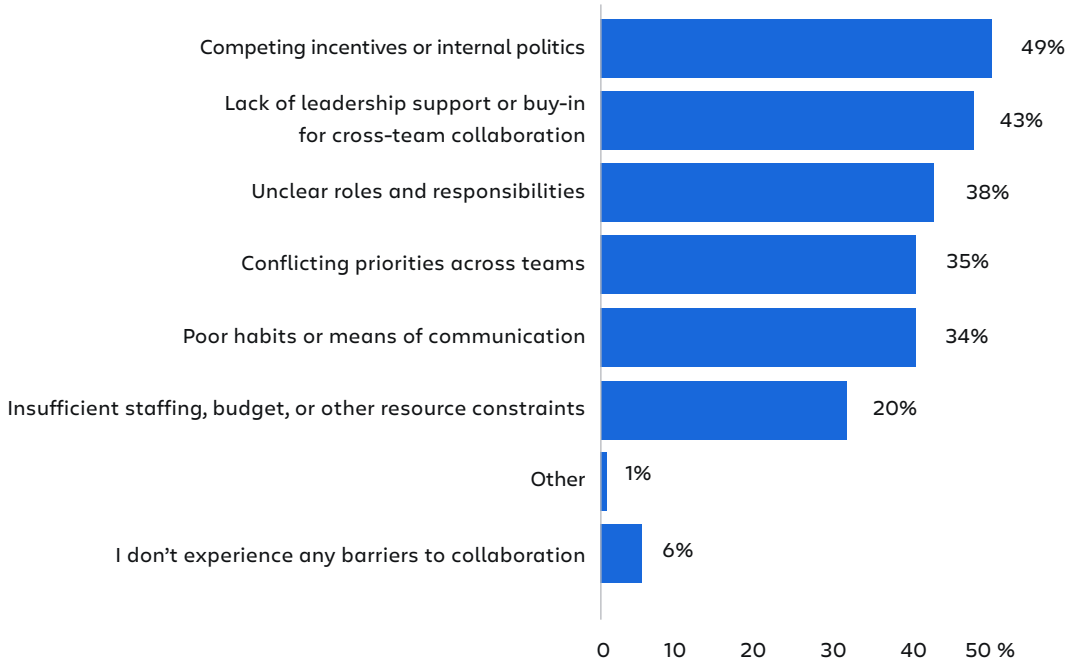
When are engineers involved in shaping features and the product roadmap?



This stands in stark contrast to the collaborative, interdisciplinary model that leads to the best product outcomes. We'll discuss this in more detail in part 2. In a Product Engineering model, engineers take an active role throughout the development cycle. They don't just write code; they participate in user interviews, propose and validate solutions, and collaborate with designers and product managers as they iterate and deploy.

There are many other barriers holding back optimal product teamwork, too. Especially common issues include competing incentives and internal politics (49%), and a lack of leadership support or buy-in for cross-team collaboration (43%).

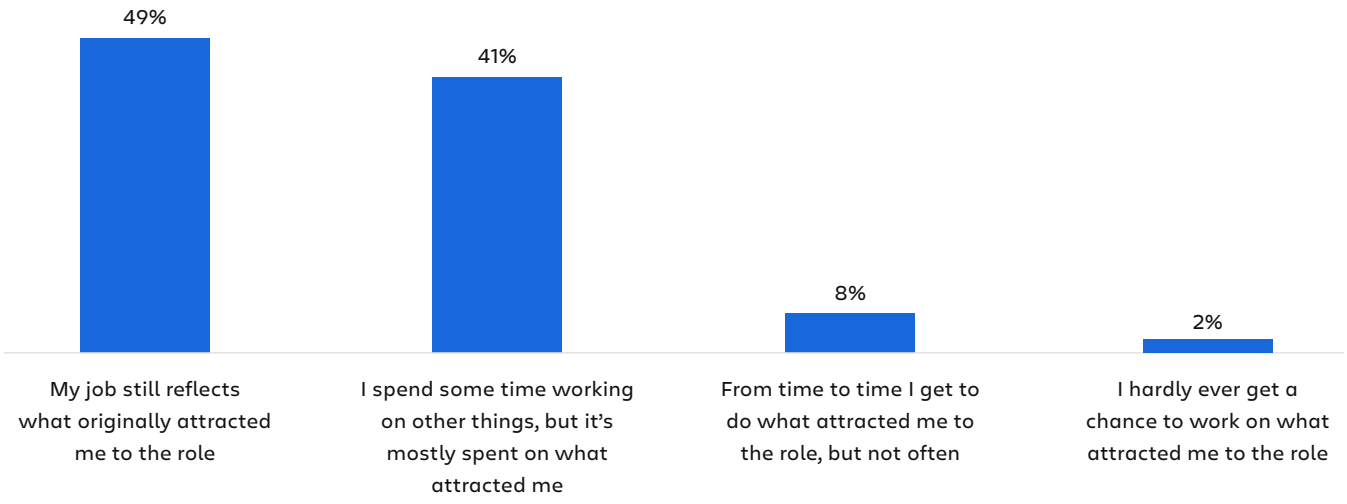
What are the main barriers to better collaboration?*



*Respondents could select multiple answers

But we *do* have good news – on the whole, product teams love their work. **Nearly all (90%) of respondents feel that their job reflects what drew them to this field in the first place.** That's good news, because when people love their work they tend to be more engaged. Leadership just needs to make sure they're set up for success with the collaborative problem-solving work that lights them up.

Does your day-to-day job still reflect what originally attracted you to the role?



Pressure's on: Product teams are expected to drive profit and business results

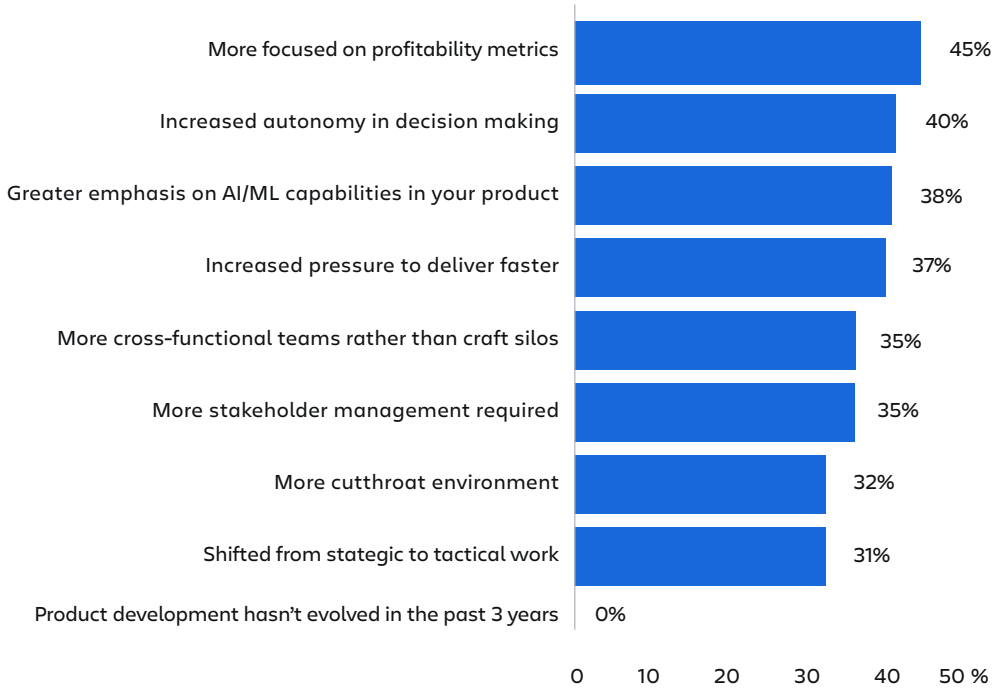
The #1 change product teams see in their field is a competitive, velocity-focused, "profit over everything" approach – and they're not sure how to feel about it.

Obviously, revenue is every business's goal. But in the past, teams may have not felt the pressure to draw a clear line between every product decision and ROI.

In the last three years, the most common changes teams have seen in their field include:

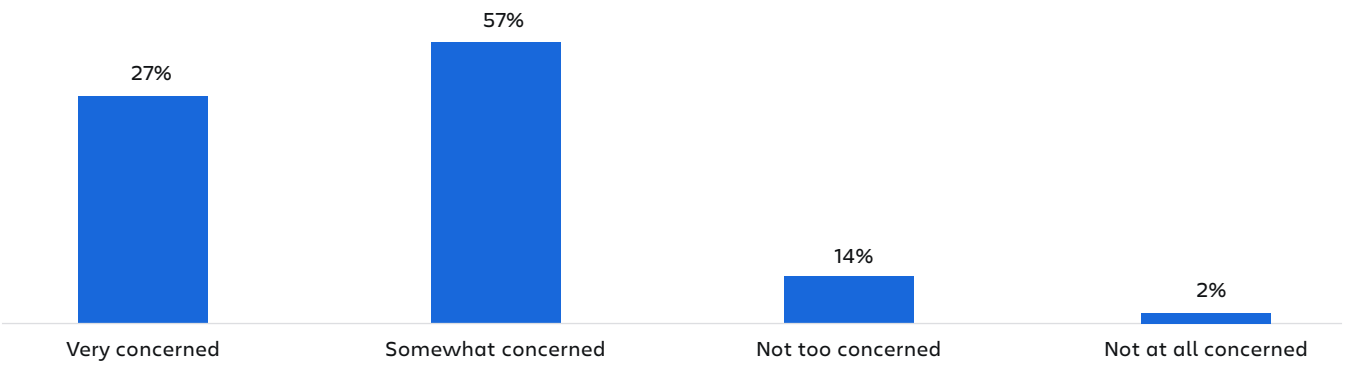
1. An increased focus on profitability metrics
2. More pressure to deliver faster
3. Product development becoming a more cutthroat environment

How has product development evolved over the past 3 years?*



*Respondents could select multiple answers

How concerned are you that your product will not be successful in the market?



So while profit focus isn't new, the degree to which it falls on product teams has likely changed. **And yet, 84% of teams are concerned the products they're currently working on won't be successful in the market.** It's no wonder KPIs become a source of stress – they're metrics product teams are expected to drive, but feel little control over.

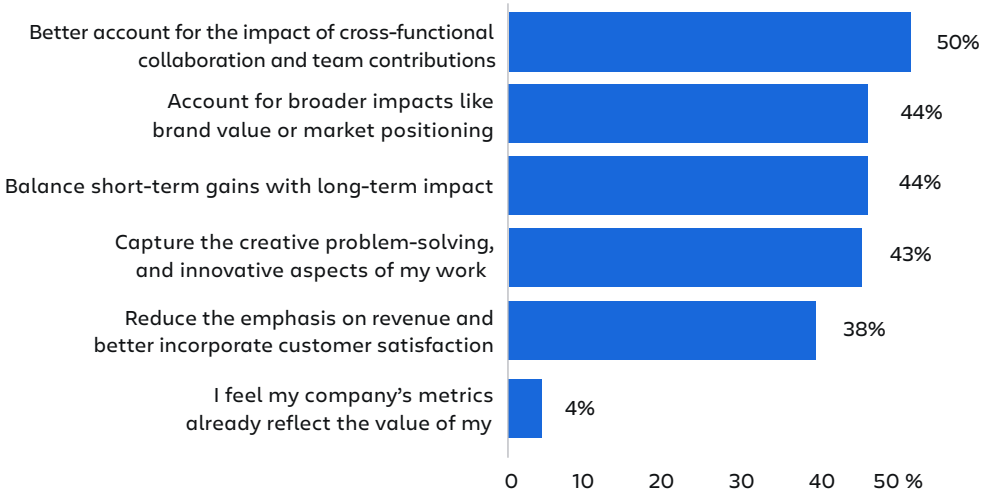
Product teams are uneasy about how to thrive in this new environment, and most aren't clear on how the work they love connects to business goals. **Driving measurable business results, like revenue and market share, is the least rewarding part of their work**, **cited by just 12% of respondents** (see chart on pg. 10).

A number of factors are likely producing pessimism. Remember, half of product teams don't feel they have enough time for strategy, and 40% do little to no experimentation, instead basing their roadmap on leadership preferences.

The wish: From profit-focused to holistic metrics

Product teams are dissatisfied and frustrated with the shift towards profitability metrics. Only 4% of respondents think their company's metrics reflect the true value of the work they do. Instead, they want metrics that evaluate their impact across the **whole customer journey**, not just revenue generated.

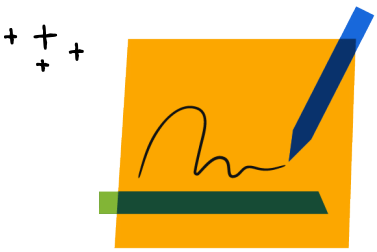
What would you improve about your company's metrics?*



*Respondents could select multiple answers

Half believe metrics should take into account cross-functional collaboration and team contributions, while 44% think metrics should balance short- and long-term gains and account for broader impacts such as brand value or market positioning. They also believe creative, innovative, and problem-solving work should be rewarded (43%), as should customer satisfaction (38%).

Product teams' work is complex, and they want it to be evaluated accordingly. That means nuanced metrics that take into account all the steps that lead to profitability.



The AI curveball: Promises and perils

AI's not the 'next big thing' anymore. Widespread adoption is here, and product teams are getting real value. But so far, the AI boost is more like bailing water out of a sinking ship than building a stronger boat.

The advanced AI use cases product teams want don't seem to be here yet – and often, trying to realize AI's promises feels like an uphill battle. In an industry where everyone's spread thin, saving time on basic tasks feels like just one more way to tread water.

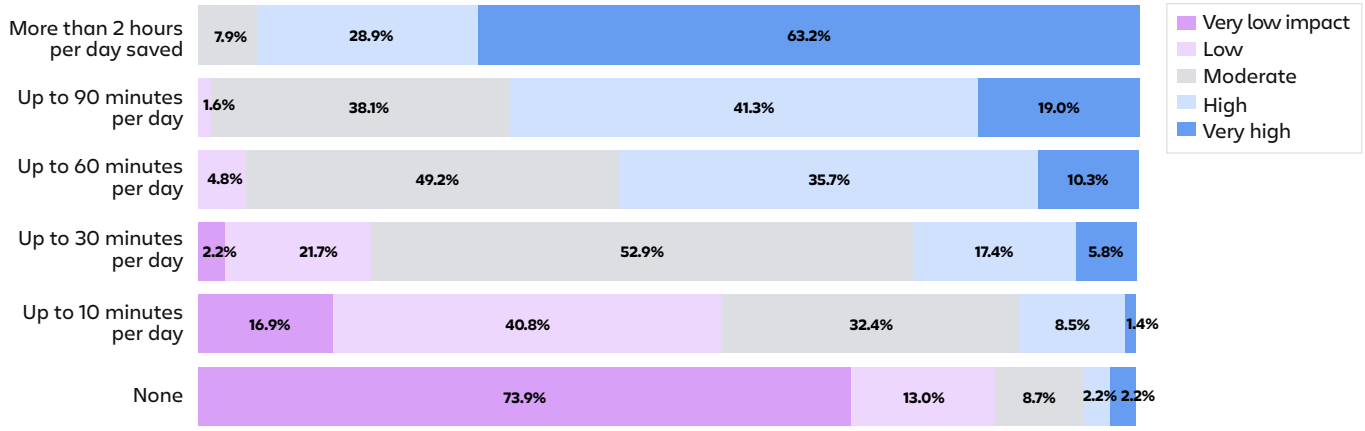
Product teams save hours a week with AI – but for many, it's a drop in the bucket

By and large, product teams use 1-3 AI tools in daily work, with moderate productivity gains of up to an hour a day.

Most use 1-3 AI tools, with the three most popular being ChatGPT (85%), Microsoft Copilot (31%), and Claude (29%). Most respondents (77%) reported at least a moderate impact of AI on productivity, with 38% reporting high or very high impact to productivity.

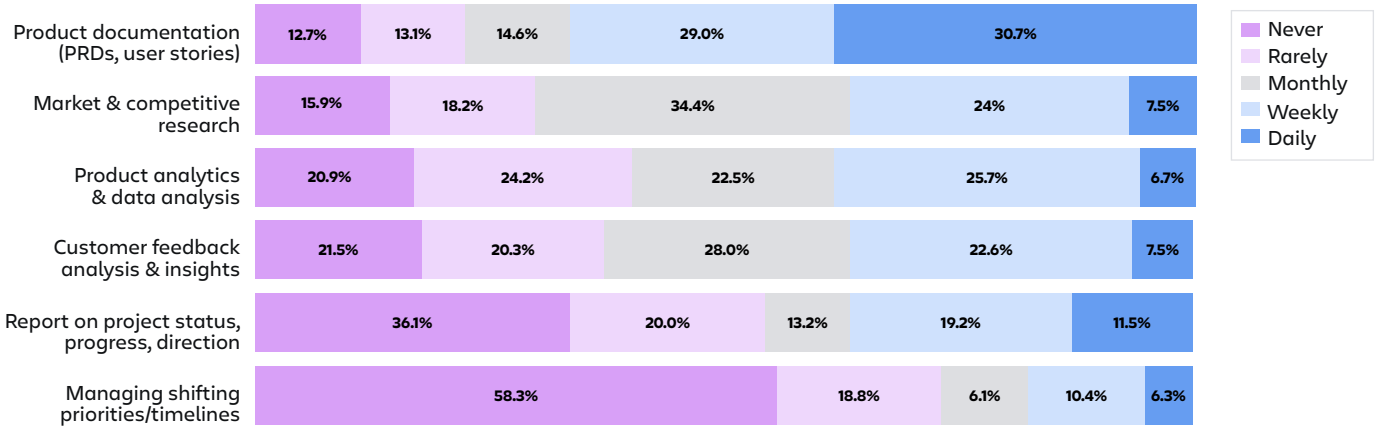
Productivity impact was highly correlated with time saved. 92% of PMs who reported that AI had a high or very high impact to their productivity were saving more than 2 hours per day. Overall, 50% of respondents are saving 10-60 minutes of time per day using AI.

AI impact on productivity



The most common way to save time with AI was by automating routine, low-skill tasks, mentioned by 77% of respondents. Using AI for product documentation was the most popular AI application (60%). Nearly one third of respondents also use AI daily or weekly for market & competitive research, product analytics & data analysis, and customer feedback analysis & insights.

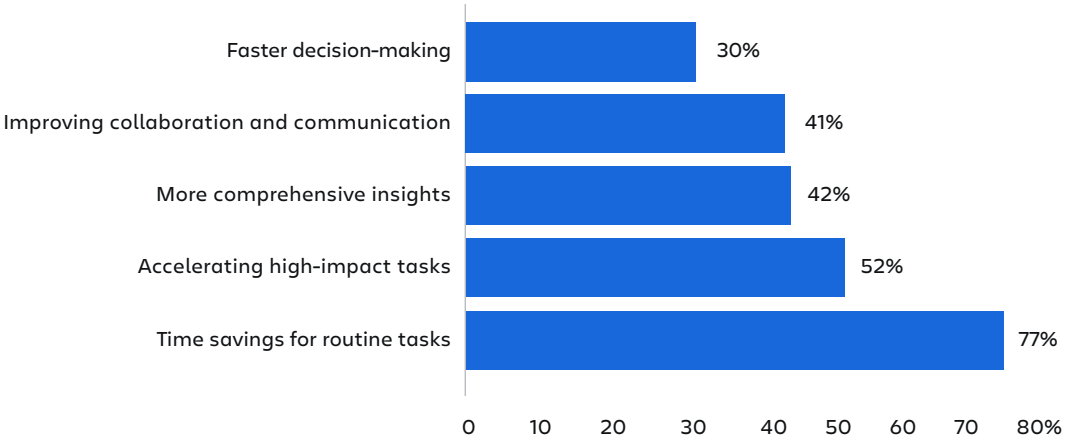
Frequency of AI Usage in PM Jobs to be Done



So far, AI doesn't help with complex work

Product teams crave a higher level of AI that can help with prioritization, planning, and more advanced tasks. Over half (52%) already use AI to provide starting points or frameworks for complex tasks, and it's likely that streamlining this work even further would be welcome.

Ways AI improves productivity*



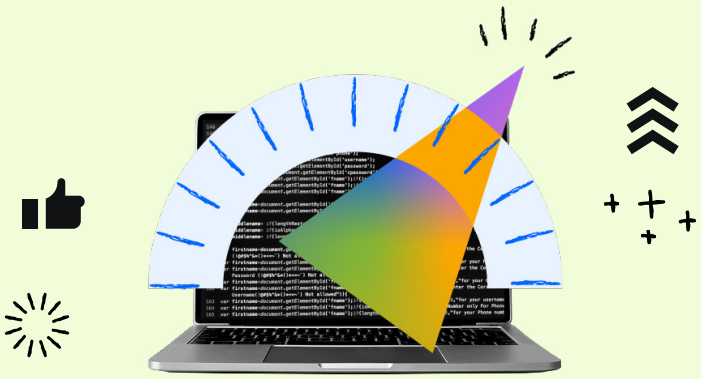
*Respondents could select multiple answers

The AI stretch goal: Prioritization and planning

Prioritization and planning were the least common AI use cases – but unsurprisingly, they're among the most in-demand, likely since product teams already find it hard to make time for these tasks.

Most product teams (77%) aren't using AI to manage shifting priorities and timelines. But they wish they could – planning and prioritization were the second-most common AI 'wish list' item.

Product teams want to use AI for more than just proofreading and summarizing documentation. Many mentioned its limitations in writing coherent user stories, release notes, and acceptance criteria.

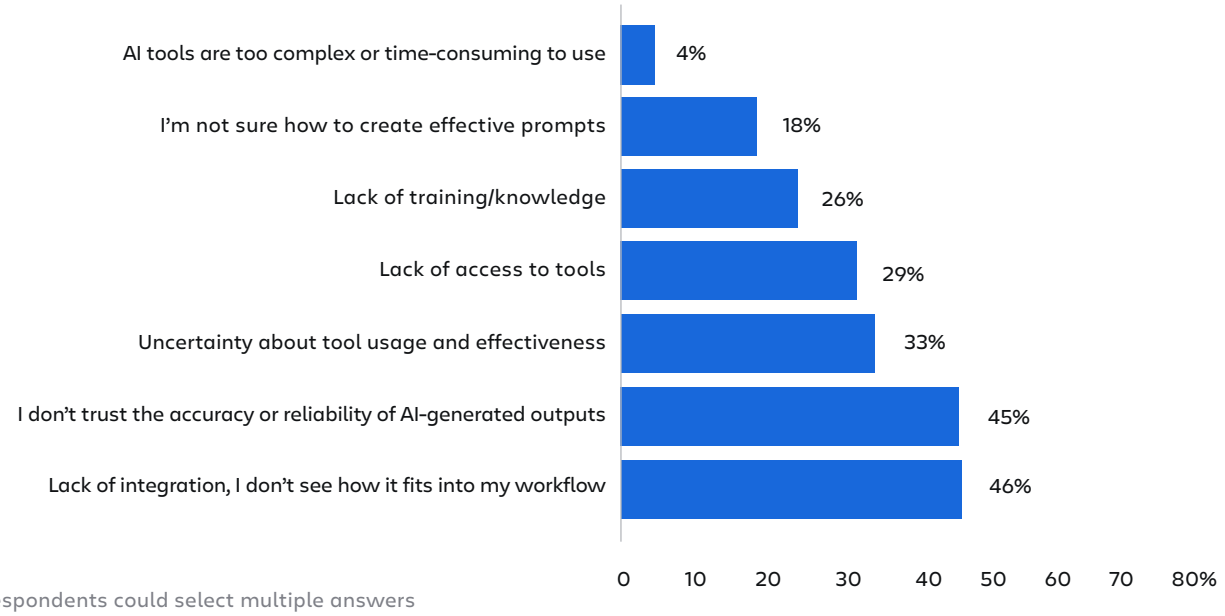


Double-edged sword: How AI adoption holds back productivity

Even as it's saving teams time, fitting AI into work life can be a source of stress. As we've seen, time is a scarce resource for product teams. It takes real effort to develop AI workflows that integrate well with existing work – especially considering that AI, while powerful, is still in its early days and comes with concerns around output reliability and data security.

One-third of product teams we surveyed listed adapting to new tech like AI as a challenge. The tools themselves aren't difficult to use (only 4% of respondents reported AI tools are too complex or time-consuming to use), but other concerns are holding back adoption.

Challenges with adopting AI*



*Respondents could select multiple answers

A lack of integration between AI products and other business tools is the most common barrier holding back AI adoption. 46% of teams report inability to see how AI fits into their workflows as their top adoption challenge, and the same number mention a lack of integration.

The second most-common concern is a lack of trust in AI-generated outputs (45%), suggesting that product teams lack confidence in current AI tools' ability to handle tasks autonomously.

Data security concerns are also preventing product teams from accessing the AI tools they want, especially at large companies. 43% of respondents at companies with over 1,000 employees reported this as a challenge, compared to 20% of respondents at those with under 50.

PART 2

How product teams can do their best work

So far, we've painted a picture of an industry in flux. Product teams have more strategic power than ever, but they're burnt out and struggling to make the most of it – even as they're expected to drive more profit and ROI.

The good news? Product teams don't need to take a passive role in their situations. Whether you're an individual contributor or team leader, you can empower yourself with the knowledge to collaborate better, think strategically, and keep business goals as your North Star.

At Atlassian, we've learned a lot about what it takes to do great product work. In this section, we're sharing some of those lessons. No matter what industry you're in or the maturity of your product organization, we believe there are 5 things all teams should be doing:

1. Taking an active role in strategy and goal-setting
2. Shifting focus from outputs to outcomes
3. Building a culture of experimentation
4. Improving cross-team collaboration
5. Investing in product operations

With these tips and best practices, you'll be set up to adapt and thrive as a product organization, even as the field continues to change!

Take an active role in strategy and goal-setting

For product teams to get excited about driving ROI, they should be contributing to strategy and helping define KPIs, not being told to reach milestones by an arbitrary date.

Case in point, according to our survey:

- Teams who feel limited ability to influence strategy are **41% more likely to be concerned their product won't find market success**
- Teams who feel completely aligned with business objectives are **67% more likely to say they find 'driving measurable business results' rewarding**

This should be extremely intuitive. If product teams (or anyone) feel like they're responsible for business outcomes, but have no voice in how they'll be achieved and measured, that would feel unfair and stressful.

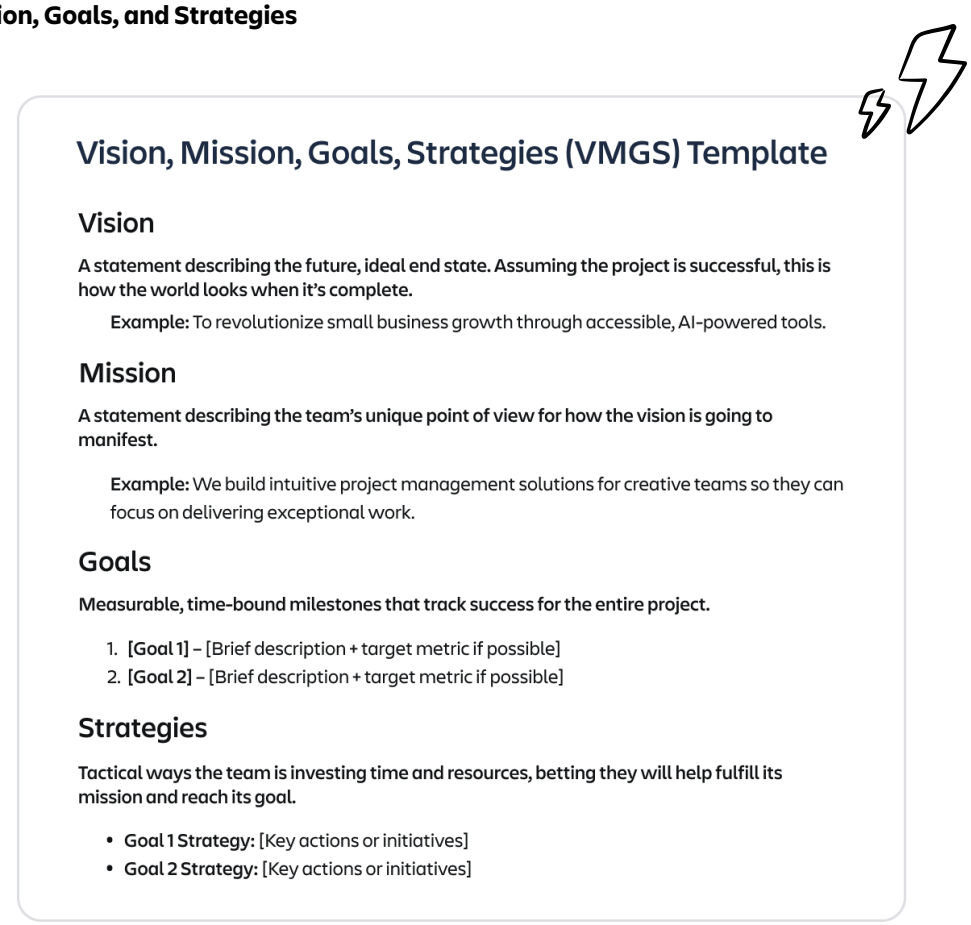
To feel connected with business outcomes and driving profit, product teams should be:

- Taking part in strategic discussions to determine business priorities
- Helping set metrics that fairly measure progress towards them
- Building processes to keep teams focused and on track towards goals

This kind of collaboration is key to the Product Operating Model – an outcomes-focused, user-first model that is the gold standard for product organizations. Next, we'll share a couple techniques from this model that product teams can implement in their own daily work.

The Product Operating Model: A transformation away from top-down product decision-making towards a collaborative, customer-centric way of working.

VMGS: Vision, Mission, Goals, and Strategies



Vision, Mission, Goals, Strategies (VMGS) Template

Vision

A statement describing the future, ideal end state. Assuming the project is successful, this is how the world looks when it's complete.

Example: To revolutionize small business growth through accessible, AI-powered tools.

Mission

A statement describing the team's unique point of view for how the vision is going to manifest.

Example: We build intuitive project management solutions for creative teams so they can focus on delivering exceptional work.

Goals

Measurable, time-bound milestones that track success for the entire project.

1. **[Goal 1] –** [Brief description + target metric if possible]
2. **[Goal 2] –** [Brief description + target metric if possible]

Strategies

Tactical ways the team is investing time and resources, betting they will help fulfill its mission and reach its goal.

- **Goal 1 Strategy:** [Key actions or initiatives]
- **Goal 2 Strategy:** [Key actions or initiatives]

Prioritizing a roadmap is much simpler when the entire team envisions a clear, shared path to success. There's no ambiguity about the ultimate outcomes you're working towards, and which strategies you'll iterate on to get there.

One of the best ways to define that path is a Vision, Mission, Goals and Strategies (VMGS) one-pager. A strong VMGS document will get everyone feeling connected to each other, their daily work, and the project's ultimate goals.

Write your VMGS document collaboratively, such as through a series of workshops, discussing what you're building, why, and how it will benefit your organization. Keep it clear and simple–don't use fancy words, overly descriptive language, or industry jargon.

- **Vision:** a statement describing the future, ideal end state. Assuming the project is successful, this is how the world looks when it's complete.
- **Mission:** a statement describing the team's unique point of view for how the vision is going to manifest.
- **Goals:** measurable, time-bound milestones that track success for the entire project.
- **Strategies:** tactical ways the team is investing time and resources, betting they will help fulfill its mission and reach its goal. Strategies work best when they are clear, crisp, pragmatic and easy to understand.

Strategies should be built out even further, since they describe specific work the team will undertake. Each strategy should:

- Ladder up to a desired outcome, which contributes to the end goal.
- Use a corresponding sub-goal to measure its success, often aiming to improve a specific qualitative or quantitative metric. Consider metrics like SEQ score (Single Ease Question, a measure of perceived usability), or "pirate" metrics (AARRR: Acquisition, Activation, Retention, Referral, Revenue).

From output- to outcome-focused work

The shift from outputs to outcomes is key to the Product Operating Model. In an output-focused model, temporary teams work to complete projects, defined as shipping specific outputs (like features) within budget and on time. In an outcome-focused model, permanent product teams work towards big-picture outcomes that will improve the product, and by extension benefit their organization.

Examples of outputs

- Ship 10 features by a specific date
- Publish 3 long-form content assets per quarter
- Launch a product on time for a specific conference

Examples of outcomes

- Increase conversions from trial to paid from 15% to 25%
- Reduce support tickets for a feature from 50/week to 5/week
- Prove that X customers solved a specific problem with a solution

Shipping on schedule does matter – but only if the features in question actually provide value to customers and the business. That's why outcomes are a better way to measure productivity and success.

There are two broad types of outcomes[1]: business outcomes and product outcomes.

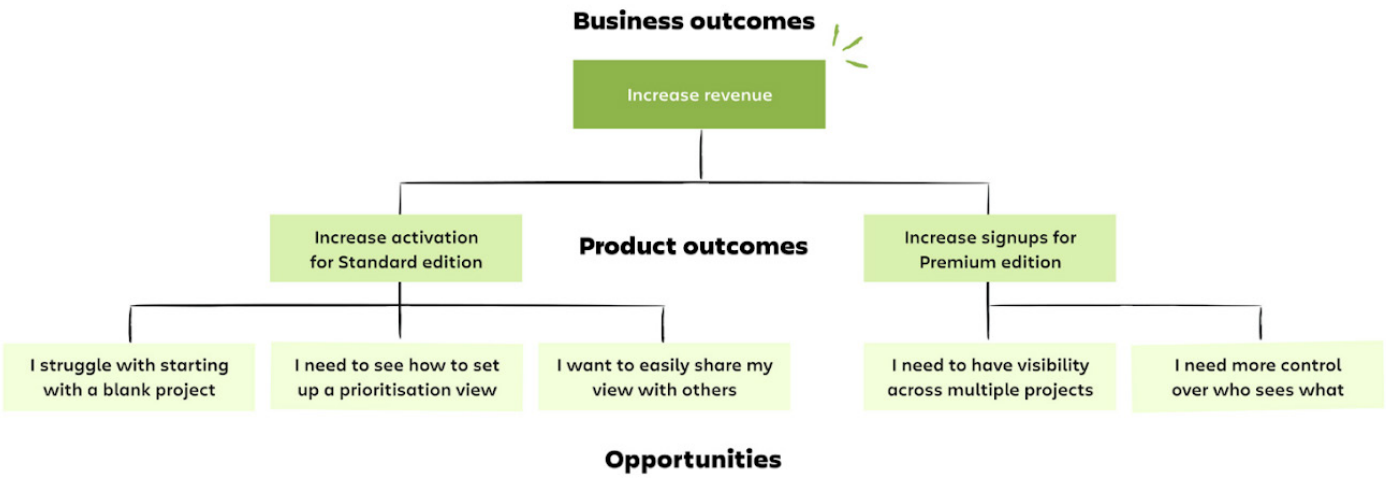
A business outcome benefits the organization. It is a lagging indicator, telling you what has already happened as a result of product decisions or outcomes.

- Example: Boosting revenue

[1] Torres, T. (n.d.). Continuous Discovery Habits: Discover Products that Create Customer Value and Business Value.

A product outcome improves the product to create positive business outcomes. It is a leading indicator, giving early signs of what might happen to business outcomes.

- Example: Increasing conversion rate from evaluations to purchase

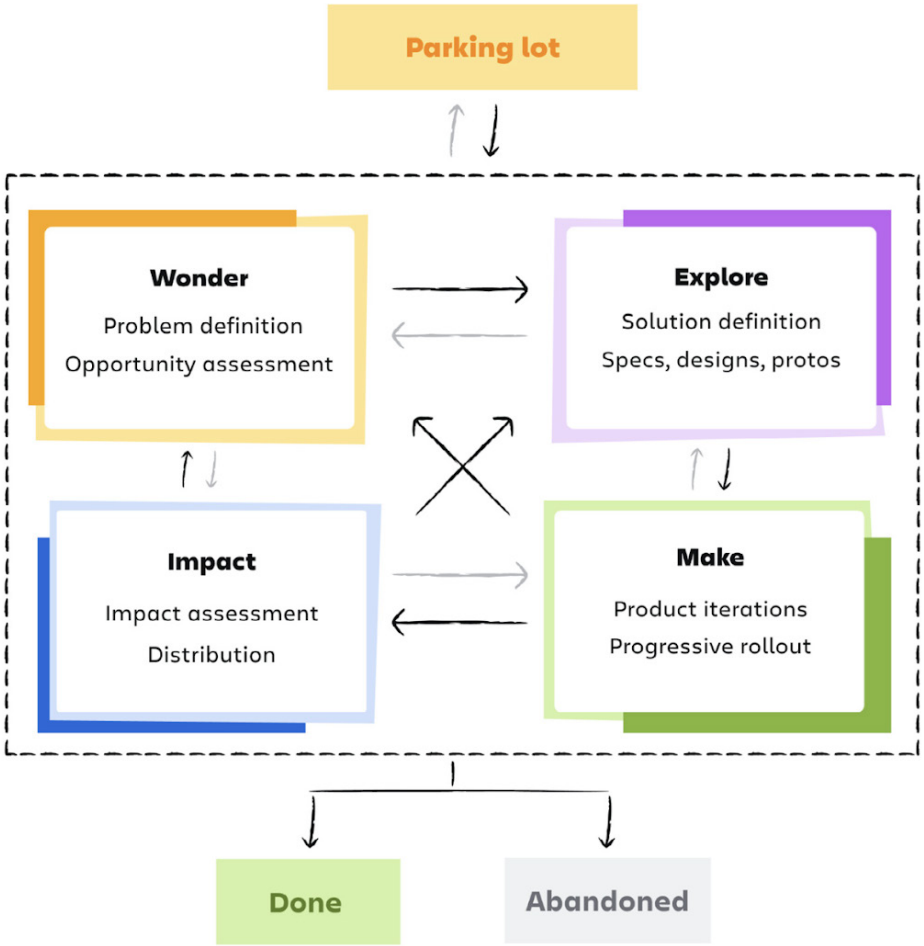


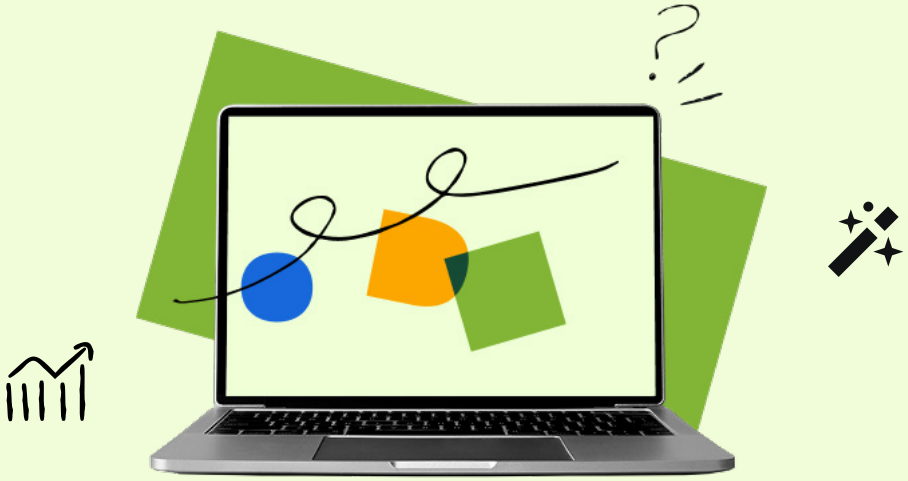
Use the idea lifecycle to work towards outcomes

Once teams have clear outcomes in mind, organizations need systems to connect daily work to these goals. Systems help people understand not just the objectives themselves, but how day-to-day work will achieve them in a practical sense.

One way to do this is to use 'ideas' to represent units of work that could potentially support business outcomes. These ideas can contain product ideas, user feedback, opportunities, problems, solutions, and more.

The idea lifecycle is the process of deciding which ideas support outcomes, and if so, whether they are worth implementing. At Atlassian, we follow a four-stage lifecycle to develop, validate, and deliver ideas: Wonder, Explore, Make, Impact.





Building a culture of experimentation

Driving outcomes is an iterative, experimental process. Outcomes, and the goals that correspond to them, drive product work – but experimentation is how teams actually get there and stop flying blind.
A 'culture of experimentation' is one that's grounded in real data and makes tying action back to those findings a daily practice. Here are some principles you can use to guide you as you build your organization's own learning culture.

Case in point, according to our survey, respondents who reported a strong experimentation approach were **40% more likely to say they feel empowered to lead product strategy** than respondents with minimal or no experimentation.

Use findings and feedback to identify problems and solutions

Decisions about what to explore, build, or ship should always be connected to business goals, customer needs, and market demands. To make that a reality, teams need data – findings, insights, and user feedback.

These findings come in many shapes and forms. All of them reveal opportunities, challenges, and areas for potential improvement within your product.

Examples of findings, insights, and feedback:

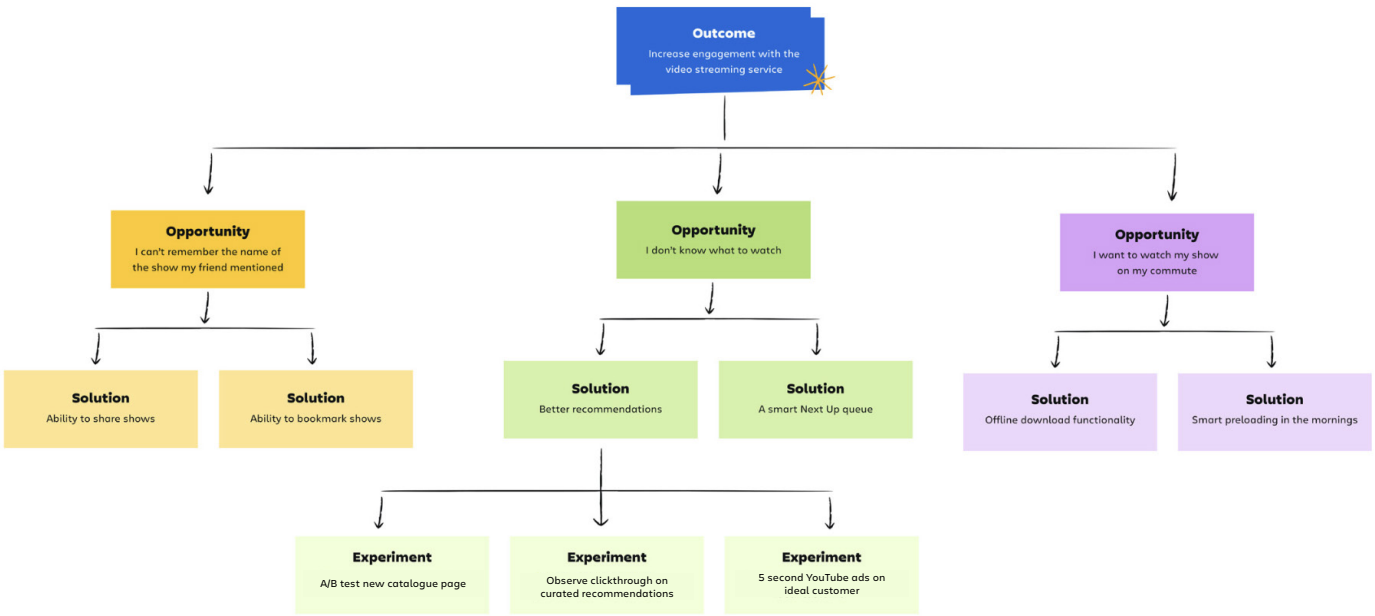
- Repeat problems identified by support teams
- Product gaps identified by sales teams
- Suggestions coming from customers
- Suggestions from employees across different departments
- Market research and industry trends
- Competitive analysis and benchmarking
- Brainstorming sessions and ideation workshops
- Input from leadership on company strategies and goals

These pieces of data give different members of the product team, as well as stakeholders, a common language to return to as they decide what to experiment with and iterate on. And this common language helps teams build trust in one another as they collaborate to build a great product.

Brainstorm experiments and solutions with Opportunity Solution Trees (OSTs)

Once you've used data to uncover problems and opportunities, Opportunity Solution Trees (OSTs) can help you visualize the experiments that can be used to solve for them and achieve business and product outcomes.

OSTs are a great way for teams to keep track of why they are pursuing specific solutions, their hypothesized impact on defined outcomes, and other potential ideas and solutions to iterate on.



Validate solutions with lighthouse users

So, customer findings and feedback should be your North Star. But if you receive feedback from hundreds or thousands of customers, you can't possibly work with all their feedback directly, let alone act on it.

Instead, consider working with a small, dedicated focus group of 'lighthouse users' as you develop, iterate, and ship solutions. Depending on your product and goals, as few as 10 lighthouse users may be enough.

Working with lighthouse users enables teams to:

- **Move faster:** you can make decisions based on focused, collaborative discussions, and test product experiences early by giving lighthouse users prototype access. There's no need to conduct 1000-user surveys to make routine decisions.
- **Get rich contextual insights:** you'll build rapport with these users to understand their problems and motivations. It's often more impactful to have multiple conversations with a user you know well, than to have a single conversation with many people.
- **Drive urgency across product teams**: Product teams get to know lighthouse users as people, which drives their sense of ownership. It's much more motivating to solve real problems for real people, than take action based on abstract findings or takeaways.

However, you'll want to have a general idea of your problem space before working with lighthouse users. Consider conducting some preliminary research to get a better idea of the prevalence of the problem, as well as its intensity.

What makes for a good lighthouse user?

Over time, the idea is to keep learning about who you're building for, and find lighthouse users who are representative of that. In our experience, they share these attributes:

- Very clear communicators
- In your target customer segment, even if you're still iterating on what that is
- Strongly affected by the problems and pain points you're trying to solve
- Trying to find new ways to solve this pain point, so far without success
- Not using a competing app, so you don't center discussions on replicating features
- Open to new and different ways of working, instead of looking for specific features
- Happy to use an early-stage product or feature, share feedback, and discuss solutions

To find your lighthouse users, give them a channel to get in touch with you, like a landing page or in-app invitations. Then, direct them to a form to help assess whether they're a fit. Finally, set up 1-1 chats to get acquainted with all your qualified leads.

Once you've selected a group of lighthouse users, you'll really want to go all-in on collaborating with them – essentially, treating them as co-creators of the solution. Here are a few ideas:

- Set up dedicated Slack channels where they can share feedback and questions
- Meet monthly to discuss their product experiences
- Share early designs with them and get their feedback
- Give them early access to products, experiences, and features
- Ask how they'd design the solution themselves

Improve cross-team collaboration to help teams build great things

Fluid collaboration across teams and functions – especially engineering – is the foundation of exceptional product work. Engineers should be part of product decision-making discussions early, and stay closely involved as teams experiment. Their technical experience can help teams understand what's actually involved in potential initiatives, so they can prioritize realistically and pivot as needed.

Case in point, according to our survey, respondents who say they are empowered to lead product strategy are **30% more likely to say they involve engineers from the beginning**.

Here are a few techniques.

The product triad: product managers, engineers, and designers working in sync

At Atlassian, we use a 'product triad' structure to support cross-functional collaboration. Product teams always include pods of product managers, designers, and engineers involved in the entire cycle of ideating, experimenting, iterating, and deployment.

Product triads use the Wonder, Explore, Make, and Impact model discussed above to explore problems and come up with solutions. Engineers are actively involved from day one.

Triads work together to document every aspect of the challenge or opportunity, from technical hurdles to user needs. Triads work through feedback, brainstorm, and validate potential solutions together. Because engineers, product managers, and designers all have an equal voice, there's no surprises around technical feasibility, capacity, or design hurdles.

Unlike in other models, with product triads, work never happens in a silo. Engineers join customer calls, product managers look over designs in Figma, and designers take part in technical feasibility discussions.

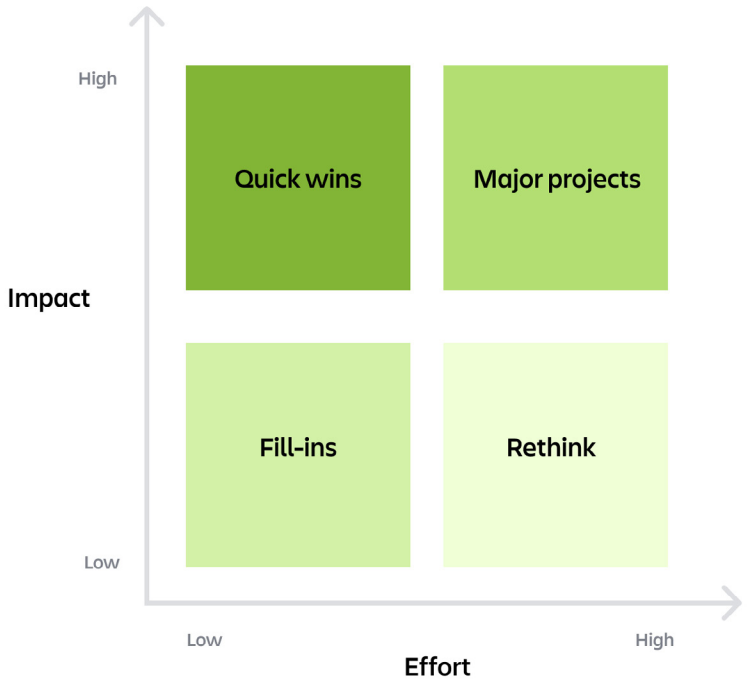
Structure cross-team collaboration with prioritization frameworks

For product teams to prioritize in a balanced way, they must understand what's involved in different ideas or initiatives, and how moving forward with them will affect the future of the project.

Shared frameworks give product teams and stakeholders a common language as they decide what to prioritize. They can also guide budget and resource allocation.

Impact vs. Effort Matrix

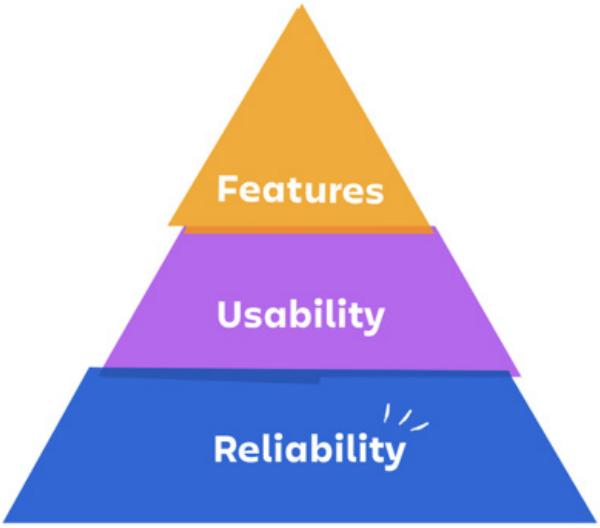
The Impact vs. Effort Matrix prioritizes is a simple, yet powerful way to structure conversations between product managers and engineering.



Engineers are invited to share their perspective on the complexities of delivery. That helps product managers identify possible quick wins or big bets, and determine why specific ideas should be prioritized over others.

The RUF Pyramid

RUF stands for reliability, usability improvements, and new features. These are the three components of a product that actually meets users' needs. New features are exciting, but they're the icing on the cake – first, the core product needs to be reliable and user-friendly.



- **Product reliability** is the base of the pyramid. Invest in the infrastructure that will prevent urgent interruptions: incident management processes, system redundancy, technical debt reduction, and more.
- **Usability improvements** mean investing in your current feature set: improve the user experience of highly-used features, make lesser-used features more discoverable, and remove features without traction.
- Finally, with a strong foundation in place you can add **new features**: ideally, ones grounded in customer data and thoroughly validated through experimentation and iteration. This is the fun part that most product teams are already comfortable with.

Boulders, rocks, and pebbles

This framework helps differentiate ideas from one another based on the level of investment an idea requires, balanced with its strategic importance.

Boulder

- Big new bet
- New product pillar
- Large rewrite

Rock

- New feature

Pebble

- Small UX improvement
- Papercut

All three categories of idea are equally important. For example, a product's usability will degrade without pebble fixes, but they can be difficult to prioritize without an intentional effort. By separating ideas into distinct categories, this framework can help you avoid apples-to-oranges debates like "should we fix this UX glitch, or expand our core functionality"?

Use clear roles and open communication practices to keep collaboration productive

Cross-functional collaboration gets messy when people don't know exactly how to participate. Use clearly defined roles and responsibilities to bring the wisdom of different experts into your process – in a structured, organized way.

Here's a table showing how these different groups relate to one another and contribute to the product development process. Creators and contributors are closest to product decisions. External stakeholders, including leadership, need a way to see what product decisions are being made and share feedback.

Role	Who	Responsibilities
Creators	The core product team across product, engineering, design, research.	Drive the product, the prioritization process, and the ideas from beginning to end.
Contributors	Your points of contact within the sales, support, customer success, marketing, and other field teams.	Participate in the prioritization process and provide key insights: customer requests, support problems, etc.
Stakeholders	The rest of the company, typically separated in 2 roles: leadership and everyone else.	Need visibility on priorities, progress, and decisions and ways to provide feedback.

Invest in product operations for happier, more effective product teams

When companies invest in product operations, their product teams tend to be happier, more effective, and more connected to company goals.

Case in point, according to our survey, product teams at companies with a dedicated product operations function show numerous positive traits. They share these attributes:

- Teams with a dedicated product operations function report a **+30-point difference in feeling empowered to lead strategy** compared to organizations with distributed or basic product operations.
- Teams with a dedicated product operations function report a **+22-point difference in feeling completely aligned with company objectives** compared to organizations with distributed or basic product operations.
- Teams with a dedicated product operations function report a **+19-point difference in involving engineering from the beginning of ideation** compared to organizations with distributed or basic product operations.

Let's not get ahead of ourselves – correlation does not equal causation, and companies with dedicated product operations teams also tended to be larger (with budgets to match). But it shouldn't be surprising that when organizations invest in supporting them, product teams are able to do their best work.

Product operations is the systems, tools, and practices product teams use to get work done. By optimizing these processes, teams get the support they need to build products that benefit end users and serve company goals.

A roadmap to leveling up product operations

You don't need to hire an entire new team to improve your product operations. Whatever the size of your product operations budget, ensuring this work is as well-resourced as possible – no matter who handles it – can help product teams feel more empowered, collaborative, and aligned.

Here are 4 principles to start with as you think about elevating your product operations.

#1 Change existing processes in a collaborative, outcomes-focused way

Don't just impose new processes on teams – start by holding collaborative discussions to understand what they need. Agree on how product work should look in your organization, and tie all changes back to that vision.

Roll out changes in a flexible, experimental way rather than expecting everything to go perfectly from the start.

#2 Standardize goals and prioritization methods – but give teams autonomy in daily work

Teams need some degree of control over processes to do their best work. But as organizations grow, consistency becomes crucial to understand what's happening in product work and why certain choices were made.

Rather than imposing structure on every aspect, focus on standardizing three areas: company goals, prioritization, and level of effort for each idea. Frameworks like those discussed above are useful here.

#3 Build systems for learning from and acting on customer data

Customer data should always be flowing into product teams' work through intentionally designed channels, where it can naturally integrate into everyday decisions that support company goals.

This is a fundamental shift towards a learning culture – and it's built on practices and processes. Building this learning infrastructure is a three-part process.

Connect product teams to customers

- Remove obstacles and complexities that stand between teams and customer insights

Make accessing knowledge a habit

- Create learning rituals so that practices become habits

Make learnings easy to access and use

- Customer knowldge is no longer siloed, and everyone can easily refer to it as part of regular work

#4 Make product work visible to leadership and other teams

Visibility is often a key reason organizations focus on product operations in the first place. To have confidence that resources are being allocated wisely, leadership typically wants awareness of what's getting done and how it connects to strategic goals.

But if product teams are over-reliant on manual reporting, creating visibility can quickly become a pain point. The right tools and processes, especially for roadmaps, can unite the entire organization around strategy without too much extra administrative labor.

A bright future of connected, collaborative product work

Wherever you are in your career, we hope these insights can help you understand our changing industry, and that these best practices can help you get closer to your product and career goals.

Here are the key challenges we found product teams are facing:

- Product teams have a seat at the strategic table – but are struggling to find the time to take full advantage of it
- Product teams love collaborating to solve complex problems – but still face teamwork challenges
- Product teams are under more pressure than ever to drive profit – but many aren't sure how their work connects to these business outcomes
- While AI has brought productivity gains, product teams are still treading water, and AI isn't yet helping with complex high-value tasks

And these are the solutions we recommend teams explore to address them:

- To get excited about driving profit, product teams must be included in strategy and goal-setting discussions
- Cross-functional collaboration, especially with engineers, can be improved by using insights and shared prioritization frameworks to guide product discussions
- Investing in product operations processes can help product teams be more satisfied, productive, and aligned with company goals

Start elevating product work with practices, structure, and tools

Are you ready to dive further into the practices we discussed above? The Jira Product Discovery team has compiled dozens of resources product teams can use as they work towards a bold, user-centric vision of their product's future in our Resource Center.

We suggest you start with:

- The magic behind product engineering, a guide to implementing the cross-functional collaboration between product teams and engineers we discussed in this report.
- The product ops mission: a four-part journey to building for end-users, a roadmap to building or improving product operations processes at your organization.
- The product discovery handbook, a guide to the Product Operating Model and how to start implementing it.

Want to learn more about Jira Product Discovery?

Methodology: where we sourced our data

The Atlassian State of Product survey was conducted by Wakefield Research of 700 respondents in the U.S., Germany, and France. All respondents had a minimum seniority requirement of "Manager", and worked at companies with between 500 and 10,000 employees.

In this report, we wanted to speak to the experience of everyone who works on product teams, not just Product Managers. So, while most of the respondents were Product Managers, our sample also included Engineers, Designers, and Program Managers – all the disciplines that make up cross-functional product teams.

Additionally, for the AI section of this report, Atlassian conducted a survey of 521 product managers globally, with questions focusing on AI tool usage, productivity impact, adoption challenges and future opportunities.

ATLASSIAN