

My goal is to set you up for success as a new product manager.

First, you're going to have to dedicate yourself to the art of product management. It is one of those things, like people management, that seems simple, but can take many years to really master. The only way to learn it is to actually do it.

That being said, reading about it and learning from others does help. One suggestion would be to speak with 2-3 product managers (here or at other companies) to get their view. Become a knowledge sponge. Copy others before you try to find your own voice and do something unique (that can come after you've achieved mastery).

The main parts of the job in my view are:

- Understand the customer deeply – this means user studies, you have to go talk to the users every week and spend a lot of time with them to hear their pain, get inside their head.
- Be metrics driven , you should be using time series data to give you insight into what people are doing with the product and see if the changes you are making are improving things. If you haven't instrumented the app and chosen a metric you want to improve, you are just guessing.
- The product manager is responsible for prioritizing the product roadmap and communicating it to the team. Not as a top down dictator, but as a consensus builder amongst all the stakeholders, breaking a tie when necessary.
- You need to be a communication hub, both when building consensus internally on priorities/roadmap, but also externally communicating changes to customers. Users need to see that the product is continually improving by hearing about it from you. Everyone internally needs to be on the same page when changes roll out. You are the point of contact for all things related to this product.
- Once you master all of that, you will need to develop product vision (conviction about where things are going in the future, make the hard calls about what to eliminate, etc) and strive to make something truly great. You can think about it not just as eliminating customer pain, but actually creating customer delight. In rare instances, you can wind up creating something that people actually love. (very few products attain this – nobody says they love Tide detergent, but people do say they love their Harley Davidson).

On a practical note, you are responsible for the following tasks on the team: running product review, maintaining/updating the product roadmap, and doing sprint planning. Here are two slides that help clarify your role vs the engineering manager.

Eng Mgr vs Prod Mgr?

Engineering Manager

- Mentor on technical skills
- Code review
- 1:1s
- Career development, long term goals
- ICs report to this person

Product Manager

- Sets the roadmap via consensus
- Metrics driven
- Communication hub internally
- User studies

Pop Quiz?

EM or PM?

- Who manages the product roadmap?
- Who do engineers report to?
- Who is the communication hub with other departments?
- Who has the final call on technology decisions?
- Who conducts user studies?

Answers

PM
EM
PM
EM
PM

Good luck! This will be a big challenge but I have confidence that you can do it. I expect a few bumps along the way, but I expect by the end of next quarter you will well on your way to having a happy/healthy/productive team that is delighting its customers.