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Product Manager as a Shepherd
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My journey in becoming a product manager is built on the back of amazing experiences I have been fortunate to have been a part of, in multiple continents, amongst many cultures in both educational and professional contexts.

In landing the role, I was not looking for jobs with that specific title. I was interested in a way to build on my experiences to date and channel them towards creating products for consumers that lived at the intersection of physical and digital experiences.

The function that would let me do all of the above turned out to be Product Management at Logitech.
I am responsible for the product management of the hardware, software and cloud backend of the company’s connected home video camera platform.

I have launched many experiences with my awesome team:

- A modular line of connected home security cameras and complimentary accessories - along with firmware releases to improve the hardware experience.
- Multiple releases of iOS, Android and Web applications that couple with the hardware.
- An evolving cloud-based backend and computer vision pipeline that act as the backbone for the hardware and the apps.
- Two generations of paid subscriptions for users to enhance their camera experience.
- Multiple smart home ecosystem integrations including Amazon Alexa, Google Home and Apple HomeKit.
What do I do as a product manager?
The balanced breakthrough model for product development is a great backdrop for adding context to answer the question of what my role is all about.

When thinking of new product development, one must consider all three aspects - the desirability, viability and the feasibility of an idea to create great product experiences.

Most of my role as a product manager deals with product development in this way and the job function sits at the intersection of the needs that arise from these aspects.
I interact with my colleagues in certain roles including design, engineering, marketing, program management and business strategy, consistently and frequently throughout the product development process.

My interaction with other colleagues in roles including market research, product compliance, legal, finance and business development, is extremely vital during certain but not all phases of the product development.
The work involved for a given product involves the following:

• Define and maintain the feature roadmap and to capture the functional and experiential requirements along with what success looks like for these features.

• Work with the other functions in the organization to ensure that the product intent is maintained across the manifestations of their work during development.

• Launch this product for the user.

• Manage the interactions of the product with the users over time and create content to aid their usage of the product.

• Learn from the user's interaction and engagement with the product features based on the defined success criteria.

• Grow / maintain / deprecate the features in the next iteration of the product.
With more experience in the role, I am working on multiple products simultaneously that are at different phases of development at a given time.
How this work manifests itself in any given week is another way to add color to the work I do.

The level of interaction with my colleagues in each of these roles vary based on stage of project and between hardware and software.
The same calendar can be broken down into another view, breaking down the work into when I am working solo, in reviews providing critique, shareouts getting critiqued, or in shared creation or ideation sessions.
An explanation of what the role entails would be incomplete without talking about the fact that a lot of my job involves influencing other people in these roles without any direct authority over them.
Knowledge and skills needed to perform the role
In many ways the role requires me to be a jack of all trades and master of some.

It requires that I have a practical understanding of each of the key fields that I interact with in the way the practitioners think, are incentivized within the business and communicate within their function.

On top of this, I need to have the skills to step in and co-create with them as needed and present a point of view.
Armed with this knowledge, the language and the skills I have to be able to:

- Take in all these different viewpoints, data in a very short duration of time.
- Understand these points of view and separate them out into opinions, assumptions and facts.
- Determine where they line up with my goals of delivering the intended product experience.
- Come up with a concise and accurate summary of the salient points in the conversation for everyone to have a shared understanding.

Rapid critical thinking  clear communication
Most of the time, unblocking people’s thinking is enough and exposing them to the different vantage points leads them to drive the rest of their work towards the product intent.

Then there are times when it is not enough and another skill comes into play - Inception.

This requires seeding ideas in their minds, guiding them and working closely with them to feel like they can own the idea and can run with it.
Behaviors and personality traits that are invaluable
Balancing the desire to see the world with wonderment, making sense of it and carving out a niche to solve and to not travel into tangents.

We are inherently curious as children, but as we grow up this goes away. Fortunately, in an environment like ID, I had the mental and physical space to get back into this mode of unbounded curiosity.

The design thinking process and the structure of learning at ID is built around practicing this behavior constantly.

Unbounded curiosity with a focus
To be successful in my role, I have to champion the needs of my users and empathize with them.

I am regularly building on this trait by reading reviews for my products, and other products in this category, being part of troubleshooting process with customer support, getting on customer support calls and understanding the perspectives of experts in the domain.

While channeling the user's point of view, I need to be able to identify the needs I can address and prioritize them to maximize impact and ultimately move the needle from a financial perspective for the company.
It’s important in the role to be like water in its different states as Bruce Lee suggests - being fluid and adaptable in some while needing to be firm and decisive in others.

The cycles for being in these different states of “Water” vary between teams, product development stages and even the type of development between hardware and software.
Ultimately, the most important behavior / trait as a product manager is to build strong relationships with every single colleague in their respective fields and being open to their point of view.

While this can be challenging at times as, it allows me stay humble and recognize that the product is the best version of itself, when everyone in my team is successful and working alongside me to deliver it to the world.

Maori proverb

He aha te mea nui o te ao.
He tāngata, he tāngata, he tāngata

What’s the most important thing in the world
It’s people, It’s people, It’s people
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