Product Management Platforms for Healthcare
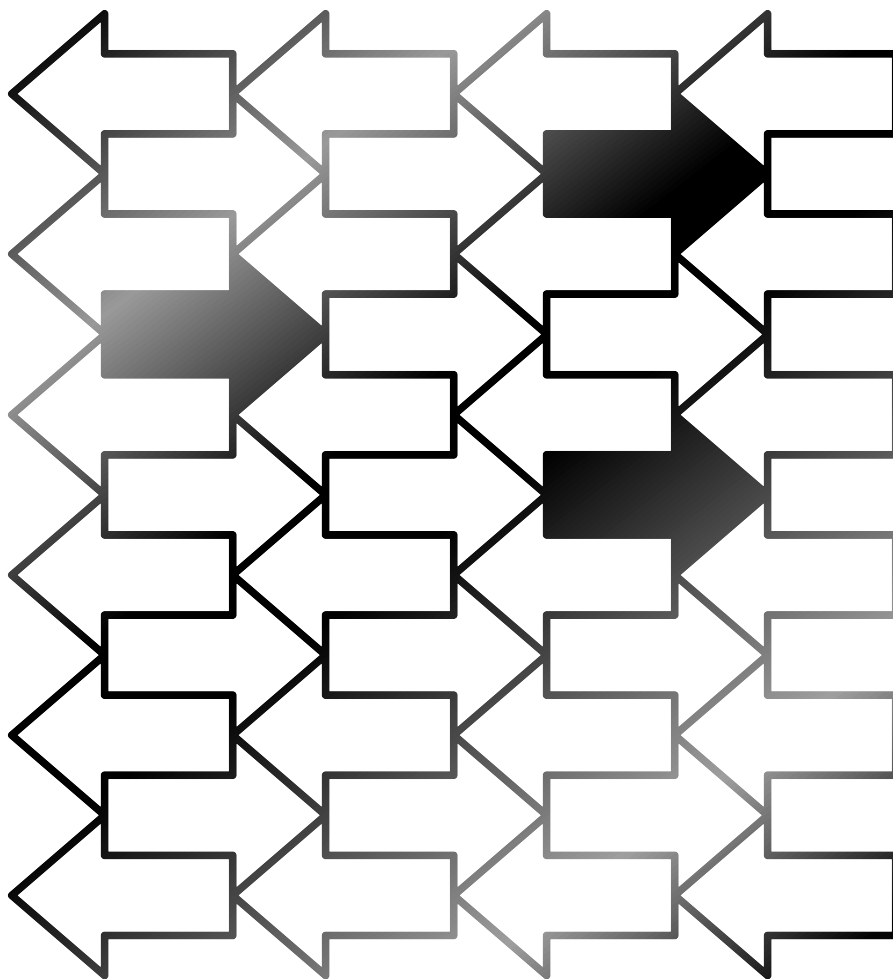
A selection guide

productboard

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Table of Contents

Introduction

The healthcare industry is in critical condition. The industry's use of digital technologies, including telehealth services, mobile apps, and platforms, has only accelerated in recent years as global events increased demand to meet people where they need technology most. The shift toward digital health has also reset consumers' perspectives, as they seek rapid innovation from the healthcare industry. Expectations are higher than ever before, with consumers anticipating more personalization, convenience, accessibility, engagement, and security balanced with quality.

As digital health continues to play a critical role in improving and modernizing healthcare, the promise of innovative technology alone won't ensure success. [Success starts with the product team.](#)

Product teams, while greater in number than in years past, are often tasked with doing more with less. Moreover, they've had to move quickly and deliver on three key fronts:

- ◆ Accelerating innovation by building better products
- ◆ Optimizing operational efficiency and productivity
- ◆ Reducing organizational risk through visibility and alignment

Traditionally, product managers have relied on all-purpose tools like spreadsheets, general project management platforms or product delivery tools. They use these tools to develop product strategies, capture customer feedback, create roadmaps, and communicate with other product teams and cross-functional or company-wide stakeholders.

However, these makeshift solutions often fall short — aligning stakeholders around prioritization decisions is a major pain point for a majority of teams — resulting in product teams facing several challenges:

- ◆ Product managers spend more time communicating information instead of creating innovative product strategies
- ◆ The product organization becomes less efficient and productive, especially as the team grows
- ◆ Customer insights are harder to manage and analyze, which impacts innovation speed
- ◆ Engineering cannot align development requirements due to inefficient collaboration and transparency
- ◆ Product leaders and other stakeholders lack visibility into the latest strategy, feature prioritization, and the roadmap, increasing the risk of misalignment and bad decision making

Any leader can't afford to make the wrong tooling decisions — 99% of them know the stakes couldn't be higher. For healthcare organizations, the stakes are even higher, as they cannot lose time to lost communications or slow handoffs, as their deliverables not only have an impact on their bottom line, but massive implications for society at large.

Enterprise-ready tools are needed, but information on the right options for organizations to utilize and scale are often scarce.

In this guide, we'll present the challenges in product management, why a dedicated platform is needed to address them, and how you can confidently select the right toolkit for your organization. Let's get started.
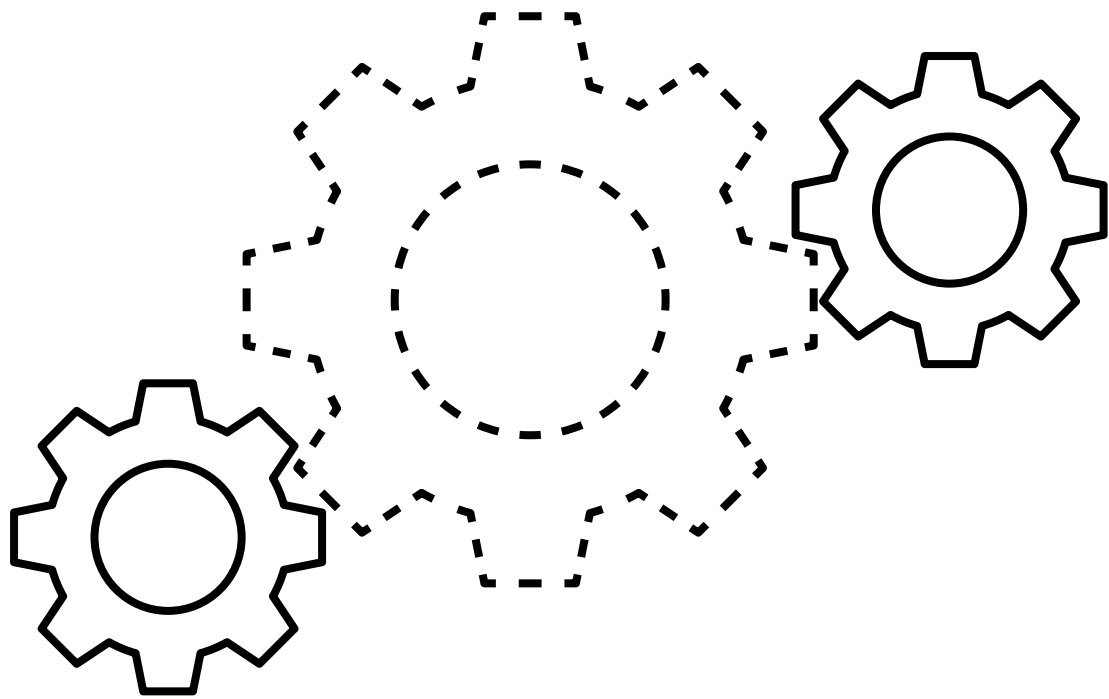
Challenges in product management today

Harvard Business School Professor Theodore Levitt [argues](#) that companies often fail because they focus so narrowly on products rather than focusing on the bigger picture: what customers actually want. Organizational inefficiency and by extension, lack of alignment, has key business consequences, which we highlight below.

1. **Redundancy of manual tasks**

   When the latest product strategy isn't shared effectively, product managers have to allocate time and resources updating multiple roadmaps and communicating the same information with different stakeholders. These tedious tasks not only increase product management costs, but can also be a leading indicator of employee attrition.

2. **Limited transparency, leading to missed revenue opportunities**

   Visibility is such a crucial component of product success. When you have multiple roadmap versions and different customer feedback streams, it's often difficult to see, access, and share the latest information in a timely fashion. The result? Not only delayed releases, but missed opportunities to win new revenue and grow existing accounts.

3. **Compromised stakeholder trust**

   Missed or miscommunications, caused by disconnected tools and limited transparency make it difficult for executives and other functions like sales, marketing, and customer success to have continua, asynchronous access to real-time product information. This can compromise stakeholder trust and increase the risk of organizational misalignment.

4. **Costly release delays**

   As a product organization grows, specialist teams risk becoming siloed without shared processes and tools. Employees become dissatisfied and distrust, leading to delayed releases, slower development cycles, and a reduced rate of innovation. This all comes at a growing cost that organizations can understandably not afford.

5. **Lost market share**

   Faced with a firehose of feature ideas from various sources, many product teams struggle to evaluate those that will deliver the most value to customers based on their insights and feedback. Your losses become the gains of others — not having an effective prioritization framework disengages customers, slows innovation, and gives your competitors an opening to gain market share — all at your expense.

6. Increased customer churn

The combination of the challenges above ultimately falls on (and fails) the customer. Customer feedback — whether in the form of problems, requests, or suggestions — are often scattered across various support, sales, marketing, and product sources of truth. When this vital feedback is disconnected from the product strategy and there is no identifiable single source of truth, your business can overlook opportunities to keep customers satisfied and out of reach of your competitors, leading them to look elsewhere for the solutions you could have provided all along.

"We were challenged with a not uncommon problem in healthcare. Lots of ideas coming in from across the organization and from very distinct business groups."

Ted Burns
VP of Product
Propeller Health
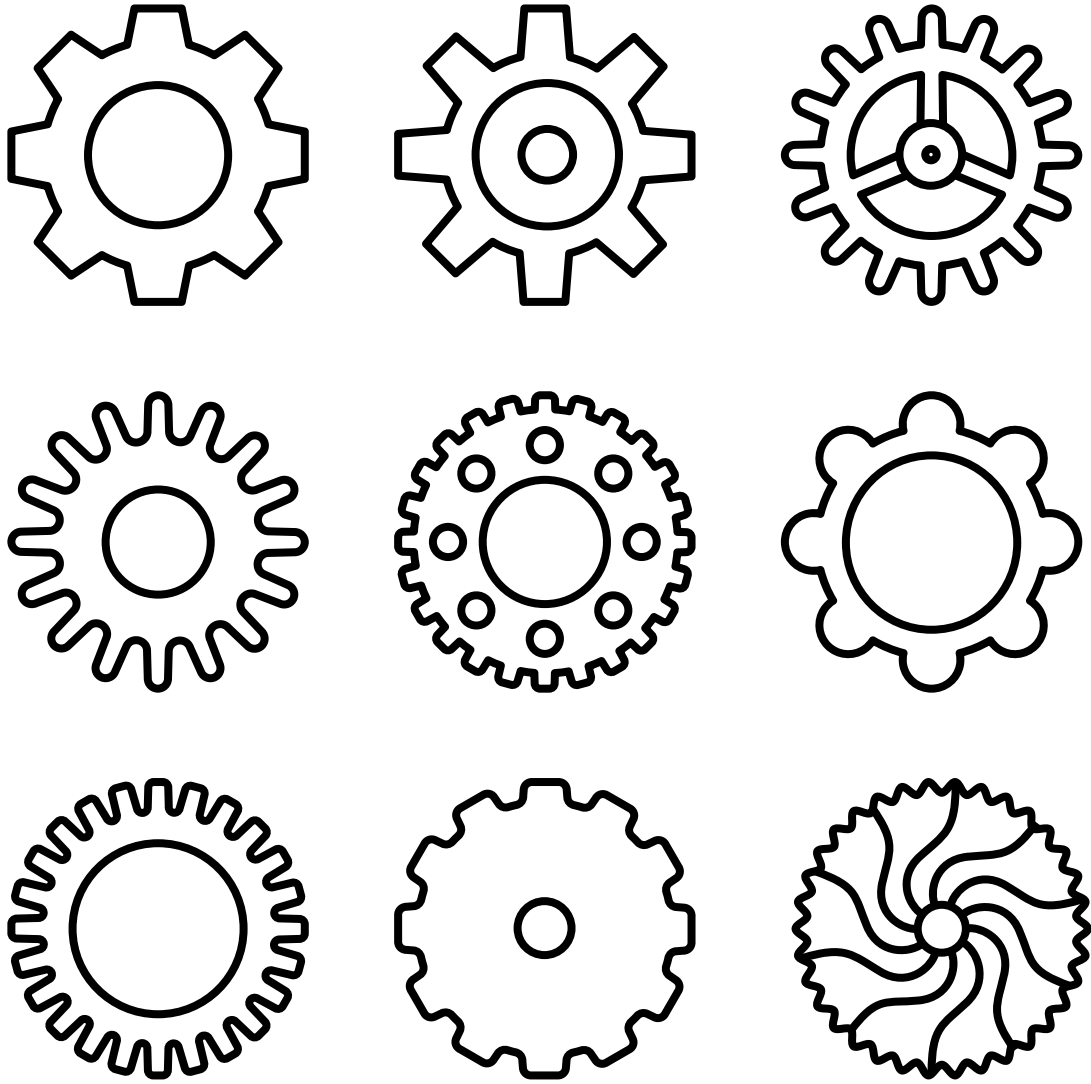
Benefits of investing in a product management platform

The time is now to invest (and build)

Digital technologies have the potential to play a critical role in efforts to improve health equity, which means the longer you wait to deal with product management issues, the more entrenched and difficult solving them becomes. Now's the time to implement a platform that will drive your product team's innovation and create more value for your business. Here's why.

Improved productivity

Seeing every idea in one place makes it easier to prioritize what goes on the roadmap by assessing customer demand, effort required, and the overall business value. This not only makes your teams more productive, it also helps your organization to focus on the ideas that will accelerate innovation.

Reduced time to ship

As your teams become more specialized with distinct product responsibilities, it's crucial to reduce the risk of becoming siloed. Ensuring that everyone can collaborate on a shared platform will enhance visibility and alignment across the product organization and increase your overall efficiency and productivity.

Improved customer satisfaction and retention

Consolidating customer feedback is one of the keys to building better products. When you can analyze and evaluate all feedback in one place, your team is better positioned to develop innovative solutions to real customer needs, instead of just responding to the latest feature request from sales.

Aligning teams around the right solutions for a diverse healthcare audience: Propeller Health
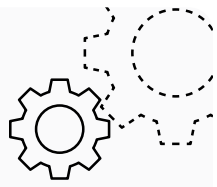
Building digitally connected inhalers that generate an array of app-based reports is no easy task — technically or operationally. But, Propeller Health is unfazed by obstacles; the digital first-company is determined to help people take control of their health.

Naturally, solving problems for a diverse set of stakeholders (patients, caregivers, pediatricians, pharmaceutical companies, and others) requires more than good intentions.

Propeller Health VP of Product Ted Burns says he learned quickly: static roadmaps and an engineering ticket management system weren't the right tech stack to serve the needs of a complex healthcare audience.

Here's just a few of the ways a single product management platform has made product innovation possible for Propeller:

Identifying customer needs faster

Adopting Productboard afforded Propeller teams not only the right framework for future releases, but also the chance to merge the past with the present —ensuring Product had a holistic view of user requests over time.

Suddenly, the team could more strategically prioritize features by understanding the full scope of persistent problems — plus high-revenue requests that had gone unnoticed coming in across disconnected channels.

Improving operational efficiency

Productboard's accessible feature boards and intuitive roadmaps improved operational efficiency by paving the way for faster leadership buy-in and customer-facing responses.

Propeller has been able to cancel bi-weekly prioritization and meeting preparation calls, cutting 8-10 hours of meetings every month for multiple teams. Ted says there's no doubt the accuracy of roadmap information has improved, too, as product managers are reviewing it on a daily and weekly basis in Productboard instead of monthly through slide deck updates.

Once Product pushed feedback from various stakeholders into Productboard Insights, product managers ensured requests were categorized into specific "product levels, to make sure everything was broken out into the right healthcare vertical," Ted says.

Ted says customer-facing teams have also been able to close external feedback loops more effectively with Productboard. When account execs or program managers can review intuitive roadmaps and quickly report back to users asking questions, it strengthens loyalty to Propeller, as internal teams now have "transparency into the features underway — where ideas from users get applied to the roadmap and where they don't."

Strengthening Product-Engineering collaboration

Productboard's integration with JIRA is a source of optimism across Propeller's teams, including its Product-Engineering workflows. By establishing a now/next/later roadmap linked to JIRA tickets, Ted says his Product org is on its way to establishing stronger communication with developers for every feature underway.

Already, product managers are providing links to relevant usability tests, competitive research, and user personas through Productboard — offering Engineering the required context on the "what" and "why" behind a feature's importance.
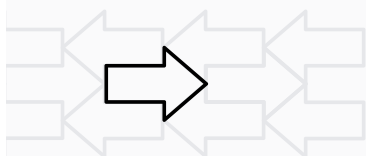
Read the full case study [here](#).

" We get lots of feedback from physicians and other stakeholders about how they want to track information in our app, etc, and some of it was getting incorporated into JIRA or customer service tickets, but it was also coming in soft feedback channels [and going under the radar], so we were struck by Productboard's Insights capability. That was the biggest driver for us — being able to manage feedback from the many types of customers we have."

Ted Burns, VP of Product at Propeller Health
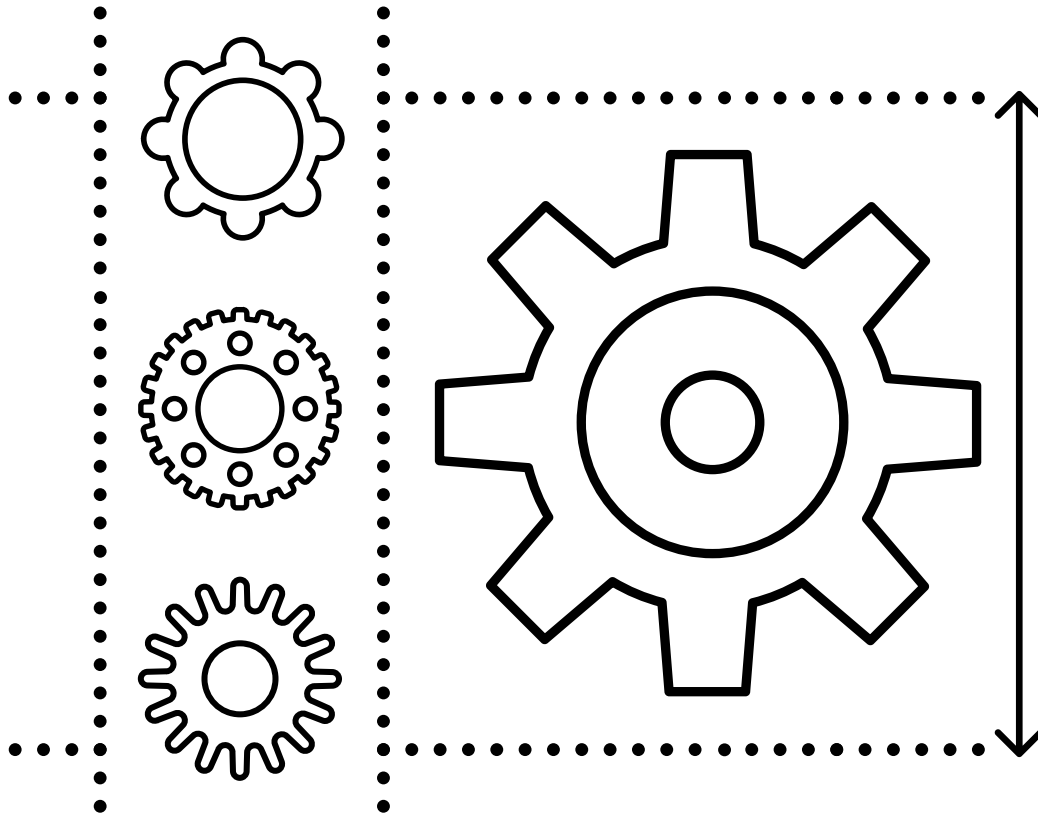
Evaluating product management platforms

Where to begin

The best product management platforms will enable you to build more customer-centric roadmaps and enhance your product management processes to help your team to innovate faster and build better products.

Here's what to look for when evaluating which product management platform is right for your business.

1. Enhanced roadmap capabilities

Roadmap alignment can mean the difference between product success and failure. Here's the two main purposes they should serve:

Customer-centricity

A customer-centric product management platform keeps customers at the heart of your process and creates a single repository of your future and potential customer needs. When evaluating a product management solution, ensure that it provides a central place to store all customer and prospect data, alongside their interactions with anyone at your business, via a broad set of integrations with leading tools like Slack, Salesforce, and Zendesk.

As well as collating information, a customer-centric platform will also include the ability to analyze data and feedback using descriptive characteristics like segment, spend/tier, feedback, qualitative user research, and engagement/usage data. These details will enhance your understanding of what specific segments or customers want from your product and allow you to filter roadmaps based on these needs, making it easier for sales and customer support to see where and how their customers' requests are being prioritized.

Real-time transparency

Your product management platform should have real-time roadmaps that make it easy to align stakeholders and deepen customer engagement. The ability to filter roadmaps for different audiences and scenarios means that you won't have to spend time creating multiple presentations. Flexible views will also allow users to drill down when they want more context around why the product team prioritized a feature and its place in the overall product strategy. It is also useful to be able to share customized versions of your roadmap with customers and prospects.

Having automatically updated, user-friendly, and easily accessible roadmaps will ensure that everyone can see what the product team is working on and easily understand how a new feature or update will benefit customers.

2. Structured and standardized prioritization

A product management platform provides structured and standardized prioritization that helps you tie product decisions to business objectives rather than just reacting to the latest or loudest requests. It will have flexible prioritization scoring that lets you rate important variables like impact and demand for specific segments and user personas, allowing you to weigh customer feedback. Smart visualizations can help you to quickly evaluate the value-effort trade-offs of your decisions.

This prioritization process must be transparent and easy to understand so that stakeholders can see the customer context around product decisions.

3. Integrations with existing workflows and systems

To truly enhance collaboration, a product management platform must integrate with your team's existing workflows. It can connect to your CRM to help you understand the impact of features on customer segments and gather information captured by your go-to-market teams to incorporate customer voice into the prioritization process. Syncing with development tools like Jira will keep product and engineering up to date on development lifecycle status.

When your entire organization can see and contribute to what the other groups are doing, it reduces the risk of anyone missing out on vital information. This visibility also helps product managers spend less time answering questions, while increasing visibility and the quality of input from executives and other stakeholders.

4. Direct customer engagement

As your product organization matures, you'll want a way to give customers and other external partners access to your roadmap to test and validate new ideas and get direct feedback about what you're planning to build next. When assessing product management solutions, look for how easy it is to directly capture and manage feedback from customers and stakeholders so that you can easily incorporate it into your product prioritization process and roadmap.

Find out if your prospective provider runs a strong customer advocacy community. Tapping into the insights and knowledge of these groups can be very valuable for your product's evolution.

5. Product management best practices and expertise

Implementing a product management solution is an opportunity to align your product team around a shared framework for product prioritization and strategy. But defining and implementing your own product management best practices takes time and requires continual enforcement of consistent adherence to your framework. Alternatively, the best product management platforms often support a product management workflow out of the box using a proven methodology for successful change management.

This will enable your team to start following best practices, as developed by industry experts, right away that can uplevel your product process and support its longtime success.

6. Enterprise-grade security and access controls

While enhanced visibility helps reduce organizational risk, it also introduces the potential for the wrong people to access confidential information. You need a product management platform that protects against this risk and provides simple safeguards around information sharing.

When evaluating a solution, first check that it has been designed and built to enterprise-level security and compliance standards. It should also scale to allow large and complex product organizations to share and access only the information that is relevant for them. Product teams should be able to build processes that can adapt and scale for larger teams to ensure seamless collaboration between multiple product owners and stakeholders.

"Our Productboard roadmap has been useful because the executive team can quickly take a look and establish how everything is going. Now, management also has the appropriate expectation that our 'later' category really does mean 'much later.' So, Productboard has really taken away any 'why are you working on this' type questions."

Ted Burns
VP of Product
Propeller Health

Let's find the best solution for your business

In this section, we'll look at the overall value, benefits, limitations, and typical costs of the five most common types of product management tools and help you to assess which type is right for your product team.

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All-purpose tools

Widely used tools like spreadsheets and presentations can be adapted to meet various needs.

Excel   Powerpoint   G-Suite

Pros	Cons	Typical cost
◆ User-friendly	◆ No embedded product management best practices	$
◆ Easy to build roadmaps	◆ Limited integrations with existing workflows	
◆ Basic collection and consolidation of customer feedback	◆ Difficult to share with multiple users and stakeholders	
	◆ Limited roadmap visualizations	
	◆ No access controls to manage multiple users	
	◆ Can't automatically organize information by category	
	◆ No ability to connect customer feedback to prioritization	

Though most people are comfortable using all-purpose tools, each product team will need to create a new process from scratch. These tools also lack the ability to connect existing customer feedback tools and help your product organization to prioritize new ideas effectively based on this feedback.

Project management tools

Project management systems provide a visual approach to app development or generic task management and resource allocation.

Notion	Trello	Coda	Asana	Airtable

Pros

◆ Seamless collaboration across teams

◆ Easy to create roadmaps

◆ Built-in access controls

Cons

◆ No prioritization frameworks

◆ No built-in product management best practices

◆ Customer feedback and data disconnected from roadmaps

Typical cost

$$

While useful for simple app development and managing tasks and people, low-code and project management tools lack the crucial customer connection that great product development demands and the flexibility and complexity to support sophisticated product organizations with more complex requirements.

Point Solutions

Tools dedicated to solving one or two specific pain points within the product management process.

ProductPlan   Roadmunk

Pros

◆ Easy to create roadmaps

◆ Built-in collaboration
capabilities

Cons

◆ Basic prioritization
frameworks and scoring

◆ Limited scale and
enterprise-ready access
controls

◆ Customer data and
feedback needs to be
stored in separate solutions

Typical cost

$$

Point solutions are great for tackling specific product management challenges but require teams to stitch together multiple tools they use throughout the product development process. This means that product teams and organizations lack a single source of truth for the latest product strategy information.

Product management software

Product management platforms are typically a specialized solution for product managers that offer roadmap creation, distillation of insights from user feedback, and organization-wide collaboration.

Productboard   ProdPad   Aha

Pros

- Purpose-built product management workflows
- Built in product management best practices
- Customer feedback and data connected to roadmaps
- Prioritize the right features using a variety of frameworks
- Flexible roadmap visualizations
- Seamlessly integrates into product workflows
- Customer support focused on the needs of product teams
- Analytics to help teams continuously improve product processes
- Customer support and services

Cons

- Specialized product management software only
- Requires upfront investment to implement new workflows
- Requires buy-in and training across the company for successful adoption

Typical cost

$$

Specifically created to solve a range of common product management challenges, these tools can become the single source of roadmaps, feedback, feature idea prioritization, and collaboration that product managers crave. However, they do demand the full engagement of your product team and alignment with key business stakeholders.

Product delivery tools

Tools commonly used to manage the development and deployment of features by engineering teams with a focus on bug tracking and integration with coding version control systems.

Jira Azure DevOps GitHub

Pros

- Optimized for project managing feature delivery work
- Analytics for monitoring/ improving product delivery processes
- Easy to collaborate with engineering teams
- Enterprise-grade security & access controls

Cons

- Few capabilities for prioritizing the right features to build next
- No built-in product management best practices
- Difficult to create and visualize roadmaps
- No ability to capture or connect customer feedback
- Limited integrations with tools used by teams outside of engineering
- Limited visibility for teams outside of engineering

Typical cost

$

While product delivery tools play an essential role for the engineering teams that build and deploy products, they are not optimized for the core product management use cases: prioritizing the right features to add to the roadmap based on user feedback, business goals, and product strategy. Increasingly, companies are adopting product management systems alongside product delivery tools. Once integrated, these solutions support customer-centric product management processes as well as product delivery best practices.

Let's find the best solution for your business

The TL;DR Table		
Solution Type	**Pros**	**Cons**
All-purpose tools	Easy to use	No product management specific features
Project management systems	Flexible and designed for collaboration	Too open ended; oriented around tactical execution
Point tools	Simple way to solve specific issues	Limited feature sets
Product management platforms	Purpose-built for product management	Requires full team engagement
Product delivery tools	Essential for effective deployment	Built primarily for engineering workflows

"Spreadsheets don't give you flexibility and aren't connected to everything that you need as a PM, like insights into features."

Joe Hoffend
Senior Product Manager
Fastly

Information gathering & organization

Whether you've decided on the solution for your needs or are still evaluating which one is the best fit, the next stage is to explore the specific systems, tools and platforms offered by different service providers.

Below, a framework for narrowing down your options and getting real insight into which solution will work for your business.

1. Get objective opinions

Forget the slick website and sales brochures for now and find out what other people in your position are saying. Turn to the channels you trust:

- ◆ Look to the product community — your peers have likely been down this path and have plenty to say about the process

- ◆ Cut through the social media noise

- ◆ Give product review sites a peek to discover the main product platforms to serve your needs with feedback from verified customers

2. Seek out familiar challenges and customers

Once you've got a shortlist of potential products, spend time exploring their website and sales material.

- ◆ Do they consistently describe the same challenges you're facing? Don't get sucked in by simple point services if you need a more comprehensive solution.

- ◆ Does the provider have a lot of genuine customer testimonials? Look for companies in industries or with business models similar to yours.

3. Design evaluation use cases

Take the key issues you're looking to resolve and design a simple test for how successfully the service deals with each one. Some services will offer a free or trial version of the product that you can set up yourself, while others will have sales teams who can provide in-depth demos or evaluation sessions.

4. Socialize your preferred options

As you edge closer to the solution you think is right, share it with people on your team and other key stakeholders to get more perspectives. They may help confirm your opinion or raise a red flag you hadn't considered.

5. Look behind the product

Now's the time to think about contract terms and service agreements:

◆ How much support will you receive during implementation, onboarding, and beyond? Is it included in the price or an additional cost?

Also, examine the company behind the product you're buying:

◆ Are they in it for the long haul?

◆ Do their values align with yours?

The last step is gathering all of your learnings to inform your final decision. If you're finding this challenging, you can take a page from product teams and build a simple prioritization matrix to see which qualities can provide everything your team needs now and as it grows.
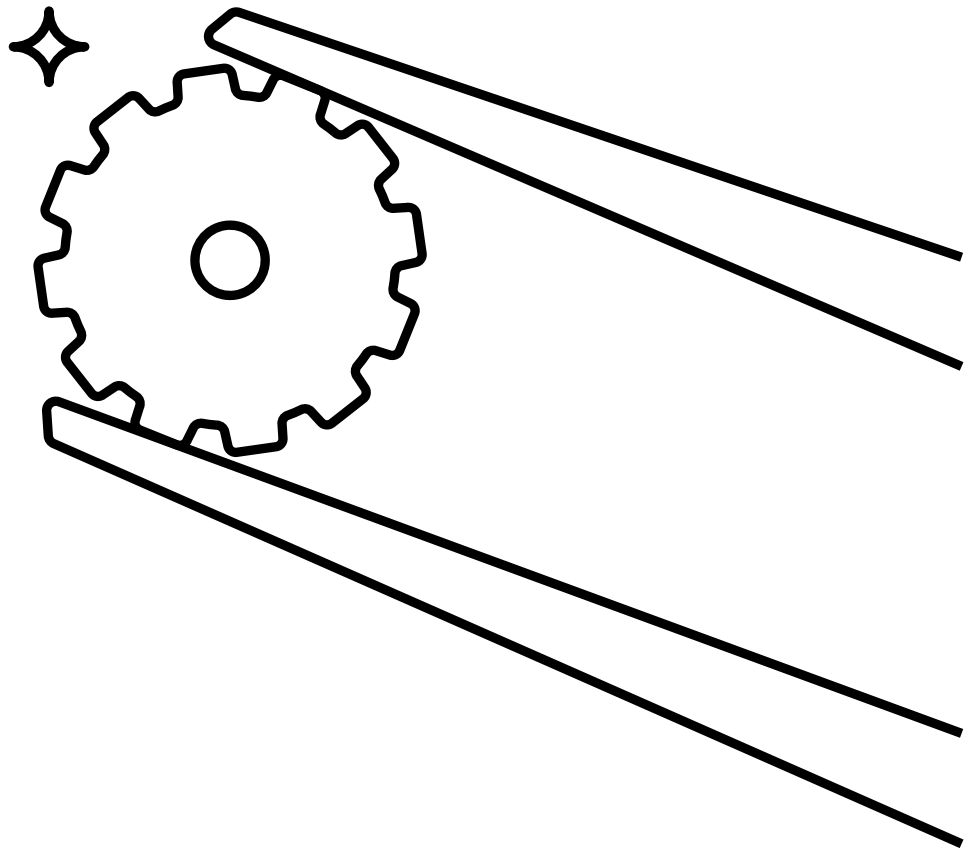
Making a selection: consensus, engagement, and success

Once you've decided which product management solution best suits your business, it's important to think about the potential next steps of implementation and adoption.

Implementation and adoption usually involve three stages:

◆ Building internal consensus

◆ Collaborating with the vendor to effectively enable product and supporting teams with training and resources

◆ Quantifying the success of your new solution

1. Building internal consensus

There are three groups of people in your organization whose buy-in you will need to make a success of any new product management platform:

Product team
Take the time to explain the benefits and value of your chosen product management platform to your team. Share any content or resources that your vendor has provided. After all, they are the ones whose effort and enthusiasm will make it work. Listen to any concerns raised, as these may suggest ways in which the solution could be tweaked to better suit your organization. .

Leadership
If you're investing in a new solution or buying extra seats for an existing service, you'll need to show the relevant leaders at your organization how it will generate value. Getting leaders on board early can also help create awareness and excitement in the rest of the business.

Additional stakeholders
Customer-facing functions like sales, customer success, and support will play a key role in your new platform's success, so make them a part of your plans as soon as possible. If you're getting a new solution, partner with IT on implementation requirements and what the timeline looks like.

Sharing stories of how other businesses have successfully employed your chosen product management platform will help all of your audiences ground the theoretical benefits in reality. Your vendor will be able to provide success story resources or put you in contact with relevant references.

2. Vendor collaboration

If you're planning to implement a new platform or expand the use of an existing one, find out what level of assistance the vendor can provide and whether this comes at an additional cost.

From helping build consensus and working with your IT team to providing user training and support, the best service providers will be resourceful and responsive partners in getting you up and running.

You should also find out what to expect post-implementation:

◆ Is your vendor interested in your feedback and feature suggestions?

◆ How can they help your organization get more value from your investment as your product management process evolves?

◆ Or will you only hear from them when your contract is due for renewal?

Conclusion

The work of determining whether your new product management platform is a success starts today. Find a range of ways to quantify the effectiveness of your existing process and capture those metrics now. Survey your customers, record your product team's thoughts, measure how long it takes product ideas to become a reality.

Once you've established key baselines, define what success looks like:

◆ Accelerating innovation by building better products

◆ Optimizing operational efficiency and productivity

◆ Reducing organizational risk through visibility and alignment

Your vendor should be able to help you identify the right goals and measure them effectively, while supporting you as your process evolves over time.

See how Productboard provides entire organizations with clarity and confidence around the product team's vision, strategy, and roadmap.

Get in touch.

Productboard is the customer-centric product management platform that helps organizations get the right products to market, faster. Over 6,000 companies, including Toyota, Microsoft, Zoom, 1-800-Contacts, and UiPath, use Productboard to understand what customers need, prioritize what to build next, and align everyone around their roadmap. With offices in San Francisco, Prague, and Vancouver, Productboard is backed by leading investors like Dragoneer Investment Group, Tiger Global Management, Index Ventures, Kleiner Perkins, Sequoia Capital, Bessemer Venture Partners, and Credo Ventures. Learn more at www.productboard.com.

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