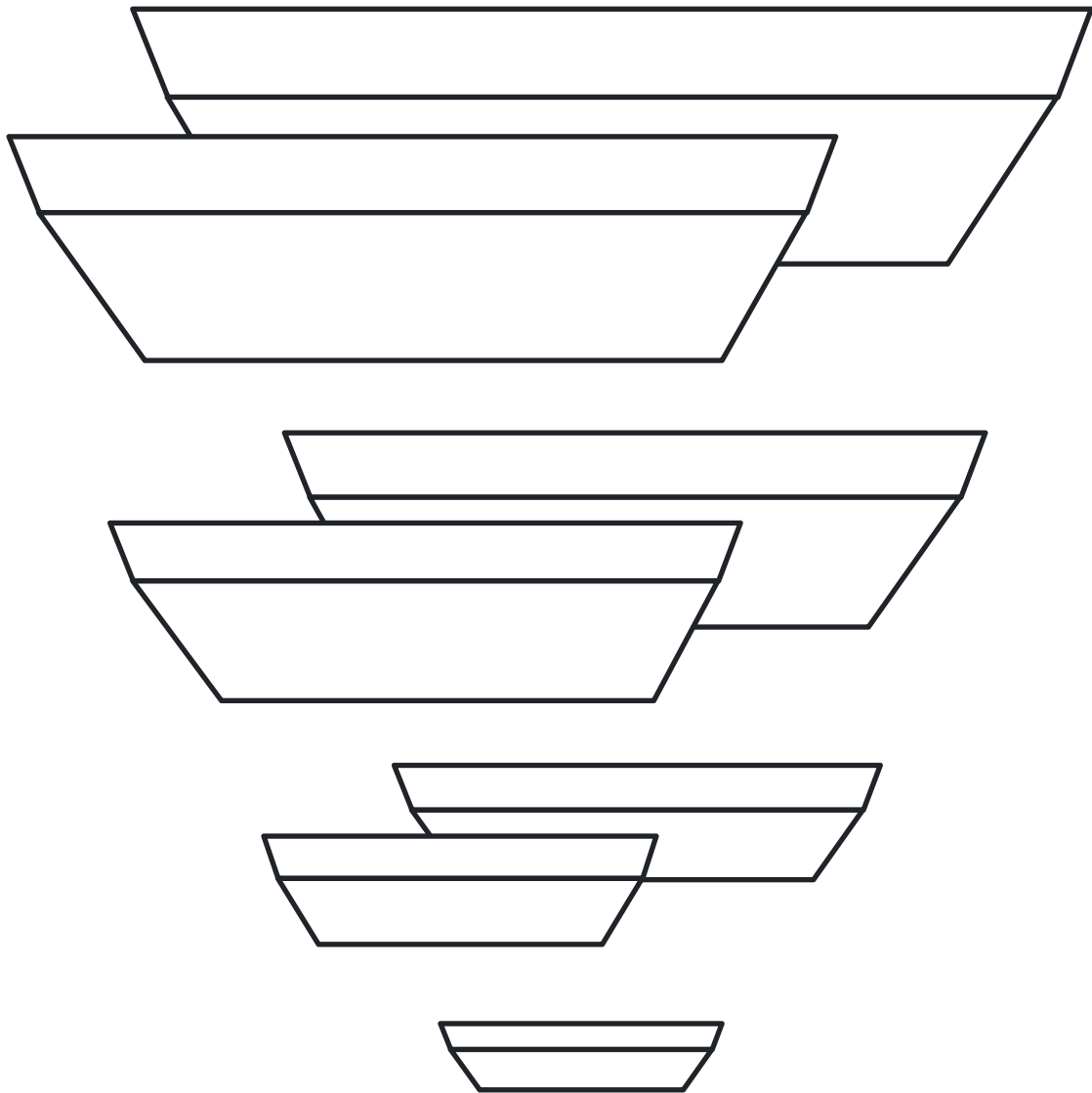


**Why the wrong product  
tech stack causes team  
inefficiencies**



# Why the wrong product tech stack causes team inefficiencies



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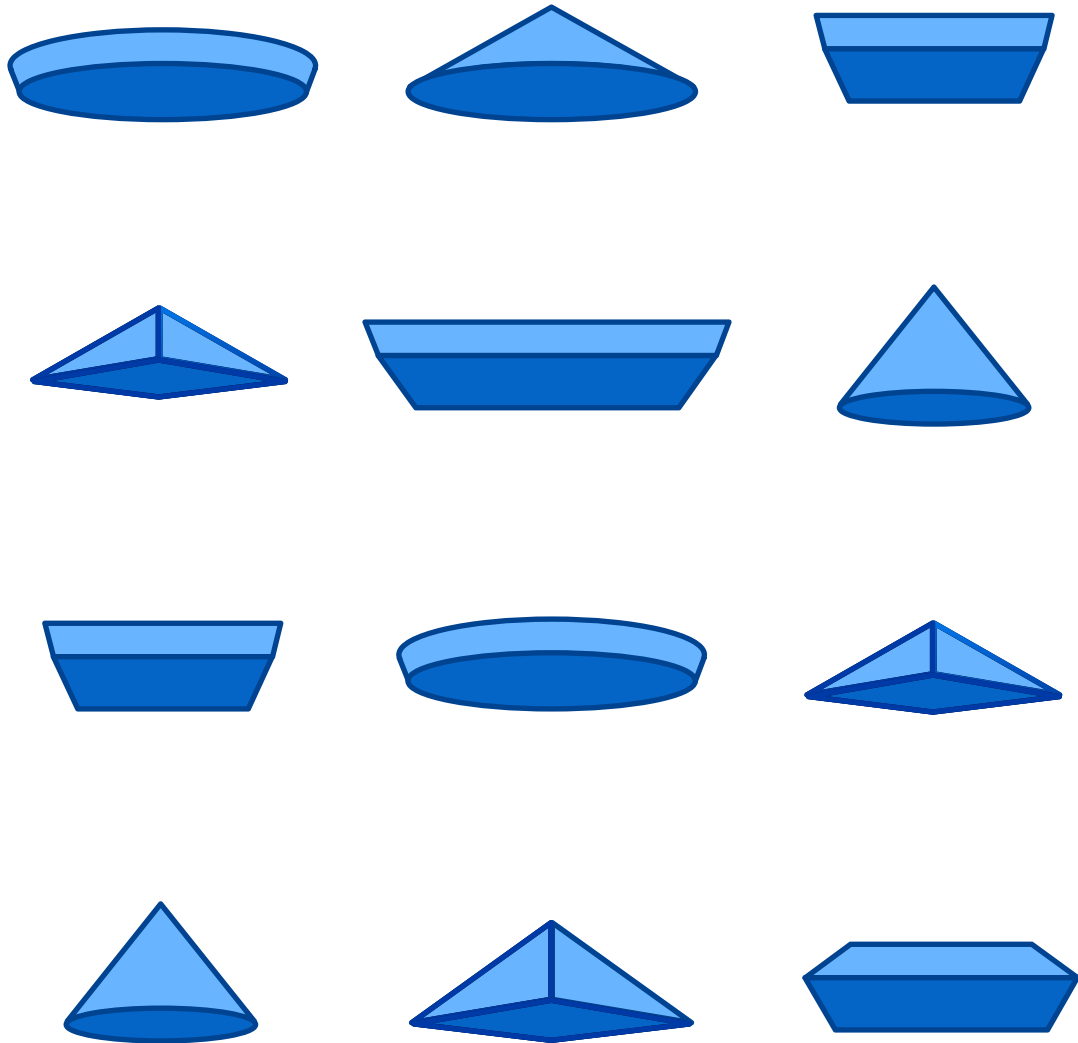
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# Why product leaders need to understand the different types of product management tools

In an increasingly uncertain macroeconomic environment, it's easy to look at your budget and start cutting out everything you think is extraneous – what software do you really need and what's just nice to have?

While it might seem like a more efficient choice to use a multi-tasking software across your teams – it's good enough, it gets enough things done – it's ultimately not what an ambitious product team needs, especially in a more turbulent atmosphere. In this fast-changing landscape, it's more important than ever to get products and features right the first time, and to meet customer needs. That's why now is the time to invest in purpose-built product management software.

A dedicated product management platform will set you and your team up for success in a time when it's critically important to be placing the smartest product bets possible, using limited resources. After all, organizations with advanced product management practices are 36% more likely to achieve revenue growth, according to [a 2022 Forrester Consulting study](#) commissioned by Productboard.



## CHAPTER 1

**What are the different types of systems product teams use?**

**Product professionals have a few different categories of systems they can choose from to build workflows for their teams:**

- 1. All-purpose tools**, like spreadsheets or presentation software (think Excel, PowerPoint, GSuite)



Excel



Powerpoint



G-Suite

- 2. Project management software** (think Trello, Asana, Notion)



Notion



Trello



Coda



Asana



Airtable

- 3. Point solutions** (these address one or two specific pain points within product management; think ProductPlan or Roadmunk)



ProductPlan



Craft.io



Roadmunk

- 4. Product management software** (think Productboard or Aha!)



Productboard



ProdPad



Aha

While most people are comfortable using all-purpose tools like spreadsheets and presentation software, using these for a product workflow comes with a lot of drawbacks. Each team has to create their process from scratch and train any new team members on it, for example. That leads to obvious risk of lost work or process when established team members leave.

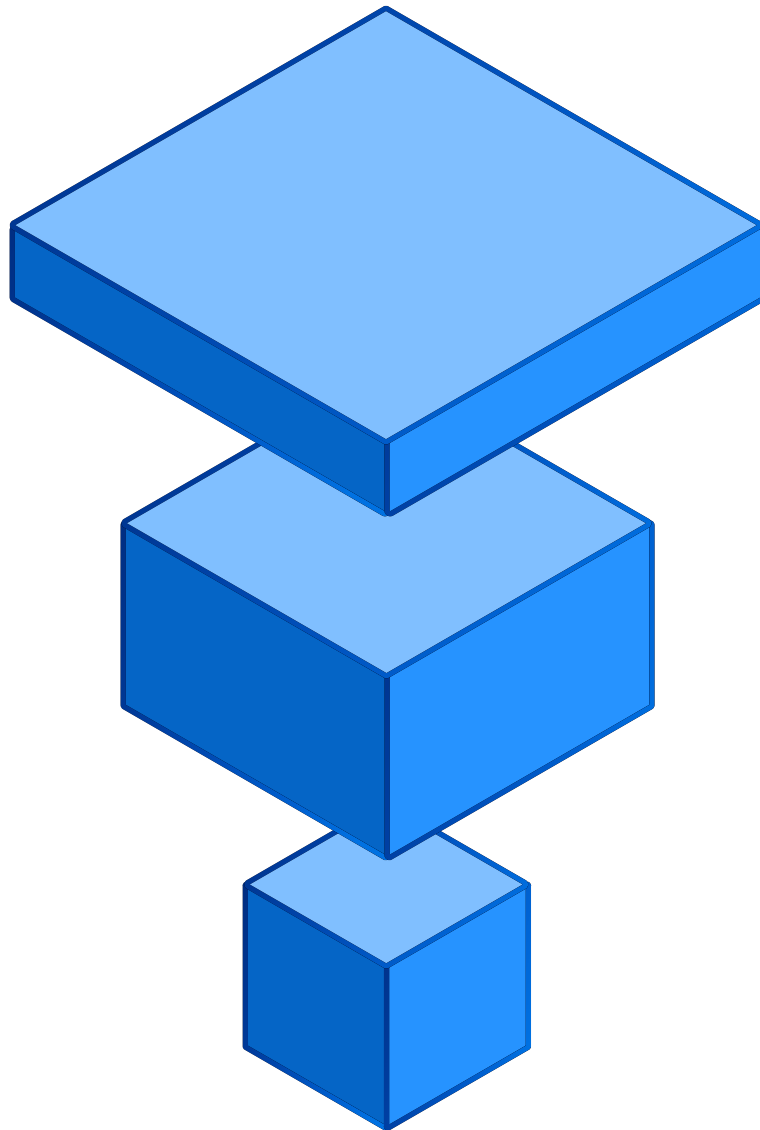
Additionally, users of these systems will end up with:

- ◆ Build-up of technical debt that compounds with use
- ◆ No embedded product management best practices
- ◆ Limited integrations with other existing workflows, especially cross-functionally
- ◆ Difficulty sharing with multiple users and stakeholders
- ◆ Difficulty managing user access
- ◆ Difficulty establishing a single source of truth with risk of duplicates being made, updated and shared across teams with no visibility from the product team
- ◆ Limited ways to easily connect customer feedback to prioritization

Project management tools might seem like an affordable step up from spreadsheets or presentations, and they do offer a few advantages like seamless collaboration across teams and built-in access controls. However, project management tools lack prioritization frameworks, have no embedded product management best practices, and customer feedback and data remains disconnected from product roadmaps.

Point solutions are just that: they address one or two specific pain points product teams encounter in their workflows without addressing the entire ecosystem needed for success. Customer data and feedback still need to be stored in a separate solution, and these tools have limited scale and enterprise-ready access control.

So while your team might be saving money in the short term with any of these options, you're building technical debt and looking at a lot of lost time in the long term. As your team grows, these options do not scale. They lack the flexibility and complexity necessary to succeed as a sophisticated product organization.



## CHAPTER 2

# The current state of product management (and product management tools)



One of the key takeaways in our [2022 Product Excellence Report](#) was that product organizations still lack purpose-built toolkits to ply their trade, resulting in fragmented workflows and greater difficulty aligning across multiple stakeholders.

## The tools used by product managers

An issue tracker or delivery planning tool like Jira

-10% **70%**



Wikis like Confluence, Notion, or Coda

-6% **55%**



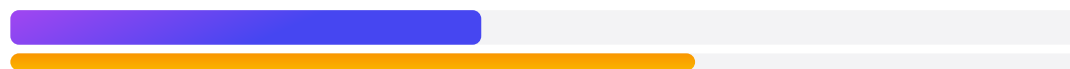
Spreadsheets, Google sheets, Airtable, etc.

-8% **52%**



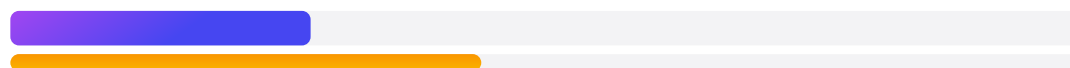
Documents or Google Docs

-20% **44%**



A dedicated product management tool, like Productboard, Aha!, ProdPad, etc.

-16% **28%**



A project management tool like Asana, Trello, or Monday.com

**27%**



2022 2021

This makes it more difficult for product teams to establish a single source of truth in terms of their workflows.

The report also reveals that confidence is currently quite low in product management processes. Only 12% of 1400+ respondents are satisfied with how they capture product insights — which makes it hard to truly listen to your customers and what they need. When it comes to roadmapping, just 32% of teams believe their roadmaps will deliver desired business outcomes, and only 31% can easily share their roadmaps with cross-functional partners.

With an increased focus on efficiency and making the most of our limited budgets in 2023, getting these systems and processes in place should be a top priority. You want your teams and stakeholders aligned around a shared plan. And you need to get new products and features right the first time to save valuable time and money.

In the same survey, we found that using a dedicated product management platform like Productboard does improve confidence in processes and workflows.

Respondents using a dedicated [product management system](#) said they were much less likely to cite issues in product roadmap accessibility, sharing, and providing stakeholder context, among other critical aspects of their roles.

## Product professionals lack visibility

**63% of respondents**

reported lacking visibility into whether planned product work really aligns with product objectives and strategy.

**Nearly 1/3**

of those respondents were product managers, something leadership should note.

**Less than 1/3**

said roadmaps could be easily shared and accessed by cross-functional partners.

Source: The Product Excellence Report, 2022

This was particularly notable as one of our other key findings in the report highlighted waning confidence in product roadmaps year over year. Roadmaps are an essential, [strategic communication tool](#) for driving direction and intention inside of an organization, and managing expectations both inside and outside of an organization. **Product leaders should take this as an urgent call to action to equip their teams with the resources they need, particularly in light of the current environment.**



## CHAPTER 3

# The risks of a tech stack that isn't specific to product management

We don't have to tell any product professional that the pressure is increasing on their teams to produce business-critical work, often with fewer resources. Productboard recently commissioned Forrester Consulting to conduct a new study, [The Business Impact Of Investing In Product Management](#), which found that while product management has increased responsibility in driving business outcomes, the investment in those teams doesn't always match the expectations placed on them. Just like the Product Excellence Report, the 2022 Forrester Consulting study found that product teams aren't using purpose-built product management systems.

## Risk #1: Lack of efficiency

Enterprise teams often find themselves relying on a convoluted mix of documents, spreadsheets, SQL queries in data lakes, and anything else their current team and predecessors have cobbled together over the years. Some of it might integrate, some might not — at least not without expensive upgrades across multiple tools. In all, it might work, but it's definitely not efficient, and these teams could find immense value in a comprehensive system.

Smaller teams can find just as much value in a comprehensive system — the ability to glean deep [user insights](#), better prioritize features and products, enable easier access to roadmaps for the product team and key stakeholders, and more.

"The product management organization is using disparate tools to perform their work. When asked about the tools and technologies they use to do their jobs, respondents indicated that their time is fragmented across a variety of tools that may or may not interoperate."

– 2022 Forrester Consulting Study

## Risk #2: Business Risk

We've already touched on some of the risks associated with operating a product team through tools that aren't built for it. There's also business risk, particularly in a turbulent time marked by layoffs and team changes. It's critical that product knowledge is accessible not only to the full product team – present and future – but to key cross-functional teams and stakeholders as well.

There's the risk of wasted work and duplication of efforts, when everyone is making a copy of a spreadsheet and updating their own, rather than gravitating toward that single source of truth.

There's inconsistent decision-making and prioritization from leaders with the inability to effectively understand not just what certain capabilities are, but why they are being prioritized for discovery or as solutions to needs of customers. (You don't want to become a cautionary tale of the [fabled statistic](#) that "[slightly more than half of the features shipped from roadmaps are seldom or never used by customers.](#)")

### Risk #3: Lack of customer centricity

There's also the issue of customer feedback and how it's being collected, annotated, shared, and ultimately utilized. If every team is collecting [user feedback](#) in separate spreadsheets or other tools without the ability to easily compile, filter and update it, it's much more likely that feedback simply remains in the void. Customers are more likely to get frustrated, thinking they've sent valuable feedback that will make an impact on the future of the products they use when the reality is that the product team never received it, or received so much disparate information it was impossible to use. That can increase churn when customer retention is most important.

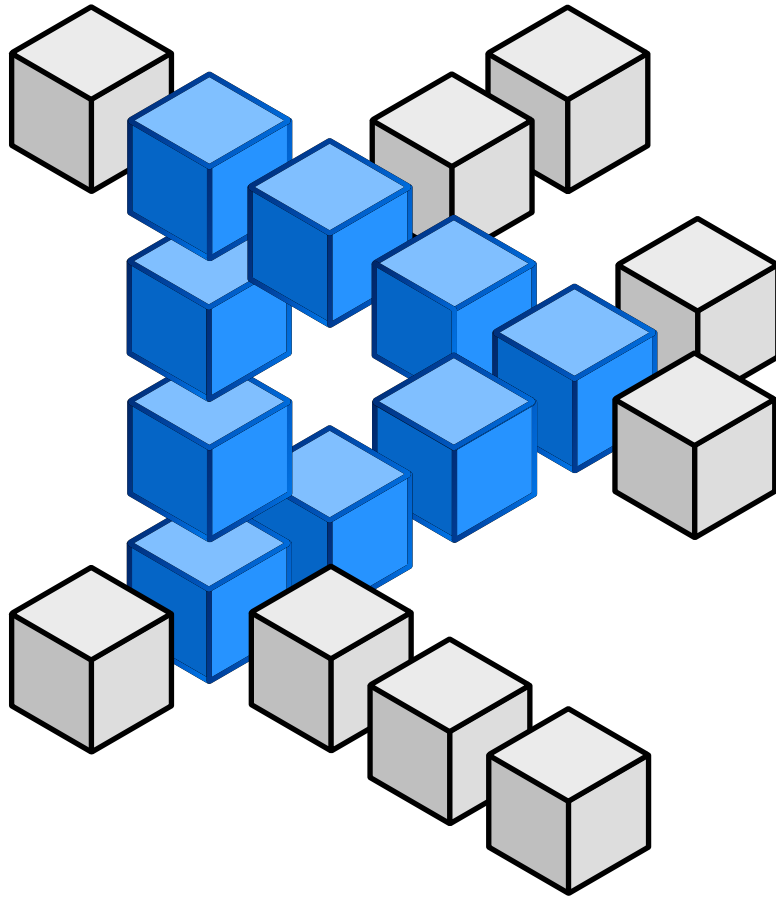
The Product Excellence Report found that only 12% of respondents said they successfully capture insights and feedback from all available customer sources, while only 14% effectively categorize customer feedback to inform prioritization. That means these teams aren't capturing feedback, listening to it, or incorporating it into planning and prioritization, making it difficult to be a customer-centric product organization.

Customer-centricity is one of the [six factors](#) shared by highly effective product organizations, and organizations with advanced product management practices are 36% more likely to achieve revenue growth.

So the risks seem clear, especially in the current environment: a less efficient product team isn't going to be a highly effective one, and that lessening impact will be felt all the more when the pressure is on. It's [worth investing in product management teams](#), including the resources they need to perform as expected.



Source: The Business Impact Of Investing In Product Management, commissioned by Productboard and conducted by Forrester Consulting, November 2022



## CHAPTER 4

# How investment in product management tooling looks in practice

Even as a seasoned product leader, research might not be enough to convince the stakeholders—with tightened purse strings—to invest in a dedicated product management platform. So we wanted to share some real world stories of Productboard customers who made the investment in a purpose-built product management tech stack and the impact that decision made on their business.

## Zapier

An excess of customer feedback was the issue [Zapier](#) faced before Productboard. Data poured in, but they had no central place or standard process to maximize its potential as teams scaled rapidly.

Shira Bauman, Zapier's senior manager of product operations, identified the value Productboard could bring in helping teams across Zapier align around real-time roadmaps. After all, as known experts in automation, Zapier had set up plenty of ways to instantly generate calendar invites and Slack notifications for user discovery opportunities. But, as teams worked within disconnected systems, sharing findings and building roadmaps, they found:

- ◆ Team leads came to different conclusions about which customer needs to prioritize, and would occasionally pursue solutions without connecting cross-functionally
- ◆ Product managers faced frequent "shoulder taps" from global team members, fielding feature-related questions across the day and losing time for "valuable work"
- ◆ Leaders lacked a comprehensive view of feature prioritization and roadmap progress



"With our transparent roadmaps, everyone knows what a given team is working on — that Productboard is the place to look and work."

– Shira Bauman, Senior Manager, Product Operations at Zapier

**Read the full Zapier story [here](#).**

Having a single source of truth for the team in the form of Productboard has made a lot possible, including:

- ◆ Global teams can easily find customer feedback and start brainstorming solutions cross-functionally, driving alignment around real-time roadmaps
- ◆ Product managers spend more time on users' challenges than fielding internal questions
- ◆ Leaders can quickly check real-time data to understand how Product is driving revenue
- ◆ Sales now has a customer-facing roadmap in Productboard that account execs increasingly share in conversations

## Salesforce

Productboard helps [Salesforce](#) reduce risk, improve efficiency, and save time. Obviously you can never completely eliminate risk, but you can make smart, data-driven decisions that improve team efficiency, ultimately saving everyone time.

The main differences the Salesforce team sees with Productboard in action?

- ♦ Drew Lau, Senior Director of Product Management, says scalability is the key differentiator. “You could use a bunch of Quips and spreadsheets and do that day to day,” he admits, “but that gets hard to scale once you get to four or five product managers all working together.”
- ♦ On the other hand, he says Productboard helps teams “deal with that ‘messy middle’ [of product management] where you’re trying to gather enough data to collaborate on something to make large decisions across several product managers and several teams. Having a tool dedicated to that where people can expect all the data in one place is, for me, a lot easier.”



“You could use a bunch of Quips and spreadsheets and do that day to day but that gets hard to scale once you get to four or five product managers all working together.”

– Drew Lau, Senior Director of Product Management at Salesforce

**Read the full Salesforce story [here](#).**

## TomTom

Last but not least, [TomTom](#) is a fascinating use case – their HR department uses Productboard to drive teams to function more like a product management organization — focusing on cross-functional visibility and collaboration, ruthless prioritization, and customer-centric decision-making.

Ultimately the decision to invest in Productboard led to this transformation: they moved from **11 independent and disconnected team roadmaps to one comprehensive, global HR roadmap.**



# Final thoughts

A comprehensive product management system can act as a forcing function for [Product Excellence](#). Productboard is purpose-built for product teams, and its features and functionalities reflect the best practices that any successful product organization should be following: understanding needs, implementing an effective strategy and a clear and aligned plan around how to bring value to both the customer and the business.

Ultimately, your team needs to build the tech stack that makes the most sense for the work you're doing and the resources you have in place to support that work. Investing in a product management platform can help scale your processes, drive customer engagement, and ultimately drive business impact.

Let us know if Productboard might be that missing piece for you and your team.

[Watch the webinar to learn more efficiency building tactics.](#)



## About Productboard

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 [productboard.com](https://productboard.com) and follow [@productboard](https://twitter.com/productboard).

