Collaborative Product Roadmapping:

7 Roadmaps that Build Alignment
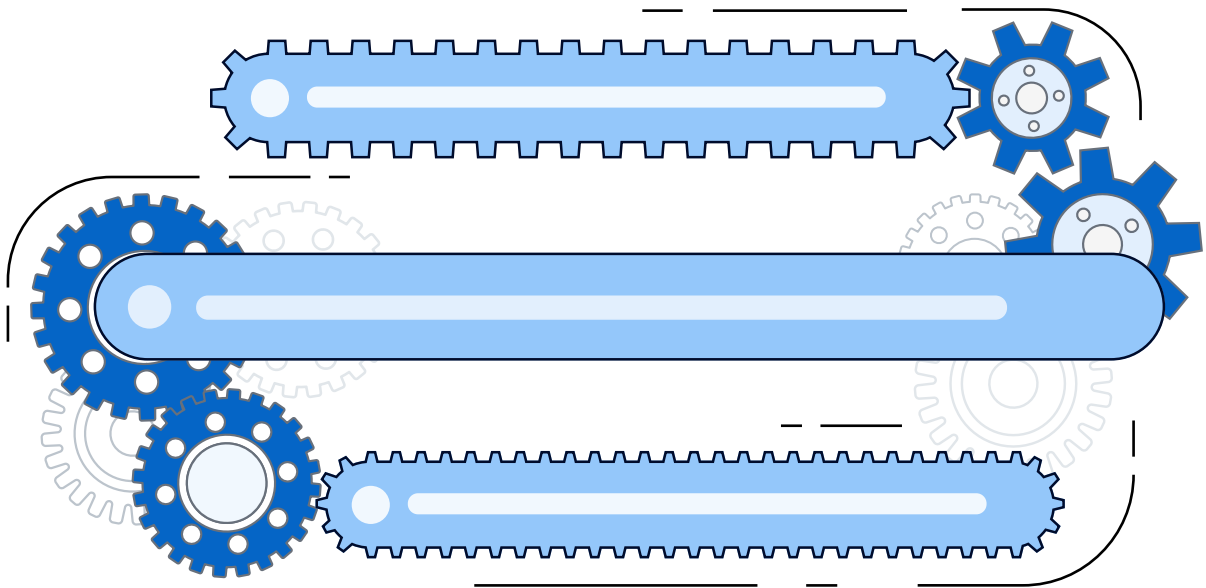
productboard

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Tailored product roadmaps build crucial business alignment

When the margins between product success and failure are so thin, it's critical to have a roadmap showing a clear path to success.

Your product roadmap should articulate your product strategy so everyone, including different audiences with unique needs, understands it. Remember that what works best may be unique to you and your organization. That's why it's critical to talk to everyone across your teams and ensure alignment on the best way to present this information.

We know rethinking how you approach the product roadmaps can be daunting. But taking the time to build effective roadmaps will help your product team successfully — and swiftly — achieve mission-critical business objectives together with the rest of the organization.
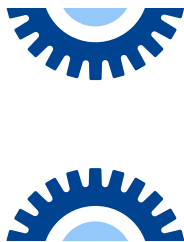
"I think of roadmaps as communication vehicles rather than decision vehicles. A lot of folks say their goal is to have a roadmap. And I say no, our goal is to have a good product strategy where we make hard choices and prioritize the right things. The roadmap is simply a reflection of this."

-Rich Mironov, Product Consultant & Thought Leader

Different types of roadmaps work best with different stakeholders. You can choose which views best support how you want to communicate and rally your organization around your product vision:

	Audience	Examples	Use Cases
Leadership Roadmaps	Senior executives & stakeholders	• Release plan roadmap • Objectives timeline roadmap	Provide a 1000-foot view of the product team's work and quick summaries of your product direction. They can include information such as the market opportunity and profit and loss details with the ability to dive in deeper if needed.
Company Roadmaps	Cross-functional teams (e.g. sales, customer success)	• Release plan • Release timeline roadmaps	These roadmaps allow other teams to set appropriate expectations with prospects and customers and contribute comments and relevant customer feedback.
Delivery-Focused Roadmaps	Development teams	• Kanban • Sprint plan • Features timeline roadmap	Communicate granular timelines, objectives, status/stage of development, areas of your product, and account for other work they need to support. Leverage dependencies and capture risks.
Customer-Focused Roadmaps	Customers & GTM teams (e.g. sales, customer success, and marketing)	• Release plan • Now-next-later roadmap	Customize a roadmap that zeroes in on features customers care about most. These roadmaps also communicate what's coming up next for your product to internal customer-facing audiences.
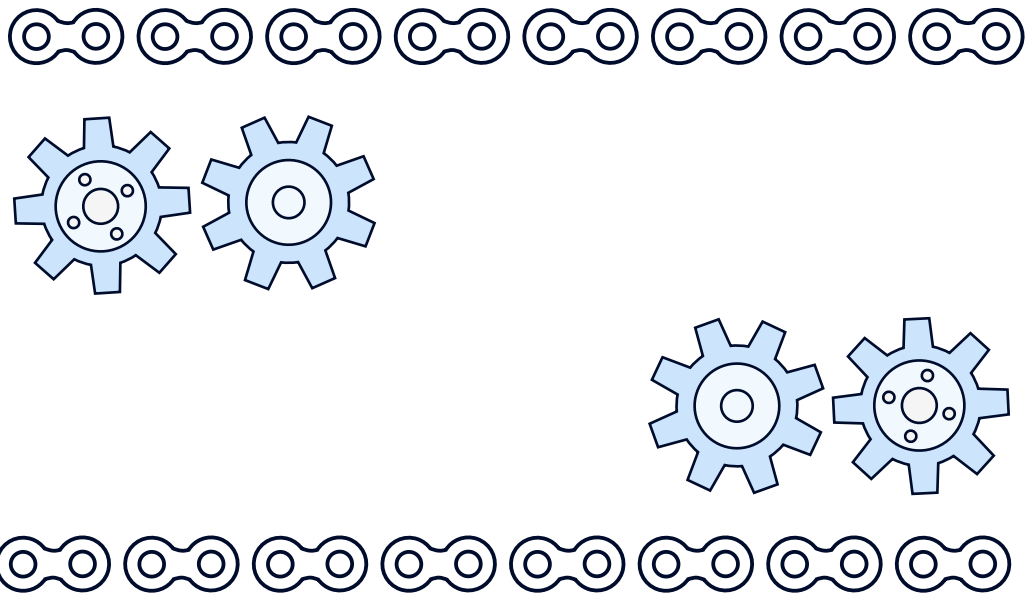
4 Steps to Building a Collaborative Roadmapping Process

Collaboration is key to building a product roadmap. After all, where the product is headed (and why) impacts everyone in the company. Involving a variety of stakeholders in the development of a product roadmap provides the context, shared ownership, and collaboration needed to bring new products and features to life.

As the primary owner of the roadmap, it's your responsibility to include stakeholders every step of the way. For most companies, your stakeholders will be sales, engineering, marketing, customer support, executives, and of course, your product team. Essentially though, you should be looking for any departments that regularly interact with customers or have a high-level view of company and product strategy

Once you know who your stakeholders are, collaborate on the roadmapping process at these stages:

Step 1: Identify your product strategy & priorities

The goal of your product roadmap is to articulate your product strategy in a way that everyone can understand. It should clearly show the overarching direction of your product and what you plan to accomplish along the way.

You, the product manager, should meet separately with all stakeholder groups.

Start the discussion with your executives. Define the high-level goals of the product(s). Where do you want the product to be by the end of the quarter? Discuss how you can tie product strategy with high-level company objectives.

Say your company aims to grow revenue by 25% this year. A product goal that supports this company goal might be "Reach 25K paid subscribers by Q3." This exercise helps ensure that the product roadmap aligns with what your company is trying to accomplish overall.

Meet with other stakeholders. Next, widely communicate the strategy you've agreed on with leaders and use it to inform your product roadmap. At this point, stakeholders should share what products or features they want to prioritize and why. Sales might think it's better to create a specific feature this quarter because of insights surfaced during product demos. Engineering might bring attention to technical debt and bugs that have potential to hinder progress. Make sure stakeholders have the data to back up their reasoning.

Priorities across teams will likely be conflicting, but assign a priority ranking to ideas that each team deems necessary and assess them against your overall strategy. You'll come back to these rankings later, but surveying all inputs from different teams changes your thinking from "I think I know what we should be building" to "We're making this decision because of XYZ."

Step 2: Share product priorities

When PMs "show their work," as Teresa Torres puts it, they ensure that all stakeholders are on the same page about what to build next and why. Work with your product team to review all stakeholder inputs and their priorities (and additional factors, of course), and then create a working draft of your roadmap.

This step can become a little overwhelming given the sheer volume of information you're working with. This is where it helps to have a tool that organizes insights in one place. A product prioritization framework can help you assess inputs and priority rankings you received from stakeholders.

Use the following framework questions as a guide:

- Are we working on items with the highest business value?

- Are we delivering necessary value to customers?

- Does our work contribute to broader business objectives?

- Can we get this product to the market within a reasonable timeframe?

Once you have a working roadmap draft, communicate the order of priorities to avoid misaligned expectations with stakeholders later on. **Hold a kickoff** call with stakeholders to discuss the ranked product roadmap (e.g. your understanding of their original inputs, the lineup of priorities, and roles of different teams). Think of it as a "Here's what I think you said. Is that correct?" exercise.

This meeting should get stakeholders excited about the product direction and confirm priorities. You will likely face pressure from competing priorities, but tie everything back to the product strategy you nailed down at the beginning of the process.

As product thought leader and consultant [Rich Mironov](#) puts it, "No matter what everybody wishes for, we live in a world where we only get to do five things, not a world where we can add unlimited new things. Once we make that clear, we can be hard-nosed about which new features or capabilities we put into production and how we make those tradeoffs."

When you include stakeholders from the beginning, it is much easier to do what Rich advises.

Step 3: Design and refine the roadmap based on inputs

Your inputs from the previous two steps will help you and your product team design a comprehensive structure for your final product roadmap. And as you create your roadmap, include these elements to keep it simple and informative for your end audience:

- **Timeline.** Help your audience understand when short-term, medium-term, and long-term features will roll out. We're not talking about specific dates or deadlines. Instead, show the general time a feature will be completed, such as the month.

- **Features.** Communicate what features you want to roll out in the above timeline. You can be as high-level or as detailed as you want, just explain why you are including each feature to give context.

- **Goals.** Let all teams know where the product is headed and what goals you're trying to reach. These goals might be product-based or business-related (e.g., increase monthly active users by 5%).

Defining and refining your roadmap can be done by you alone, or together with your product team. Regardless, its creation is separate from the outside input of the rest of your company at this point. The goal is to create a product roadmap that neatly organizes all inputs and is easy to understand. From here, you can show your stakeholders.

Step 4: Communicate the final direction of the product roadmap with stakeholders

Your roadmap is now ready for review by stakeholders. "Communication, communication, communication" should be your mantra from here on out. Provide product roadmap access to all members involved in the product development process. An easy way to do this is through a product roadmapping tool so stakeholders can view and track changes at any time.

Stakeholder review shouldn't only happen when the roadmap is first created. Stakeholders should be involved throughout the life of the roadmap. An ongoing communication strategy ensures that all key stakeholders are aware of the progress being made with the product. **Set up a regular meeting cadence** (e.g. quarterly meetings with executives, monthly meetings with sales), and regularly send emails updating the team about any product roadmap changes.

Regular communication about the product roadmap creates an agile product process. Stakeholders involved in the process can course-correct their tasks and projects if they know that there are delays or changes. Input based on using the roadmap will also help create a new roadmap next quarter.
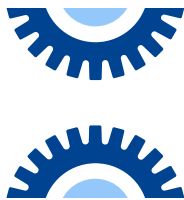
"Telling great stories about a product creates evangelists: people who believe in your idea or product and promote its value to others."

– Petra Wille, Product Leader & Author

Streamlined Roadmaps in Action: Zapier

Zapier promises a sweet escape from the manual tasks so many of us dread by helping people and companies automate work across 5,000 apps.

Product-led to the core, Zapier's winning formula for growth stems from a simple principle: Build customer-centricity into company culture.

Over time, however, an influx of customer feedback became too much of a good thing. Data poured in, but Zapier had no central place or standard process to maximize its potential as teams scaled rapidly. As teams shared findings and built roadmaps within disconnected systems, Zapier saw the following:

- **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

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### Introducing Productboard as a single source of truth at Zapier led to the following results:

- 97% of Zapier makers are active in Productboard

- 200 contributors across Zapier consistently view roadmaps

- Global teams can easily find customer feedback and start brainstorming solutions cross-functionally, driving alignment around real-time roadmaps

- Sales now has a customer-facing roadmap in Productboard that account execs increasingly share in conversations

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Read the full Zapier story here.

"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
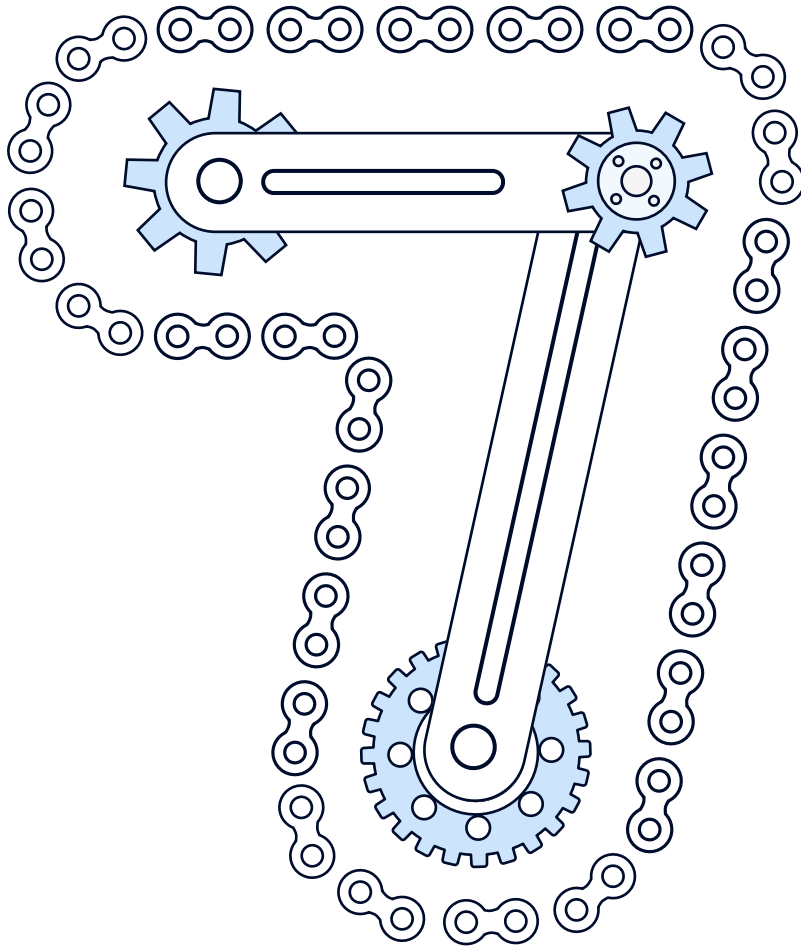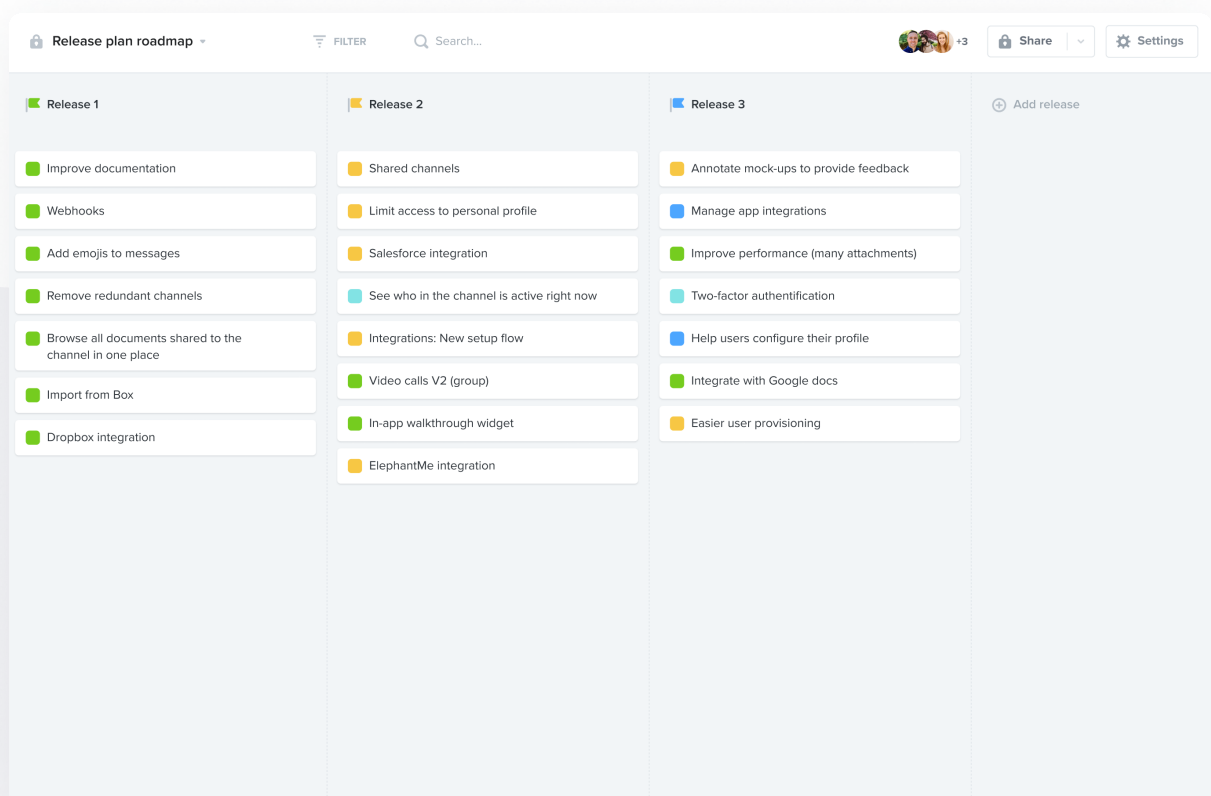
7 Excellent Product Roadmap Examples

Let's explore some popular types of product roadmaps that you can start using to boost team alignment, secure buy-in, and accelerate your product development process. At a high level, you can differentiate between two overall types: column and timeline roadmaps. We'll look at each one in more detail and share a few examples.

Release plan

Release plans are the **execution-level plan** of how you'll deliver the work that you've decided to do and the timeframe when you'll complete that work.

A release plan communicates an overview of upcoming product releases. This level of detail works well with senior executives, stakeholders, cross-functional teams, and even customers. Release plans are ideal for planning milestones that aren't time-bound and looping in other teams about features that are coming soon without committing to a specific launch date.

| 🔒 Release plan roadmap ▾ | ☰ FILTER | 🔍 Search... | | 👥 +3 | 🔒 Share ▾ | ⚙ Settings |

🚩 Release 1	🚩 Release 2	🚩 Release 3	⊕ Add release
🟩 Improve documentation	🟨 Shared channels	🟨 Annotate mock-ups to provide feedback	
🟩 Webhooks	🟨 Limit access to personal profile	🟦 Manage app integrations	
🟩 Add emojis to messages	🟨 Salesforce integration	🟩 Improve performance (many attachments)	
🟩 Remove redundant channels	🟦 See who in the channel is active right now	🟦 Two-factor authentification	
🟩 Browse all documents shared to the channel in one place	🟨 Integrations: New setup flow	🟦 Help users configure their profile	
🟩 Import from Box	🟩 Video calls V2 (group)	🟩 Integrate with Google docs	
🟩 Dropbox integration	🟩 In-app walkthrough widget	🟨 Easier user provisioning	
	🟨 ElephantMe integration		

Sprint plan

Sprint plan roadmaps are **delivery-focused** and, of course, useful for sprint planning.

Product teams use sprint plans to align their dev teams around upcoming work so they're always up-to-date and in sync.

You can plan your delivery over multiple sprints and show each feature's effort and owners to monitor your team's workload. You can even use swimlanes for additional context or grouping.
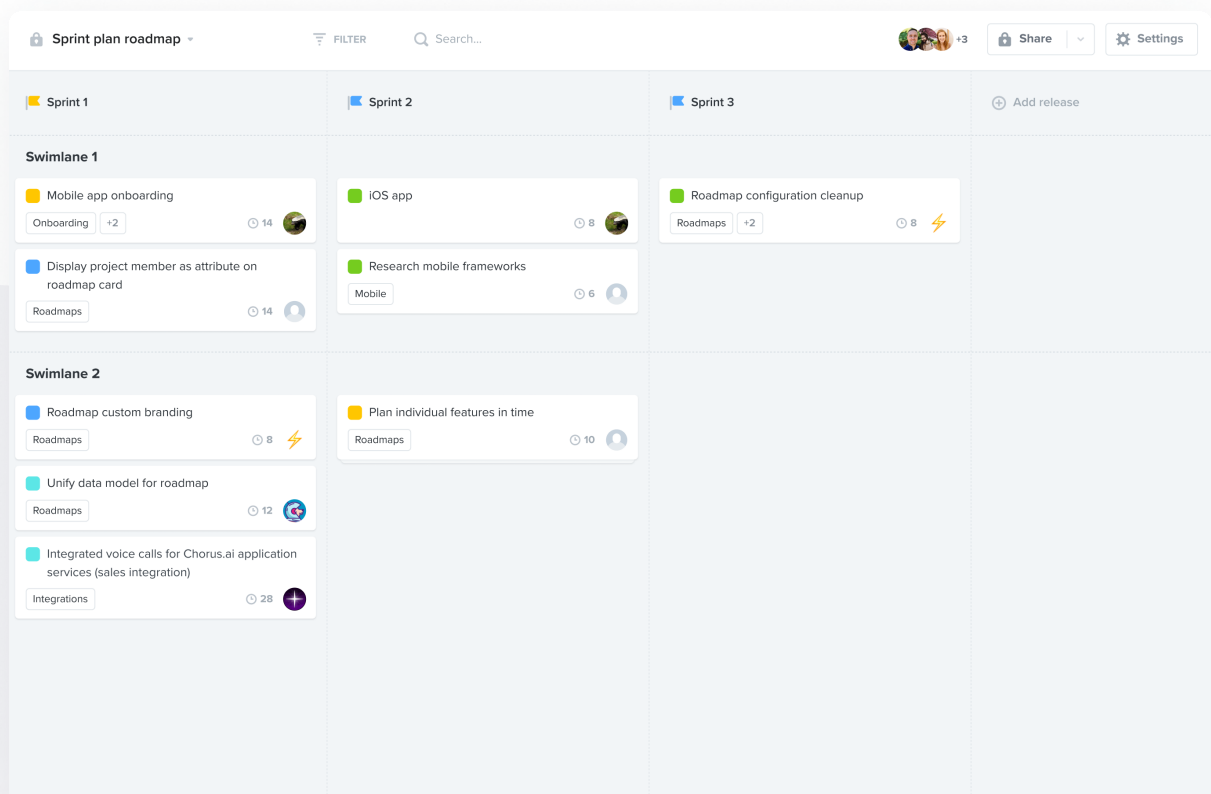
Now-next-later

Now-next-later roadmaps **communicate your priorities over broad time frames** with an emphasis on the near-term.

Features in the "now" bucket have more detail as you work on them, while features in the "later" bucket will be more high level and reflect the long-term strategy. They are perfect for teams operating in fast-changing environments where release dates may change, and can help you share your product priorities with your entire company.

Plus, they allow you to communicate comprehensive plans to customers without committing to specific deadlines.
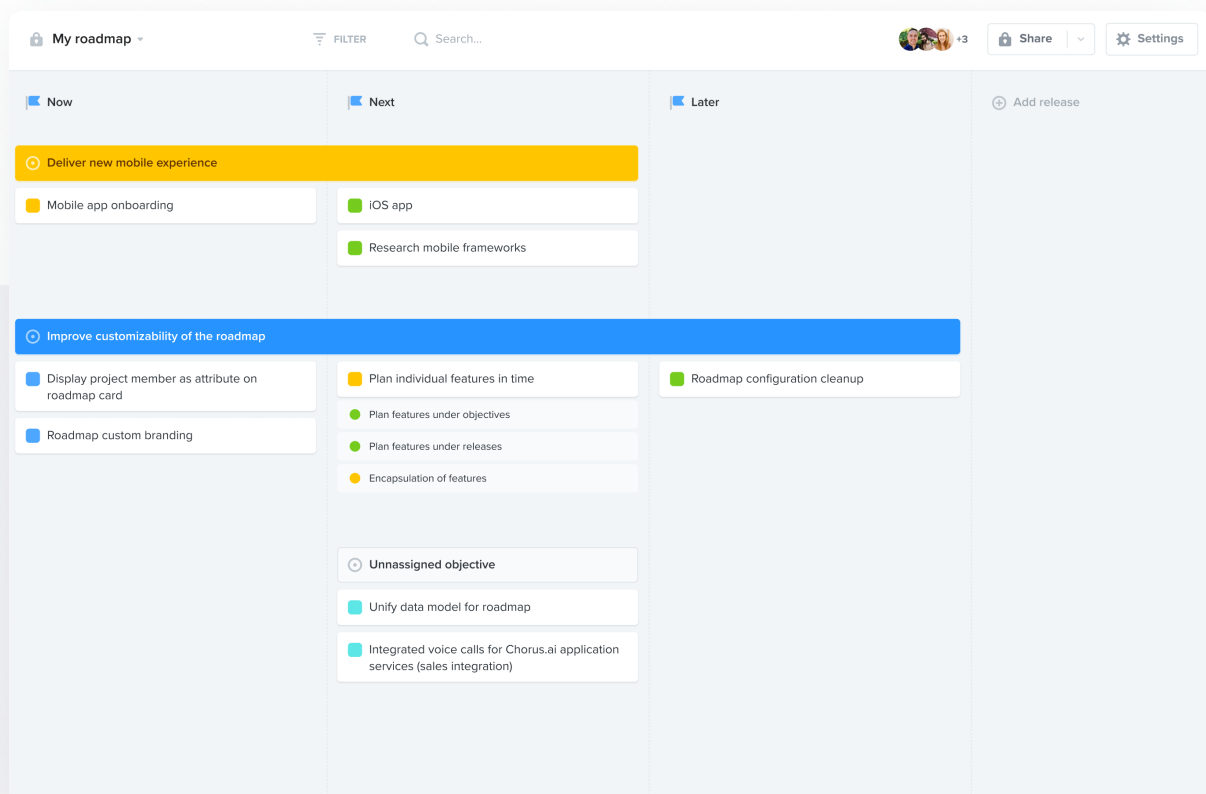
Kanban

Our last column roadmap example is the Kanban roadmap, which is another **delivery-focused** roadmap for development teams.

It helps product teams clearly group initiatives into buckets. For example — what's in the backlog, what you're planning, what's in progress, and what you've completed.

One of the most significant advantages of a Kanban roadmap is that it allows product teams to communicate their near-term plans without committing to exact dates. You can showcase when you're working on specific features and keep your delivery team motivated by reminding them what they're building towards.
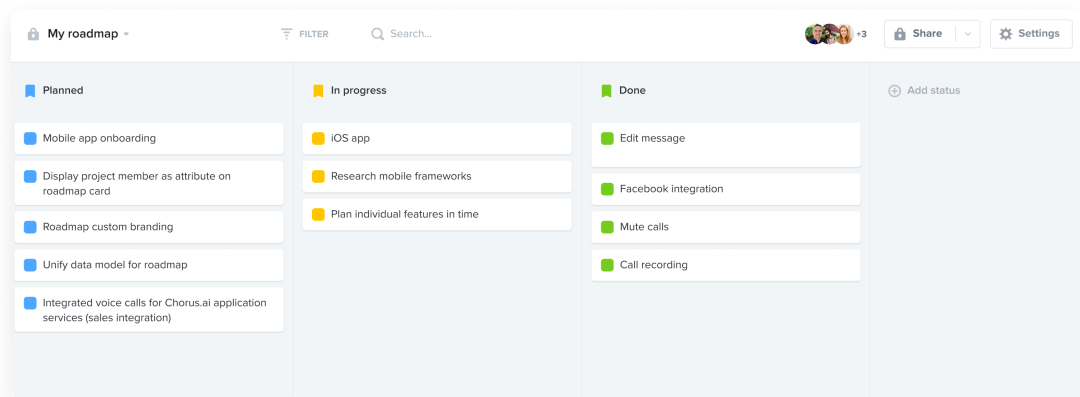
**Now that we've covered the column roadmap examples,
let's change course and talk about timeline roadmaps.**

Product managers most commonly use timeline roadmaps to ensure alignment with stakeholders and cross-functional teams. However, be wary about using tight timeframes as this can set difficult expectations. Broader time frames — such as monthly or quarterly — work best to communicate your plans broadly and address your stakeholders' needs.

Features timeline

A Features timeline roadmap is an **output-driven** roadmap that allows you to set the time frame for an individual feature.

Planning features and tracking progress with a timeline roadmap is ideal if you want to get a 1000-foot view of how work is progressing toward a time-bound milestone.

You can track feature progress against specific deadlines and milestones and align internally with development teams on concrete dates. You can also allocate resources when and where they're needed.
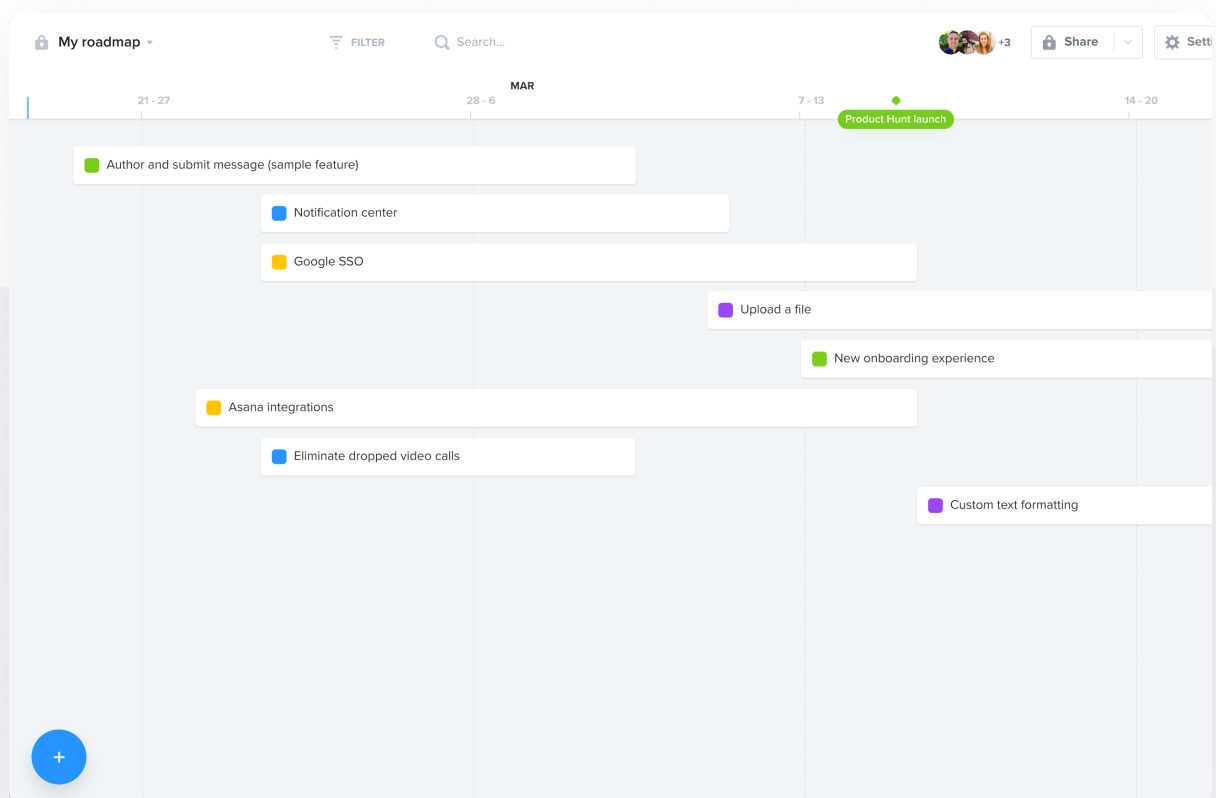
Objectives timeline

For larger organizations and those working in more complex environments, there comes a time when senior executives and stakeholders want a more **zoomed-out approach.**

That's where an objectives timeline roadmap can come in — to provide broad organization alignment on product direction.

It's easy for anyone to understand when you'll work towards each of your business goals and where that sits relative to your most significant milestones. Objectives timeline roadmaps are great for communicating your product strategy and goals across teams for the next 2–3 quarters.
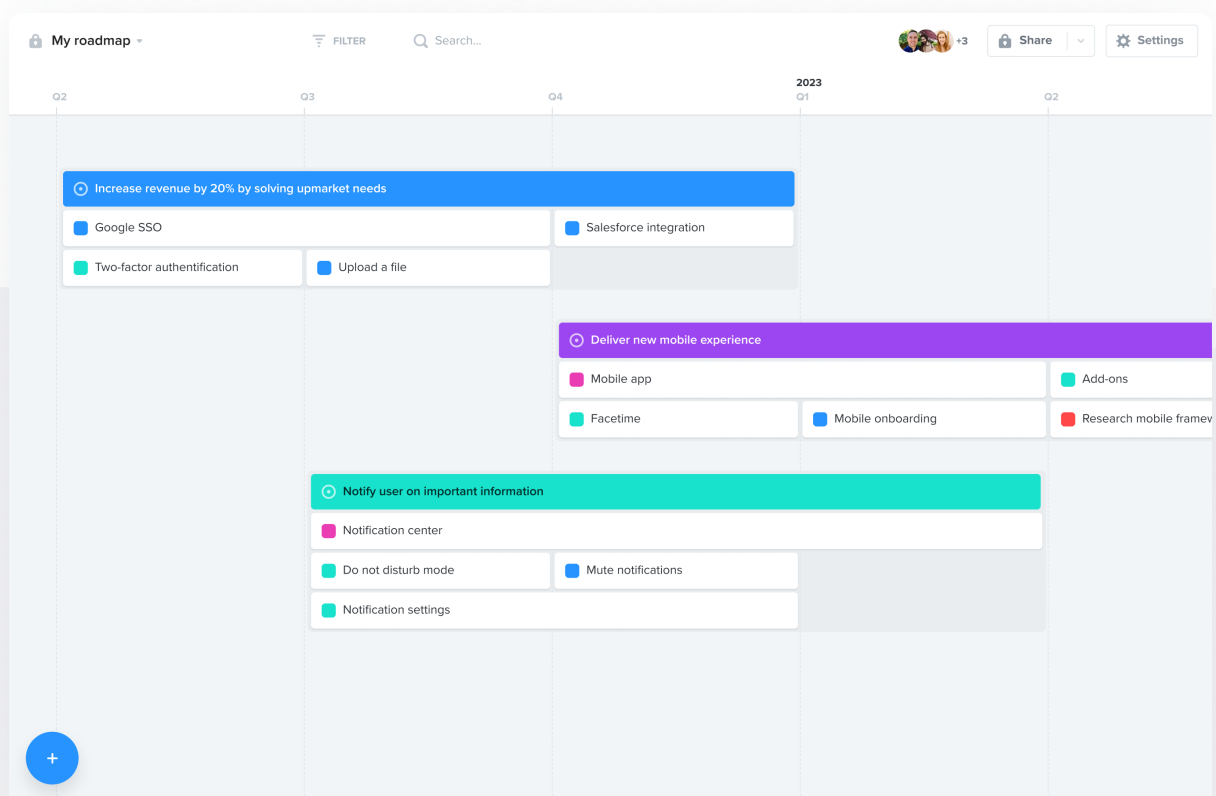
Release timeline roadmap

When gearing up for **sprints and launch** activities, release timelines can help you decide which features to release together and when.

This roadmap allows you to plan and communicate when you'll work on releases in the near future. It includes clear timeframes for cross-functional teams like sales and customer success.

With product management software like Productboard, larger product organizations with multiple teams can even create multiple release groups. This allows teams to better organize the features that are being released on different cadences.

A release timeline roadmap allows you to keep using your specific release objects while also conveying a time horizon with any essential milestones or company deadlines.
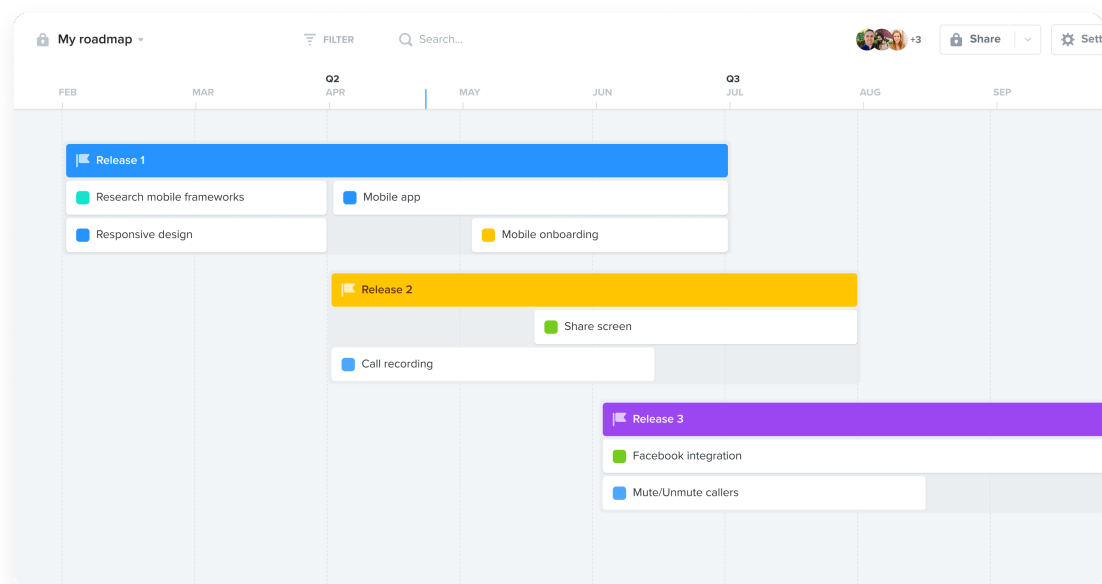
Building a great product without a roadmap is like going on a road trip without a map...

If you're lucky, you might eventually reach your destination, but you're more likely to end up stranded near some run-down motel.

Remember, product roadmaps are all about the destination — ensuring that you build what matters most to your customers.
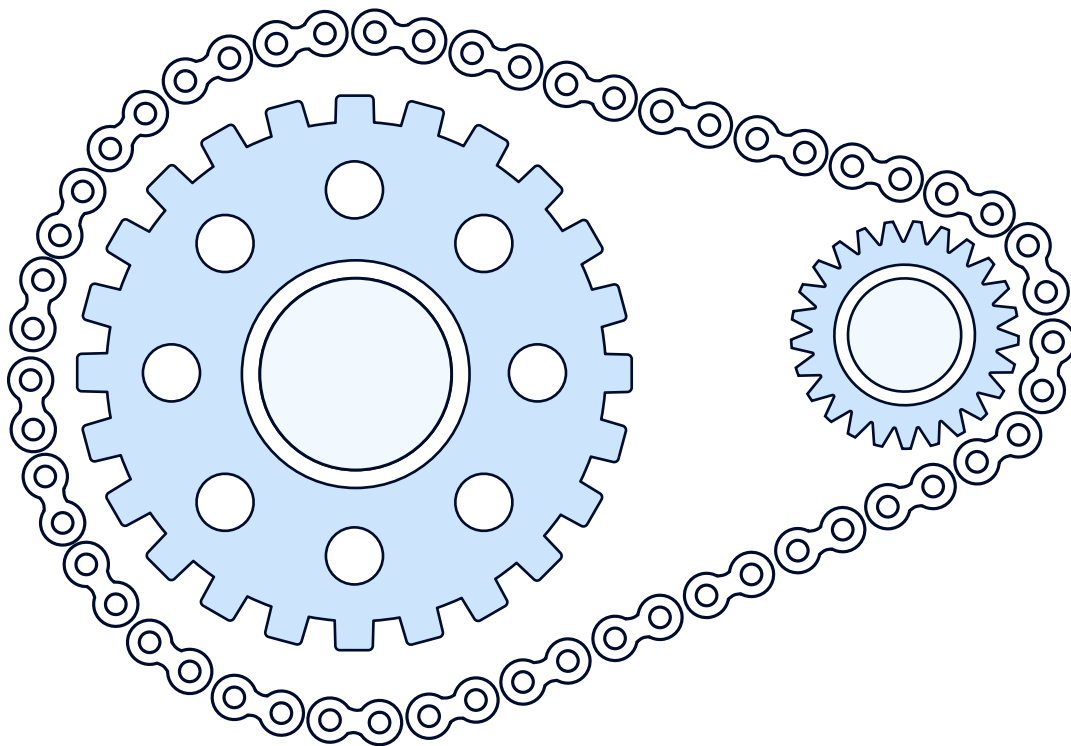
# How Productboard Empowers Teams to Roadmap at Scale

Productboard's customer-centric roadmaps can be customized for all audiences, and are always up-to-date. With Productboard roadmaps, product managers save time, accelerate product planning cycles, ensure cross-functional stakeholder alignment, and build the right products for customers.

Build product roadmaps that reflect customer needs

According to a recent survey of 1400+ product professionals, only 47% of respondents are confident that the products and features on their roadmaps actually reflect user needs.

With Productboard, customers are always at the center of your roadmap process and product strategy, saving you time and accelerating your product planning cycles. You can collect and organize customer feedback within Productboard. Plus, Productboard's auto-calculated user impact score surfaces your top-requested features based on customer feedback, ensuring the right features are on your roadmap. You can see these scores and tags you create to categorize feedback (like dealbreaker, usability, or enterprise) on roadmaps.

When real customer insights inform roadmaps, product teams can clearly communicate the "why" behind roadmap decisions to stakeholders. Your entire team has unlimited access to view the customer feedback behind each feature on your roadmap. With customer-driven roadmaps, you speed up product innovation, avoid costly assumptions around customer needs, and confidently build the right features for customers.
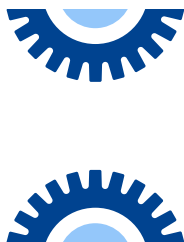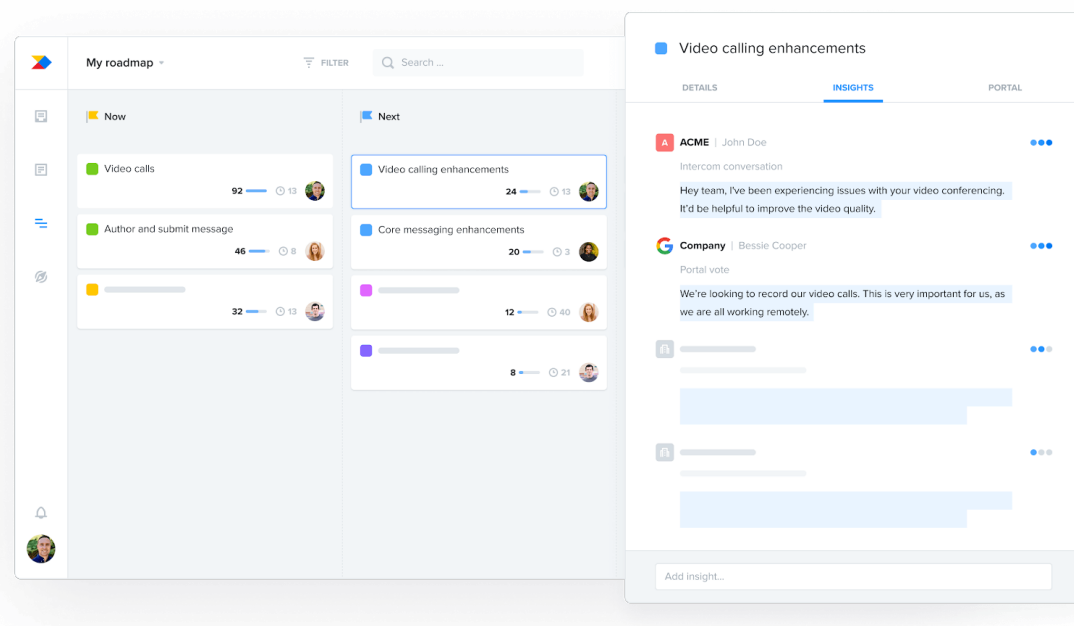
"Everyone receives line-of-sight into what the customer is asking for and being delivered. Those who need to know what's happening with a product, now have one place to go for end-to-end visibility."

**– Rohit Mehta, Director Product Quality & Statistics at Here Technologies**

## Quickly create custom roadmaps tailored to each stakeholders' unique needs

A good product roadmap is a tool for effective cross-functional collaboration. Roadmaps should clearly help product managers communicate critical context and timelines for delivery to relevant teams and stakeholders. However, only 33% of product professionals said roadmaps could be easily shared and accessed by cross-functional partners, while only 31% find they provide adequate context — a clear disconnect.

Plus, every stakeholder, both internal and external, needs a different roadmap view. Product teams often spend hours creating roadmaps for different audiences or present one generic roadmap that doesn't meeting any audience's needs. Productboard's custom roadmap templates empower product teams to easily create, share, and communicate strategic roadmap views for all.

Product teams save time and focus on what matters — building better products — and empower stakeholders to self-serve the roadmap.

Leadership roadmaps provide a high-level overview or quick summary of a product team's work and direction. **Company roadmaps** give greater detail to customer-facing teams like sales and customer success.
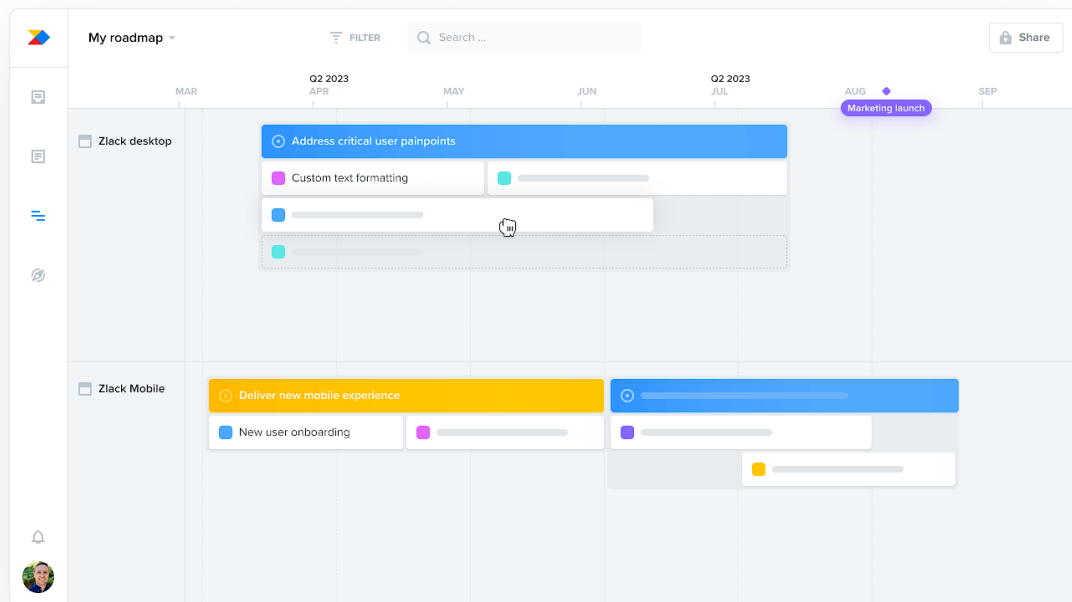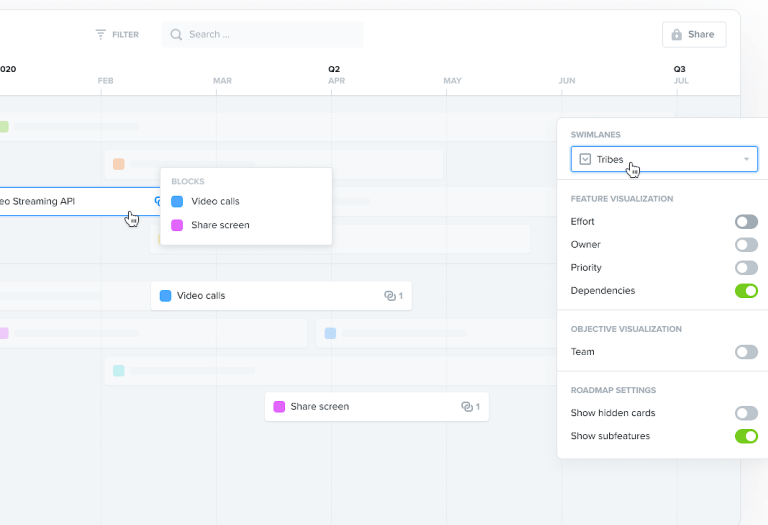
Delivery-focused roadmaps — including features timeline roadmaps with objectives — provide detailed, granular views. Product managers can track and plan their features from discovery to delivery. With new custom field swimlanes, you can organize your roadmap according to the criteria your team cares about most — such as platform (iOS or Android) or feature type (bug or delight) — in one click.

With **dependencies**, see features blocked by other features on your roadmap. Quickly address issues to meet timelines, optimize delivery resources, and save money.

Using Productboard's Salesforce integration and dynamic customer segmentation, a **segment-centered roadmap** (Enterprise plan) shows key segments' needs, such as enterprise or high ARR customers. An enterprise roadmap shows the enterprise sales team and enterprise customers the upcoming features they value. And with a **customer-focused roadmap**, customer success managers show customers they're listening to their feedback and share expected delivery dates.
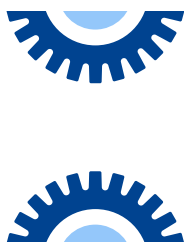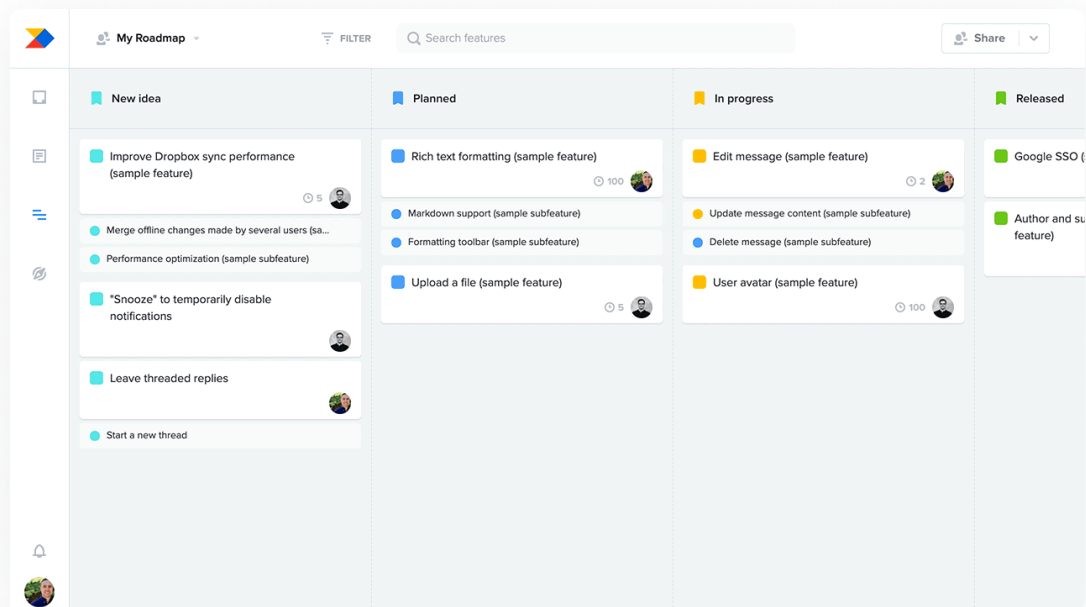
"Productboard's real value is orchestration. Our stakeholders, from high-level internal executives to partners like Apple and KFC, are now happier with the product team's output because of the alignment we all have on what's most important to our business and customers."

**– Rangga Wiseno, Senior Vice President of Product at Dana**

Dynamic, always up-to-date roadmaps replace manual slides

Custom roadmaps for all audiences are critical, but useless when they are outdated and don't reflect current work — a common challenge faced by product managers stitching together disconnected tools or using tools not purpose-built for product managers. When using slides, product teams must manually update each roadmap with every time-consuming change. And when stakeholders don't know where to find the roadmap or can't trust that it's up-to-date, they revert to flooding product managers with questions.

Productboard's roadmaps are dynamic, staying up-to-date as plans evolve. Product teams and stakeholders are confident knowing all roadmaps align with a single source of truth. Changes you make to product features and strategy in Productboard on your Features board automatically update all roadmaps at once for every audience.

Product managers stop wasting time sharing roadmaps and focus on strategic product decisions, strategy, and discovery. Product teams improve productivity, save time, and reduce maintenance costs. Teams speed up product innovation, build the right products for customers, and become more productive.

With Azure DevOps and Jira integrations, Productboard roadmaps integrate with your developers' existing workflows. Product and development stakeholders stay aligned, transparent, and consistently communicate with a real-time view of deliverables. Everyone accelerates roadmap creation, delivery speed, and eliminates duplicate manual work in both systems.
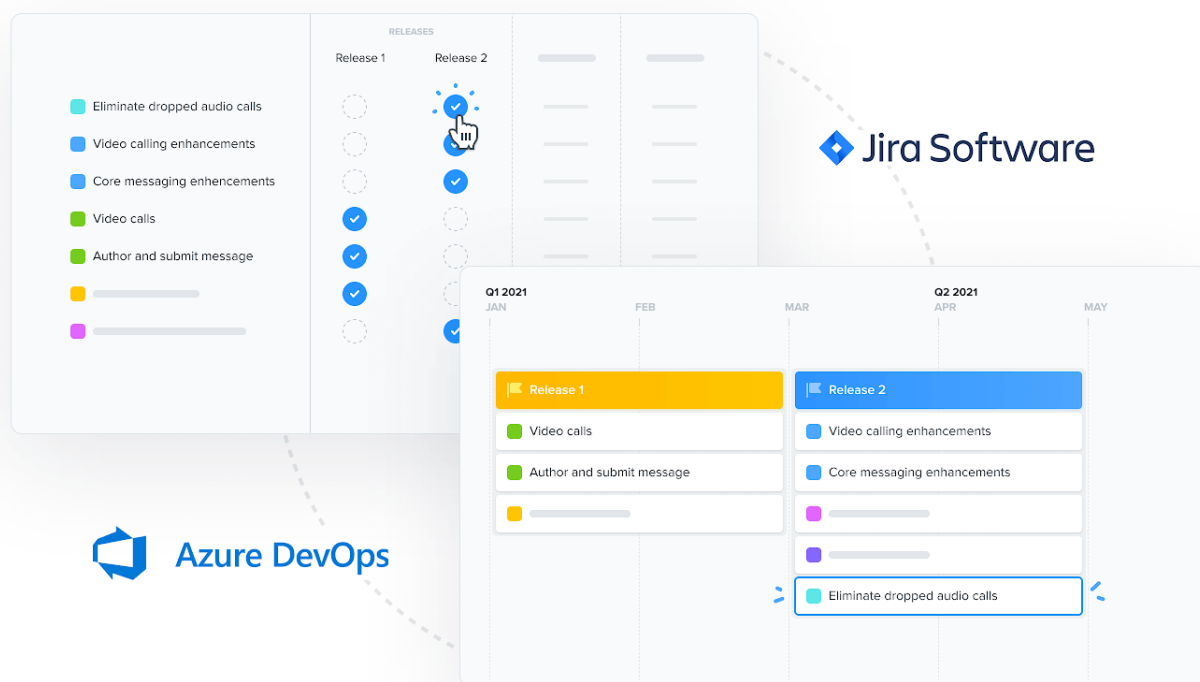
Build products customers need, use, & love

Investing in a product management platform like Productboard can help scale your roadmapping process, boost customer engagement, and ultimately drive business impact.

Start your [free trial](#) of Productboard to start building excellent product roadmaps today!

About Productboard

Productboard is the customer-centric product management platform that helps teams get the right products to market faster. Over 6,000 companies, including Microsoft, 1-800-Contacts, and UiPath, use Productboard to understand what users need, prioritize what to build next, and rally everyone around their roadmap. With offices in San Francisco, Prague, and Vancouver, Productboard is backed by leading investors like Tiger Global Management, Index Ventures, Kleiner Perkins, Sequoia Capital, and Bessemer Venture Partners.

Learn more at productboard.com