



# Modern Product Management

Part 1: Effective Roadmapping

A TAPLYTICS GUIDEBOOK





# Modern Product Management

## Part 1 - Effective Roadmapping

32% of product managers list planning and prioritizing as their biggest challenges. In this section we'll go over how to build a customer-led product team, lean product development, and when to use it, followed by the 7 customer journey map templates you need to level up your product onboarding.

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## How To Build A Customer-Led Product Team

**Every product team likes to say that they're customer-driven.  
*Customers know which ones actually are.***

Their company's mission is all about putting the customer first, and their office is decorated with "customers rule everything around me" posters. It's easy to pay lip service to being customer-led — but being user-oriented is much harder in practice.

It doesn't matter what your decor says — truly building around the customer is a function of how your product teams are structured. To create products that users love, you have to examine and reshuffle your team from the bottom up.

It takes structural change to connect your team with customers. Organized to know exactly what buyers want, your team can iterate their products faster and better.

## The Cliff Of Customer Experience For Product Teams Today

Every team wants to create products that their customers love — but that's a daunting task.

You have to balance a multitude of customer inputs across devices, channels, and platforms and implement them into your product development. At the same time, you have to ensure that the product will meet profitable business benchmarks — you can't offer a reliably outstanding user experience if the product isn't sustainable.

How your team meets this challenge all depends on your organization. There are typically two different types of product team structures:



### **Business-Led Teams**

Product decisions are driven by KPIs to grow revenue and profits.



### **Product-Led Teams**

Product decisions are driven by customer inputs to create a superior user experience.

These two types all reflect valuable priorities: monetizing and customer satisfaction. But exclusively focusing on a single one limits your product's potential. You might have a product concept, for example, that reflects what customers want but isn't financially feasible. Alternatively, your team might have a product idea that seems profitable based on past products' revenue, yet doesn't align with what customers want in user research.

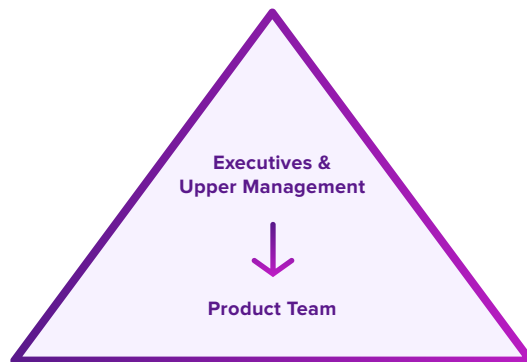
The key is to balance both priorities as a customer-led team. Aligning users' needs with business goals allows teams to build profitable, customer-oriented products. Serving both interests, companies can sustain their business and continuously provide users with products they love.

To balance both business-driven and user-driven interests, your team has to be restructured. We'll walk through how each team type can be adjusted to prioritize both areas. With business and user interests all considered, your team will be set up to create products that are both customer-centric and profitable.

## Business-Led Teams

Generating revenue is critical for product teams. It doesn't matter how cool or exciting your product concept is — if the product itself leads to losses, it's not worth developing.

Business-led product teams understand this well. They have a tactical, earnings-driven mindset that often sets their products up for success. By using Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), these product teams can focus on growing the revenue and profits of their products. With top-down decision-making, upper management at the company controls and approves product development so it's always aligned with the company's goals.



This business-driven perspective, however, can also lead products to their downfall. By focusing on KPIs and putting product-decision making in the hands of senior company leadership, business-led teams can be slow to discover and implement the best ways to improve their customers' product experiences.

## The Business-Led Development Process

Think of your favorite brands — Nike, H&M, IKEA. Given their scale, these companies are all likely home to business-led product teams.

Business-led teams operate in companies that have many products, yet aren't engineering-focused. With non-technical products, these companies rely on KPIs to measure their company's progress. Focusing on these metrics keeps product development aligned with the business' larger revenue-based goals.

The model works by integrating upper management with product development. Project managers report their team's progress to the company's upper management, who ultimately decides the overall goals and trajectory for each product. With this oversight, the senior leadership can keep the company's strategy and products unified and consistent for customers.

This upper management typically includes the CEO and other executive team members of a company. Many other internal stakeholders, such as the board of directors or investors, can also be involved in decision-making with business-led products. If an individual plays a major role in the company's long-term success, whether through their job or investments, they're usually offered a seat at the product decision-making table.

Risk is minimized by making product decisions with KPIs. By prioritizing performance metrics, the upper management can objectively measure what's worked in the past to decide how to move forward in the future.

**Prioritizing metrics and top-down decision making, here's what a product development workflow might look like in a business-led organization:**

- 1 Research:** A Product Manager (PM) researches a problem to understand the challenges the customer is facing and how a product might resolve those issues.
- 2 Pitch:** With research completed, the PM outlines a plan for developing a product to show to upper management. Senior leadership holds the decision-making power — if the product seems problematic or unlikely to sell, upper management won't approve the plan.
- 3 SPEC:** Assuming the product plan is approved, the PM will work with developers and designers on their team to write a product spec, the document that outlines what will be required of the team to build this product.
- 4 Development:** Once the product specification is complete, the PM, designers, and developers work together to build and iterate on the product. Throughout this development stage, the PM reports back to upper management on the progress of the product.
- 5 Finalize:** As the product development finishes, upper management forms insights using the product's KPIs to decide whether it should be launched.

With this workflow, the business-led product team focuses on stability and profitability. These guiding principles usually lead teams to launch successful products that their buyers love — but not always.

### **Impact On Customer Experience & Product Development**

By focusing on KPIs and risk-aversion, you can gradually build a product that supports your company's larger goals. Instead of making quick, unfounded product decisions, a business-led mindset helps you make steady, incremental progress and align product development with the organization's goals.

Building around the company's goals, however, doesn't always mean you're being customer-centric. You can't quickly adapt your product to customer needs because you

have to wait for approvals from upper management. Your product development is also disconnected from customers because you're primarily building around what management wants, rather than what customers need.

### **Impacting the customer experience and product development, the business-led team model comes with a few pros and cons.**

#### **Pros**

- Focusing on KPIs gives you greater control over business outcomes. By tracking performance metrics, you can see which elements of your product lead to greater revenue for your company.
- Building on what drives revenue often serves your returning customers. By focusing on what's worked for your business in the past, you're expanding on what most customers already enjoy and love.
- Centralizing product decision-making under upper management makes it easier to develop a unified product experience. With a single vision, as opposed to several divisional views, employees can confidently execute the product strategy.

#### **Cons**

- KPIs aren't always the best indicator of what consumers want, especially in the long-term. By only focusing on business goals, you miss the customer's perspective and can easily create a product that no one wants to buy.
- Having so many internal stakeholders involved in the decision-making process slows down development. An idea for a product in business-led teams has to get approved by so many parties before it can be implemented, so the customer has to wait longer for a solution.
- With the same stakeholders working on multiple products, it's tough to know who's accountable for specific issues and pinpoint solutions to product issues.

The business-led team knows how to measure KPIs and identify the best ways to monetize a product. But no matter how many metrics they track, this team type can easily miss what the customer wants. Structured around business objectives instead of customers, business-led teams can mistakenly build a product that users don't want to buy.



## Blockbuster: Business-Led Example

Blockbuster is the quintessential example of business-led product development.

Ten years ago, you couldn't drive through a suburb without seeing the chain somewhere. Blockbuster was the king of video rental stores throughout the 1990s and 2000s — until it was dethroned by Netflix and shut down in 2014.

Blockbuster's ultimate downfall can be attributed to its business-led product decision-making.



**Bryn Owen** — Ex-Blockbuster UK CMO

*"The board, which were heavily retail-focused, saw embracing online as a threat to Blockbuster's future as they thought it would cannibalize the high street sales."*

The company judged its product and company based on its past strong performance in stores, assuming customers' preferences wouldn't drastically change over time.



Their overwhelming business-driven decision-making is especially clear in Blockbuster's rejection of Netflix. Reed Hastings, the CEO of Netflix, met with Blockbuster's executives in 2000 to offer the company a buyout deal: purchase Netflix for \$50 million and Netflix would manage a DVD delivery service for Blockbuster.

Netflix was turned away by Blockbuster, but they probably aren't too bothered by this rejection today. Netflix had revenue of 25 billion USD in 2020, while Blockbuster was forced to shut its doors in 2014.

Saying no to Netflix was a big mistake in retrospect. But at the time, Blockbuster had business-driven reasoning to justify the rejection. In 2000, Netflix had only 292,000 subscribers and relied on the U.S. Postal Service to deliver its DVDs.

	Year Ended December 31,				
	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002
(in thousands, except subscriber acquisition cost)					
<b>Other Data (Unaudited):</b>					
Number of subscribers at end of period	NA	107	292	456	857

The company was losing money...

	Year Ended December 31,		
	2000	2001	2002
<b>Revenues:</b>			
Subscription	100.0 %	97.8 %	98.7 %
Sales	—	2.2	1.3
<b>Total revenues</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<b>Cost of revenues:</b>			
Subscription	69.3	64.7	50.4
Sales	—	1.1	0.7
<b>Total cost of revenues</b>	<b>69.3</b>	<b>65.8</b>	<b>51.1</b>
<b>Gross profit</b>	<b>30.7</b>	<b>34.2</b>	<b>48.9</b>
<b>Operating expenses:</b>			
Fulfillment	28.5	17.7	12.7
Technology and development	46.9	23.4	9.6
Marketing	71.7	27.7	23.4
General and administrative	19.5	6.1	4.4
Restructuring charges	—	0.9	—
Stock-based compensation	24.5	7.5	6.4
<b>Total operating expenses</b>	<b>191.1</b>	<b>83.3</b>	<b>56.5</b>
<b>Operating loss</b>	<b>(160.4)</b>	<b>(49.1)</b>	<b>(7.6)</b>
<b>Other income (expense):</b>			
Interest and other income	4.6	0.6	1.1
Interest and other expense	(4.0)	(2.4)	(7.8)
<b>Net loss</b>	<b>(159.8)%</b>	<b>(50.9)%</b>	<b>(14.3)%</b>

Source: [Netflix](#)

Blockbuster's performance, on the other hand, was incredibly strong. In 2000, Blockbuster dominated the movie rental competition with thousands of locations and millions of customers.

Blockbuster tried to save itself by offering online movie rentals in 2004 but, at that point, it was too late. The company filed for bankruptcy in 2010 and was forced to shut down in 2014.

By focusing only on their business performance, Blockbuster missed the consumer perspective — that consumers found online rentals more convenient. With customer-driven product decision-making, Blockbuster could have saved itself by hopping on the online rentals train.

### Worksheet Questions

Have a business-led product team and want to make it more customer-oriented? Here are a few questions and suggestions to consider when restructuring your team.

1

How often does your product team speak or interact with customers about their product usage?

It doesn't matter if you're a product manager or an engineer — as a product team member, you should be communicating with customers at least once a week. By regularly hearing first-hand accounts of users' experiences with your product, you're able to quickly make improvements that benefit users. Schedule times in your team members' calendars to handle customer service every week so that you don't let this task slip.

2

Do you launch new product features without A/B testing?

As a business-led team, product decisions might be made by executives and other internal stakeholders without A/B testing. But these individuals, no matter how powerful they are, aren't mind readers — they can't tell you what users enjoy and don't enjoy as accurately as A/B test results. In addition to considering internal feedback, product decisions should also be backed by experimentation.

### 3

How frequently do you iterate on your product?

Iteration isn't just a means for fixing bugs. Teams should iterate on the entire product — its UX, its features — to improve customer satisfaction. Positive test results are rare, so you have to iterate frequently to actually gain insights on improving the product for users. Check out our guide on building an experimentation culture to encourage your product team to test more often.

## Product-Led Teams

Today, it's trendy to be a product-led company. These businesses have an obsessive focus on building a product with a superior customer experience. Product-led companies like Segment and Stripe have become massive, billion-dollar businesses — and it's thanks to the strength of their product.

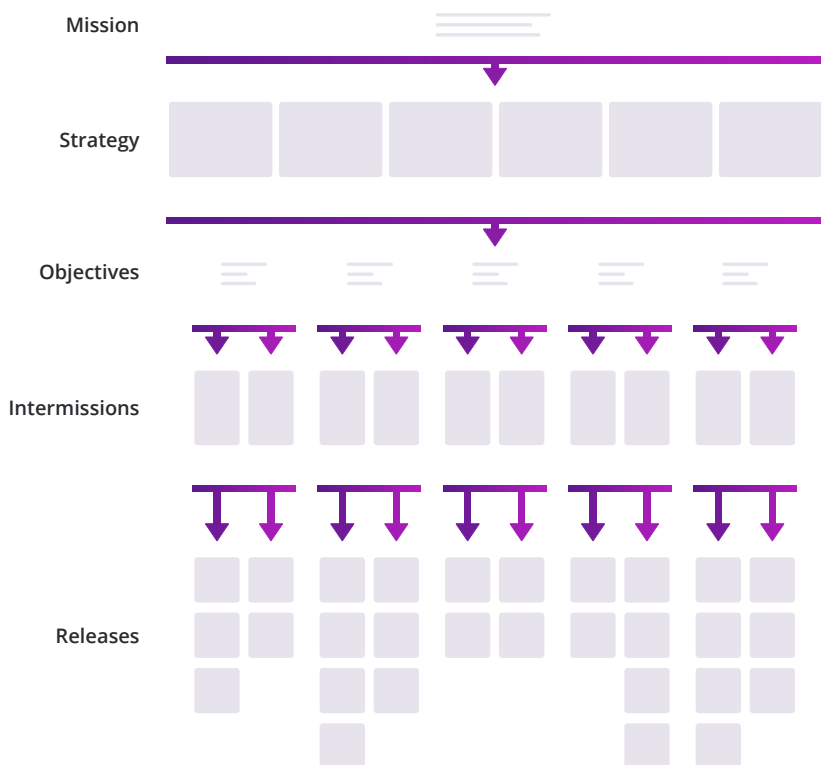
With this mindset, teams improve their product's customer experience with user-based iteration. Based on inputs from customers, product-led teams decide what features and aspects should be changed and improved. Every product development stage revolves around users' wants, so the team is always working towards a better customer experience. Prioritizing users' feedback enables teams to build products that customers are interested in — but it doesn't guarantee maximum sales. What the buyer wants isn't always what drives the most revenue. Consequently, teams that mostly focus on customer inputs can miss out on opportunities to monetize their product.

## The Product-Led Development Process

Product-led teams are common at startups that don't have a fully established product. Eager to define their business further, these companies adopt the product-led mindset to quickly iterate and adapt their product according to customer inputs.

Teams at these companies improve their products with quantitative customer data — analytics and metrics from user testing and product usage — and qualitative customer data, such as surveys and customer support conversations.

The product development process begins with picking the right problem to solve and defining goals through user research. Once a roadmap is set, the plan is divided into team objectives with smaller releases that can be iterated upon.



Product-led PMs keep teams focused on customers by adding user research to every stage of the development process. Relying on this research throughout development lets the PM and their team feel confident in their product decisions.



With this user research focus, here's what a product development workflow might look like for a product-led team:

- 1 Feedback:** The PM uses customer interviews, research, and user behavior data to discover and define the problem that the product is solving.
- 2 Prioritization:** The PM presents their product idea to senior product leadership. Product leaders could say no to the idea but, usually, they just offer suggestions about how this product should be improved and help users even more. The PM will incorporate the feedback into the existing product roadmap and prioritize the identified needs.
- 3 Product Specification:** Using product leaders' feedback and their user research, the PM works with engineers and designers on their team to write a product specification, the document that outlines what will be required of the team to build this product.
- 4 Development:** The PM works with designers and engineers to build designs and prototypes of the product, which are tested with users. The PM uses these test results to determine further iterations.
- 5 Finalize:** Towards the end of the development process, the PM runs beta versions of the product to get detailed feedback from users. The PM uses this input to finalize the product with designers and engineers before launching it.

With this workflow, a product-led team is always driven by its users. The PM integrates customer inputs throughout product development so the team has the insights they need to build products that customers love. But to monetize their product, these teams need to consider more than users' feedback.

### **Impact On Customer Experience & Product Development**

In many ways, customer-driven product development is a win for both users and businesses. When a product-led team listens to their customers, they can build products that people want. In return, they enjoy a large number of sales from all of the customers who are eager to use their product.

But being so user-centric can also hurt your product development. By making product decisions solely based on the PM's interpretation of customer inputs, you ignore other critical factors — like sales and marketing concerns — that impact your product's revenue.

### **Affecting customer satisfaction and product development, the product-led team model comes with a few pros and cons.**



#### **Pros**

- Product-led teams can build great products because they can respond nimbly to customer needs with their focus on user inputs.
- With a single person (the PM) leading product development, it's easy to stay on track and create a cohesive product.
- Product-led teams can iterate quickly because they have so many user inputs at hand.

## ⊗ Cons

- Product-led teams may be unable to apply customer inputs to product development when user feedback is contradictory with other customer inputs or the overall product vision.
- Product-led teams can be misled financially by prioritizing customer inputs. User feedback may lead to costly product decisions or be too narrow and not apply to the majority of customers, leading to lower sales.
- Product-led teams can be misled by user data. Selective data with a small group of test users can be a false sign of increased engagement. Even when engagement has increased, teams should still question whether that feature fits within the larger scope of the product.

The product-led team can gather and implement customer inputs to build products that users love. But buyers' feedback is just a fraction of what's needed to monetize a product — other stakeholders within a company, such as sales and marketing teams, and business metrics like KPIs should also inform product decisions to ensure that they're financially sound.



### Intercom: Product-Led Example

Intercom, a customer messaging app, thrives on its product-led perspective. With 20,000 customers, the enterprise startup focuses on its users by linking their customer service department to product development.



**Paul Adams** — VP Of Product @ Intercom

*“The customer support team helps us figure out what has to be addressed. They tag conversations with customers and they make feature requests. They summarize what our customers are telling us.”*

These customer inputs are implemented throughout product development thanks to Intercom's PMs. Like PMs on other product-led teams, PMs at Intercom are given quite a bit of responsibility to implement customer inputs throughout product development.

They're accountable for making sure:

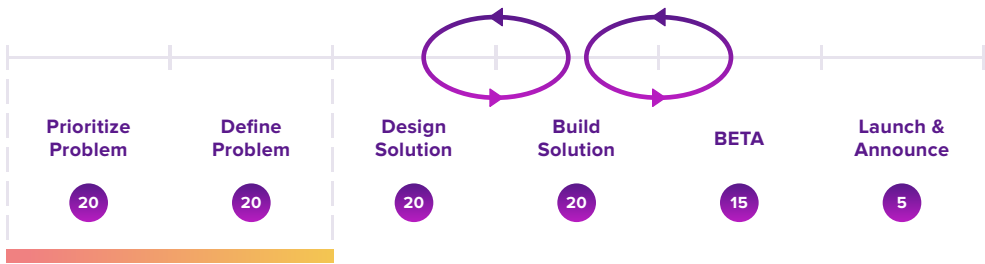
- The analysis of the product problem is correct
- The product doesn't go out with too many bugs
- The product's performance is measured
- The product solves the problem

In fulfilling each responsibility, the PMs prioritize users. With this focus, Intercom's product development is built around scaling customer inputs from the research stage to deployment.

User research is also easily implemented at Intercom with the company's focus on “defining the problem.” According to Adams, 40% of product development at the company is dedicated to just understanding what the product is trying to solve for users.

This preliminary problem stage is driven by user research. PMs and their teams use recorded customer conversations from the Support team and have conversations with customers to understand what users are looking for in a product.





Source: [Inside Intercom](#)

Being product-led, Intercom has mastered the art of figuring out what their clients want — but sometimes their focus is so customer-centric that it hurts their sales strategy.

Intercom had originally structured their product in a way that accommodated every user's need they had come across. A person could choose however many of the four functional plan types they wanted, based on their business' needs.

Within each type, the customer selected how many people would be using the plan in their company and whether they wanted the Basic or Pro option.

Intercom wanted to show customers everything available across the product — but from a sales perspective, this product structure was more harmful than helpful.

Users were being presented with over 80 product variations between the four types, user amount levels, and the Basic or Pro selection. With this many options, users faced feature analysis paralysis. Unable to make a decision, the user wouldn't make a purchase, lowering Intercom's sales.

Instead of focusing so heavily on customer inputs, Intercom could have improved their product structure by consulting with their sales teams. These employees could have

quantified the company's buyers' personas to find similarities in willingness to pay so plans could be bundled and simplified.

Today, Intercom's product structure seems improved and informed by both product-led and business-led perspectives.

Users' wants are met as the product is still highly customizable — two of the three plan types are varied by the number of users and the Basic or Pro option. At the same time, there are far fewer options, so the pricing is less confusing for users. With more simplicity, customers are less likely to face analysis paralysis and are able to make a purchase.

### **Worksheet Questions**

Have a product-led team and want it to become more balanced and business-oriented? Here are a couple of questions and suggestions to consider when restructuring your team.


1

Are customer inputs shared with other internal teams?

As a product team, it's easy to think that you should independently implement customer inputs since your roles — engineers, designers, PMs— are directly tied to the product. However, other departments, such as sales and marketing teams, have insights that help interpret buyer feedback. If the marketing department, for example, knows that users are most interested in a specific feature, they can start brainstorming the best ways to promote the product to increase sales.

2

Do you back up customer input-based product decisions with KPIs?



Qualitative customer feedback is a critical insight when building a product, but it's also limited. Customers in support conversations or surveys can only speak from their own experience, so you want to check their responses with performance metrics to see if it applies to other users, too. For example, one user might say that a feature is useless and should be deleted — but if your engagement rate on that feature is high, you know it's worth keeping.

## Customer-Led Teams

A customer-led team is the hybrid dream. It takes the best qualities of both business-led and product-led teams to meet users' needs in a way that aligns with their company's goals.

Customer-led teams balance the interests of both types — the business-led motivation of profits and the product-led goal of creating a superior user experience. They continuously learn about customers via user research, such as usage analytics and surveys.

Complementing this research, they work with internal teams to figure out how they can meet their customers' needs in a way that serves their business' other interests, such as meeting sales quotas or lowering costs. In doing so, they align their users' interests with the overall goals of their organization.

The dual focus of customer-led teams ultimately serves the customer more than any other team type. Users are served in the short-term as their inputs are implemented in development to build great products. At the same time, users are served in the long-term because these companies, prioritizing business interests, are sustainable and can continually build great products

## The Customer-Led Development Process

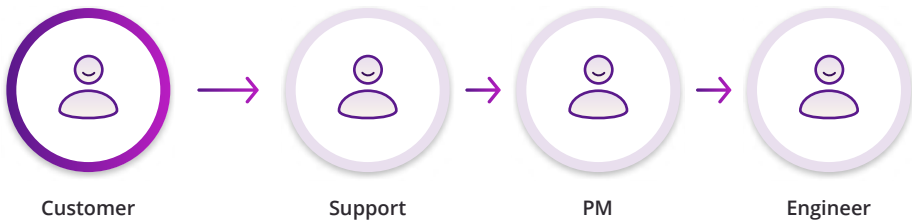
Customer-led teams are common at later-stage startups and companies with a well-defined product. They're not obsessed with creating the ultimate user experience since they're already successful in the core concept of what they offer. Instead, they're more balanced in aligning their customers' needs with their business goals.

The customer-led development process works with user inputs being shared across the entire organization. The product team:

- Collects insights by working closely with customers. Customer-led product teams can make decisions by analyzing user surveys, research, NPS scores, and other customer-based resources.
- Collects and shares customer inputs with internal stakeholders outside of the product team. Discussing customer inputs with other departments allows customer-led teams to also consider business-led concerns in their product development.

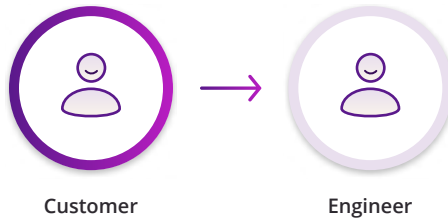
With the entire organization offering feedback on customer inputs, everyone — not just the product team — is involved in product development.

Product managers are the liaison between internal teams and the product team. They collect user-based insights from their team and other departments to raise both customer success metrics and business metrics for internal teams. They each manage multiple teams of engineers, who are expected to speak directly with customers and improve the product continuously according to user needs.



1

Customer feedback, the traditional way



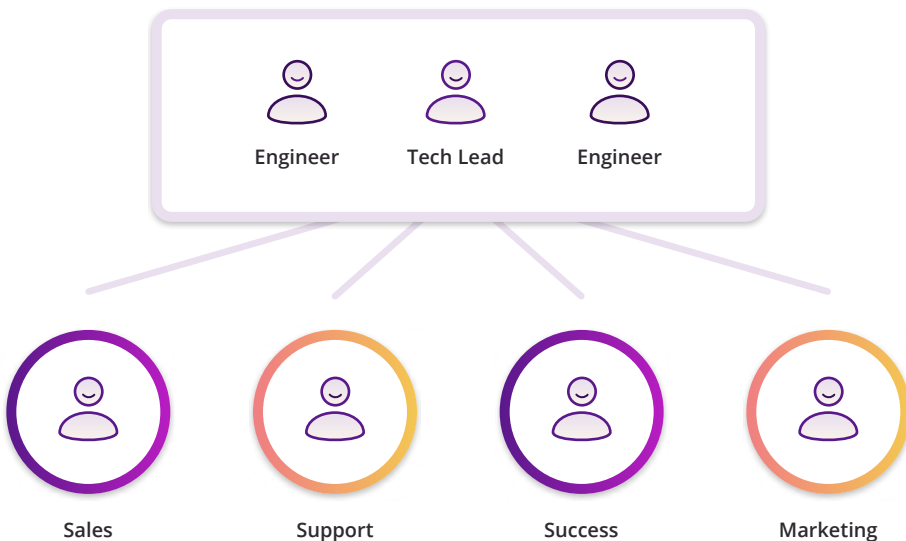
2


Customer feedback, the customer-driven way

**Balancing user and business interests, here's what a product development workflow might look like in a customer-led team.**

- 1 Understand The Problem:** The PM and product team use customer research to understand users' pain points. From there, they define the problem that the product needs to solve and how it might solve it.
- 2 Company-Wide Discussion:** The PM pitches the idea to product leadership and other company department heads. They provide feedback to the PM on how to create the best product experience for the user while still generating revenue.

- 3 Product Specification:** Using feedback and their user research, the PM works with engineers and designers on their team to write a product specification, the document that outlines what will be required of the team to build this product.
- 4 Speedy Iteration:** The PM gets early designs and prototypes in front of users to collect feedback, as well as connecting the product team with other internal teams to get input on development.
- 5 Reprioritization:** Throughout all of the development, but particularly towards the end, the PM reevaluates a team's progress to ensure that the work is always aligned with the business' goals and leading to key results by consulting with internal teams about their goals as they relate to the product.
- 6 Finalize:** Towards the end of the development process, the PM runs beta versions of the product to get detailed feedback from users. The PM uses this input to finalize the product with designers, engineers, and other internal teams before launching it.





The engineering team connects with customers to decide how the product should be iterated on to solve its designated problem and how bugs should be fixed.

Involving the entire company, the customer-led workflow is extensive, yet worth it. Considering customer inputs from all perspectives, not just the product team's view, takes time. But at the cost of slightly slowing down development, the PM and their team can build a product that not only serves users' interests but also drives revenue and profits for the company.

### **Impact On Customer Experience & Product Development**

Customer-led teams enjoy the pros of both business-led and product-led teams, as well as their own unique benefits.

By collaborating with their entire company, customer-led teams can employ both user-centric and business-focused insights in product development. This knowledge enables them to build products that keep customers happy while still generating revenue.

Handling so much feedback in the customer-led model comes with challenges. Checking in with internal teams takes more time than just consulting within the product team, like a product-led company. With the customer-led model, it can also be difficult to determine which interests need to be prioritized with so many competing perspectives.

**Impacting both customer satisfaction and product-led development, the customer-led team model comes with a few pros and cons.**

## ✓ Pros

- Working closely with customers and other teams allow customer-led teams to flexibly prioritize product development according to immediate customer needs.
- Customer-led teams have the insights to build products that satisfy demand by focusing on and implementing user research in development.
- Customer-led teams have control over their business outcomes because they communicate with internal teams to ensure that development is aligned with the company's larger goals.

## ✗ Cons

- The customer-led process is slowed down by needing to communicate with multiple internal teams, not just the product team, about development. It takes time for the PM to gather, interpret, and implement all of this input.
- It can be challenging to discuss product development with the entire organization involved. Every member has their special interests, and it's often tough to recognize and appreciate every perspective in product development.
- The customer-led model can make it difficult to create a cohesive product. With so much feedback to consider, it can be difficult for the PM to stay on track and maintain a unified product vision.

Though the customer-led model can lead to disruption in product development, this mindset is ultimately the most reliable and powerful way to serve your customers. Being customer-led, a product team has the customer inputs they need to build a product that users love and the business insights they need to sustain their company's growth and continually serve their customers.





## Airbnb: Customer-Led Example

At an IPO or \$60 a share, Airbnb can attribute much of its success to its customer-led product development. Product teams at the company consider both customer inputs and business-driven interests to make key product decisions.

PMs at Airbnb ensure that both quantitative and qualitative customer inputs are informing development at all stages. For early-stage development and new product development, Airbnb teams rely on user interviews to gain broader insights. In the later stages, usage data helps identify the smaller feature details that need to be adjusted to avoid roadblocks.

Along with considering customer inputs, product teams are pushed to consider business-driven interests as well. Every quarter, Jonathan Golden, Airbnb's former Director of Product, conducted a review on each product team to determine their impact on the entire business, not just their individual product goals.

Likewise, Airbnb pushes product teams to stay business-oriented by also focusing on stakeholders' requests in development.

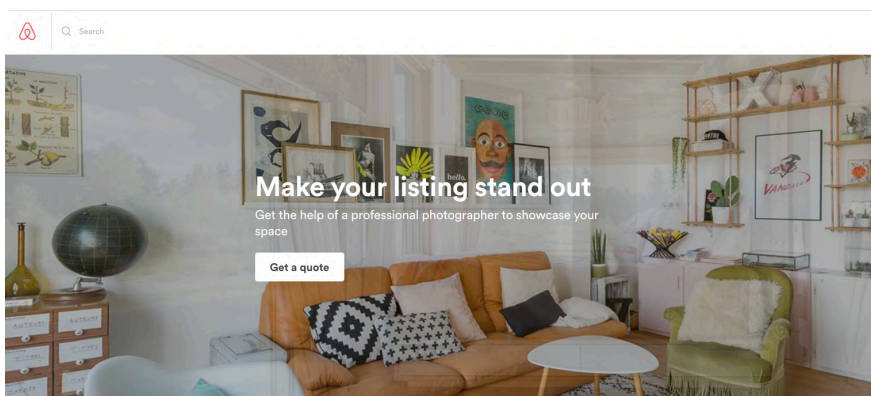


**Jiaona Zhang** — Product Lead @ Airbnb

*"For a platform team (example: payments), understanding the requirements of other product teams, Business Development and Financial Processing & Analysis is critical to your success."*

Airbnb's balance of user-based and business-driven interests can be seen in the launch of Airbnb's photography program. In the summer of 2009, New York bookings were slumping, so the founders booked spaces with almost every host to understand the user experience and identify the main problems for customers. Seeing the bookings in person, they suspected the issue wasn't the actual accommodation — it was the low-quality photos that hosts were using in their booking pages.

To test their theory, the founders bought a high-quality camera and updated these listings with nicer photos. The upgrade led to two to three times as many New York bookings, doubling their weekly revenue. With their user-based insight confirmed by the improvement in revenue, Airbnb launched a program that links hosts to professional photographers for their listings.



Basing product decisions on both user and business-related concerns, Airbnb employs a customer-led mindset in development to launch product features that satisfy customers' needs and grow their business.

### Worksheet Questions

Want to adopt the customer-led model in your product team? Here are a few questions and suggestions to consider when restructuring your team.



1

How often is your product team talking to customers?

Direct communication with users shouldn't be the sole responsibility of Support. Your engineers and other product team members are the individuals who are closest to the product — putting them in closer contact with customers makes it easier and quicker for issues to be resolved.

2

What metrics are your product team held accountable for?

To be driven by both users and business interests, customer-led teams need to be held accountable for customer metrics, such as product usage goals, as well as success metrics for internal teams, such as generating a certain ROI on a product.


3

Do you have processes for involving the entire company, not just product teams, in product development?

You won't be able to gain insights from other company teams if you don't have an established system for consulting with each other about product development. Set up clear points in your product roadmap for when you should review development with other stakeholders, such as the marketing or sales teams.

### **The Key To Being Customer-Led? Balance**

User-oriented products aren't created with a single priority in mind — both the customers' and the business' interests are considered in development. With this balance, companies have both the user and revenue-based insights they need to sustain their business and continuously provide products that users love.



Shifting your product team to becoming customer-led requires restructuring. Making organizational adjustments with the worksheet questions we've provided can refocus your team, allowing it to align customers' needs with your business' larger goals.



## Understanding Lean Product Development & When To Use It

It seems like the world moves faster every day. Technology has created a society of instant gratification, and it's affecting businesses and product teams, too.

That's why it's more important than ever for product teams to not only be resourceful but quick and nimble. [One Gartner survey](#) found that 32% of respondents said their need to deliver more quickly was the main reason for adopting a product-centric approach, citing "speed to market" as their core metric.

Lean product development helps you reduce your speed to market without sacrificing quality or causing additional stress on your team.


### What Is Lean Product Development? The Basics

Lean product development is a great way to conceptualize and evaluate the value your product provides to users continually. It focuses on a few core tenets:

- Eliminating or decreasing waste
- Improving efficiency
- Shortening timelines
- Maximizing profitability and ROI
- Providing more customer value when creating new products

Lean product development is different from agile product development because lean focuses on making the most efficient use of resources and processes, while agile focuses on the quickest way to get things done.

One commonly cited example of lean product *manufacturing* and lean *management* is



Toyota: in 2000, they used lean product development to launch 14 new products — more than GM's entire product offering — with 70,000 employees compared to GM's 350,000.

The same principles apply to lean product development for software — get more done with fewer resources. But it requires a considerable amount of focus to accomplish; your team will need to understand exactly what they're responsible for at every stage of the [product development life cycle](#). Lean product development also emphasizes continuous learning; as your team analyzes each iteration of the product and adjusts according to those insights, they'll gain more expertise and knowledge along the way.

Sounds great in theory, but how do you know when it's valuable to use lean product development instead of other methodologies? It all starts with a solid understanding of the key principles of lean product development, so you can adopt this approach for your team.

## When To Use Lean Product Development

Understanding how and when to use lean product development is important. It's always great to be more efficient and less wasteful. But there are certain scenarios where lean product development can be especially beneficial to your team:

- **You experience frequent product launch delays.** According to [one Gartner survey](#), 45% of product launches are delayed by at least a month. This creates a poor customer experience and gives your brand a bad reputation, which will damage your bottom line over time.
- **Your team is burnt out.** Lean product development makes better use of your resources, and that includes your people. A learning environment can also stimulate and motivate your team to push through difficult times together.

- **You have knowledge gaps.** Because of its emphasis on learning, lean product development can bridge knowledge gaps and empower your team with more information and skills. When you're trying to nail down customer value for every new feature you release, these gaps can be potentially disastrous.

## The 5 Key Principles Of Lean Product Development

Lean product development's foundation rests upon a set of principles that guides product teams through the product development lifecycle. These principles essentially walk you through defining the value of your final product for both customers and your team.

### 1 Define Value To The Customer

Taking a customer-first approach is a principle of lean because it ensures that every feature you launch will serve your audience, without wasting time and resources working on something customers don't truly need.

Conduct customer research to understand their needs and values. Analyze customer feedback, and use marketing analytics from your [email campaigns](#) and [push notifications](#) to understand what customers think of and how they interact with your brand.

Once you understand your customers, map their needs to specific product/feature specs. For example, at Taplytics, we noticed enterprise-level companies needed enhanced data privacy and security features. So we rolled out specific features on our platform, including secure connections to existing data infrastructure, single-tenant cloud installations, and the ability to create your own encryption keys.

In a lean approach, many product teams repurpose already-existing software, tools, and products for new uses while actively exploring alternatives. Not only does this kind

of repurposing help reduce your development time, but it also gives your team an existing base on which to build. But it's important to be flexible enough to adjust to customer needs.

“Product Managers need to widen their empathy with customers and move beyond the ideas of existing solutions. This requires the consideration of user needs at the earliest possible stage of a product's development, before fixed ideas for solutions to the product's design problems have been established – When you skip this step, you sacrifice quality for speed. This will soon require a v3 of the design system you have just put in place. In the end this you will have wasted more time and money focusing on being fast! and agile! then you would have if you put proper user research methods in place from day 1 of development.” – Chelsea Oswald, Shoelace

## **2 Identify The Value Stream & Reduce Waste**

Understanding and mapping new features back to customer needs to help you define the end goal. Now it's time to put together the systems to help you get there.

A lean product development approach relies on a streamlined product development process to mitigate risk, reduce bottlenecks, and create efficient workflows. To do this, you need to set the blueprint for the rest of the team to follow.

You might also consider creating a framework, so teams know what goes into a successful idea and can objectively evaluate their own. This reduces confusion and motivates your team to keep things moving, while also ensuring alignment with the larger business goals.

## **3 Make These Value-Creating Steps Efficient**

Once you've defined these processes, it's time to make sure they flow smoothly. Tightly integrate the steps from principle #2 and see if bottlenecks remain — sprint retros are



a great way to reveal these issues. In these retros, your team can easily chat through past tasks and work experiences to identify where changes are needed. Just remember that you need to be honest and forthright; optimizing the product development process is only possible when everyone trusts their peers to work together towards the same goal.

Another way to sync with team members and keep everyone apprised of project status is through daily standup meetings or scrums. Scrums provide accountability, transparency, and an opportunity for teams to connect.

When you're ready to launch your new feature, use [phased rollouts](#). This breaks your launch down into a series of smaller steps instead of one massive launch and makes it easier to plan and execute projects and consistently check in on progress — and it's easy to revert when needed. Using [feature flags](#) is the best way to accomplish this.

#### 4 Empower The Team

Speaking of your team: informed, motivated, and empowered employees drive successful product ideas and launches.

Give team members the chance to own their projects without micromanaging or senior oversight. High-performing product teams work very closely with members of the executive team and enjoy unwavering support. These product teams are very aware of the company's business strategy and take steps to ensure tight alignment."

The folks at [Zappos](#) have this down pat.

"The majority of our team can run experiments without even telling me," says Product Team Lead Andrew Nguyen. "They just need to execute and report on their experiments with a high level of integrity."

Leaders should be transparent and forthcoming about larger business updates and goals. It's also beneficial to promote cross-departmental communication and collaboration to encourage more information-sharing and brainstorming. Use tools like Slack to share updates with as many people at once, as well as facilitate 1:1 interaction.

Remember to optimize resourcing, so workloads are balanced and projects are equipped with the expertise they need. Assign a dedicated project manager who understands your people's strengths and the project's needs, so they can assemble the right team for the task.

In lean environments, it's common for people to work on multiple projects at once. Encourage hours' estimates, so no one is over-allocated — burnout is a real issue that managers need to be aware of. Regularly check-in to make sure people aren't overwhelmed with what's on their plate.

## 5 Learn & Improve

Lean product development is all about building an environment of continuous iteration, ideation, and learning through analysis.

Product team leads should not only capture and organize information, but they should also proactively share and distribute it within teams. Tell them what the information means and share key learnings and insights. Consider setting up monthly or quarterly demos to show off individual and team accomplishments and dedicating a Slack channel for announcing updates and new findings.

Give your team a chance to collect and interpret the data independently. Many product teams use Taplytics's [A/B testing](#) platform to run tests and learn from the results, applying those learnings to new products.



## **Moving Forward With Lean Product Development**

Lean product development empowers teams with knowledge and efficient processes, so they can mitigate product launch delays and drive more customer satisfaction and profitability. Teams that are resource-strained can use this approach to compete with larger companies with bigger budgets.



## The 7 Customer Journey Map Templates You Need To Level Up Your Product Onboarding

Providing a seamless customer experience is one of the best things you can do to attract new business and boost engagement with your product. How do you make customers feel this connection throughout their experience with your brand? By mapping out the customer journey. When you understand how different types of customers move through the process, from becoming familiar with your product to their eventual purchase, you ensure they get the most value at every touchpoint.


Building out these customer journey maps also helps you track the various ways that new users become familiar with your product and grow from a newbie into a loyal advocate of your brand. While everyone's experience with your product is slightly different, customer journey map templates help you visualize these processes across all different use cases.

Not only does that help you foster understanding of the customer journey within your team, but it also helps you highlight how to add value at each step.

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### Current vs. Future State Customer Journey Map Templates

Customer journey maps are a way to visualize a customer's experience with your brand. They outline key touchpoints in the relationship and highlight how the customer moves toward a specific goal. A customer journey map template can have



two different states: current and future. As you build out your templates, it's important to understand both the current state of your customers' experience as well as how you want that experience to change.

Creating both types of journey maps provides the most comprehensive picture of your team's impact, goals, and desired outcomes.

- **Current customer journey map templates** provide clarity into the experience as it is today.
- **Future customer journey map templates** help you specify what you'd like the experience to be in the future.

When you combine the two, it helps you refine the customer experience over time and ensure that each step—from interest to consideration, purchase, and beyond—adds concrete value to the customer experience.

### How To Read A Customer Journey Map

You can conceptualize the customer journey in many different ways, but it all comes down to tracking each step toward a specific goal or desired outcome. The following journey map templates list each step from left to right, with the specific activities, motivations, emotions, and potential barriers a customer encounters at each stage.

- **Activities** - the specific actions taken at each step
- **Motivations** - why people perform those actions
- **Emotions** - how they feel at each step
- **Barriers** - known issues that stop the action

Following this structure helps you connect with customers, buyers, and users on a deeper level and see more opportunities to help them along the way.

## 1 The Buyer's Journey Map

This first customer journey map template is arguably one of the most important. Understanding your target persona's journey, from interested consumers to paying customers, ensures you provide information that motivates them to make the final purchase decision. Mapping out the buyer's journey in this way requires a comprehensive understanding of each stage of the customer acquisition funnel. It's important to know how potential leads become aware of your product, how those leads learn more about the value your product provides, and what makes them finally turn their interest into an actual purchase.

The Buyer's Journey Map			
	Awareness	Consideration	Purchase
ACTIVITIES	Accesses a product landing page on your site	Signs up for a newsletter	Completes the order form on your website
MOTIVATIONS	Searching for solutions to their specific problem	Wants to learn more about your product	Solve their problem using your tool
EMOTIONS	Frustrated and seeking answers	Invested in finding the right solution	Excited to get started using your product
BARRIERS	Competition on the search engine results page	Lack of information available	Price or lack of knowledge

But the reality of what happens at each stage of the process is only the first step. To make your buyer's journey map valuable for the team, you also need to include the

potential customer’s motivations at each stage of the process and the type of content you use to move them closer to making the final purchase. That provides insight into the underlying “why” behind people’s purchase decisions, which is the key to providing the type of experiences that match their expectations.

## 2 The Sales Funnel Journey Map

Whether your product’s sales cycle is shorter or longer, identifying key inflection points that motivate customers to engage with your sales team is crucial. Mapping out these touchpoints ensures that your team always understands the best tactics for nudging people towards an eventual sale. This map mirrors the buyer’s journey in some ways by following the movement of potential customers from interest to consideration to purchase. It focuses on how those stages progress after a potential customer reaches out to your sales team.

The Sales Funnel Journey Map			
	Awareness	Consideration	Purchase
ACTIVITIES	Learns about your product from a popular review website	Accesses live chat on a landing page	Works with your sales team to complete their purchase
MOTIVATIONS	Searching for solutions to their specific problem	Wants to speak to your team about their problems	Solve their problem using your tool
EMOTIONS	Engaged in finding a solution to their problem	Actively seeking help from a human being	Excited to start using your service
BARRIERS	Review sites offer several potential solutions	High volume chat queues of wait times	Lack of follow through from your sales team

Make sure to include your typical sales cycle, call cadence, and time required for your team to complete the sale. Support this with the common sales objectives and educational material—sales enablement resources or third-party review sites—leads refer to when speaking with your team.

### **3 The New User Onboarding Map**

Once someone has purchased your product or signed up for your service, you need to onboard them fast. Doing so increases engagement and sets customers up for success. New user onboarding also ensures that your new customer gets the most value out of the product as quickly as possible, which boosts retention rates and builds stronger relationships.

Use your new user onboarding map to identify specific actions users need to take to properly set up their accounts, like entering an up-to-date email address or clicking through a modal pop-up on their account settings page. Then highlight where your team can make improvements to those processes. The steps you choose will depend on the goal, or the first action, you want people to accomplish to signify the end of their onboarding.

Be sure to include the actions new users take, wherein the account they do so, and how your team can provide proactive help at each step of the process. When your customers feel comfortable using the product on their own, it helps them get the most out of the relationship.



## The New User Onboarding Map

	Purchase	Account Setup	Access Control Panel	Perform First Action
ACTIVITIES	Complete order via purchase gateway	Add personally identifying info to their account	Click through tutorials and education content	Add an email to their nurture campaign
MOTIVATIONS	Actively address the problems our platform solves	Ensure billing & contact details are correct	Get familiar with how the product actually works	Start getting value from the product
EMOTIONS	Excited to get started	Impatient to start using the product	Surprised at the ease of use	Eager to solve their problem
BARRIERS	No follow through on account confirmation	Asking for too much info early in the relationship	Information overload can decrease engagement	Takes time to complete the task

### 4 The Feature Adoption Journey Map

Rolling out a new product or feature is the culmination of a lot of time and hard work from your team—which is why you need to understand the path customers take to learn and use that new product. The first few days after a release are a leading indicator of overall engagement rates and pivotal to the lasting success of your product. This customer journey map template follows a similar path to new user onboarding as the goal for each process is to spur customers to take action in their account.

Use your [release management](#) plan to highlight the new product’s value and walk through the steps people need to take to find that value as quickly as possible. You mustn’t leave any of this to chance since the longer it takes to find value in your product, the less likely it will be that consumers will use it.

## The Feature Adoption Journey Map

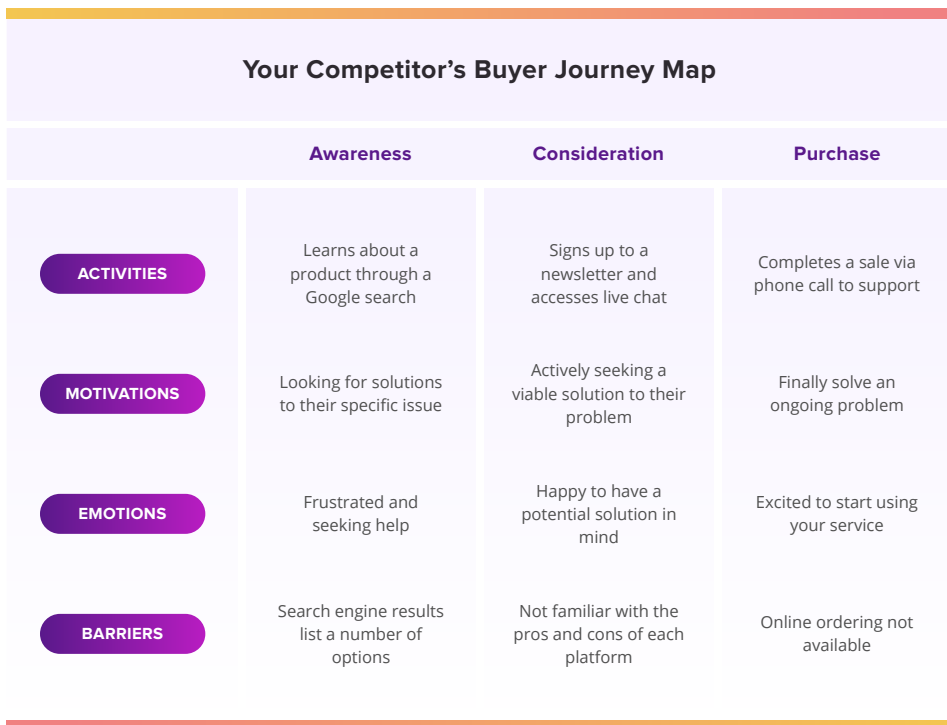
	User Testing	Release Day	First Week	Second Week
ACTIVITIES	Complete order via purchase gateway	Add personally identifying info to their account	Click through tutorials and education content	Add an email to their nurture campaign
MOTIVATIONS	Actively address the problems our platform solves	Ensure billing & contact details are correct	Get familiar with how the product actually works	Start getting value from the product
EMOTIONS	Invested in the success of the product	Impatient to start using the product	Surprised at the ease of use	Eager to solve their problem
BARRIERS	No follow through on account confirmation	Asking for too much info early in the relationship	Information overload can decrease engagement	Takes time to complete the task

Your feature adoption journey map should include release announcements, beta testing, testimonial outreach, and follow-up emails. Understanding the path users take, from learning about your product to using it and recommending it to their peers, helps you provide value at each step along the way.

### 5 Your Competitor’s Buyer Journey Map

To be truly effective with your positioning, you need to understand how competitors attract, convert, and retain their customers. This insight helps you build a better picture of your market and customer expectations. Use competitor analysis to show each member of your team how other players in your industry think about acquiring new business. Then document that process for your team.

The easiest way to understand more about this journey is to sign up for their marketing campaigns and a free trial account. Doing so provides a firsthand experience with your competitor’s content, which you can use to make smarter decisions about your positioning.



Notice how this customer journey map template is structured similarly to your own buyer’s journey, and that’s by design. When you can cross-reference the potential customer’s experience at each stage of your competitor’s sales process, that helps to nail down exactly how that differs from your own experience. With that knowledge, it’s easy to bypass potential issues and sync up with customer expectations.

## 6 The Lead Nurture Journey Map

Like our sales funnel example from earlier, the lead nurture map exists in tandem with your overall buyer's journey. Used alongside its counterparts, the lead nurture map helps you track the impact of various campaigns on potential customers who have subscribed to your distribution lists.

Visualizing the lead nurture experience helps you see the way marketing educates customers about the value of your product. And it helps you provide more relevant and personalized information to users as they move through each campaign. The modern online buying experience spans so many touchpoints across different channels, so you need to understand how they all work together.


The Lead Nurture Journey Map				
	Sign Up	1st Message	2nd Message	3rd Message
ACTIVITIES	Enter their first name & email into a form	Learn more about the product & how it's valuable	Dive deeper into their unique needs	Engage with customer case studies & testimonials
MOTIVATIONS	Learn more about the product & company	Gain a baseline understanding of the product	See how the product solves their unique issue	See proof of the products' efficacy
EMOTIONS	Curious about solving their problem	Invested in learning more	Happy to see the solution fits their needs	Excited to solve their problems
BARRIERS	Perceived value of signing up is low	Need to provide immediate solutions to a problem	Information overload can decrease engagement	Lack of engagement with an ongoing series

Make sure to include each channel people interact with, how those channels play off one another, and how it all combines to move leads toward your desired goal. That ensures you have clarity into what kind of messaging has the most potential to convert these leads into paying customers.

## 7 The Day-In-The-Life Journey Map

Visualizing both the product and marketing experience helps you gain a clear understanding of the relationship between your customer and your company. But to truly connect with customers' needs, you also need to see how your product or service fits into their daily lives. Mapping out this information not only helps you refine your understanding of certain customer personas but also helps you communicate the value of your product more effectively.

The Day-In-The-Life Journey Map				
	Morning	Before Lunch	After Lunch	Dinner
ACTIVITIES	Make coffee, read email, & open Slack	Work through multiple followups with a client	Email their project manager about delays	Wrap up outstanding emails
MOTIVATIONS	Prioritize the work that needs to be done	To resolve an ongoing issue with their workflow management tool	Get buy-in for researching a new tool	Make sure they're not delaying the project further
EMOTIONS	Excited to get a few tasks off their plate	Frustrated at their inability to get work done efficiently	Tired of having to deal with ongoing workflow issues	Excited to quit work & spend time with family
BARRIERS	Getting the kids to school on time	Their workflow management tool isn't easy to use	Lack of buy-in from their team	Ongoing issues that need to be resolved ASAP



The day-in-the-life customer journey map is more about understanding what drives potential customers to seek out your product. It's a way to build empathy with their problems and position your product as a solution. Be sure to create a different map for each of your target personas.

When you use this template, make sure to include specific actions people take throughout the day, as well as what drives those actions. The best way to suss out these motivations is through a discovery or usability interview. Speaking directly to your customers in this way ensures that you're not extrapolating too much—which keeps your day-in-the-life map grounded in reality.

### **Customer Journey Maps Build Understanding Across Your Team**

Using a customer journey map template solidifies your understanding of the customer experience faster, without sacrificing too much of your time. Every member of your team can engage with these journeys on a deeper level and connect with the customer's underlying needs and desired outcomes. With that knowledge, building products that are truly valuable is simple.