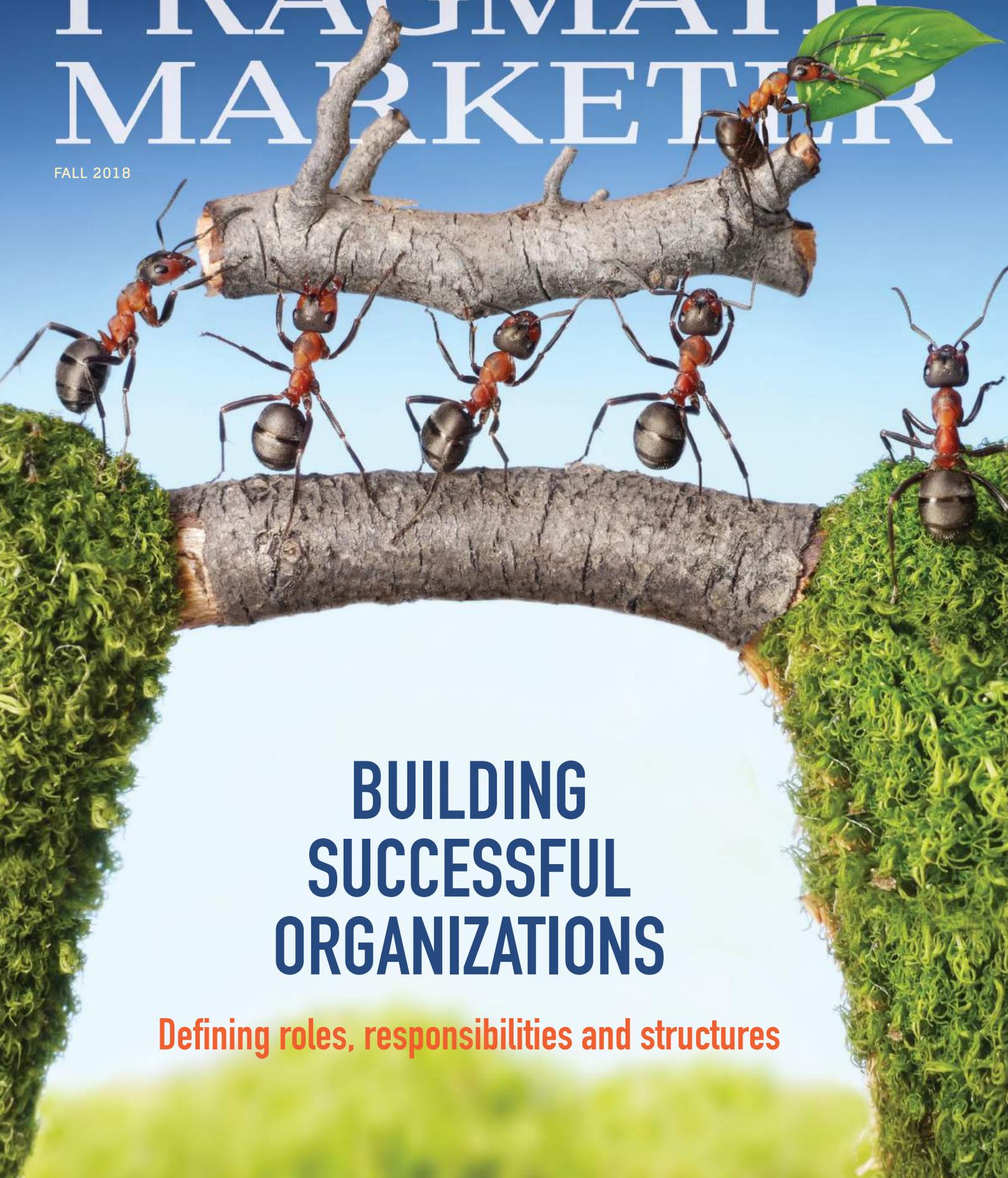


THE PRODUCT MANAGEMENT AND MARKETING AUTHORITY

# PRAGMATIC MARKETER

FALL 2018



## BUILDING SUCCESSFUL ORGANIZATIONS

Defining roles, responsibilities and structures

## WELCOME

Perhaps you're wondering, why are there ants on the cover of an issue about building successful organizations?

Simple. Ants are one of nature's best examples of successful teams.

For example, the leaf-cutter ants of the Amazon rainforest have roles so clearly defined that some are soldiers, others are leaf-cutters and still others are QA (ensuring the leaf-cutters cut to just the right side).

And then there are the fire ants whose Amazon habitat floods for two months of the year. How do they survive? By joining together, interlocking legs and turning themselves into an unsinkable raft (no single ant alone could survive those floods).

In fact, ants form such successful teams that they are classified as a superorganism, meaning ants work so well together that the collective group functions as a single organism unto itself.

Imagine how powerful your team would be, how much it could accomplish, if it were as strong as the tiny ant.

That's the topic we're digging into in this issue of *Pragmatic Marketer*: how to build strong organizations through clear structure and defined roles and responsibilities. We start with a look at where to place product roles from Mark LaScola of ON THE MARK, a leading organizational design consultancy, and what the product marketing role really is with Justin Topliff. Then John Milburn, Steve Hardwick and Andrea Fryrear talk best practices for agile organizations. All of this, plus some great articles in our departments, add up to an issue chock full of information to help you and your team.

Happy reading,



Rebecca Kalogeris  
Editorial Director  
editor@pragmaticmarketing.com

P.S. Wondering how I know so much about ants and their amazing teamwork? Check out this great keynote from our instructor Kirsten Butzow.  
[pragmaticmarketing.com/ants](http://pragmaticmarketing.com/ants)



# PRAGMATIC MARKETER

THE PRODUCT MANAGEMENT  
AND MARKETING AUTHORITY

## CEO

Philip Alexander

## EDITORIAL DIRECTOR

Rebecca Kalogeris

## EDITOR

Lisa Sorg-Friedman

## ART DIRECTOR

Norman Wong

## SPECIAL PROJECTS

Sarah Mitchell

*Pragmatic Marketer*™

8960 E. Raintree Drive, Scottsdale, AZ 85260

Interested in contributing an article?

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Since 1993, Pragmatic Marketing has conducted product management and marketing training for 8,000 companies on six continents. Our team of thought leaders produces blogs, webinars, podcasts and publications that product professionals around the world turn to for industry insights.



# BUILDING SUCCESSFUL ORGANIZATIONS

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# Philip Alexander

## CEO of Pragmatic Marketing



To celebrate Pragmatic Marketing's 25th anniversary, we sat down with our new CEO, Philip Alexander, to talk about his vision for the company's future. Prior to joining Pragmatic Marketing, Phil spent more than two decades on the front lines of senior-level and international marketing. In 2000 he founded BrandMuscle Inc. in a Boston incubator, and grew the media and branding platform into a \$100+ million marketing services company.

**Q:** What were your first impressions of Pragmatic Marketing?

**A:** Prior to joining Pragmatic Marketing, I had heard rave reviews about what the company offered. Upon joining, I set out to understand the reasons for those reviews by following what we preach: NIHITO (nothing important happens in the office) visits. Experiencing the training and hearing attendees talk about how Pragmatic Marketing changed their lives, as well as the trajectory of their careers, made me realize that what we do is extremely important and meaningful. There's a reason why we have so many adherents to the Pragmatic Marketing Framework!

Today, careers in product management and product marketing are highly desired. They are also highly demanding roles. However, the number of product managers or product marketers in an organization is still relatively small compared with other functions. For example, the ratio of product managers to engineers is typically one product manager to seven engineers. Obviously, there is a great need and opportunity for well-trained product professionals. And no one fills that role better than Pragmatic Marketing.

**We have to do everything we can to ensure that our attendees absorb the material and understand how to implement it.**

**Q:** What is the company's vision for fostering customer success?

**A:** Pragmatic Marketing will continue to focus on delivering practical and actionable product management and marketing training to product teams responsible for the successful development and sale of new products and services.

Our goal is to provide product leaders with all the learning and tools they need to ensure success within their organizations and in the market. We have to do everything we can to ensure that our attendees absorb the material and understand how to implement it to be successful. If you attend a top business school, you expect to do better in your career. People have that same expectation when they attend Pragmatic Marketing training.

**Q:** Are there plans for additional international expansion?

**A:** We have successfully expanded to India, Australia and multiple countries in Western Europe. International expansion will continue to be driven by attendee and employer demand. For example, in December we will begin offering classes in Tel Aviv.

**Q:** What are some of the tools and solutions on the horizon?

**A:** While nothing can replace the classroom learning that students receive from our instructors, we recognize that a lot of learning today is done online. We want our students to be



**We intend to deliver more online curriculum geared toward working professionals that is convenient for after-work learning.**

able to access a new course, a refresher, a tutorial or a deeper dive on a topic on their own schedule. We intend to deliver more online curriculum geared toward working professionals that is convenient for after-work learning.

**Q:** Why is this investment in new products so critical?

**A:** Technology is advancing rapidly, and our content needs to be constantly refreshed to be relevant. New modes of delivery must be offered to an increasingly time-pressed and mobile audience. Employers use our training for new employees, those transferring into new product management roles, and to enhance the skills of existing managers. We must ensure that we meet the evolving needs of the companies that need the best in product management and marketing training. It's not a big surprise that today there are hundreds of open positions that say, "Pragmatic Marketing certified preferred." **PM**

TRAVEL TIPS FOR ROAD WARRIORS

# Phoenix Rising

Phoenix anchors a sprawling multicity metropolitan area known as the Valley of the Sun. It's not only Arizona's capital but also the state's largest city, renowned for its year-round sunshine and warm weather. The name stems from a suggestion that, similar to the mythical Phoenix rising from the ashes, a new city would emerge from the ruins of the prehistoric Hohokam tribe.

**FUN FACT:**  
Phoenix is home to the U.S.'s only known feral population of rosy-faced lovebirds, natives of southwestern Africa.



**Taliesin West**

[frankloydwright.org/taliesin-west](http://frankloydwright.org/taliesin-west)

This was the winter home of architect Frank Lloyd Wright from 1937 until his death in 1959. Today it is the main campus of the School of Architecture at Taliesin and houses the Frank Lloyd Wright Foundation. Tours are available.

**Cactus League Spring Training**

[cactusleague.com](http://cactusleague.com)

If you're a baseball fan visiting Phoenix this spring, be sure to check out a Cactus League spring training game. The league boasts 15 teams that play at 10 stadiums across the Valley, so there's a good chance you'll find a game to watch.



**Barrio Café** | [barriocafe.com](http://barriocafe.com)

Chef Silvana Salcido Esparza's upscale versions of regional Mexican favorites are nationally recognized as some of the city's best. The guacamole prepared tableside is not to be missed.

**Phoenix Mountains Preserve**

[phoenix.gov/parks/trails/locations](http://phoenix.gov/parks/trails/locations)

With more than 41,000 acres in the park system, 200 miles of trails and 41 trailheads, you can take a leisurely stroll or an energetic hike or hop on a mountain bike and pedal.

**Heard Museum** | [heard.org](http://heard.org)

Since its inception in 1929, the Heard has matured into one of the world's finest destinations for learning about American Indian arts and cultures.

**Desert Botanical Garden** | [dbg.org](http://dbg.org)

The 140-acre garden features the world's finest collection of plants from deserts around the world.



**Phoenix South Mountain Park**  
[phoenix.gov/parks/trails/locations/south-mountain](http://phoenix.gov/parks/trails/locations/south-mountain)

Almost 20 times larger than New York City's Central Park, at 16,000 acres this is one of the nation's largest city parks. With more than 51 miles of trails, it's perfect for hiking, horseback riding or mountain biking.

**Quiessence at the Farm (at South Mountain)** | [qatthefarm.com](http://qatthefarm.com)

Billed as Arizona's original farm-to-table dining experience, the restaurant is nestled in a historic home at the back of The Farm at South Mountain. It's an ideal location for celebrating a special event.

**Arizona Biltmore Hotel**  
[arizonabiltmore.com](http://arizonabiltmore.com)

Built in 1929, this Phoenix landmark is heavily influenced by Frank Lloyd Wright's architectural style. Visit the Wright Bar to taste the original Tequila Sunrise recipe (created here in the 1930s or '40s); it won't disappoint.

**Bitter & Twisted Cocktail Parlour**  
[bitterandtwistedaz.com](http://bitterandtwistedaz.com)

Located inside the former Arizona Prohibition headquarters, Bitter & Twisted boasts a sophisticated collection of new and classic drinks and innovative bar bites. Yes, you could drop by for a beer or glass of wine, but why would you?

**Four Peaks Brewing Co.** | [fourpeaks.com](http://fourpeaks.com)

Founded in 1996, Four Peaks has grown into a nationally recognized brewery (and was acquired by Anheuser-Busch) thanks in large part to their flagship beer: Kilt Lifter. The original location remains housed in a 100-year-old former creamery and ice factory and includes a restaurant.

**Musical Instrument Museum** | [mim.org](http://mim.org)

Known as "the MIM," the museum has collected more than 13,600 musical instruments and associated objects from approximately 200 countries. The oldest instrument is a paigu (goblet drum) that dates back to China's Neolithic period.



**Hot Air Expeditions**  
[hotairexpeditions.com](http://hotairexpeditions.com)

Get a bird's-eye view of the Sonoran Desert when you take hot-air balloon ride.

**Grand Canyon**  
[nps.gov/grca/playourvisit/index.htm](http://nps.gov/grca/playourvisit/index.htm)

The Colorado River established its course through the canyon about 6 million years ago, and there's a reason more than 6.25 million people visited last year: It is spectacular. If you can swing the eight-hour round-trip, just do it.

## How to Fail at Business While Really Trying



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**Q:** How do I get company buy-in on the good, better, best approach to pricing?

**A:**

**FIRST, HOW DO YOU** get company buy-in on anything?

Step 1: Tie it to your company's stated goals. You should know those goals exceptionally well and be able to show how your new initiatives help the company achieve them. Whenever you talk about *anything*, remind the listener how it will help the company reach those goals.

Step 2: Talk to one person at a time. Spend your time working one-on-one with as many people and departments as possible. Learn their individual goals and pain points. Determine how your initiative helps each one. Eventually, when you get an audience with the CEO, you will have the support of many backers.



Mark Stving, Instructor  
Pragmatic Marketing

Now, how do you specifically get buy-in on good, better, best (GBB) pricing? The best answer: Build a business case. How much additional revenue will a GBB offering contribute? To answer this you have to determine and measure where the additional revenue will come from. Why do you think GBB is the right answer for your company?

For instance, let's assume that you think your price list is too complex and it should be simplified with GBB. Complex price lists often result in customers who either don't buy or buy from the competition because they are confused by your pricing. You need to quantify this. Start with win/loss, especially losses.

You are looking for evidence that customers didn't understand what you were offering. After they tell you why they didn't buy, present your GBB offering and ask if it would have made a difference in their decision. Once you detect a pattern, identify the right questions to ask and do some quantitative research.

Finally, collect anecdotal stories to go along with your data. Although executives love data, they are also swayed by good stories. Your conversation with your CEO should go something like this: "Our research shows that we lost about 30 deals last year because our price list is too complex. For example, Joe at Acme Corp. said ..."

Convincing a company of anything is hard. However, when you are confident that it is the right thing for your company, it takes a strategy, a plan of attack and diligent effort. It may be hard, but it's definitely worth it. **PM**



Although executives love data, they are also swayed by good stories.



Do you have a question for our experts? Send us an email at [experts@pragmaticmarketing.com](mailto:experts@pragmaticmarketing.com).



# It Depends:

BY MARK LASCOLA

## Determining the Best Location for Product Jobs

**YOU HAVE A DECISION TO MAKE:** where to locate product management and product marketing jobs in your structure. Which team and department will be the best location on the organizational chart? To answer that question, you first must understand what truly makes up structure.

Most leaders think structure is synonymous with an org chart. This is completely wrong. An org chart is a management tool that tells you who reports to whom, the number of employees and layers in a business, and nothing more. It is not structure.

### WHAT STRUCTURE IS

Structure is made up of six critical elements that, when combined, determine what work will be done, where and by whom, the location of power in the business, the fundamental shape and how it all sticks together. Structure consists of the following:

1. Work in boundaries
2. Departmentalization
3. Specialization
4. Shape
5. Distribution of power
6. Integrating and coordinating mechanisms

This article will focus on four of the elements: work in boundaries, departmentalization, specialization, and integrating and coordinating mechanisms, as they are key in determining the structural location, role and job within a business.

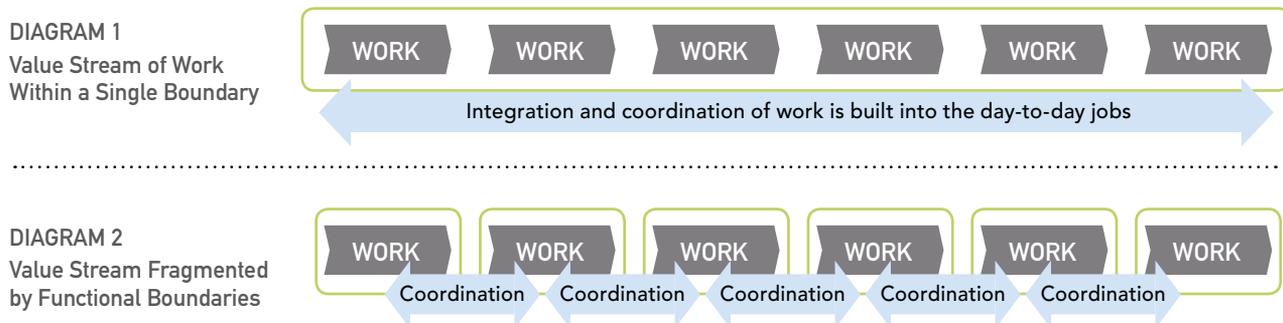
### WORK IN BOUNDARIES

Bounding or grouping work together is the DNA for structure in any business. Most leaders completely miss this step, seduced instead into focusing on people over more fundamental and core decisions. But this is THE most critical part of structure. If this step is missed then you've missed the boat, because this is

where real change happens. The wisdoms here are twofold: First and foremost, it's all about the work that creates real value for the customer. The second important wisdom is, "We don't care about jobs or people." While it sounds insensitive, it is key. Skipping this step and not applying these wisdoms is in fact one of the main reasons a business can make lots of superficial change without ever changing.

As you bound work, remember the more boundaries that are put around the end-to-end value stream, the more fragmented the value stream becomes. This in turn drives significant costs into your operating model. These costs are driven by overspecialization of jobs, compounded by the increased need to coordinate and integrate work across all the boundaries. It is quite common to find people spending more time and effort in coordinating/integrating meetings than doing real work.

The following diagrams illustrate how the insertion of departmental boundaries fragments an end-to-end value stream and exponentially increases the need for integration and coordination of work.



ON THE MARK conservatively estimates that additional costs resulting from value-stream fragmentation range from 10 to 25 percent of current operating costs.

So, the first thing you must consider to address the structural location of a product marketing or product manager job is where the work resides and in which boundary.

### DEPARTMENTALIZATION

Departmentalization is a decision about how to organize people *around* work within the boundaries. It is one of the more significant decisions and must directly align and reinforce your business strategy and competitive difference. While there are a variety of ways to departmentalize, leaders tend to default to functional departmentalization because it's the only thing they know. The six departmentalization choices are shown in the chart.

DEPARTMENTALIZATION CHOICE	ADVANTAGES	DISADVANTAGES
1. Functional	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Builds expertise</li> <li>- Easier to manage people</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Creates silos</li> <li>- Significantly fragments the end-to-end value stream</li> <li>- Costs driven into the business by significant time and effort to counter silos</li> <li>- Customer gets lost</li> </ul>
2. Product	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Focuses on a single product</li> <li>- Control of resources</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Hoards resources; difficult to extract resources to share</li> <li>- Center-of-the-universe thinking</li> <li>- Customer must navigate across product lines</li> </ul>
3. Customer (ecosystem and channels)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Segmentation of customer types to drive intimacy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Fighting over customers who cross over segments</li> <li>- Requires strong integration across segments</li> </ul>
4. Geography	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Local knowledge and presence</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Expensive brick-and-mortar investment</li> <li>- Each geographic location does things its own way</li> </ul>
5. Horizontal/ process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Organized around end-to-end value stream</li> <li>- Speed and cost savings</li> <li>- Drives empowerment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Requires a different way of managing people, compared with traditional ways of management</li> </ul>
6. Hybrid	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Combines of any of the above choices</li> </ul>	



The good news is that each disadvantage can be mitigated by implementing other roles, mechanisms and processes.

Each departmentalization choice described in the chart fits better with different competitive positions. Case in point: Apple competes mostly on a product leadership competitive difference. To gain and keep its competitive advantage, Apple maintains deep expertise in various technology areas such as screens, cameras, memory, etc. Its teams are most likely functionally organized to cultivate and innovate this deep expertise. On the other hand, consider a luxury retailer focused on its competitive difference of customer intimacy. Here the commercial-facing part of the business may be organized around a kind of customer segmentation.

The structural location of product jobs will differ depending on the departmentalization choice you make overall as an organization. For example, in a functionally organized business, this job might reside in the marketing department. However, in a customer-organized business, it might be located in a customer-facing segment because that's where the work is done. Remember, it should always be about the work to be done, the boundaries placed around that work and the departmentalization choice.

### SPECIALIZATION

Many businesses are overspecialized: They hire one person to do a job that only that person can do. The consequence is that progressing work will be based entirely on that one person's productivity and performance. Imagine what happens when they go on vacation!

A viable alternative to one person/one job is to organize multi-functioning units and teams around whole work. This setup ensures that no one focuses only on their specialty. Instead, team members cross-train each other, which allows them to more effectively cope with the ebb and flow of work demand.

Consider what happens when you have a product specialist located in a functionally organized business, especially when they are working at peak demand. Now, consider the responsiveness possible with a cross-functional team that has deep product knowledge combined with other skills.

### INTEGRATING AND COORDINATING MECHANISMS

In any operating model, it is normal to separate work and people into specialties, functions and departments. Each time a unit or department is put in place, it should be glued to other units, especially when work and decisions are interdependent. These integrating and coordinating mechanisms can be a combination of meetings, processes, procedures, governance, measures, technologies and roles that are implemented to

lubricate and glue work, people and decisions together across the value stream.

There are two types of glue: vertical and horizontal. Vertical glue connects strategy to day-to-day operations, ensuring a common focus and alignment. Horizontal glue connects customer needs with the consistent and accurate delivery of results, including work, people, decisions and units along the end-to-end value stream. Both are necessary to make a business work.

Failing to use appropriate glue will open up a business to significant risks, including:

- Errors and waste across the value stream, resulting in poor-quality outputs to the customer
- Rework and workarounds, resulting in increased cost and cycle times
- Cross-boundary conflict and finger-pointing associated with roles and responsibilities
- Escalating issues to management rather than resolving them where the work is done

Of course, the product group will always want to own its resources, but in the absence of having the product marketer or manager report directly to the product line, an alternative is

to ensure that most of their objectives and performance reviews are based on the product line performance they support. Another option is to physically co-locate them with the product line they represent so they sit with that product team and participate in their meetings. Finally, you can provide a dotted-line reporting relationship with the product leader. Each of these actions will provide lubricant and glue to ensure that cross-boundary jobs are appropriately aligned.



Many businesses are overspecialized: They hire one person to do a job that only that person can do.

### IN CLOSING

In the end, determining the structural location of any job depends on the business's strategy and competitive difference. It's important to focus on the core work—and the boundaries around that work—that creates value for the customer. In addition, the departmentalization choices must directly align with the competitive advantage. Finally, consider the degree of specialization that works best for your business. Regardless of the structural location you choose, make sure to apply sufficient lubricant and glue to those boundaries. Following these steps will help you determine the optimal structural location of any job. **PM**

### About the Author

Mark LaScola is the founder and managing principal of ON THE MARK, the leading global boutique consultancy offering practical, collaborative organization design solutions to modernize operating models. With over 400 redesigns completed cross-industry and on five continents, the company offers C-level executives a proven and reliable alternative to modernizing operating models based on the engagement of real people from start to finish. Send your comments and questions to Mark at [mlascola@on-the-mark.com](mailto:mlascola@on-the-mark.com).



# DEFINING <sup>THE</sup> ROLE OF PRODUCT MARKETING

BY JUSTIN TOPLIFF

**I F I'VE LEARNED ONE THING AFTER SPENDING** almost a decade in product marketing at more than a handful of companies, it's that it looks a little different everywhere you go. I have been a strategic leader and a revenue owner and also, a collateral factory for sales. To paraphrase the Greek philosopher, Heraclitus, the only thing that's constant in product marketing is change itself.

## PRODUCT MARKETING HAS EVOLVED

The role of product marketing has expanded exponentially. You're not just working on product pitches and discussing product value and positioning. You set strategy, oversee revenue drivers and, above all, are masters and evangelists of your market and the customers you serve. In partnership with product management you inform what products to build, and whom to build them for, based on time spent in-market and with customer-facing teams. You also determine how to price those products in partnership with finance and leadership. Finally, you work with sales and marketing to determine how to sell them.

Modern product marketing has become hyper cross-functional. Roles can become blurred and a lot of time is spent building consensus. Yet there's a fine line between building

consensus and falling into what I like to call a tragedy of commons. With so many partnerships, companies are often confused about when, and how, to start their product marketing functions.

## WHEN TO HIRE A PRODUCT MARKETER

The first thing to ask yourself: How big is my company and how complex is the product portfolio? Your assessment will dictate whether you need product marketing in concept (perhaps co-owned by one or several people), an individual product marketer to handle the growing responsibility and tasks, or product marketing as its own function with an entire team attached to it.

To help reinforce whether it's time to incorporate product marketing into your company, look for any of the following red flags: a flopped product launch, broken communication between departments or trouble making decisions across functions. These challenges indicate that your company has scaled to the point where teams have the luxury and ability to focus on their own areas of expertise, rather than wearing multiple hats. The good news is that—sitting at the intersection of the organizational Venn diagram—product marketing can bring everyone back together.

## DEFINE THE ROLE AND ROLL IT OUT

There are three key pillars of product marketing. The first is research: industry research, competitor research, customer research, market landscape, win/loss, etc. Research helps you understand the market in which you operate, as well as the customers you serve and their needs, and it also informs long-term strategy. The second pillar focuses on messaging, positioning and pricing. Once you know what to build—and it's actually built—it's your job to decide how to talk about it, articulate the value to buyers and price it. Finally, the third pillar focuses on product launches and product lifecycle management. It is all about architecting go-to-market strategies, making a splash with the perfect product launch, and optimizing the performance, consumption and profitability of the product over time.

The reaction to these three pillars is often, "Wow, that's a lot!" Yes, yes it is. And that's the double-edged sword. Remember when I said product marketing looks a little different everywhere you go? The global nature of the role, varying growth trajectories of companies, and even culture and internal politics will dictate what the role looks like and which pillars are the focus.

That's why it's important, as you define the product marketing function for your company's current stage of growth, that you create a responsibility matrix to define roles. Who will be responsible for what? Introducing a product marketing function may feel like you're doing what you've always done, but the difference is that you can function at a new depth of expertise and process.

A major mistake that occurs here is a failure to ensure that product and marketing have a shared definition of product marketing. Much of what will fall into product marketing's domain is sand from someone else's sandbox. And if they've used the sand to build (what they think is) a beautiful sandcastle over the years, it's often hard for them to let go. They may dig moats instead.

Another thing to do ahead of time is to create a product roadmap or line of sight into what you're building next; otherwise, your new product marketer will have little to hang on to. You also should have a good understanding of your company's goals over the next few years so that a product marketing roadmap can be developed.

For instance, when I started product marketing from scratch at VTS, I made sure my roadmap aligned with timely company objectives. My first quarter centered around building departmental partnerships and laying operational framework (intranet, product release/launch protocols, etc.). My second quarter focused on messaging, positioning and a pricing audit of our entire product portfolio. My third quarter focused on a packaging and pricing overhaul to improve product sales and profitability. And during my fourth quarter, I merged our product portfolio with that of a company we acquired, helping customers through that transition and repositioning the product platform alongside a corporate rebrand. If you can equip your new hire with both company and product roadmaps, you will provide them with the necessary tools to plan out the product marketing roadmap that supports both.

The following tips will help as you establish the new



product marketing function, and support the success of the person in that role.

## SET UP PRODUCT MARKETING FOR SUCCESS

Product marketing must be given the tools, authority and altitude to succeed. I often see misalignment between what is expected of product marketing and what product marketing is given to work with. I have also lived this nightmare, and know it is an area where executives and hiring managers make critical mistakes. If there is a gap, something needs to change.

Many product marketers, myself included, assume—after reviewing the job description and speaking with recruiters, the CEO and departmental leaders with whom they intend to partner—that they will receive a warm welcome as they establish and champion the product marketing function. They think they will have the authority to create strategies that drive revenue and make decisions on things that fall into product marketing's ownership. They assume that, as promised, they will be able to do their jobs and build out a product marketing team.

However, they soon discover that their role and authority are limited to collateral creation or project management. They have no ownership for, and limited influence over, key product marketing-owned items like product launches, pricing, messaging and positioning, and all the other pieces that come together to form the modern product marketing function.

And yet, despite executing their newfound responsibilities to the best of their ability, others in the organization become upset because deliverables and impact don't meet expectations.



Much of what will fall into product marketing's domain is sand from someone else's sandbox. And if they've used the sand to build (what they think is) a beautiful sandcastle over the years, it's often hard for them to let go. They may dig moats instead.

The problem isn't that their skills prevent them from helping the company reach its strategic or revenue goals; it's that there is a mismatch between expectations and the authority they are given. At the root of the problem: Executives aren't aligned on why product marketing is there, key stakeholders aren't briefed before the role is implemented, and the job is so poorly designed that it is difficult for anyone to succeed.

This situation will be frustrating for everyone, but it's especially disappointing, and ultimately infuriating, for your product marketer. When this situation unfolds, and a product marketer loses confidence, they usually leave the company within a year. Not only will your company lose money on the hire, it will slip back into the swamp of chaos and misalignment you were trying to escape. The good news is that you can prevent this by providing adequate training (certifications like Pragmatic Marketing) for green product marketers, working alongside them, setting an attainable plan and celebrating early wins.

When I consult with companies that experience rough starts or high turnover in product marketing, they often get defensive and blame the new hire. I hear, "It wasn't the right fit" 80 percent of the time. And, they're wrong 80 percent of the time. If you think it's the person without assessing the impact gap—the expectations you've set for them compared with what you've given them and how you've supported them—you're probably wrong. And your next product marketer will either fail or get frustrated and leave, too.

Many companies and executives don't know what a great product marketer looks like. That's okay. Reach out to your

network and talk with companies that have great product marketing departments. Be self-aware, inquisitive and humble. But above all, think hard about what you expect from product marketing and what you're willing to give them.

#### "ROLE" WITH THE PUNCHES

Much of product marketing is ambiguous; great product marketers navigate and thrive on it. Companies that build successful product marketing teams acknowledge this ambiguity even before they create the function or make their first hire. While you may not fully understand what product marketing is, I encourage you to explore and invest sooner than you think is necessary. Make the jump thoughtfully—outline the role, get key stakeholders onboard, and give your hire the tools and authority they need to meet or exceed your expectations. [PM](#)



#### About the Author

Justin Topliff is director of product marketing at CampusLogic and the founder of ProductMarketingSummit.com. He specializes in starting and/or scaling the product marketing function at expansion- and growth-stage companies, alongside VC funding. He previously worked at VTS, Infusionsoft and Tallwave. Contact Justin at [justin.topliff@gmail.com](mailto:justin.topliff@gmail.com).



BY JOHN MILBURN  
AND STEVE HARDWICK

# IMPLEMENTING AGILE BUSINESS PLANNING

**P**RODUCT MANAGEMENT IS RESPONSIBLE FOR documenting market requirements for development and engineering. Best practice prescribes that these market requirements are about who (the persona), what (the problem), when (frequency or event) and why (the overriding goal), but never how (designs or specs).

But what about business requirements? Just as product management articulates the market's requirements to engineering and development, they must also communicate the business rationale so that the organization invests in the most promising projects or products.

## CREATIVITY VS. STANDARDIZATION

Many organizations view business requirements management as more art than science in an effort to encourage lean and agile innovation and out-of-the-box thinking. This works well in smaller organizations such as startups. But even as companies scale, standardization of planning documentation and processes is often not implemented, usually because leadership or the organization fears that too much formalization will encourage bureaucracy and slow them down. Also, with vastly different types of projects, success metrics and planning horizons across a typical organization, many believe that standardized processes do not work.

"Doesn't replacing an aging product architecture vs. building a third-party partnership program demand different types of planning documents and processes?" they think.

Pragmatic Marketing teaches that the market-driven product manager should act like the CEO of their product. Company CEOs know that their investors and boards expect standardized updates and metrics—expenses, revenue, profit, risks and future outlook—to explain the overall value provided by the company and why it is a good investment. Similarly, product managers owe it to their organization to communicate

standardized value-based information, regardless of the project type, to justify new or continued investment. This includes regular reporting on the progress being made against the original committed plan and any adjustments made to the plan due to changing product or market conditions.

## AGILE PLANNING CHALLENGES

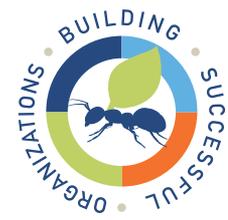
After 12 years as a Pragmatic Marketing instructor and product management consultant, I've identified several key reasons why companies don't effectively develop or manage their business plans and commitments or implement agile and dynamic business-planning processes.

### Lacking the Necessary Skills

Many product managers lack the necessary skills or training to develop quality business-planning data. Though they often have a business degree or have attended professional business-oriented training, concepts like NPV, EBITDA, competitive strategy, segmentation, KPIs and burdened rate are foreign to them. This lack of experience often means they provide their own interpretation of what information is required in a standard corporate template.

### Shifting Focus

The focus of many product lifecycle processes has shifted to product and technology details over business goals and metrics. Backlogs, story mapping, scrums, sprints and demos dominate much more product management time and attention than strategy, roadmaps, KPIs and profit.



### Inadequate Accountability

Historically, business plans have been static artifacts that are required early in the product lifecycle process, and product teams have often viewed their role as selling the plans to the business. Aggressive financial commitments and schedules are made to get projects funded, and the processes lack a closed-loop way to hold the product teams accountable for their commitments. Schedules slip, scope changes and new competitors enter the market, yet the original business objectives are not modified to reflect these changes.

### No Contextual, Fact-Based Documentation

With personnel shifts, promotions and departures, individuals may inherit plans minus the adequate details or context that were the basis for those plans. This lost intellectual property often leaves with the person who developed it. Without contextual, fact-based documentation, the new owners may struggle to understand where the numbers came from and may not have a clue about how the author expected to meet the plan's objectives.

### No Standardized Processes

As organizations scale from lean and nimble startups to multi-product, larger organizations, they often fail to define standardized processes for proposing new projects, or making difficult investment priority decisions. This often results in confusion and erratic priorities and decisions.

### Overworked Teams

Technology teams and management are often overworked, which tends to result in being more reactionary to crises—the unhappy and loud customer, the product defect, the budget cut, the organizational change—than strategic. Reviewing previously agreed-to business commitments is not usually a top leadership priority, and this often results in major surprises that would have been avoided had they been visible earlier.

### Relying on Limited Metrics

Many companies rely on a limited number of standard metrics across all products to gauge success. With a broad range of products across different types of markets, standard metrics usually don't provide an accurate or fair view of the health of a product's value. For example, the return on investment may be less important than the net promoter score for existing products, whereas net present value may not be an accurate way to measure an innovative, thought-leadership offering.

## MOVING TO AGILE BUSINESS PLANNING

Moving to a dynamic, agile business-planning process follows specific stages, depending on the level of an organization's planning maturity. By assessing the current state, organizations can implement the right improvements to fit their specific gaps. We find that most product organizations today tend to fit into one of three stages:

**Ad hoc:** No formal plans or processes have been established, and most planning is reactive or on-demand. As a first step,

we recommend a lightweight but standardized planning template to establish consistency between the products and teams. It is important to encourage innovation and agility, but management also needs a standardized way to regularly evaluate multiple investments; common (yet flexible) templates makes this much easier.

**Repeatable:** Formal processes and planning documents exist, but they are manually developed, non-standard and quickly become out of date. To address this, companies look to automated tools that product managers can use to share their plans and keep data current.

**Managed:** Standardized plans are regularly reviewed and updated, and product management is held accountable for business commitments and metrics. To achieve this level of maturity, organizations must instill discipline and rigor in how they review and hold teams accountable for their plans. Ideally, managers use automated reporting and analytics based on their teams' plans that can provide an on-demand snapshot of the overall state of the business.



Dynamic and agile business planning is an area that needs improvement in most technology companies we work with today. Though no one wants to take a big step back to the monolithic days of waterfall development and heavyweight documents and processes, we still need to think of our products like businesses and manage them as such. Business-requirements management is not sexy or fun; it's not about burndowns, sprints, pigs and chickens, or even closing the next deal. But, being a CEO—whether for the company or the product—demands effective planning and management that keeps pace with the dynamic nature of the business. [PM](#)

### About the Authors

**John Milburn** is CEO of Practical Growth Strategies, LLC, where he and his team help companies to apply and implement market-driven principles. Prior to this, he was an instructor at Pragmatic Marketing for 10 years and has held executive and individual contributor roles in development, sales and product management for startups and Fortune 100 companies. Email John at [jmilburn@practicalgrowthstrategies.com](mailto:jmilburn@practicalgrowthstrategies.com), or visit his website at [practicalgrowthstrategies.com](http://practicalgrowthstrategies.com).

**Steve Hardwick** has over 12 years of experience bringing technology products to market and a skill set that spans everything from collecting market requirements to delivering technology solutions. He has worked at a range of software, hardware and semiconductor organizations, including at large companies like Dell and Siemens, and small successful startups in three countries. Steve has a B.S. from the University of Manchester, England; has authored *ISDN Design: A Practical Approach*; and has published many articles, white papers and webinars. Email Steve at [shardwick@practicalgrowthstrategies.com](mailto:shardwick@practicalgrowthstrategies.com).

# DESIGNING AN AGILE MARKETING ORGANIZATION

## Roles, Responsibilities and Restructuring

BY ANDREA FRYREAR

**EXECUTIVES AND MANAGEMENT IN TRADITIONAL MARKETING** organizations see themselves as chess masters. They move pieces on a board—more personalization here, attack lagging lead generation here, support sales with additional pieces there—in accordance with a long-term strategy that only they can (and should) understand.

Such command-and-control leaders establish a plan and follow it to the letter, and they're not interested in feedback from the front lines. Though effective in a stable, predictable environment, the most remarkable thing about these organizations in a modern, volatile environment is their plodding pace.

To keep up, marketing leaders must start to act like gardeners cultivating an innovative, creative, rapidly evolving environment, rather than chess players manipulating a collection of finite resources. Only this shift in mindset will allow us to enjoy the fruits of agile marketing, including faster campaign delivery, better marketing ROI, happier employees and improved alignment with business objectives (among many others).

Of course, no thriving garden ever happens by accident. From seed selection and placement to watering schedules and pest control, gardeners need to handle tons of variables. Agile marketing organizations are no different: They require deliberate planning and careful execution to produce a fruitful harvest.

### CREATING FERTILE GROUND

First and foremost, agile marketing departments need to be planted in the right soil. In other words, each member of the department (and their leadership) needs to share a similar mindset.

For most groups, the easiest place to start is a grounding in the agile values and principles outlined in the Agile Manifesto. Others may want to spend time adapting and translating these guidelines to suit their own unique vision. The exact composition of the soil isn't important; what's key is that it's consistent throughout the entire space. Every marketer and leader should be able to articulate the reasons why things are changing, and how those changes are going to be rolled out.

This shared mindset is what will support a variety of different day-to-day practices across groups. Everyone understands the *why* behind activities because they know the ultimate objective those activities are trying to achieve.

Second, we need to plant the right seeds in this fertile ground. No matter what sort of organization you're in, the customer should be the seed from which all agile marketing teams spring.





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One of the first ways to improve team function is to eliminate excessive hierarchy,

This customer-centricity helps us eliminate unhelpful silos that produce disjointed messaging and poor customer experiences. It also provides a means of destroying the unhelpful practice of organizing departments exclusively around projects (and their managers). Instead, we design groups to deliver outstanding value to customers in a very specific way, such as creating a team that focuses only on a single persona, or one that handles all points of contact before a prospect becomes a customer.

#### **GUIDING INDIVIDUALS WITH CLEAR ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

To be their most effective, agile leaders must study their teams, engage with them and support them. Ultimately, their goal is to become an expert on each team in their department, while providing guidance to individual marketers.

One of the first ways to improve team function is to eliminate excessive hierarchy, which typically manifests as a cumbersome review and approval process. Agility will stifle quickly if teams are still required

to get each piece of work approved by multiple leaders at every stage. Move decision-making as close to the work as possible, allowing individual contributors to make choices whenever it's safe.

In places where individual decision-making doesn't yet feel safe, figure out how to create conditions where it will be possible. Training, pairing, documentation—do what it takes to empower people close to the customer to serve them better. Don't stick with your existing approval process simply because "that's how things are done around here."

Of course, just because teams are more autonomous doesn't mean that leadership can (or should) be entirely abolished. It just takes different forms.

Marketing directors, for instance, should become the owners of what the teams are expected to tackle. They deliver backlogs—prioritized lists of upcoming work—to the teams, but then they allow the teams to determine how they will deliver on those expectations. This partnership requires open lines of communication and clarity of purpose, otherwise neither group can perform its role well.

Setting up agile teams and creating new roles may be

intimidating, but remember that high-performing teams, whether in agile marketing or elsewhere, require only three things: autonomy, mastery and purpose. Allow them autonomy over their work, provide paths towards becoming masters of their craft and ensure they feel connected to a larger purpose, and your garden will have the guardrails it needs to get growing.

### GROWING YOUR AGILE MARKETING GARDEN

As more parts of your garden begin to transform, you need to start supporting it at a different level. In essence, you'll need multiple gardeners who are responsible for different sections, yet are still working as a cohesive unit.

For agile marketing transformations, this means we need a formal group responsible for making the switch successful. You can call it what you like, but the simplest name may be the transformation team. This group has its own prioritized transformation backlog, and it's committed and empowered to remove any large-scale impediments that individual teams aren't able to tackle on their own. (Any department larger than 15 marketers will benefit from setting up a transformation team.)

The team should also draft a clear plan for education and piloting, and share it across the entire department. Marketers who aren't part of the initial agile efforts often feel excluded, so having a documented approach with a tentative timeline can help them wait for their turn.

Finally, the transformation team should have a firm commitment to a "nail it before you scale it" policy. Essentially, this means early pilot teams need to be operating at a high level before new teams are rolled out. Small problems can explode at scale, so there needs to be plenty of time and opportunity to address these issues before attempting a rapid scaling approach.

There should also be a person who's explicitly responsible for the success of agile inside the marketing organization. Often called the agile lead, this person facilitates meetings, provides agile expertise, and coaches multiple teams to help them successfully transition to these new ways of working. (If you're looking for something for your former project managers to do, with a little training this may be the perfect spot for them.)

### GARDENS ARE FOREVER

Gardening is not a short-term commitment. You can't spend a single weekend haphazardly working on a space and expect it to magically bear fruit.

Adopting an agile approach to marketing, likewise, won't happen overnight; it requires ongoing attention and deliberate action. But if you take time to prepare the soil, provide stable structure, and give it room to expand, you'll have an agile marketing garden whose innovation, productivity and success can feed a growing business for years to come. [PM](#)



High-performing teams require only three things: autonomy, mastery and purpose.

### About the Author

**Andrea Fryrear** is president and lead trainer for the agile marketing consultancy AgileSherpas, where she loves helping teams evolve from chaos to high performance. In addition to being trained as a scrum master and product owner, Andrea is a certified professional in agile coaching and a certified agile leader. She shares her findings (and failures) regularly from stages around the world as an international speaker on all things agile marketing. Her most recent book, *Death of a Marketer*, chronicles marketing's troubled past and charts a course to a more agile future for the profession. She'll talk agile any time via [Andrea@AgileSherpas.com](mailto:Andrea@AgileSherpas.com).

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# Maybe We Should Be PROBLEM MANAGERS

BY STEVE JOHNSON

**H**ERE'S A FUNDAMENTAL QUESTION: Should product managers own the problem or should they own the solution?

According to a recent TechValidate survey, 49 percent of the respondents said they took Pragmatic Marketing training because of unclear roles and responsibilities. Many people continue to describe product managers as the "glue between departments" or "everything development doesn't want to do." One company refers to product management as "Wikipedia for the product."

These are organizations that view product management as a support role for development, marketing and sales teams.

## Product Support Isn't Product Management

If you ask people from development, sales and marketing what product management's responsibilities should be, chances are you'll get three different answers. For example, developers might say product management should provide market expertise in real time, whereas sales teams might rely on product management's domain expertise to help close more deals. Meanwhile, marketers might prefer that product management use their product expertise to create articles and blog posts, speak on podcasts and at conferences, or write prose for the website.

But when I talk to executives, they expect product managers to be business leaders of the product. Not support for development. Not Wikipedia for salespeople. Not the content factory for marketing.

Marty Cagan, author of *Inspired: How to Create Tech Products Customers Love*, wrote: "Countless people with the title product manager or product owner are not doing the job their company needs them to do."

What is that job? Finding, filtering and prioritizing problems.

It's why product managers visit prospects. Not to help close deals or demo the product, but to listen for problems, capture how potential clients talk about their challenges and refine their product positioning.

It's also why product managers analyze wins and losses; they interview recent buyers and identify problems in how their products are marketed and sold.

And it's why they visit existing customers: They want to interview and observe real people doing real work that helps them identify real problems they can solve.

That's why *Market Problems* is the first box in the Pragmatic Marketing Framework.





## Problems Drive Solutions

Let me illustrate. From interviews and observation, the product team learns about unsolved problems. Then they can sit down with development to discuss each specific problem and solicit ideas for solving it. This discussion should lead to further clarification of the problem and business rules around that problem, which then becomes the product team's acceptance criteria.

Similarly, a product manager interviewed a few recent buyers and learned that they were all confused about product pricing—specifically, which items were included and which were options. If this product manager had been involved in those sales events, she could have addressed their confusion individually with each customer and resolved the problem for a few accounts. However, it wasn't just one sales scenario with a single customer, it was all salespeople and all customers.

This problem-oriented product manager identified a systemwide communication problem. She sat down with her marketing counterpart and shared the analysis results. The marketing manager identified a few possible solutions: a one-page pricing summary, a product configuration worksheet, an additional slide in the sales deck.

In this scenario, the product manager was expert on the problem; the marketing manager was expert on the solution.

Does this scenario sound familiar? It should. It's the same method used when working with development and engineering.

## Three Specialties: Strategy, Planning, Growth

Respondents of the 2017 Pragmatic Marketing Survey said they managed an average of three products each. It's hard to fathom how a product manager can do all the activities of defining, describing and delivering products for more than one product. That's why we are starting to see more specialization in product management roles. We see strategic product managers, technical product managers and product owners, and product marketing managers.

Let's take the idea of a problem manager one step further. We can get a better understanding of roles and responsibilities if we specialize titles around problems of strategy, planning and growth.

## Product Strategy Manager

The product strategy manager, sometimes called a portfolio strategy manager, thinks beyond the current set of products.

These people define the portfolio roadmap, evaluate the overall success of the products in their portfolio, and determine which products are failing to achieve their goals and should be retired. Typically, product strategy managers are seasoned product professionals with experience in the business of product management.

Their success is measured in completed business plans. This includes identifying new product opportunities,

validating those opportunities in the marketplace, and defining the necessary business documents to get commitment and funding to proceed with the idea.

## Product Planning Manager

Most closely aligned with the role of agile product owner, the product planning manager is focused on the next set of deliverables—the next release, the next model. This role works closely with development and engineering to guide product creation and revisions.

Based on customer and market feedback from myriad sources, the product planning manager aligns new feature requests against the product strategy and prioritizes the work to be done. A measurement of success is increased customer retention, or more customers using and implementing the product.

## Product Growth Manager

The product growth manager, often called a product marketing manager, takes a systematic approach to identifying and correcting problems that hamper product growth. The role profiles the sales funnel to identify areas for optimizing the buyer's journey and includes analyzing customer wins and losses to identify areas for improvement in promotion and selling. The product growth manager also works with the marketing team to determine the best

programs and campaigns for addressing problems discovered in the go-to-market process. A measurement of success is increased adoption, more customers evaluating, acquiring and recommending the product.

## The Problem Manager

The title "product manager" means different things to different people, and may be the source of confusion about roles and responsibilities. Imagine if product managers were called problem managers! After all, they find and quantify market problems. They determine which problem should be solved first and then they represent these problems to the solutions teams—development and marketing—to build solutions and empower sales and support with the tools they need to succeed.

Problem manager. I like it. It reminds me of when I was a problem in class and my teachers would complain to my parents. Even then I was in training to become a problem manager. [PM](#)

"Countless people with the title product manager or product owner are not doing the job their company needs them to do."

## About the Author

**Steve Johnson** is an author, speaker and advisor on product strategy and product management. His approach is based on the belief that minimal process and simple templates result in nimble product marketing and management. After 15 years as a Pragmatic Marketing instructor, Steve founded Under 10 Consulting, where he provided implementation assistance to product teams. He is now vice president of products at Pragmatic Marketing. Contact Steve at [sjohnson@pragmaticmarketing.com](mailto:sjohnson@pragmaticmarketing.com).

# Stories Still Matter:

Communicating  
in a Crowded  
Marketing World

BY LINDSAY SUTULA





**WHAT IS YOUR STORY? FOUR LITTLE WORDS** that ask a very important question. Every company has a story, and successful companies are great at telling their amazing stories through every marketing channel available. Their story takes center stage and is woven into their print materials, website, social media channels, blog posts, trade shows, and in sales and customer-service interactions. It resonates with their target audience, drives loyalty and appeals to values that their brand shares with consumers. Telling their stories is one of the most important things they do.

How well are you telling your story? If you have room for improvement (and most of us do), here's a quick guide to get you started on how to tell your story by defining your mission, knowing yourself and your audience, and identifying and using marketing vehicles to tell that story far and wide.

### The Mad Men Days Are Over

Many companies still operate like they are back in the old days of consumer marketing, when there were just a few ways to reach consumers. The goal was to interrupt whatever the innocent bystander was doing. Perhaps your message was in a flier for the potential customer to find while sorting their mail. Or maybe you had a commercial that interrupted the regularly scheduled programming on someone's TV (on one of only three channels). The point here is that getting your potential consumer's attention was limited by the available media. And telling your story wasn't really as important as getting attention, because attention meant sales.

Today, the average consumer is exposed to approximately 5,000 product messages a day. So getting someone's attention has gotten much harder to do. And just getting someone's attention isn't enough, unless your target audience connects to your message in an intrinsic way. Many of us never give a second thought to most of the marketing messages we see or hear. But if you pay close attention, you might notice the messages that do grab your attention are valuable because they teach you something or fulfill a need. That's because those messages have been crafted by companies with a thorough knowledge of their audience. They've done the hard work to get to know you and connect in a meaningful way. Simply put, they know how to tell their story in a way that connects with the customer's story.

### Know Thyself: Mission Statements

That hard work starts with a deep dive into your company's values to craft a mission statement that defines what you do in a compelling and succinct way. You must answer a lot of questions to develop a successful mission statement. You need

to cover: What do you do and whom do you do it for? What is special about how you do it? What value does it create for your customers? You also will need to define your goals for five to 10 years into the future and create a roadmap for meeting those goals.

Great mission statements are often the drivers of customer loyalty. The reason people stay loyal to brands is because they identify with their values. And for people to identify with those values, you must be consistent in how you tell and retell your story.

Patagonia and Starbucks are two examples of companies that have solid mission statements.

Patagonia's mission is to build high-quality products and protect the planet, and their mission statement is crystal clear and precise: *Build the best product, cause no unnecessary harm, use business to inspire and implement solutions to the environmental crisis.*

Have you seen Starbucks' mission statement? I bet not. You've also never seen any advertising by Starbucks. They are the perfect example of a company that knows their audience. They don't need to spend money on advertising because they tell their story so well that their customer loyalty is the highest in their industry. It shouldn't come as a surprise that their mission statement is very simple: *Our mission: to inspire and nurture the human spirit—one person, one cup and one neighborhood at a time.* When you unpack that, it makes perfect sense and fits their social and corporate stance of responsibility to their customers.

In the age of email and social media, good old one-on-one conversations matter more than ever.

### Content Marketing Is Storytelling

To create successful content for marketing, you need to ask even more questions about your target audience and who they are—from their demographics to their value systems—to earn their loyalty. The goal of content marketing is to put the needs of your audience first. To do this, you must listen to and learn from your customers and become a resource for them. Learn their stories. Make them the hero of your story. The content you create for your audience is not about you, it's about your audience. Many of us get caught in the trap of creating content that we need, on topics that we want to read about. New rule: You are not your target audience!

The next step is to know the people within the industries you serve. Answer questions like these: Who makes up your industry? What are the unique challenges those people face? What keeps their businesses from growing?

How do you do this? By talking to your customers! Yes, in the age of email and social media, good old one-on-one conversations matter more than ever. In essence, the minute details of their stories will be a gold mine for creating content.



We realize that you can't possibly call all your customers, so call the 20 percent of customers who make up 80 percent of your sales. Set aside a couple of hours once a month to talk to customers—new and old—to make sure you still understand and meet their needs.

After talking to your customers, you can create fictional personas that are generalized representations of your perfect audience or customer. Personas outline behaviors, preferences and purchasing processes to guide your content to stories that are important to them.

### Reach Your Customers

Now that you've done the hard work—built your foundation and know who you are, who your customers are and how your industry works—let's discuss how to reach your target audience.

Websites are now your business card. Your first impression. Your online storefront. They are the vehicle that draws your audience in, so you want to make an impression. There are two parts to your website: the static brochure-type parts and the dynamic content. The mix between the two is what is important. The dynamic part that engages your audience must be updated frequently (and consistently) with interesting and informative content. It's important to put a lot of thought into how you present yourself on your website. Most people don't like talking about themselves and find it difficult to talk about what they do in a compelling way. If that describes you, hire a business coach, marketing consultant—or, at the very least, ask a friend to help you brainstorm your message.

A company blog is a great vehicle for telling your story. It doesn't take a lot of time to write short stories to publish online. Blogs are the hub of your content and social media sphere.

If you don't have a blog, it's time to start one. Go back to the customer personas you crafted earlier and make a list of challenges or questions that they have. Use your first blogs to answer some of those questions, and you are on your way to creating interesting and useful content! Post consistently, be human, tell a story and have a call to action (that's

not always a sale).

The email newsletter is a powerful vehicle of permission-based communication that you can approach in many ways depending upon your customers, products and brand. It's important to make your email content visually appealing and easy to read. Be sure to link content on your website to drive traffic to your blog posts, and link to landing pages for your products or services so you can track results. Never spam potential customers; it's illegal and annoying. Always get permission and offer opt-out links at the bottom of every newsletter.

Don't assume that one size fits all. Segment your lists to offer different content to different personas. Also, make sure to highlight the things you do best and what makes you special. List awards and get customer testimonials. This helps people know you are credible.

Social media humanizes your brand and provides a platform to share ideas and inspiration. It is the biggest support system for your website, blogs and email newsletters. Generally, your website or other content might not get a lot of traffic, but when combined with social media channels, you have a powerful tool that supports a culture for sharing information. Once you've decided from among any number of platforms (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, LinkedIn, Google+, Snapchat, YouTube, etc.), you will need to create a social media plan.

Remember, social media is a conversation, not a megaphone.

Make sure your posts strike a good balance—80 percent of your posts should be rich, value-driven posts for your audience and 20 percent should be promotion. Again, consistency is key. Post regularly, even if it's just once a week. Post interesting, relevant content and use engaging imagery. Take advantage of events and activities by posting photos of event attendees (with their permission only), tagging them and encouraging them to share.

There are still plenty of offline opportunities for marketing your story. Engaging with real humans has never been easier or more important. Your printed materials, trade shows, special events, speaking engagements and even guerrilla marketing activities give you the opportunity for voice-to-voice or face-to-face interaction. **PM**

Don't assume that one size fits all. Segment your lists to offer different content to different personas.



### About the Author

Lindsay Sutula is the founder of Sutula Marketing. She has a passion for swamping companies with leads, optimizing marketing and sales funnels, and building creative brands that resonate with customers and prospects. Visit [SutulaMarketing.com](http://SutulaMarketing.com) to learn more or email [Lindsay@SutulaMarketing.com](mailto:Lindsay@SutulaMarketing.com).



# Become a GO-TO-MARKET HERO with the 3 PILLARS



BY BRUCE LA FETRA

**W**INNING A CUSTOMER STARTS WITH ADDRESSING customer pain, but it doesn't stop there. By framing every action in terms of the impact on your customer's business, you will gain invaluable clarity to help you understand the buyer's journey and build customer-winning, sales-cycle-shortening, go-to-market plans. These remarkable results are possible when you make three straightforward changes in the way you think about your customers. Each forms one of three pillars to support your go-to-market plans.

## Introducing the 3 Pillars

Creating deeply rooted alignment between your company and your customer's business rests on these three pillars:

1. Align with your customers by adopting an outside-in point of view.
2. Focus on why you're selected.
3. Accelerate the sales cycle by understanding how your customers think and make decisions.

Despite their huge impact, the three pillars are often overlooked because they don't tie directly to a company's tangible products. But it's actually a feature, not a bug, that the pillars do not directly relate to tangible products and what can become obsessive efforts at differentiation. Let's look at each of the three pillars in greater depth, including what's at stake and tips for implementing them at your company.



### Point of View

Adopt an outside-in point of view to align with your customers.

Stop talking about your product and focus on how the entire experience of working with your company will improve your customer's business. Even if your product is a commodity, the

relationship with your customer isn't. Conversely, your widget may be faster, but unless you can tie widget speed to improving their business, your customer won't care.

It's a challenge to change your point of view when nearly everyone at your company—not only marketers—perceives the customer through their own lens. Remember, customers want to talk about their business, not yours, so an inside-out point of view is a hurdle to customer alignment.

An outside-in perspective shifts the focus from your product and how it is used to how your company improves the customer's business. However, adopting this point of view requires more than talk; it requires a mental shift in your thinking.

It can be humbling when customers see your business differently than you think they should. The payoff of embracing an outside-in approach is seeing your business the same way your customers do. The good news is that little things can make a big difference. And while it may sound like hyperbole, you will never market the same way again.

### Don't Limit Yourself to Product Benefits

Don't limit your impact to the direct application of your product. Understand every way your company improves the customer's business (product, service, support, relationship, etc.). It's easy to spot the impact of a widget that resolves a bottleneck. But it's also a rarity. I see plenty of examples where the indirect impact—for example, the service commitment that keeps a

production line running as a byproduct—exceeds the product's direct impact.

Customers love it when your company aligns with their overall success. Meanwhile, if your competitors focus on minutiae that they claim are critical, this can gain your company an edge. Even if your competitor's product is indistinguishable from your own, simply speaking in terms of the customer's business—rather than yours—will cause buyers to gravitate to your company. When you are aligned with their interests, they feel you “get” them.

Encourage this mental shift in your thinking by asking yourself whether each action or communication truly focuses on the customer and improves their business, or whether it is about you. When you can see your business through the same lens as your customers, it will prepare you to take the next step and identify the real reasons why they buy from your company.

**EXAMPLE:**

*A series of customer interviews revealed that customers bought a cybersecurity company's solution not to secure their data, but to accelerate regulatory compliance. The insight—that compliance was viewed as a higher priority than security—became a competitive advantage. By aligning with their customers, the company shifted positioning to embrace compliance as a precursor to security.*



### The Selection Process

See beyond your product to focus on why your company gets selected.

Chances are, you have data on who buys your product, and how much and how often they buy. But the story can get murky from here. Salespeople will offer anecdotal information from their own experiences. You can pay industry analysts for more objective data; however, analysts are an unlikely source of great insight because they have incentives to play it safe.

Beyond the hard sales data, most customer-buying information is riddled with confirmation bias, wishful thinking and guesswork. This uncertainty undermines confidence and is the antithesis of the three pillars.

When I began interviewing the customers of my clients, I gained a huge insight: Buyers actually have little understanding of their own decision process. The more loyal a customer is and wants to help, the more likely they are to parrot back your marketing. It may be tempting to stop here because you're hearing things that make you feel good. But don't be tempted; you haven't really learned anything yet.

The real reasons customers buy from your company may be quite different from why you would select your company. More important, their reasons are a subset—often a small subset—of the benefits they gain from working with your company. Stay focused on why customers actually select your company and you will accelerate the customer's decision process.



### Focus on the Decision

The finer points of your offer are less central to your customer's decision than you think. There are other, bigger factors in play, and you will gain new insights by locking your focus on the decision to select your company.

Despite what you tell yourself, quality and most product capabilities are the entry fee, rather than a source of differentiation. Poor quality is crippling, but exceeding the threshold adds little luster.

To figure out what drives selection, you must dig deeper. Be cautious with surveys. They are ideal for validating hypotheses but are a poor choice for discovering what you don't know you don't know. An open mind and an expert third party, like Eastwood Strategy Advisors, will draw out insights you are unlikely to get on your own. Your sales team will love you.

The ability to see your business the way your customers see it, and to know why they select your company, will prepare you for the third pillar: shortening the sales cycle by understanding how customers think and decide.

**EXAMPLE:**

*Interviews showed a company why business was falling off. Customers were now confident in any of several companies, so experience—the reason for so many past victories—had evolved into the threshold for consideration. In repositioning itself to explicitly target the most complex and time-critical applications, the company gained so much focus that it grew despite submitting fewer proposals.*



# Quality and most product capabilities are the entry fee, rather than a source of differentiation.



## The Sales Cycle

Accelerate the sales cycle by understanding how your customers think and make decisions.

The first two pillars focus on positioning and the information customers need to select your company. The third pillar offers a further avenue for gaining competitive advantage because most competitors sequence the customer relationship backwards.

This pillar incorporates neuroscience to provide insights into how people make decisions. People are less rational than they believe; this includes how they make complex purchase decisions. Expecting customers to process piles of information rationally slows, rather than speeds, the decision process. They strive to be logical, but processing gobs of often ambiguous or conflicting information from multiple vendors flies in the face of how humans make decisions. By understanding how your customers think, you can help them make better decisions.

## The Neuroscience of Decision-Making

It seems counterintuitive that less information can drive faster, more confident decisions, but it's true. People will make a pre-decision based on emotion, then cherry-pick supporting facts to create a logical justification to support it. A growing body of research shows this is typical whenever we make decisions. Professor Raj Raghunathan of the University of Texas advises, "The earlier you make the emotional connection the better, because once the buyer has decided they like a particular option ... their thinking falls in line with their emotions." Raghunathan goes on to warn, "People who claim that emotions are not that important, who consider themselves to be really rational, are actually more prone to fall into this trap."

This is not a failing; we're all hard-wired this way. Research

conducted by Antonio Damasio at the University of Southern California shows that people who lack emotions because of brain injuries often have difficulty making any decision at all. Good decisions balance emotion and logic; both are required.

It's ironic that by trying too hard to be rational, you make your job harder. Too long a list of features—even benefits—derails the decision process when people reconsider their emotional pre-decision.

## Connecting the 3 Pillars

A go-to-market plan built on the three pillars will win more customers while accelerating the sales cycle. Selecting your company (not merely your product) becomes easier and safer for the buyer. Far from being difficult to implement, the three pillars create a virtuous cycle of marketing that will reinforce and improve execution over time.

The three pillars recast critical marketing activities from positioning to sales enablement to retention from the customer's perspective. Personas and the buyer's journey supported by the three pillars provides a clear path for marketing, while providing an easy pathway for other parts of your company to understand and align with customers.

When I teach the three pillars to marketers, they are often surprised to find the practice even better than the theory. It is not constrained to individual buyers, and works especially well with multiple stakeholders and complex B2B offers. These types of buying processes are full of uncertainty, so those involved want to reduce their own risk and exposure.

Although in theory the three pillars can be implemented independently, the presented sequence significantly improves implementation. Because the key changes are mental rather than skills-based, the three pillars are unlikely to take hold at companies that are culturally rooted in selling products rather than improving the customer's business. The phased approach allows for progressive change that quickly collects additional adherents based on demonstrated results. Greater organizational momentum creates a more rapid path to success.

The three pillars replace guesswork with clarity and confidence to support the building of more effective go-to-market plans. Your company becomes an easier choice as you visibly align with customer interests, focus positioning on the selection decision, and sequence information to accelerate the selection process.

If you believe that your solution benefits a customer's business, then facilitating a buying process that grabs market share from "do nothing" will help fulfill your company's purpose. **PM**



## About the Author

**Bruce La Fetra** is a partner with Eastwood Strategy Advisors. He positions companies and products for growth by providing a path to a deeper understanding of their customers. His clients benefit from insights gained from 20+ years in product management, product marketing and hundreds of customer interviews for dozens of clients. Prior to consulting, Bruce held product management, product and service marketing, and business development roles for leading software, hardware and financial services companies. Contact Bruce at [Bruce@EastwoodStrategyAdvisors.com](mailto:Bruce@EastwoodStrategyAdvisors.com).

"We are a global group. We all speak different native languages and different business languages. The Pragmatic Marketing Framework has been one of the most powerful tools in uniting us. It's added a layer of rigor and evidence on top of our smart people having really great ideas."



**Rob Shea**  
Sr. Director, Portfolio Management

"The Pragmatic Marketing training has allowed us to align much more quickly and not waste a lot of time in meetings where nothing gets accomplished. Because we're aligned, because we're talking the same language, we're able to work more effectively and increase our ramp time so that we're able to meet the objectives of the business faster."



**Brina Kaiser**  
Product Marketing Manager, Infusionsoft

"Pragmatic Marketing brought to us a framework, an approach and a set of best practices that are truly world class. We took the training and then made it part of our DNA, as it was applicable day one. Pragmatic Marketing really has become the de facto industry standard for world class product management training."



**Jonah Paransky**  
Executive Vice President

"I think the most unique thing about Pragmatic Marketing is that it understands the different disciplines and areas of marketing and how they should work together to achieve the type of goals we want to achieve. It's integrated and orchestrated so that you do bring the best products to market and do listen to your customers."



**Ellen Derrico**  
Sr. Director of Product Marketing  
RES Software

"We executed on our three year corporate plan in twelve months. Without Pragmatic Marketing there's no way that happens."



**Frank Tait**  
VP of Product, Frontline Technologies



**Don't listen to us.**

# Listen to our customers.



[pragmaticmarketing.com/customers](http://pragmaticmarketing.com/customers)



# HOW DO YOU MEASURE A N D MOTIVATE PRODUCT TEAMS?

BY CINDY CRUZADO



**P**RODUCT LEADERS FREQUENTLY ASK ME HOW THEY SHOULD MEASURE and motivate their product team members. Traditionally, product teams are measured on revenue and dates, so if a company hits its numbers within a specific timeframe, then members of the product team will continue to earn their paychecks. But what happens when product leaders want a more precise and individualized way to incentivize their product teams? What steps should they take?

I recently spoke with several product leaders who were looking for guidance on setting meaningful objectives for their product teams. “How do I measure my product managers?” they asked. “I know we need to watch revenue and retention rates, but how do I combine everything into a plan that helps the team focus on achieving relevant measurements of success?”

I’ve identified three types of metrics to help product leaders manage by objective (MBO) as they evolve their teams. These metrics work to help product leaders focus on prioritizing their product requirements based on market impact, which in turn helps them assess the outcome of everything they do. By focusing on these components, it also helps train a team to ask, “If we focus on doing that, will it actually drive demand for our product?”

## 1 Measure product teams by how they run their product like a business.

When they think about their products and what to focus on, many teams concentrate on execution, especially tactics, features and deliverables. But we need to incentivize them to think about their products more strategically rather than think about the next set of features. This strategy includes how to drive product demand and whether to measure success

### Measure revenue by a product’s gross margin—not net margin.

by revenue, retention or usage rates. Setting objectives will help teams focus on what success really means for their product and crossing the finish line.

A common metric is revenue by product. It should be based on the product’s gross margin—not net margin—because product teams usually don’t control everything that goes into running a business.

But for some product teams, crossing the finish line might not involve charging to use the product. Instead, it might involve driving up logins and usage rates for solutions used by employees as customers. It may also be important to look at product market share and more



# The four marketing P's ultimately don't matter unless you are solving a market problem.

granular metrics, like retention rates, especially for multi-year renewals or net-new customers acquired in key segments. It's important to know what to keep an eye on to understand how well your product is doing.

**2 Tie the five P's to success.** Though marketing has long recognized four P's (product, price, place and promotion), at Pragmatic Marketing we advocate adding a fifth P, *problems*, to the top of the list, as the other four P's ultimately don't matter unless you are solving a market problem.

The five P's build on the first metric—running your product like a business—as you need to demonstrate how one or more of them will help drive success. For example, what problems do you need to focus on, to whom will you deliver solutions to those problems, and what will you do to solve those problems? How will that drive the success metrics? If it's *product, price or place*, how do they link to the success metrics?

By linking the five P's to your team's individual success metrics, you help them focus on success in the market, instead of just focusing on which features are coming out and when each release will be launched.

**3 Help them to become market experts.** Becoming more market-driven requires spending time outside the office. If you are building, expanding or refocusing a team to be market-driven, consider where you are in that process and how to incentivize team members to get out of the office. As a leader, you must encourage and incentivize your team to leave the building and conduct interviews with the market, and that means evaluators and potentials as well as customers. I think ideally your team members should be doing 12 to 15 visits per quarter. These visits are key to the team becoming market-driven.

In addition to these visits, look at the product's positioning documents and when they are created. Are they created upfront, before development starts, so that the product leader can drive development?

Tying the creation of a positioning document with a target milestone that development has agreed to will help to raise the bar on the way the team thinks about these documents.

Positioning documents are also helpful for driving your collaboration with marketing and sales. Make sure that the problem development is focused on also appears in the sales script and training tools. That way, when the sales team begins to sell new product capabilities, they will be prepared to discuss the problem your product can solve, rather than simply itemizing product features.

Incorporating each of these three metrics will help to create MBOs that continue to evolve your team's culture, moving them closer to a complete understanding of the market and being able to act as the voice of the customer.

No one will use each metric in every situation. For example, if your team has an engineering focus and needs to become more market-driven, you will want to implement outside visits and win/loss interviews. However, the metrics will differ if your team has a good base of market data but needs to focus more on prioritization and driving awareness of the problem to development, sales and marketing.

Regardless, if you intend to run your product like a business, your team must learn to connect the dots. These metrics will help incentivize your team to think about what needs to be done to drive revenue. **PM**

This article was originally published on [MindtheProduct.com](https://www.mindtheproduct.com).

## About the Author

**Cindy Cruzado** has more than 25 years of product and go-to-market experience in the high-tech software industry. She has worked with groundbreaking solutions in U.S. and international markets and across multiple industries, including higher education, meteorology, finance, CRM and marketing automation. Cindy brings deep and broad experience to her role as a Pragmatic Marketing instructor, with a proven track record of strategic and operational leadership in startup and enterprise environments. She may be reached at [ccruzado@pragmaticmarketing.com](mailto:ccruzado@pragmaticmarketing.com).



# EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION AND COLLABORATION: Equip Your Product Team

BY BRYAN KELLY

**T**HERE'S NO SHORTAGE OF INFORMATION ABOUT SOFT SKILLS. You can find a wide range of buzzword-filled articles extolling mindfulness, emotional intelligence, decision-making and more. However, information isn't the problem. Putting soft skills into practice is the real challenge for product professionals today.

It's one thing to understand the importance of having empathy for another product team member. Yet converting that knowledge into action is altogether different.

An extensive body of neuroscientific research by Dr. Todd Maddox suggests that the human brain contains at least two distinct systems used for learning. One is the cognitive skills system, which is optimized for learning technical skills. The other is the behavioral skills system, which is optimized for learning soft skills.

Dr. Maddox suggests that soft skills can only be applied through behavioral skills training in the brain. That means we can't just say, "We got this," and move on. An intentional approach is required, and is something most of us never actually do. This is because we've lacked training tools that directly exercise our behavioral skills system. And we've been lacking them for a century.

## Meet Dale Carnegie: Human Relations Expert

After teaching public-speaking skills to more than 18,000 white-collar workers, Dale Carnegie observed that the thriving modern world of the early 20th century was desperately missing something. It was something that millions of professionals needed as they tried to navigate the dynamic business climate of the 1920s. They just didn't know what it was.

Fortunately, Dale felt he discovered the key in a 1918 study. He believed the findings of this research could unlock success for modern white-collar employees—helping them go beyond professional competence, mastery of facts, a determined work ethic and a commitment to quality.

In 1926 Dale wrote about the concept he uncovered in his book, *Public Speaking: A Practical Course*: "According to experiments conducted by the Carnegie Institute of Technology, personality has more to do with business success than superior knowledge."

Through this statement, Dale revealed a "light-bulb" moment. His focus shifted from simply teaching the mechanics of public speech to coaching a keen awareness of human nature. The principles he began to define ultimately took shape in his timeless bestseller, *How to Win Friends & Influence*

*People*, published 10 years later. This evergreen classic has been ranked as the seventh most influential book of the 20th century and continues to sell 200,000 to 300,000 copies per year.

While there are distinct differences between the professional world of the Roaring '20s and the present, there are commonalities too. Why are we still wrestling with the concept of soft skills vs. technical skills? Shouldn't we have mastered human relations by now?

Recent studies in 2015, 2016 and 2017 by McDonalds, Deloitte, and Harvard all underscore the incredible value of soft skills. But, they also point to a glaring deficit of those same soft skills in professional fields.

So, I'll ask the question again: Why is this something we're grappling with today—and more specifically, within product teams?

### Product's Struggle With Soft Skills

In *Product Management in Practice*, author Matt LeMay is blunt: "... far too many people and organizations hire product professionals based on hard skills that have precious little to do with the day-to-day work that those individuals will be expected to perform."

During an interview on *The O'Reilly Design Podcast*, Matt went a step further and offered his definition of the product professional's role. "To me, it is all about being the connective tissue, being the glue that connects whatever the different roles are within your organization. But whoever those different players are, your job is to be aligner-in-chief or translator-in-chief. The person who is ultimately responsible and accountable for everybody having a shared language and a shared sense of purpose."

So how do we do that? And how do we go beyond just understanding that empathy, communication and teamwork are absolutely critical to the role? How do we actually cultivate these qualities so they flow naturally from ourselves?

The first step is to embrace the idea of being frank and direct within the team environment.

### Let's Talk About Candor

Merriam-Webster defines candor as "unreserved, honest or sincere expression." It's essential to teamwork and the key ingredient to communicating fully and openly by not withholding or misleading. So how do we get there as a product team composed of diverse personalities and backgrounds?

Fortunately, recent neuroscientific research offers a sophisticated understanding of what inhibits and fosters candor among product team members.

### Improving the Way We Work With Others

Published in 2008 by the NeuroLeadership Institute, *NeuroLeadership Journal: Volume One* outlined a structure illuminating how to improve the way we work with others called the SCARF model. Developed by Dr. David Rock, it defines five key areas of social experience that the human brain monitors at



a subconscious level: status, certainty, autonomy, relatedness and fairness.

**Status** is our perception of where we are in relation to other people. An increase in status is a reward; a decrease is a threat. We'll often argue with others when we feel our status is under attack. And interestingly, research has shown that when we experience a drop in status, our brain networks light up just as when we experience physical pain.

**Certainty** is our ability to predict the future. Increasing it is a reward; decreasing it is a threat. Studies demonstrate that ambiguity of any kind generates a danger response. Clarity and clear expectations provide certainty.

**Autonomy** is having control or having choices. Increasing it is a reward; decreasing it is a threat. And zero autonomy can make small amounts of stress feel overwhelming. If we feel we have choices, stress is reduced.



## Even though things might not happen as planned, the act of setting clear expectations **TOGETHER** can instill confidence in the face of change.

**Relatedness** is being safely connected to people around us. An increase in relatedness deems someone a friend; a decrease deems them a foe. We trust friends and distrust foes. In general, our brain labels everyone a foe until they prove they are a friend, usually by finding common ground.

**Fairness** is a state of being where people are ethical with one another. Increasing fairness is a reward; decreasing it is a threat.

The journal explained that minimizing threats and maximizing rewards is how the brain organizes incoming information. On autopilot at any given moment, our brain can be in either of these two states: minimize threats or maximize rewards. And which state we're in will impact our ability to work with others.

For example, a perceived threat to our status activates the brain in the same manner as an actual life-threatening situation. Many everyday conversations mirror this example. When feeling threatened, we often defend weak arguments because our brain subconsciously believes our life is at risk.

We've all been guilty of triggering these domains in team members, either intentionally or unintentionally. Certainly I've triggered these domains in the past, both individually or several at once.

### Practice Using the SCARF Model

Knowing what these brain-based insights are is a helpful first step. However, understanding how to circumvent them in the future is truly empowering. Here's a quick look at some actionable ways to practice the SCARF model.

**When we attack someone's status**—It's easy to threaten someone's status by offering advice, feedback or instruction. These are all activities essential to product management, but nothing puts a person on the defensive faster, shutting down collaboration and communication.

So how do we sidestep this minefield? Dale Carnegie once said, "The deepest principle in human nature is the craving to be appreciated. Become genuinely and actively interested in other people and show it." Cross-functional team members will be much more open to candid advice when you've shown appreciation for what they contribute.

**When we mess with someone's certainty**—Changing

product requirements, direction or strategy on the fly flushes certainty right out of the brain. This causes stress because the brain must use more resources to process unfamiliar information. Yet, there's a simple way to reduce that feeling of uncertainty. Proactively involve stakeholders from engineering, design, marketing, sales, etc. in revamping those plans. It will give them a sense of clarity and alignment, which increases certainty because you brought them into the process. And even though things might not happen as planned, the act of setting clear expectations *together* can instill confidence in the face of change.

**When we don't build and nurture trust**—For eons, tribes have ensured human survival. We naturally trust those in our own tribe and distrust those who are not. It's called relatedness. When we trust each other because of our relation, information flows and collaboration increases. Yet we often forget that taking time to share personal stories helps bond relationships. It's easy with coworkers who like the same indie band or that corner Thai restaurant. But how about the person from a different culture or subculture who seemingly has nothing in common with you? Someone with potentially opposing views or beliefs? Start intentionally building and nurturing trust by learning their story.

**When we jeopardize someone's autonomy**—Working on a product team naturally reduces a sense of independence. So what can we do when managing multiple personalities and processes in our role? Possible threats to autonomy will be offset when status, certainty and relatedness are increased. Make investments in those areas. Feeling appreciated, involved and part of the team fosters an environment where people know their voice is heard.

**When we're not fair**—Nothing is more unfair than a double standard; actions really do speak louder than words. There's a distinct difference between saying one thing and doing another. However, consistent and transparent communication that matches our actions will safeguard a fair product team atmosphere. This requires a level of self-awareness that doesn't come easy. It also demands humility. Admitting when we are wrong, make an error or miscommunicate something is more difficult than shifting blame onto others. But in doing so, we will positively trigger a sense of fairness among colleagues.

### A Simple Invitation

Using these soft skills, how might you respond differently in future situations with product team members? Think about it and write down one way you can practice what you've learned. Now go implement it. I wish you nothing but the best! **PM**

### About the Author

**Bryan Kelly** helps product professionals build a practice around soft skills. For over a decade he's helped product teams intentionally practice skills that foster better communication and collaboration. Visit [softworksppractice.com](http://softworksppractice.com) for simple tools that will help you improve soft skills through a blend of neuroscience, psychology and practical know-how.

# MEET OUR ALUMNI

Once you complete Pragmatic Marketing training, it's time to implement what you learned. We spoke with four alumni about the value of Pragmatic Marketing certification and share highlights from their implementations-in-progress.



**Sarah Miller**

*Product Marketing*  
PMC II



Sarah Miller's deep understanding of the importance of product marketing has grown from her diverse professional experience, including representing coffee and chocolate buyers in Fair Trade; representing SMEs as part of UBIFrance, the French Trade Commission; researching and testing new products with IAC Media; and much more.

"Sales and marketing go hand-in-hand," Sarah explains, adding that "you can really only reach out so many times without relevant content. Product marketing is what I like to refer to as a full-stack marketer because it isn't divorced from sales and research, but ultimately understands these functions to be a standout marketer." Her drive to provide even better results using real, solid information led her to search for reputable and comprehensive training programs where she could get certified in product marketing in Silicon Valley.

Sarah chose Pragmatic Marketing because she "wanted an in-person training program that would offer me a certification I could add to my resume to demonstrate more than just taking a class." And the class was better than she could have imagined, as she was able to "network in the class with peers or potential companies in technology that I may want to work for." Sarah now has two Pragmatic Marketing certifications under her belt.

"[I] wanted a training program that would offer me a certification I could add to my resume to demonstrate more than just taking a class."



**Chris Orlob**

*Senior Director of Product Marketing, Gong.io*  
PMC III



When you're marketing a product positioned as the second most important tool a sales professional can have after Salesforce, you need to have the right skills and passion to back it up. That's what Chris Orlob has discovered over the course of his career in sales, as an entrepreneur, and most recently with Gong.io, the "software that helps sales teams generate more revenue by having better sales conversations."

For Chris, his job has always been about "solving the customer problems, and then coming together as a team in-house to determine the right positioning and messaging." Over the years, his roles frequently shifted into product marketing territory, and he often didn't realize just how much product marketing he was doing, like creating marketing collateral and researching buyer personas. This is where Pragmatic Marketing came into play.

Chris started researching product marketing—listening to podcasts; reading *TunedIn*, written by Pragmatic Marketing's founder; and more—but felt like he was "piecing together articles, seeking knowledge without always knowing if it was the best source." That's when he decided to sign up for Pragmatic Marketing training. He felt like he found a gem, a single resource center where all the information was at his fingertips to help take his skills and his company to the next level.



### Jay Weber

Technical Product and Project Manager, WesternOne  
PMC IV

Construction and oil and gas might have a reputation for not being as technologically advanced as other industries, but that doesn't mean they are stagnant. At least that's how Jay Weber has approached things in his 15+ years of experience. His knack for finding new ways to approach product management and his sincere joy in talking with customers with no agenda beyond listening has set him apart from other product managers—in any industry.

To help him add even more tricks to his bag, Jay took Pragmatic Marketing training. "Pragmatic Marketing puts the focus in the right place," he says. "Instead of dreaming up in-house ideas, it puts the focus on solving customer problems. Sure, sometimes you get lucky—but it's a systematic approach that wins." With Pragmatic Marketing's help, Jay was able to better use his time talking to his customers, compiling data from those conversations, and recommending a course of action his key stakeholders couldn't argue with.

But every product manager runs up against challenges now and then, and pricing was Jay's most recent one. "The level of segmentation of the market, the level of willingness to pay, and how to determine pricing without a clear benchmark are so important in newer industries where a framework is critical," he explains. Jay turned back to Pragmatic Marketing and obtained his PMC in *Price* to help his company move confidently forward.

**Pragmatic Marketing puts the focus in the right place. Instead of dreaming up in-house ideas, it puts the focus on solving customer problems.**



### Jennifer Keenan

Product Management and Strategy, Healthcare Industry  
PMC V



The healthcare industry is constantly changing and growing. Finding a way to set yourself up for success in this fluctuating field can seem next to impossible. Lucky for Jennifer Keenan, when she started her career in product management, she was referred to Pragmatic Marketing training by colleagues who understood how the certification would make a difference. She knew "it was important to have a strong foundation in how to think about innovating from a product perspective, given the rapid changes in healthcare."

Becoming Pragmatic Marketing certified has made all the difference, as evidenced in her career progression. She's now fluent in all things related to product management, and credits the "universal language that Pragmatic Marketing training and the framework offers" for her continued success. The ability to collaborate and adapt is high in healthcare, and Pragmatic Marketing's specific series of tools can easily translate into any environment for any team to do more. Jennifer takes great pride in her work and often utilizes aspects of her training (like developing product roadmaps and leveraging a scoring system or gap analysis to make informed decisions) to bring about greater results for her employer.

**Pragmatic Marketing training offers a universal language and framework for success.**

Jennifer is a recent graduate of the University of Oregon's Executive MBA program, and is well on her way to earning her final PMC certification in *Price*.



**If you have a story you'd like to share about how you're implementing the Pragmatic Marketing Framework at your company, email us at [editor@pragmaticmarketing.com](mailto:editor@pragmaticmarketing.com).**

# A PRAGMATIC APPROACH

Put this issue's ideas into action.

## Location, Location, Location

Consider where the actual work resides to effectively identify where a product role should fit within the organization.

**Mark LaScola**

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## Cultivate Alignment

Provide adequate training, set up an attainable plan and celebrate early wins to prevent a mismatch between the expectations new product marketers have and their actual authority.

**Justin Topliff**

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## Look Ahead

Create contextual, fact-based documentation to cultivate an institutional memory.

**John Milburn and Steve Hardwick**

page **15**

## Focus on Customers

Establish a customer-centric approach to eliminate silos that produce disjointed messaging and poor customer experiences.

**Andrea Fryrear**

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## Talk to Prospects

Visit prospects to listen for their problems, capture how they talk about their challenges and refine your product positioning.

**Steve Johnson**

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## Channel Your Audience

Create fictional personas that are generalized representations of your perfect audience or customer to guide your creation of relevant content.

**Lindsay Sutula**

page **24**

## Change Your Perspective

Focus on why customers actually select your company to accelerate their decision-making process.

**Bruce La Fetra**

page **26**

## Drive Collaboration

Tie the creation of your positioning document to a target milestone that development has agreed to.

**Cindy Cruzado**

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## Practice Candor

Encourage frankness and directness within your team environment to establish a shared sense of purpose.

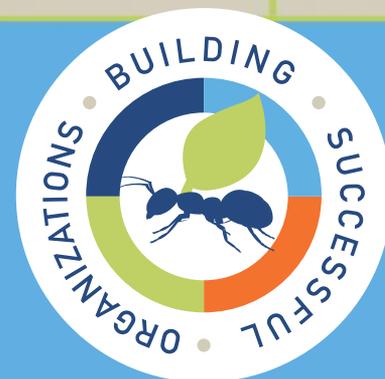
**Bryan Kelly**

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## Meet Our Alumni

Discover how Pragmatic Marketing training helped jumpstart the careers of four alumni.

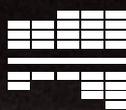
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## UPCOMING COURSES

### *Foundations, Focus and Build*

Munich, Germany	Nov 20-22
Vancouver, BC, Canada	Nov 20-22
Hyderabad, India	Nov 27-30
Bangalore, India	Dec 3-6
Philadelphia, PA	Dec 4-6
Washington, D.C. (McLean, VA)	Dec 4-6
Atlanta, GA	Dec 11-13
London, England, UK	Dec 11-13
Minneapolis, MN	Dec 11-13
San Diego, CA	Dec 11-13
Toronto, ON, Canada	Dec 11-13
Boston (Downtown), MA	Dec 17-19
San Francisco (Downtown), CA	Dec 17-19
Tel Aviv, Israel	Dec 17-19
Boston (Downtown), MA	Jan 9-11
Chicago, IL	Jan 9-11
San Francisco (Downtown), CA	Jan 9-11
Austin, TX	Jan 14-16
Morristown, New Jersey	Jan 23-25
Jacksonville, FL	Jan 28-30
Seattle, WA	Jan 28-30

### *Foundations, Market and Launch*

San Francisco (Downtown), CA	Nov 13-15
Toronto, ON, Canada	Nov 26-27
London, England, UK	Nov 27-29
Chicago, IL	Dec 4-6
Austin, TX	Dec 11-13
Phoenix (Chandler), AZ	Dec 17-19
Atlanta, GA	Jan 14-16
Portland, OR	Jan 14-16

### *Foundations, Focus, Build and Price*

Denver, CO	Nov 6-9
Austin, TX	Nov 13-16
Portland, OR	Nov 13-16
Munich, Germany	Nov 20-23
Philadelphia, PA	Dec 4-7
Washington, D.C. (McLean, VA)	Dec 4-7
Atlanta, GA	Dec 11-14
London, England, UK	Dec 11-14
San Diego, CA	Dec 11-14