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Product Manager

CAREER PROFILE

Details of the job

My job involves conceiving, planning, developing and supporting a product. I team up with Marketing, Sales and Design specialists to build a strategy for a specific product, evaluating it after the release to understand if our objectives were achieved. The role also expects that I will advocate for the users, since what we are building is solving a pain point on their end. The Developers are responsible for coding and testing the features. Our leadership is also involved, providing input throughout the whole process.

A typical day

The day starts with a stand up meeting, when I join the Marketing and Development folks and give updates about what happened and what we aim to do throughout the day. Then I take some time for myself to review our product roadmap, validating if what is being planned is still valid. The vision and the high-level features we want to deliver over the next month are there, so the roadmap provides a guideline for choosing what we'll do in the short term (lower level work).

There are multiple sessions that I attend, most of them related to a sprint. A sprint is a short cycle of development. Rather than defining everything in details, we work with a high level roadmap, only detailing requirements - user stories - that should be delivered in upcoming sprints. Planning everything low level would imply waste - everything changes all the time!

Other activities involve engaging with user, either directly or indirectly. It is worthwhile to perform research to understand their pain points and get insights of what we should deliver. I also team up with a User Experience Designer to create mocks of how a requirement could be handled, and those prototypes can be validated with stakeholders before the actual development. Getting constant feedback from them is key for Product Managers.

Skills required

- Time management
- Problem solving skills are a must!
- Communication
- Ask questions, since people have multiple perspectives and it will be up to you to "connect the dots"

General comments

I think the PM position is very challenging but rewarding. Some companies hire Junior Product Managers because they are offering mentorship. In others, where there is no such support, I would suggest getting familiar with the product - whether as a Developer, Sales Rep etc and transition into a PM role. This experience will allow you the opportunity to see if you like more of a technical PM focus that gets into details with Developers - or someone more business oriented, who is always keeping track of the "big picture".

Where can I go to get an education?

There is no such thing as a formal "Product Manager" degree. Usually people come from multiple backgrounds - Computer Science, Marketing, Graphic Design, Administration... There are multiple types of PMs so you can add on top of your degree something more PM focused like online courses. I also suggest getting involved with the community a group called Interface that has just been launched in Saskatoon connecting PMs and U/UI designers/researchers to share good practices and findings.

Helpful highschool courses

- Math 20/30
- Computer Science 20/30
- Physical Sciences