

FIND QUICK WINS

► Timing

- Week 5
- Every day or two for the second month while you ramp up

► Goal of chapter

- Identify ways in which you can create visible value to the team early on while you are still learning

► Background: Why is this needed?

- PMs don't have the luxury of a job with obvious contributions that people can observe and comment on – engineers can fix some small bugs early on, designers can make a couple of mockups based on existing screens, but PMs are on their own. It's important to provide some visible value as quickly as you can, though, to establish a good reputation.

► Resources

- Deliver a quick win within your first 90 days by solving a small but meaningful problem and measuring, sharing, and celebrating the result (QR1)
- What is the 5 Whys framework? (QR2)
- 5 Ways To Make an Impact in Your First 90 Days of a New Job (QR3)
- How to Streamline Processes and Increase Efficiency in a Growing Tech Company (QR4)



QR1



QR2



QR3



QR4

Building trust in any relationship requires action: Doing things that help the other person, and following through on your commitments. So while the first few months of a new PM job should be mainly geared towards learning, that doesn't preclude finding useful things to do. You're looking for quick wins that genuinely add value to the team while ideally complementing your learning process.

Think of this as starting to assemble a portfolio of artifacts and improvements with your name on them. Over time these will add up to a pretty big pile of value you've added, even though each addition to the pile will be small and quick initially.

Some examples of tasks that add visible value while also helping you learn:

- ▶ Make flowcharts of a process or user flow
- ▶ Document the logic behind something
- ▶ Take notes on meetings and share them
- ▶ Record the questions you have and answers you find somewhere publicly accessible

Another quick win is to record ideas about what the team could be working on, and then circulate these ideas early to gather feedback. You will inevitably start thinking from day 1 about what features you want to ship when you finally start to get your hands dirty. Talk about these with wiser heads (tech lead, engineering manager, design lead) to get their feedback, and be ready to introduce it to the team after your first month. Important reminder: Your first ideas are probably bad, so go in with the mindset of trying to work out what is wrong with them and iterating toward something intelligent as quickly as possible. The quick win here is the iteration loop of having an idea → discussing it → putting some details around it → showing it to a wider audience → recording feedback → filing away for future reference. The team will see that you are collaborative and interested in finding the right things to

work on, and you will end up with a pretty good sense of where to start building your roadmap (and more importantly, which are the tempting-but-wrong directions!).

One underrated quick win you can get stuck into early is to find things that the team doesn't like doing or that don't seem to be adding value, and finding a way to get rid of them.

The biggest problem facing most product teams is a lack of focus – too many plates spinning. And the biggest problem for most mature *products* is a lack of focus – too many extraneous bells and whistles. A good solution for both is to constantly be on the lookout for things to cut: meetings, low-value projects, features that no-one uses, onboarding screens that just add friction, etc.

Chesterton's fence = something that looks useless but actually serves a non-obvious but critical purpose.

Your best time to do this is when you are new, because you'll see with fresh eyes and ask the questions that everyone else has forgotten to ask. But you are also at the most dangerous point, because you don't know which things are relics of a bygone age vs Chesterton's fences.

The happy middle ground is to ask lots of questions rather than phrasing your ideas as commands or even suggestions initially. In practice, this means that when you find something in the product to change, your first step shouldn't be to write a ticket or a one-pager, but to note it down on your 1:1 document with your manager and your tech lead, to ask why it's there.

Restating the theme of this chapter explicitly: The best quick wins are when you notice things, write them down, and then bring other people's attention to them. You'll learn, they'll see that you are curious but suitably humble about your own knowledge, and eventually you'll turn over the right rock to find something valuable to do.

Action items

- ☐ Write a list of ideas for where you can add value in bite-sized ways, to refer to each day and week for inspiration
- ☐ Create a proposal to remove something that is no longer worth having around

DOCUMENT SOMETHING MISUNDERSTOOD

► Timing

- Week 9
- Half a day to write, then half a day a little later to correct and polish

► Goal of chapter

- Identify places where more documentation could be useful and learn how to build up such a document from a skeleton through to a finished piece

► Background: Why is this needed?

- In your initial exploration of your new area, you will definitely have run across multiple times when someone has said to you a variation of “Ah, the only person who really gets that is Person X.” When you go to Person X they give you a good, probably long, verbal explanation of how it works. This is a great opportunity to improve the state of the world by writing the explanation down.

► Resources

- The importance of documentation (QR1)
- 5 Important Types Of Documentation For Product Management (QR2)
- The Business Benefits of Investing in Product Documentation (QR3)
- Why Documentation Is Essential for Anyone Managing Products (QR4)