



Learning Outcomes

Product Management Certification

International Certification Alliance

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LICENSING INFORMATION

The work in this document was facilitated by the International Certification Alliance (ICA) and done through the contributions of various experts and practitioners. These learning objectives are intended to help the growing Tomorrow-Ready™ community worldwide.

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HOW TO READ THIS DOCUMENT

This document outlines the learning outcomes that accredited member organizations must address to offer ICA's Product Management certification.

Each learning outcome (LO) follows a particular pattern, described below.

O.O.O Learning Outcome Name

Additional Context, describing why this Learning Outcome is important or what it is intended to impart.

The learning outcome's purpose further describes what is expected to be imparted to the learner (e.g., a key point, framework, model, approach, technique, or skill).

LEARNING OUTCOMES

1. CHARACTERISTICS OF A PRODUCT

1.1 WHAT IS A PRODUCT?

1.1.1 The Product is Never Just the Product

There is a common misunderstanding that the product is a thing that is built. The thing that is built is your solution to a customer problem, which is one part of, but not the whole product. There are aspects of the business (e.g., strategy, channels to reach customers, how the business captures value from customers) that product managers need to be aware of as those things will impact the product.

Level set on the definition of a product and how product management must encompass all the aspects of the business, which enables the product to be successful in the market.

1.1.2 Types of Products

There are many different types of products and specific teams may be responsible for all or part of a whole product.

Introduce different types of products (e.g., hardware, software, service, and experience), and different types of delivery models (e.g., direct to consumer, indirect, marketplace).

1.1.3 Projects are not Products

Projects are a default way of working for many organizations. Projects get approved, funded, then assigned budgets, teams, and timelines. Products, on the other hand, are not temporary endeavors. We expect them to continue indefinitely since that demonstrates they are still evolving and delivering value. Switching from projects to products changes the way we approach planning, funding, staffing, and many other elements of work.

Explain that projects are not products, projects MAY be a means of funding product development but the project is never the product itself.

1.2 PRODUCT LIFECYCLE

1.2.1 The Product Lifecycle

The product lifecycle covers a product from conception to death.

Introduce the common product lifecycle model that covers the complete evolution of a product from conception to removal from service (e.g., Variations on Conceive, Design, Realize, Service or Introduction, Growth, Maturity, Decline). Distinguish between the approach taken when working on a new product vs. extending/maintaining an existing product, and how the stage in the lifecycle impacts product management. Example: delivery (can we build this), go to market (how do we take this to the marketplace), operationalize (customer support, call centre, sales, value proposition for customers), optimizing the product, retiring the product, and repeating the circle.

1.2.2 The Technology Adoption Curve

The technology adoption curve provides a way to explore different approaches to product management based on the stage in which a product is operating.

Explain the technology adoption curve, the importance of crossing the chasm, and how product management differs when targeting customers in different stages of the adoption curve.

2. PRODUCT MANAGEMENT CONCERNS

2.1 EARLY UNDERSTANDING

2.1.1 Understanding the Market

It is imperative to know the market to create a successful product.

Cover different strategies and tools that help teams learn about and understand the market (e.g., industry, segmentation, pricing, value proposition, market positioning, understanding competitors). Discuss how they can adapt their product based on what they learn from market research and how the approach to the product may change.

2.1.2 Business Drivers

Product management must align with the mission of the broader organization and go beyond pure financial return.

Cover the value and the goals of the product to the organization (e.g., impact, revenue, market share, cost reduction) and consider how the business's mission and goals can introduce constraints on the product (e.g., risk, legal and regulatory, compliance, sustainability).

2.1.3 Using Research to Identify Product Ideas and Solutions

There are many different ways to leverage research to collect and grow ideas, solve existing problems, and discover new opportunities.

Introduce different product-related research approaches and their common uses in product management (e.g., data mining, competitive analysis, focus groups, ideation sessions, open innovation programs, and customer feedback portals).

2.1.4 The Ugly Reality

While the ideal state is starting completely from scratch, product management often means building on work already underway.

Show how the reality of most environments is inheriting an existing product or legacy applications/services. Explain how the organization probably has a collection of products that are not well aligned or defined, and how product management includes responding to that context. The likely situation is not that of a well-funded startup where it may be possible to take a “green fields” approach.

2.2 PRODUCT STRATEGY

2.2.1 The Organization Ecosystem

Product management happens within the context of a larger organization ecosystem and that has an impact on product strategy.

Introduce various components of the organization ecosystem (e.g., external partners, users, customers, stakeholders), what they may be responsible for and how they could impact product strategy.

2.2.2 Crafting a Compelling Vision

Everyone involved in the making of a product should share a vision.

Cover different processes and tools for creating a compelling vision (e.g., story telling, vivid descriptors, product vision board) and the impact of sharing a vision.

2.2.3 Metrics that Matter for Products

Choosing the right metrics allows us to track the success of a product effectively.

Cover a wide variety of metrics (e.g., qualitative and quantitative, OKRs, outputs, outcomes, impacts, vanity metrics, leading & lagging metrics) and the benefits and disadvantages of different approaches. Convey the importance of feedback and the need to shorten feedback cycles in order to enable rapid innovation.

2.2.4 Know Your Product

The best product managers live and breathe their products. There is little about the product that they do not know.

Explain the importance of knowing the product and how that manifests in the ability to demo to a prospective customer, handle live support inquiries, speak to its relative state from a business model, ethics, UX, and tech perspective.

2.2.5 Understanding Customers

Customers and users are whom products serve. We need to truly understand them and their needs.

Provide an overview of multiple techniques that can help uncover customers' behavior and needs (e.g., customer relationship management, looking at their behavior vs. asking them, Jobs to Be Done, contextual inquiry) focusing on the pros/cons of each and when to use them. Provide an overview of the various ways to communicate assumptions and understandings about customers (e.g., empathy maps, personas), focusing on why and when these are used.

2.3 PLANNING

2.3.1 Idea Management at the Product Level

There will be many sources of ideas within the scope of a single product. Product management includes collecting, reviewing, and assessing these ideas.

Explain how product management includes collecting, triaging and prioritizing ideas. One of the key skills of product management is knowing why to say yes and when to say no. Cover multiple approaches for idea filtering.

2.3.2 Outcome-Oriented Roadmaps

It's important for product roadmaps to be aligned to outcomes. This requires a shift from a feature roadmap to an outcome-oriented roadmap. Outcome-oriented roadmaps help create context for everyone involved with the product.

Introduce a range of outcome-oriented planning approaches (e.g. user story mapping) to create a product roadmap and show how these allow adaptation based on feedback.

2.4 DEFINING A RELEVANT PRODUCT

2.4.1 Design Approach

There are many different approaches for defining what can and will be built in a product.

Provide an overview of why and when to use different approaches (e.g., design thinking, human-centered design, service design, lean startup, build measure learn).

2.4.2 Designing Hypothesis Tests and Experiments

Rapid learning is a key competency in the uncertain world of product discovery. It's imperative to design good experiments (e.g. frame hypotheses, make them measurable, test for customer behavior) to maximize learnings.

Introduce various techniques that are used for experimenting with product features and capabilities and for prototyping products at various levels of fidelity (e.g., formative design versus summative design). Introduce when and how to bring customers into the prototyping process. Demonstrate how good experiments are designed and how to choose a technique to run the experiment that is appropriate for the design.

2.4.3 Iterating on Feedback from the Market

Product management includes collecting, assessing, deciding, and responding to feedback as appropriate.

Explain the importance of keeping a pulse on the market, capturing feedback, deciding if/how to respond to feedback, and responding to feedback. Deciding if/how to respond is often more important than simply responding (e.g. true customer centricity is not responding by just giving the customer what they ask for).

3. PRODUCT TEAMS

3.1 WORKING WITH PRODUCT TEAMS

3.1.1 Cross-functional Teams

There are many possible structures for product teams, and the ideal state is where the team has true end-to-end ownership and accountability of all aspects of product development and delivery.

Compare and contrast different product team approaches with their advantages and disadvantages. Show why end-to-end, cross functional teams are an ideal state.

3.1.2 Teams Across the Product Lifecycle

As the product moves through the product lifecycle, the structure and composition of the product team will evolve.

Show how products in different stages of their lifecycle need different competencies and approaches from the team members. Identify and address common pitfalls and anti-patterns (e.g. BAU team where products go to get neglected, mercenary teams, and the silo structure). Cover the transition from launch to operations.

3.1.3 Slicing the Product

As products become more complex, there is a need to bring in structures to support scaling and partitioning the work without impacting the ability to adapt and respond to market changes. Slicing the product should focus on value and not only on analytical or technology-driven approaches.

Introduce ways to partition a product optimized for value delivery as opposed to execution.

SPECIAL THANKS

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