

Transition from project to product management: Key skills you should have for success

No one becomes a product manager overnight, not even a project manager. Transitioning from a project- to a product-focused career is a process that is necessary for one to keep up with rapidly changing consumers and markets. Most project managers switch to product management because they want to be in a more strategic role and have a more significant impact on their company. Also, they may feel that bringing products into the market can be exciting and fun. Good news is, it is not a complete change altogether.

Steps needed to transition from a

project to a product management career

As a project manager, you might have some of the skills and experiences needed to be a product manager. However, it will require you to learn many other skills that you might not have acquired in your career as a project manager. Therefore, a step in the direction of product management is a step into a new career path. Before making a switch or transition, you ought to ask yourself if you are comfortable assigning the day to day logistical tasks of product development to someone else. The steps needed include:

List out your project management skills

Here, you document your project management knowledge concerning human resources, integration, budgeting, quality assurance, quality control, communications, project scope, and time management.

Compare your project management skills and tasks with that of product management

This means understanding the similarities and differences between project and product management correctly. Project management is a different ball game compared to product management. Making a transition from one to another means a change in value, priorities, risks, and teams. You will need to go through your project management skills and note the initiation, execution, and monitoring skills that may apply to product management.

Similarities between project and product management

The similarities between project and product management will help one transition from the former to the later smoothly. And they include:

Track-keeping: Being trained to keep track of the progress, deadline, and timeline of a project. This means taking note of potential obstacles or risks that might affect the project.

Excellent communication skills: The skill of writing and relating to others is one that you will require in your transitioning from Project to Product Management. As a project manager, you wrote updates, emails, and implementation documents with or without paper writing service reviews. You also managed and worked with a team of persons that made the work go well. Though you will not write practically the same things, and the roles and priorities differ, the ability to work with a team and motivate them in the same direction is one that will always be useful. For example, that could improve websites ratings.

Risks: It is the responsibility of a project manager to eliminate and manage

risk. The manager should also be skilled in staying calm even in the face of a disaster. This does not change when one transitions. Instead of managing risks due to a project, the product manager manages its risks before it gets to market.

Other skills similar to both PMs include strategic planning, human resources, and budget planning.

Differences between project and product management

Product management involves managing a product such as an e-commerce site while project management involves one of a series of projects involved in that product's lifetime. The product manager tells the team what to build, and the project manager tells them how to make it. However, a product manager's role differs depending on the company and the job description given to it by the company. The differences one might encounter as he/she transitions from project to product management are:

Timelines: The life cycle of a project has a determined completion date. The project manager focuses on the part of building a product or delivering an update. Once the project is done, the manager can rejoice in a job well done and start imagining the change a new project will bring and the new sets of team he/she will have to work with.

However, the timeline of a product does not often have a fixed date and does not have a defined process. The product manager is in it for the long term. He/she has to manage the product concept, design, delivery, launch, updates, customer service, and decommissioning. The work involves long term planning, and you may need to get used to the flexibilities of a continually changing product roadmap and the unpredictability of the evolving timeline.

Success: The project manager is not responsible for the overall success of the product. They are connected to the business through the scope, timing, and budget for their project. And after that, their work is done. Project management skills relate to organisational and strategic planning; however, product management skills relate to marketing products.

Visibility: Project managers often have little knowledge of the customer and lack excellent data-gathering and interpretation skills. As they have more contact with end-users, product managers, and leaders need to master the politics of building relationships internally while getting the work done.

Other skills relevant to product management alone are team management, product profitability analysis, product positioning, and target marketing.

Find out if being a product manager is the right move for you

Here, you have to understand the role and responsibilities of a product manager. A product manager needs to understand his/her customers' problems and help solve them. He/she also needs to be comfortable with the product to make needful decisions in its design. The role of a product manager:

Product development: The product management model involves using Agile software development methods such as Scrum and Sprints. Agile product management is the idea of setting product strategy and creating product roadmaps in an agile environment. These models help the product manager to focus on the speed of delivery.

Product strategy

Product discovery

Product design

Critical skills necessary to ensure the success of a transition into product management

Learn about the business you want to become a product manager for. Try to build your knowledge of the industry you are in.

Learn about analytics such as Omniture, Google Analytics, or the tools specific to your company. Take a product management course and learn from others. Get to know your company's customers and understand their problems.

Use your project management experience and other skills to manage, analyse, select, and develop products for your company. Here, you choose a product to start with and try what you have learnt. Transitioning can take from a few months to a few years as it involves significant changes. So it is wise to start small so that the team have enough time to learn and evolve.

The transition to product management is an exciting and great opportunity. Note that project managers do not always make good product managers despite how attractive product management may seem. The person should see product management as a new career path instead of an extension of project management if he/she has to be successful in it.

