



Introduction to Product Management

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COURSE DESCRIPTION

Product management is a fast growing field born out of the need for a single person or small team of people within an organization to own the entirety of the end-to-end production process while also understanding and reconciling product decisions with business needs. This course focuses specifically on digital product management and is intended as a primer for those interested in a product management career or those with a general interest in how technology products are made. Those who want to play at the intersection of technology, business, and management are often well-suited for product management, a role that is often referred to as “CEO of the product”. This course is aimed at those without a strong technical background who want to develop the knowledge and skills to get a leg up when founding or joining a technology company.

COURSE LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. Understanding and Owning “Product”

Product is something that transcends any given iteration and is more akin to a brand: it is a living, changing thing that evolves over time. We will explore how products are different than brands and also different than features, learn how they are created and maintained, and about how the product manager is the keeper of a product’s identity.

2. Digital Product Lifecycle

The product manager manages the process of creating a digital product from front to end, and as any product manager will tell you: there is no end. You will learn how digital products get built from conception to launch (and beyond) and the role of the product manager at each stage of the digital product lifecycle.

3. Product Management Fundamentals

You will learn the essentials of product management and actionable ways to drive not only a product, but a product team. We will also explore how the PM role functions within a larger organization, how the role differs from company to company, and what sorts of pertinent experience one needs in order to be hired as a product manager.

COURSE ROADMAP/SCHEDULE

DAY 1

What is product?

- What is a product?
- Products vs. features
- Products vs. brands
- How products survive over time
- Start with why

Digital Product Lifecycle

- Product lifecycle overview
- Software development fundamentals
- The product manager's role throughout
- Timelines, resources, budgets

DAY 2

Product Management Fundamentals Part 1

- Defining product management
 - Managing the product
 - Managing the process
 - Managing the team
 - Managing stakeholders

Product Management Fundamentals Part 2

- Minimally viable products
- Product/market fit
- KPIs and measuring success

Hands-On Projects

- In-class practical simulating real product management
- Simulated product teams with rotating PM designations
- Creating new products and/or improving existing products

DAY 3

Final Projects

- Given specific scenarios, what would you do as product manager?
 - Defend your product decisions to expert panel + Q&A with the class

ASSIGNMENTS/METHOD OF EVALUATION

Your grade for this course will be based on the following:

25% of your grade will be based on individual assignments throughout the course.

25% of your grade will be based on the final projects.

50% of your grade will be based on active participation, attendance, and attention during class lectures, discussions, and activities.

Participation

Coming to class, being attentive, and actively participating are expected and will account for half of your grade. Product management is a participatory discipline. Asking questions, challenging assumptions, and inspiring others are all part of the process. An active classroom will simulate what it is like to work on a product team.

REQUIRED COURSE MATERIALS

Throughout the sessions, various case studies, articles, videos, podcasts, and other materials will be assigned as required content to discuss in class.

CLASSROOM NORMS AND EXPECTATIONS

Because of the small number of sessions, attendance at all sessions is required. As they will take place in the evening, eating in class is allowed. No use of phones, tablets, wearables, computers, or other internet-enabled devices allowed in class. Active participation is encouraged.

INCLUSION, ACCOMMODATIONS, AND SUPPORT FOR STUDENTS

At Columbia Business School, we believe that diversity strengthens any community or business model and brings it greater success. Columbia Business School is committed to providing all students with the equal opportunity to thrive in the classroom by providing a learning, living, and working environment free from discrimination, harassment, and bias on the basis of gender, sexual orientation, race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, or ability. Students seeking accommodation in the classroom may obtain information on the services offered by Columbia University's Office of Disability Services online at www.health.columbia.edu/docs/services/ods/index.html or by contacting (212) 854-2388.