Introduction to Product Management (Digital and AI Products)

Course Introduction

Product managers are often referred to as CEO of the Product. It is largely due to the fact that they are responsible and accountable for the end to end product lifecycle from discovery to delivery; which implies orchestrating the research, design, positioning, development, and delivery. To be effective in this role, product managers must have a deep understanding of the user, the market, the data and the business including the different functions on which sometimes they depend and that they sometimes will have to rally to their vision.

This course is designed to provide you with a framework for understanding product management for digital and AI-backed products whether in large organizations or in young startups. The course covers some techniques and real world examples from experienced PMs in the industry. You will also have the chance to apply some of the concepts through group projects.

Course Schedule

Session 1 - What do successful PMs do?

In order to be successful product managers need to have a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities. They also need to have a good understanding of what constitutes a successful product team. An appreciation of the roles, structure and responsibilities of the product team is also beneficial for stakeholders.

This course lays the foundation for success in product management by explaining the “Product” discipline, exploring the different roles within a product team and zooming in on the product manager and his/her responsibilities.

Objectives:
- Explain the Product discipline and why it’s gained so much traction
- Understand what successful product teams have in common
- Focus on the PM role and responsibilities

Session 2 - Discover your users

Products can only be successful if they address the real needs of customers. Product managers must lead a team effort to research customer needs and propose products that address those opportunities in innovative ways.
This course will guide you through the steps that effective product managers take to propose a product, research the market, and identify and analyze specific needs that will inform the design process. After customer needs are identified, product managers must lead a team effort to decide how a new or revamped product can best meet those needs. They must translate customer insights into specific design ideas that they will test and iterate on in order to achieve product-market fit.

Objectives:
- Understand why knowing your users is important; and the risks of not knowing them
- Gain an appreciation of what achieving product-market fit requires
- Cover some discovery techniques to help achieve product market fit

**Session 3 - Discover your business model**

Once the product team has zeroed in on the user need (or the problem to be solved in larger, existing companies), Product managers need to establish priorities, formalize the product roadmap, vision and strategy. They must develop a convincing business case and win the support of stakeholders and/or investors.

This course will guide you through the iterative process to build a compelling business case and identifying remaining risks to be tackled. You will explore some ways and techniques to win buy-in for your product and develop a product vision and strategy.

Objectives:
- Explore discovery techniques to tackle feasibility risk
- Explore discovery techniques to tackle business viability risk
- How to get your team started and plan the effort

**Session 4 - Deliver your product**

When customer needs have been validated and major risks have been tackled (which is referred to as the discovery phase) actual development can begin. Further design iterations may be required to achieve a higher fidelity and gain a more detailed view of what should be developed by the engineers and data scientists.

This course will start you on the design and development process by going through some tools and techniques that are available to product managers. You will see how to develop prototypes of increasing precision. You will explore how to continuously seek and evaluate design feedback from customers. Finally, you will consider a range of development issues and best practices, including the use of sprints, the establishment of appropriate infrastructure and data collection.

Objectives:
- Explore some PM tools and techniques for product delivery
- Gain perspective into the challenges that are specific to deploying AI backed products
- Cover some engineering and data science best practices that will help you better understand their processes
Session 5 - Launch and Land your product

After a product has been developed, the product manager must bring it to market and manage the product life cycle as it evolves. The product team(s) must continuously experiment to sustain and improve the product over time and must take steps to retire the product or features at the right time.

This course will show you how to prepare for product launch through close coordination with key departments like marketing, operations, sales etc. You will explore techniques to continuously experiment, to build up to an effective mass product launch, and then track and manage the product in the market after launch. Finally, you will reflect on the challenges that product teams face at scale.

Objectives:
- Explore some tools and techniques to help you launch your product
- How to Land your product - the case for continuous experimentation to pivot or kill
- Explore some challenges, product teams face at scale

Session 6 - Final Group Presentations
- Group Exercise: Final group presentations

Assignments & Evaluation

Your grade for this course will be based on the following:
- 40% of your grade will be based on the final group presentations.
- 60% of your grade will be based on assignments, 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. User experience 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.