

**PRODUCT MANAGEMENT**  
**B8636 – Section 002**  
**Spring 2023, 3 Credits**

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Communications from professor and teaching assistants about the course will take place through Canvas.  
Students should make sure they regularly check for announcements and messaging notifications.

## 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 product development cycle, 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” but without direct control of most of the resources required to build and launch a successful product. Product managers must be proficient in a broad range of capabilities, and must lead through influence, not authority.

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 joining a technology company. This course is geared toward students that aim to work at medium to large sized companies as a product manager or leader, where firms are expected to innovate and launch new products and features as a means of ensuring they retain market relevance or expand into new markets based on current capabilities. We will cover the product development cycle from ideation to commercialization in that context. This course is not geared toward start-ups or new ventures, even if some of the concepts are applicable.

Students will get a strong understanding of what it means to be a product manager and its role in the organization. For those students who decide to put the skills learned from this class into practice, CBS offers a Digital Product Management Lab, a team based experiential class that partners with member companies to address “Problems to be Solved” that require fresh product development thinking. For those students that decide against moving into PM as a career, many of the concepts and approaches covered in this class will help students in whatever path they choose.

## STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

The discipline of Product Management is evolving, as evidenced by the plethora of blogs, articles, books and opinions from some of the most accomplished product managers and consultancies. The PM curriculum at CBS, including this introductory Product Management course, curates, organizes, and delivers the latest thinking as a foundation for students who aim to pursue careers in Product Management at medium to larger sized established firms. The specific objectives of the course are to:

- **Understand what it means to “own the 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 from brands and also different from features, learn how they are created and maintained, and about how the

product manager is the keeper of a product's identity. We will also explore how this role changes as product managers are promoted to lead product teams.

- **Learn strategies for leading across all stages of the 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. You will learn frameworks and strategies to understand proven approaches to spotting product opportunities, building and launching successful products, managing a product portfolio and managing the product life cycle, and exploring how the focus and strategies change based on size and maturity of the company and product.
- **Explore approaches to leading Product Management teams in complex environments.** 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. You will learn strategies, frameworks, and tactics for managing cross-functional teams and leading through influence, not authority.

## CLASSROOM NORMS AND EXPECTATIONS

### Core Culture

Students are expected to adhere to [CBS Core Culture](#) in this class by being Present, Prepared, Participating.

### Inclusion, Accommodation, and Support for Students

At Columbia Business School we believe diversity strengthens any community or business model and brings it greater success. The School is committed to providing all students with 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 with documented disabilities may receive reasonable accommodations. Students are encouraged to contact the Columbia University's Office of Disability Services for [information about registration](#).

Columbia Business School adheres to all community, state, and federal regulations as relate to Title IX and student safety. Read more about CBS' policies to support [Inclusion, Accommodations and Support for Students here](#).

### Honor Code and Academic Integrity

The [Columbia Business School Honor Code](#) calls on all members of the School community to adhere to and uphold the notions of truth, integrity, and respect both during their time in school,

and throughout their careers as productive, moral, and caring participants in their companies and communities around the world. All students are subject to the Honor Code for all of their academic work. Failure to comply with the Honor Code may result in [Dean's Discipline](#). Here you can review [examples of Academic Misconduct](#) which may result in discipline.

### **Course Attendance Policies**

Students from all programs should review and be familiar with the [MBA Core attendance policy here](#). Students are expected to be present in all class sessions, including the Lab Working sessions (typically the second meeting of the class in a given week). Failure to attend class will negatively impact participation grade.

### **Method of Evaluation**

Your overall grade will depend on the mix of individual and team assignments according to the following percentages:

Individual Participation	25%
Individual Assignments	25%
Final Group Project (written and presentation)	50%

Letter grades for the course will be assigned in accordance with Columbia Business School's recommended grade distribution for elective courses. There will be several "deliverables" to be turned in at various points in the course, but the class discussions and activities in the course and in discussion forums are very important aspects of the course and the learning experience.

**Coming to class, being attentive, and actively participating are expected. 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.**

Thus, grades will be based both on assignments that are turned in and on your performance in the classroom and off-site discussions.

**COURSE ROADMAP/SCHEDULE**

Throughout the sessions, various case studies, articles, videos, podcasts, and other materials will be assigned as required content to discuss in class. Throughout the course, students are expected to come to class prepared. This typically implies achieving a good understanding of the material covered in previous classes as well as of any assigned readings.

Session	Topic(s)	Required Pre-Readings	Assignments Due	Commented [1]: This assumes 12/13 weeks; 2 sessions per week; 1.5 hour sessions each. Combine classes as you see fit if 3 hour class meeting 1x per week or block week / weekend.
<b>MODULE 1: Introduction &amp; Defining Product Management</b> <i>Welcome to Product Management! In Module 1 we review the course schedule and expectations and align on the definition of a product and what a product manager does.</i>				
1	<b>Introduction</b> + Course Admin (schedule, participation, grading, etc) + Team project overview + Level Set - What is a product? How do products differ from features? Or brands?  <b>Defining Product Management</b> + What is a product manager? + Defining the role of PM: + CEO of the Product + Product management vs. project management, product marketing, program management? + Differences by size and type of company. + Product lifecycle - Overview of the full lifecycle (and roadmap for the class)			

**MODULE 2: Managing the Product**

*It's critical for PMs not to lose sight of their north star: building products that solve a clear user problem and their willingness to pay. More and more, across categories and bleeding into B2B and other categories, the products that delight users gain a competitive advantage over those that don't prioritize that aspect.*

*How does a PM actually get the job done? What tools does she need to understand and work with every day? We will explore some common processes for managing the product development throughout the cycle and some of the tools of the trade to make it easier.*

2	<p><b>Product Strategy</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>+ Product's role in aligning with company vision, mission and translating strategy into goals/objectives/tactics</li><li>+ Starting with customer "Why"</li><li>+ Starting with the business "Why"</li><li>+ Product Equation - fundamentals for driving growth</li><li>+ Communicating "strategy" internally (e.g., MRDs)</li></ul> <p><b>Product Discovery (0 to 1)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>+ Finding Opportunities (from customers, competitors, internal stakeholders, data trends, etc)</li><li>+ Customer centricity: building products around user needs;</li><li>+ "Lean" User Research</li></ul> <p>Qualitative &amp; Quantitative Methods (First Principles / Personas / Journey Maps / Empathy Maps / Hypothesis Statements</p>		
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3	<b>Product Discovery (After launch)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>+ Techniques for evaluating customer engagement in existing products to set priorities</li> <li>+ Test and learn: culture and practice</li> <li>+ How to use qualitative and quantitative research (0-1)</li> <li>+ Fundamentals of sound experiment design (e.g. AB-Testing)</li> <li>+ Finding Product/Market fit (and continually chasing market fit)</li> <li>+ Defining product success</li> <li>“Outcomes versus Outputs”</li> </ul>		
4	<b>Designing Great Products (3/3)</b>  <b>User Experience</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>+ Defining UX / UX vs. CX</li> <li>+ User-Centered Design Process</li> <li>+ UX as a Decision-Making Framework</li> <li>+ Principles of Great UX</li> <li>+ Application Definition Statements</li> <li>+ Fostering Empathy</li> </ul> <b>UX Roles</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>+ UX Research</li> <li>+ UX Design (Information Architecture; Interface, Interaction, Usability, Visual, Copywriting)</li> </ul>		
	<b>Designing Great Products (2/3)</b>  <b>UX as a Business Differentiator</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>+ Measuring UX</li> <li>+ Optimizing for Customer Advocacy</li> <li>+ Balancing UX Goals with Business Goals</li> <li>+ Creating a UX-Centric Strategy</li> </ul>		

5	<b>Designing Great Products (3/3)</b>  <b>Getting Feedback</b> + Prototyping (e.g. Wireframing, User Flows)  <b>Product Design</b> + Personalization + ML/AI + Visual Design / Common UI Elements / Branding + Designing for: Mobile, iPad, Desktop, OTT, VR/AR, Wearables, Other Devices		
	<b>Building Great Products (1/4)</b> + Software development fundamentals (SDKs, APIs, web tools, technical debt, Web 3.0, AI, VR/AR, etc)		

6	<b>Building Great Products (2/4)</b> + Prioritization - How to make tradeoffs in light of constrained resources			
	<b>Building Great Products (3/4)</b> + Building minimum viable products + Managing Development: What is “agile” and why is that better than (or similar to) the “waterfall” process			
	<b>Building Great Products (4/4)</b> + Task (project) management (and tools to help) + Communicating with x-functional teams (e.g. Roadmaps & PRDs): what they are (and aren't) and how to build and manage them			
	<b>Designing “Ethical” Products (1/2)</b> + (Self) regulating data access, collection and use in the context of privacy + safety and regulatory compliance.			
	<b>Designing “Ethical” Products (2/2)</b> + “Could” vs “Should” when developing products (creating addictive behaviors, influencing them)			

7	<b>Product Go-To-Market (1/2)</b> + Product Readiness + Required participants + Market & customer segmentation			
	<b>Product Go-To-Market (2/2)</b> + Setting KPIs & Goals (for who?) + Business (& pricing) model decisions + Sales & Marketing readiness			
8	<b>Managing Product Growth (1/2)</b> + Product-led growth: + user growth (increase share of market) + user engagement (increase share of wallet)			
	<b>Managing Product Growth (2/2)</b> + increase size of market			

### MODULE 3: Product Management Leadership

*More than just about any other role, the PM works across the entire organization, fielding multiple inputs and driving the firm forward. An examination of some of the critical connections and how to navigate them effectively.*

9	<b>Characteristics of a great PM</b> + Managing a 'product'		
	<b>Characteristics of a great PM Leader</b> + Portfolio management + Managing a 'product team'		
	<b>Leading through Influence, not authority</b>		
	<b>Stakeholder Management</b> + Working with engineering + Working with design + Working with marketing + Working with business + Working with legal + Working with finance + Working with leadership		

### Module 4: Getting a Product Management Job

*How to approach the application process and present yourself as an attractive candidate as well as key questions to ask.*

10	<b>Understanding the Landscape</b> + Differences between industries + Examination of product orgs / tech org structures + Typical roles, responsibilities, career ladders		
	<b>Getting the Job</b> + Resumes + Interview strategies + Building experience through internships, personal projects		

FLEX DAYS FOR TOPIC OF INTEREST (CAN HAPPEN AT ANY POINT DURING TERM) OR  USE FOR TEAM PRESENTATIONS			
11	Flex Day		
12	Final Group Presentations		