The State of B2B Product Management

An in-depth worldwide survey of B2B Product Management professionals

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Introduction

WHY THIS RESEARCH

There is a lack of quality research focused on the unique challenges of B2B product management, having access to data on the issues leaders and product managers face is essential to improving the craft and helping companies succeed.

THE SURVEY

We conducted a detailed survey (**8** sections, **45+** questions) in late 2025. We received **425** total responses - **220** answered every question, **205** completed a subset. Average completion time was **13.5 minutes**, indicating significant commitment from participants. We believe this is **the most detailed data set** on B2B Product Management available. We appreciate the time and insights shared by all participants!

WHAT WE DID

As consultants aiming to help business and product leaders improve, we conducted the survey, analyzed the responses and are sharing this data with the community. We hope this provides some insights to help those looking to improve not only product practices, but product and business success overall.

Need more info? Want to speak to us?

A SUBSET OF THE FULL DATA

This report contains a subset of the collected data, covering all areas surveyed, but showing curated highlights of both the quantitative and qualitative data.

PRESENTING TO YOUR COMPANY/ORGANIZATION

We are available to present to your company, community, or organization for a deeper dive into the full findings and insights and to recommend changes to help improve your teams and products.

A MORE DETAILED REPORT

A more detailed, in-depth report covering all 45+ questions in all sections, including breakouts by response and thematic analysis of all comments from all participants is available for purchase.

Please email us at info@b2bproduct.io for more details.
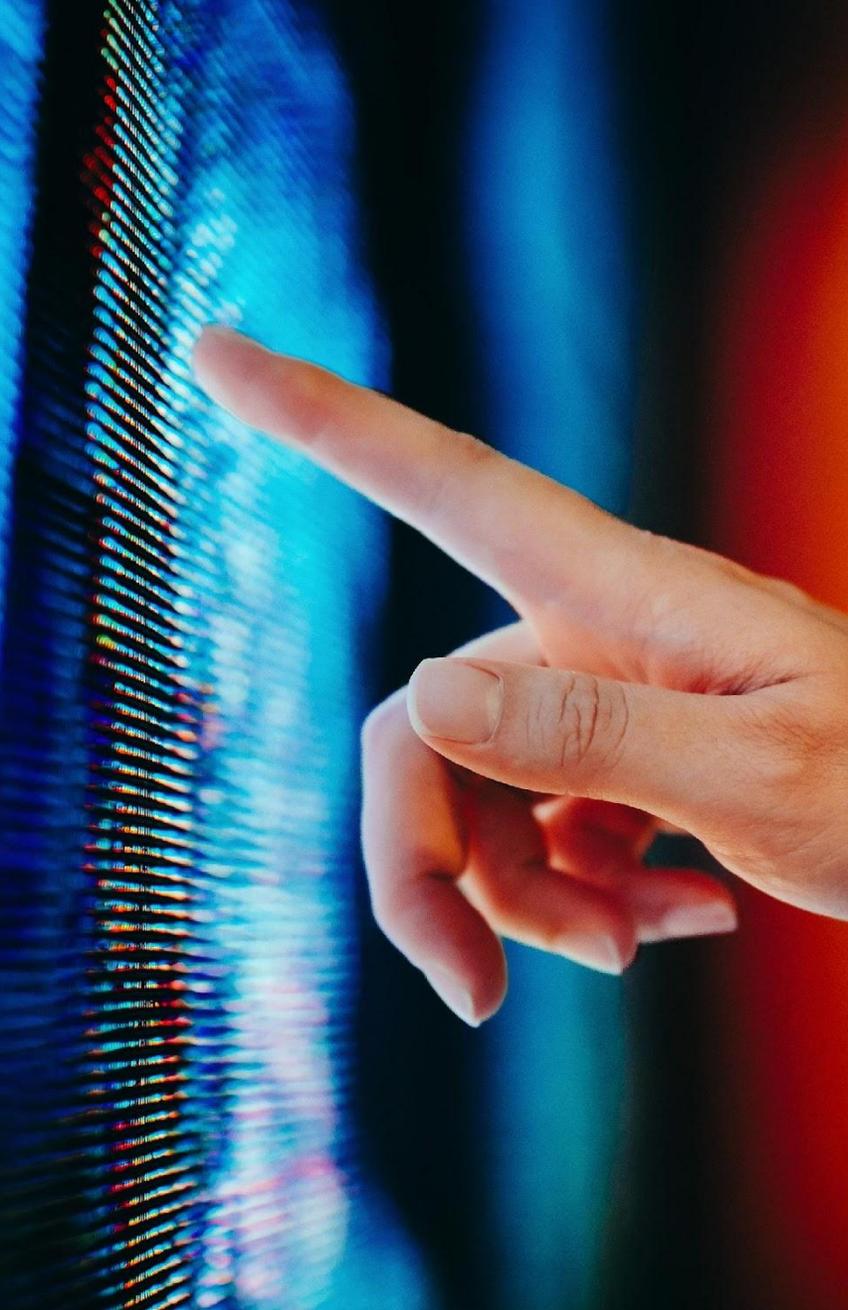
Key Findings

1 — **Strategy is frequently sidelined by operational reactivity.** Short-term sales demands often override formal product vision and long-term planning.

2 — **A significant disconnect exists between Product Leaders and their teams.** Individual contributors report a much lower level of satisfaction with leadership than leaders perceive.

3 — **Product discovery remains under-prioritized.** User-centric validation is still frequently bypassed in favor of executive intuition and sales pressure.

4 — **AI adoption is high, but opportunities remain.** Teams are leveraging AI for routine tasks, but there are still plenty of opportunities to go deeper in the right areas.

5 — **There is positivity about Product Management.** Despite industry skepticism, there is widespread optimism regarding the evolving role of Product Management.

About the Participants

Survey Responses by Geography

The State of B2B Product Management

North America 30%

Europe 50%

Asia 8%

Middle East + Africa 2%

Latin America 1%

Oceania 9%

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50% Europe | **30%** North America | **9%** Oceania | **8%** Asia | **2%** Mid East / Africa | **1%** Latin America

Survey participants by role

50% **Individual Contributors**
e.g. Product Manager, Sr. Product Manager, Product Owner, etc.

8 years
average experience

45% **Managers / Leaders**
e.g. Head of Product, Director Product Management, Chief Product Officer, VP of Product, etc.

13 years
average experience

5% **Others**
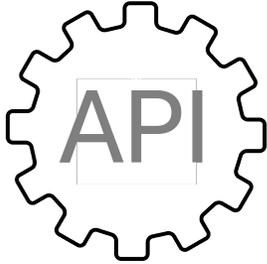*e.g. Advisors, Consultants, etc.*

Types of Products Managed

% of survey participants by product type

88%

External Products

29%

API Products
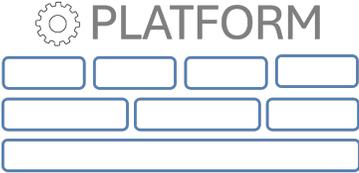
25%

Platform Products
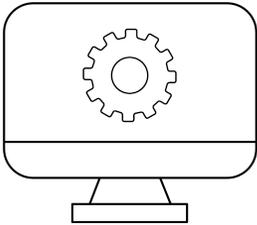
38%

Internal Products

Note: The total exceeds 100% because survey participants could select more than one response.

Company Type

"Established companies" were described as stable growth, working on profitability and efficiency

% of survey respondents by company stage

COMPANY STAGE	SHARE OF RESPONDENTS	
Scale-up		37%
Established Company		25%
Public Company		12%
Enterprise		11%
Startup		11%
Pre-Product Startup		2%
Other		1%
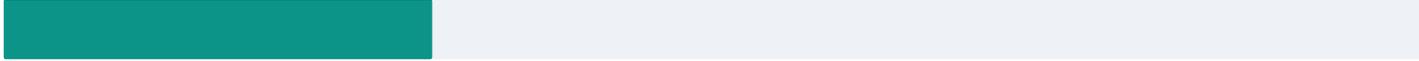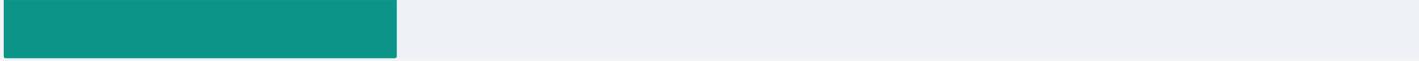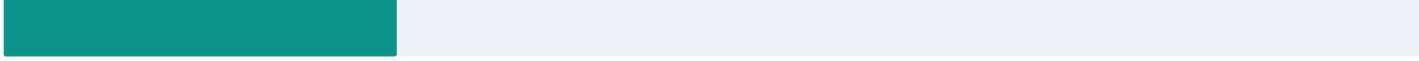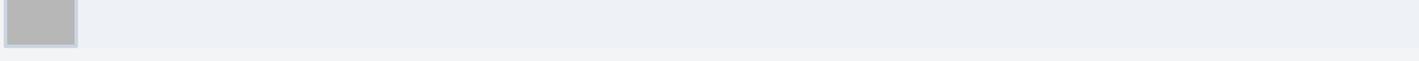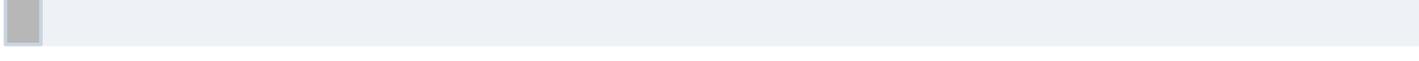
Product Culture

The State of B2B Product Management

Product Culture

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1 **RESEARCH FOCUS**

Our research explored the product culture within B2B companies, specifically investigating how Product Managers and Leaders allocate their time and identifying areas where they desire change.

2 **THE HYPOTHESIS**

Based on prior indications of existing discrepancies between these two groups, that there are differences in how IC product managers perceive product leadership compared to how product leaders perceive their teams.

3 **KEY FINDINGS**

The findings are compelling, revealing clear gaps between ICs and Leaders, and showing significant opportunities for improvement in optimizing the effectiveness of Product organizations.

IC PMs: Where they want to spend MORE time

82%   Analyzing product usage data

81%   Conducting user research & discovery

73%   Working with leadership (strategy, planning etc.)

68%   Performing competitor / market analysis

51%   Working on the product roadmap

51%   Working with commercial stakeholders

KEY FINDINGS

IC PMs overwhelmingly want to spend more time doing **ACTUAL** high-value product management work - data analysis, discovery, stakeholder management, etc.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Product leaders need to create the conditions to let PMs do the important work they know needs to be done. Talk to your teams and management and identify blockers and the best path forward.

IC PMs: Where they want to spend **LESS** time

56% Overseeing development work, standups etc.

46% Sprint planning & backlog management

33% Writing/refining epics/stories/PRDs

> " *Leadership focuses too much on delivery, we sell our development teams to build feature requests or use them to solve problems for our biggest customers.*

KEY FINDINGS

IC PMs want to spend less time in delivery mode - overseeing dev, planning sprints and writing requirements. For many PMs this is the majority of their work and blocks them from doing more valuable tasks.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Product leaders should work with Engineering leadership to see how PMs can reduce the time they spend in dev-related work. Both Product Management & Engineering need to solve this together.

Where IC PMs want to spend MORE of their time

Analyzing Product Usage Data

" *Actual deep dives into the data to see how the product is being used. I rely on customers telling me now.*

" *More analyzing of data. Our customer data is a mess. Our product is a mature product and was never built with proper analysis in mind.*

Conducting User Research & Discovery

" *Trying to engage with potential customers more to understand their actual challenges and how we could help solve it.*

" *Discovering the right thing to build, not just building what we're told to (even if we do argue about it first).*

Working with Leadership

" *Interact with executives... Think.*

" *For B2B product mgmt to work, there needs to be cooperation between leadership, engineering, sales, and product. I believe it's highly uncommon for that many departments to cooperate constructively.*

Performing Competitor / Market Analysis

" *market analysis, product research, collaborative discovery.*

" *Investigate other business opportunities (0->1) with others that can dig into the details.*

Product Leaders: Where they want to spend MORE time

70% Setting product vision and strategy
70%

62% Driving product discovery practices
62%

59% Aligning product strategy with company goals
59%

57% Reviewing product investments and business cases
57%

51% Coaching and mentoring product team members
51%

KEY FINDINGS

Leaders, not surprisingly, want to spend MORE time defining vision/strategy and support their teams in various ways. Interestingly, leaders want to drive discovery practices, and ICs want to do more discovery. Seems like an easy win.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Leaders should step back and identify what is blocking them from spending more time in these areas, and work to systematically remove those barriers. Speak with company leadership and make the needed changes.

Product Leaders: Where they want to spend LESS time

50% Managing resource allocation across teams

50%
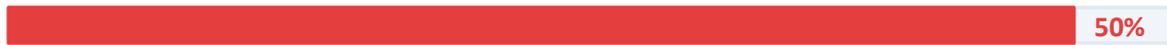
38% Managing stakeholder and executive relationships

38%

32% Ensuring execution against product strategy

32%

31% Monitoring team performance and engagement

31%

KEY FINDINGS

We were surprised that "Managing resource allocation across teams" was such a common issue. It's likely a symptom of other issues such as regularly changing priorities, being project vs. product focused, or cross-team dependencies.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Product leaders should work with Engineering leadership and identify why resource allocation is such a challenge and see if there are other organizational solutions to the problem.

Where Product Leaders spend a lot of their time

Executive Management & Internal Politics

" *Dealing with the CCO - prefer to do less. He's anti to everything good about our culture.*

" *Dealing with Internal Politics and power game.*

" *Managing the crazy founder/owner/CEO.*

Firefighting & Support Escalations

" *A lot of firefighting on Engineering teams, CX escalations... Would love to skip most of it.*

" *Tier 1 support and customer escalations.*

" *Firefighting, curve balls, 'quick question'. All things I prefer to spend less time on.*

Corporate Governance

" *Building/Maintaining relationships with investors... Board meetings preparation*

" *M&A activities... Getting internal funding for new initiatives. Effectively internal pitches outside of the normal product budgeting*

Sales and Revenue Support

" *Meeting with prospects that are referrals of executives for early qualification and demos*

" *I act as the executive sponsor for enterprise deals*

Where Product Leaders want to spend MORE time

> " Dig more on data, shadow more customers, participate more on the competitive analysis team.

> " I want to focus more on industry thought-leadership, public speaking/engagements, customer meetings and sales calls. We just aren't there yet.

> " Own product pricing, integrations partners, have a seat at corporate client meetings.

> " Building new products, building company-wide product strategy.

> " More in depth data analysis, dashboarding of user behavior, basically deep dive into data which I don't get time to do.

> " Defining better operational mechanisms for my team, deeper career development plans, thinking deeply (and realistically) about how to leverage LLMs in product workflows and tasks (upskilling).

> " Team culture building i.e. offsites, forming a customer advisory board.

> " More AI experimentation.

Leader vs IC PM Perceptions

We had some anecdotal information about gaps between expectations of ICs on their leaders, and the leaders' view of the work they were doing.

We wanted to dig into this further and asked two parallel questions:

To leaders we asked:
*"How much do you agree/disagree with each of the following statements about **your role** as a product leader?"*
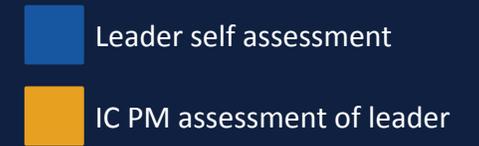
To ICs we asked:
*"How much do you agree/disagree with each of the following statements **about your product leadership team** as a whole?"*

The results are striking.

Leader self assessment vs. IC PM assessment of Leader

■ Leader self assessment
■ IC PM assessment of leader

Delta

+43%
Sets a clear vision and product strategy
- 76%
- 33%

+54%
Aligns teams around shared goals and priorities
- 88%
- 34%

+57%
Enables effective prioritization across teams and product areas
- 79%
- 22%

+44%
Fosters ownership, decision making and a customer centric culture
- 86%
- 40%

+48%
Removes cross-functional blockers and advocates for the product org.
- 82%
- 34%

+53%
Invests in people through mentorship, feedback and career development
- 78%
- 25%

KEY FINDINGS
There is a **very large difference** in how product leaders view their performance vs. how IC PMs do. The gaps range between **44%** and **57%** - a clear problem in expectations and reality that should be addressed by leaders with their teams.

RECOMMENDATIONS
Leaders should speak to their teams and understand if these gaps exist and how big they are. This requires a psychologically safe environment. Pick a non-controversial area to start the discussion and work outward from there, implementing changes and assessing progress as you go.

The biggest problems for B2B product teams

% of respondents who ranked each problem serious or a 5-alarm fire

	PROBLEM	DESCRIPTION	QUOTE
49%	**Overemphasis on Delivery over Strategy**	Teams are trapped in a cycle of shipping features to meet deadlines rather than focusing on market differentiation or long-term value.	*"Every major launch has to have a due date - project management instead of product management kills morale."*
45%	**Gaps in Product Skills and Leadership Capability**	There is a perceived deficit in foundational product skills and reliance on "domain-expert" leadership.	*"Get someone in the product leadership that knew about setting up product orgs for success and whom the CEO could delegate in making the right product choices."*
40%	**Poor Prioritization and Decision-Making Discipline**	Roadmaps are frequently bypassed for short-term revenue gains or "knee-jerk reactions" to competitive pressure.	*"We use RICE and then leadership throws it out and decides."*
40%	**Lack of Clear Goals and Alignment with Business Strategy**	Without a "North Star," teams struggle to justify trade-offs and focus areas.	*"The company has no vision. My only goal is grow revenue."*
35%	**Weak or Untrusted Product Processes**	Ad-hoc processes for discovery and validation lead to wasted engineering effort and "unbiased customer feedback" being replaced by anecdotal whims.	*"Discovery right now is based on hunches not data that impacts the business."*

How to to Improve Product Culture

> " *Clearer business strategy. It is generally assumed that the product strategy will align with the business strategy, but when that is unclear or not in place it can fall on product to drive strategy, while managing stakeholders internally.*

> " *The exec understanding that product managers currently asking for help is a result of the lack of strategic clarity. Either go with their strategy or fill the gap yourself but stop undermining my team.*

> " *More emphasis on vision and strategy to create better products for the market versus only execution on what is directly in front of them.*

> " *Create a company mission, vision and stick to it. Craft product vision around it. And then drive strategy and roadmap from it.*

> " *Focusing on delivering outcomes of the product strategy rather than the whatever client request will immediately drive revenue.*

> " *Make my product managers more in-depth and less shallow... Make them to write things on their own instead of being lazy and relying on ChatGPT.*

> " *Ability to take risk, innovate and experiment. Better processes to help turn insights into options, into solutions for testing.*

> " *Setting clear product goals and measuring the team's progress towards them.*

Vision & Objectives

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Product Vision & Objectives

1 **RESEARCH FOCUS**

Vision and Objectives define where a company wants to go and what it wants to achieve. These are the why and the what for any product organization and align teams on the work they do. We wanted to understand how much focus there is on vision and objectives in companies.

2 **THE HYPOTHESIS**

Far too often, vision is undefined or not clearly understood by all, and product objectives are ambiguous, disconnected from business goals or not defined at all This often creates problems for product teams.

3 **KEY FINDINGS**

The participants are clear that both Vision and Objectives are important and that they want to see more focus on them, and they should not be given lip service or be part of theatre. The problems are more acute for individual contributors, leading to questions about whether they know where they are going with their products.

Comparing Leaders and IC PM views on Vision

Delta

+11%

I have a clear understanding of the overall vision for my company

- Leaders: 53%
- IC PMs: 42%

+10%

The leadership team is aligned on the overall company vision

- Leaders: 46%
- IC PMs: 36%

+14%

I have a clear understanding of the vision for the products I work on

- Leaders: 74%
- IC PMs: 60%

+13%

Other teams (Sales, Marketing etc.) are aligned on the vision of the products

- Leaders: 37%
- IC PMs: 23%

+6%

We are stubborn on vision, flexible on details

- Leaders: 30%
- IC PMs: 24%

KEY FINDINGS

In every category, leaders are **MORE** positive than IC PMs.

Note that with one exception, fewer than **50%** of IC PMs agreed with the statements, and in the last **2** items, only about **25%** of ICs agreed. That's problematic.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Assess the state of these questions in your org or company, as well as the gap between leaders and ICs. Is there alignment on the vision? Are other teams aligned? Look for signs that people are misaligned (awareness, understanding, relevance etc.) and work to share and explain the vision. This is the first step in driving alignment.

How to Improve Product Vision

> " *Define a vision for products first. Vision usually comes from the top. Without a vision, there was no North Star for the products. We were just winging it for the next few quarters.*

> " *Having the founders actually phrase a vision, that is not "making more money" or would deserve that name.*

> " *Don't get desperate when growth is slow, but stick to our plan. We review quarterly, so can adjust course if necessary, but sometimes a big shiny, but wrong opportunity, derails things.*

> " *Being focused on the creation and communication and advocation of one, rather than immersing themselves needlessly in trivial things and sitting on the fence when clear decisions are required.*

> " *Coherent succinct vision would enable a long term scoping of objectives and products.*

> " *Knee jerk reactions to opportunities outside of our ICP and focus areas based on ARR.*

> " *Keep the language we use consistent; resist the urge to change messaging every quarter despite the overall narrative not changing.*

> " *I have set vision and objectives for my product team but these exist in a vacuum of the wider business' intent.*

Product Leaders and IC PM views on Objectives
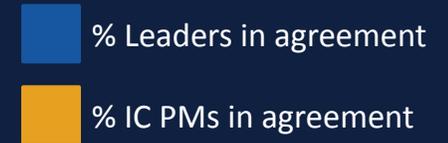
Delta

+21%

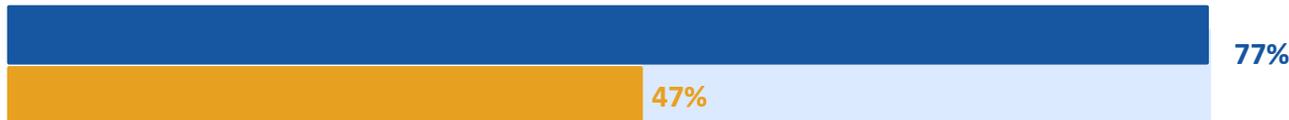### I have clear product and business objectives to guide my work
58%
37%

+27%

I understand how our product goals align with company strategy
70%
43%

+30%

My team is aligned on objectives we're working towards
77%
47%

+11%

I use our objectives to guide decisions, trade-offs and prioritization
72%
61%

+11%

We regularly adjust objectives based on changes in strategy or the market
53%
42%

KEY FINDINGS
Similar to the Vision statements, there is a significant difference between how Leaders view objectives vs. IC PMs. Also the agreement from IC PMs is low (only 37% agree they have clear business and product objectives).

RECOMMENDATIONS
Identify whether these differences exist in your organization, and whether they are simply communication problems or deeper issues, e.g. if there are unclear objectives, then give the teams objectives to work towards. Honest investigation and discussion is needed here.

How to Improve Objectives

> *Be more disciplined about objectives in the executive team, not a different set of objectives every few months.*

> *Write down and socialize the vision and objectives and how we want to achieve it.*

> *I'd like leadership to be clearer on the company's objectives and communicate them effectively and frequently.*

> *Stick to them. The objectives change too frequently to drive anything beyond the short term.*

> *Change how we consider OKRs. I think we should focus on fewer OKRs and not business as usual.*

> *Have quarterly planning to review product alignments with company objectives and not change priorities day by day.*

> *Having more open discussions between executive team and product managers about shifts in business objectives.*

> *More direct relationships and shorter feedback loops between product and GTM objectives.*

Strategy & Roadmaps

The State of B2B Product Management

Strategy & Roadmaps

1 **RESEARCH FOCUS**

Strategy and Roadmaps should be intrinsically tied together. A roadmap is a time based expression of a strategy. We knew this was an area of concern for many product people and wanted to dig into the details to better understand the challenges.

2 **THE HYPOTHESIS**

These two topics are core to Product Management work, but both terms are often misunderstood and misused, and in practice, ignored; particularly strategy, leading to unclear goals and difficulty in prioritization.

3 **KEY FINDINGS**

The survey participants are clear that both Strategy and Objectives are important and more focus is needed. IC PMs need to play a more meaningful role in strategy and roadmap development, and they need to be better connected to business objectives.

Leaders & IC PM views on Strategy & Roadmaps
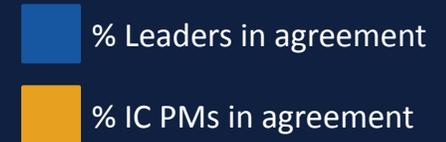
Delta

+15%

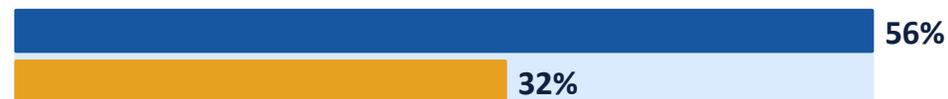**I understand both my company's and my product's overall strategy**

65%

50%

+22%

I play a meaningful role in shaping the strategy for the product(s) I work on

85%

63%

+24%

Our product roadmaps are tied to clear objectives and strategic goals

56%

32%

+16%

Our roadmaps balance delivery commitments with longer-term strategic direction

53%

37%

+5%

Our product plans are sometimes changed due to sales-driven commitments

79%

74%

KEY FINDINGS

Leaders clearly have more understanding of strategy than ICs. It is striking how few ICs feel that roadmaps are tied to clear objectives and goals, or that short-term delivery is balanced with strategic direction. Overall, it is clear that Sales still holds veto power over roadmaps in a majority of organizations.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Leaders need to do a better job bridging company and product strategy, and ICs need to do more to understand the why. B2B PMs need to get much closer to the Sales team, and put a more structured approach in place to handle escalations and deal-based decision-making.

What type of Roadmap format do you use?
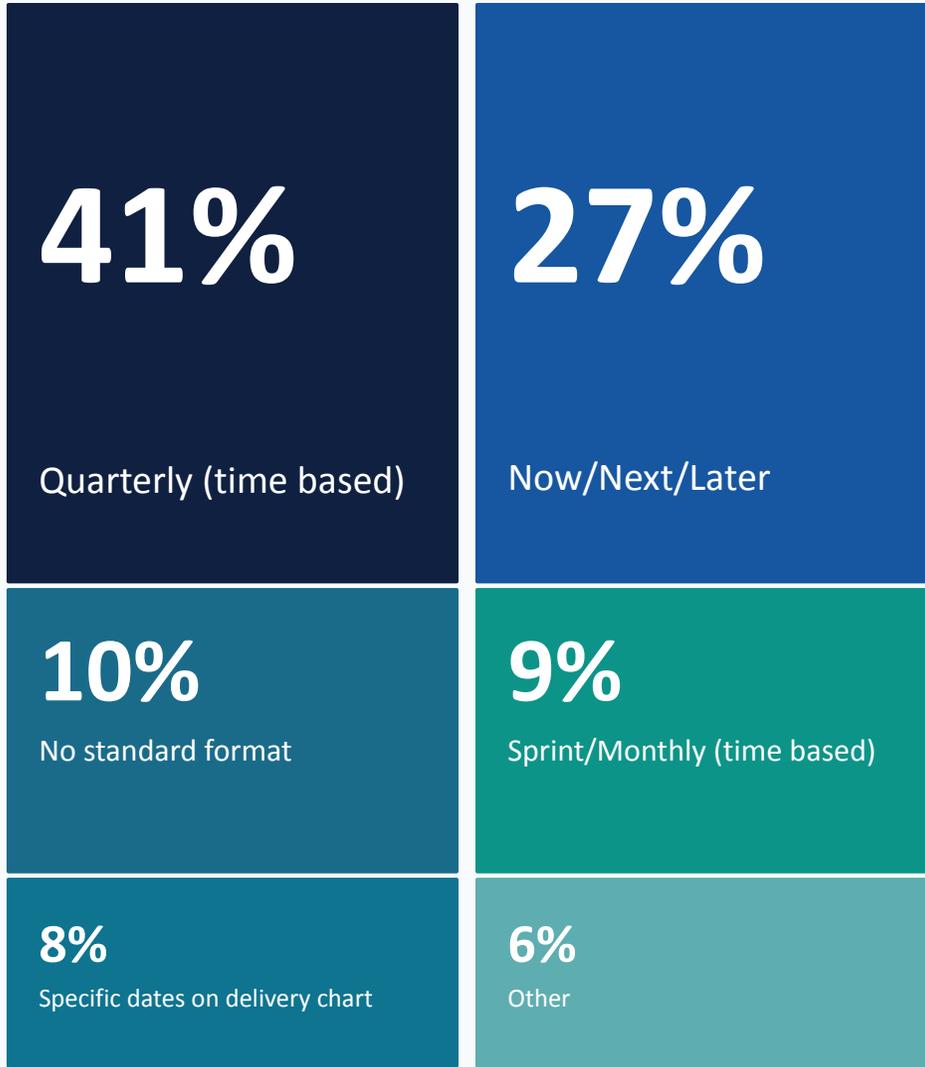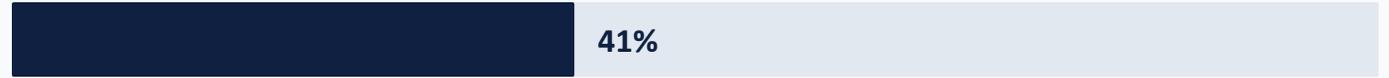
41%
Quarterly (time based)

27%
Now/Next/Later

10%
No standard format

9%
Sprint/Monthly (time based)

8%
Specific dates on delivery chart

6%
Other

Quarterly (time based)
41%

Now/Next/Later
27%

No standard format
10%

Sprint/Monthly (time based)
9%

Specific dates on delivery chart
8%

Other (e.g. Rolling, Yearly, SAFE style, monthly/quarterly, no format etc.)
6%

How to Improve Strategy and Roadmaps

> *Establish ownership of who is responsible for the creation, maintenance and communication of the roadmap.*

> *Stop making everything a priority and derailing the plans for the quarter every week.*

> *Setting a roadmap based on clear business strategy and objectives, being proactive instead of reactive and focusing on outcomes instead of output.*

> *More of a Now/Next/Later with a blend of key results and date driven outcomes not just delivery time based.*

> *We have a cultural obsession with efficiency - doing the most with our teams vs. recognizing where we need to make "slow and steady" commitments vs. put our attention and efforts into a strategic bet.*

> *Better understanding that we should be selling our product based on what it can do today, not based on the future. Sales committing to feature X to get a sale with Company Y is not a strategy.*

> *Abandon clear losers and focus on the vision, strategies and products having the most market success.*

> *Less time spent on the ceremony of planning / revising strategy. Our current process is overly complex and somewhat disconnected from the reality of our budgets.*

Discovery & Prioritization

The State of B2B Product Management

Discovery & Prioritization

1 **RESEARCH FOCUS**

Discovery and prioritization are core ongoing Product Management tasks and impact everything downstream, from strategy, development, GTM etc. We wanted to dig into the details to understand the reality of these two topics.

2 **THE HYPOTHESIS**

Many companies do both of these poorly or inefficiently. This then affects all teams, their work, their culture, their job satisfaction and more.

3 **KEY FINDINGS**

Over 50% of participants reported limited access to customers, and even fewer ICs have sufficient time to do customer research at all. This leaves product management teams reliant on second-hand information, top-down decision-making and prone to short-term thinking.

Comparing Leaders and IC PM views on Discovery
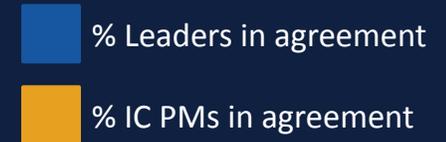
Delta

I have easy access to customers to do user research and discovery

48%	(Leaders)
45%	(IC PMs)

+3%

I have sufficient time to do the user research and discovery I need to do in order to make informed product decisions

30%	(Leaders)
25%	(IC PMs)

+5%

I have the needed training to do product discovery effectively

49%	(Leaders)
43%	(IC PMs)

+6%

My company values customer and market research and encourages us to do it to make better product/business decisions

40%	(Leaders)
31%	(IC PMs)

+9%

A lot of product decisions are made by leadership, and Product Management is mostly there to implement those requests

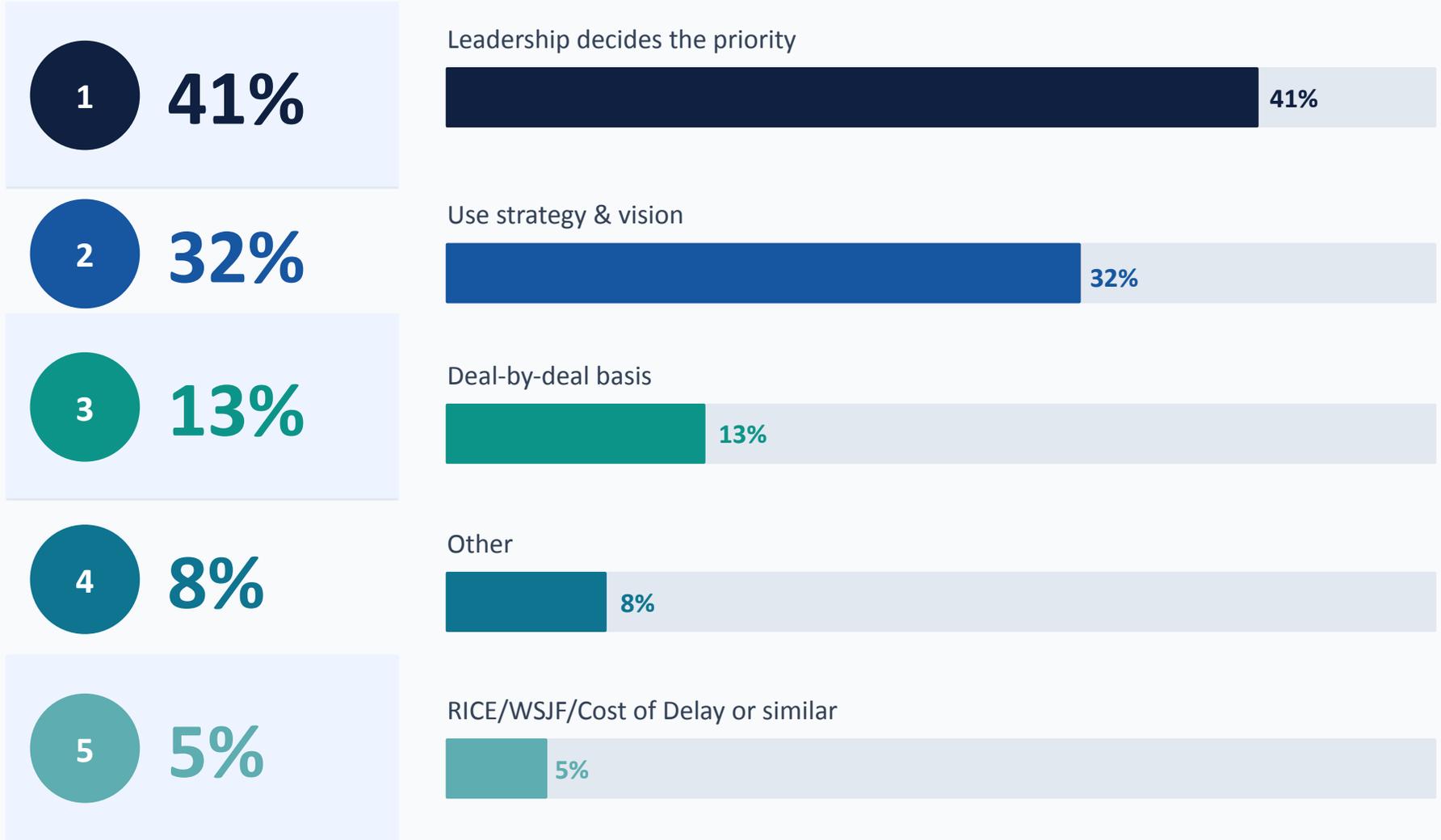|	
37%	(Leaders)
53%	(IC PMs)

-16%

KEY FINDINGS
There was far less distinction between IC & Leader views in this section than in others with the exception of the perception of where product decisions were made. **51%** of IC PMs viewed leadership as the "deciders" whereas only **37%** of Leaders saw it that way.

RECOMMENDATIONS
The very low score for "sufficient time to do discovery" is something that both ICs and Leaders noted & is something leaders should address in their organizations. There's no point having access to customers, if there's no time to connect with them and learn.

Prioritization Method for Large Initiatives

1 | **41%**
2 | **32%**
3 | **13%**
4 | **8%**
5 | **5%**

Leadership decides the priority

41%

Use strategy & vision

32%

Deal-by-deal basis

13%

Other

8%

RICE/WSJF/Cost of Delay or similar

5%

KEY FINDINGS

We were pleased to see "Use strategy & vision" score reasonably highly, but a clear majority of organizations are still operating through top-down decision-making and sales-led, deal-driven prioritization.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Leaders need to do a better job of giving the context behind decision-making, and ensure that prioritization is balanced between deal specifics and longer-term strategy, objectives and vision.

How to Improve Discovery and Prioritization

" *Discovery right now is based on hunches not data that impacts the business; therefore much of the strategic direction is top-down vs. bottom-up.*

" *Get useful input from commercial teams instead of just the one thing they need for the next prospect.*

" *To follow a strategy-based approach. I am new in my role, am strongly pushing for this approach, and am starting to see the support for it.*

" *Less about today's sales and more tied to an actual strategy.*

" *Product managers need to do more discovery and share the results more often to foster a market centric decision making rather than a deal by deal, hipo or leadership decision making approach.*

" *Leadership should share company goals and Product managers should be responsible for bringing product goals and roadmap accordingly.*

" *Product discovery is run, but at a leadership level. Direct access to internal and external customers is blocked. Information is scarce. Train leadership so that they can understand how it actually works.*

" *Creating capacity in teams time and roadmap for discovery led features.*

The Product Trio

The State of B2B Product Management

The Product Trio

1 **RESEARCH FOCUS**
The "Product Trio" is a core part of preferred product development practices, consisting of Product Management, Product Design and Engineering. These teams should work and move together as one, to ensure the products they build meet company and user goals.

2 **THE HYPOTHESIS**
In many organizations, these teams work in silos, handing work off to each other with limited collaboration, leading to slower, inefficient work cycles and less cohesion between teams.
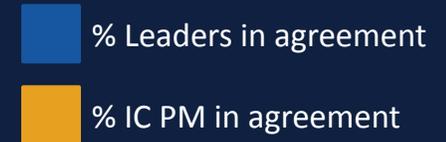
3 **KEY FINDINGS**
A significant number of participants indicated they don't have Design, or are very limited in design capacity. Interestingly a higher percentage of ICs indicated trust in their teams vs. leaders for those teams.

Comparing Leaders and IC PM views on The Product Trio

Delta

+1%

Roles and responsibilities across product, engineering, and UX are clearly defined and respected

54%
53%

+6%

Product, engineering, and UX collaborate early to shape solutions - work isn't just handed off

56%
50%

-9%

I trust the delivery team to make progress without needing constant direction or oversight

41%
50%

+6%

I provide context and clarity during delivery, not step-by-step instructions

74%
68%

+4%

The team feels ownership and stays aligned with product and business goals throughout the process

50%
46%

KEY FINDING

It is positive to see a majority of participants providing context and intent versus instructions, but many indicate they that they need to provide constant direction and oversight to engineering and there is still work to do on role definitions and ownership.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Clarify & codify expectations for the different teams. Ensure roles are clearly defined, that collaboration is baked into daily work. Work to remove the "PM as delivery manager" mentality, and empower Engineering teams to self-manage around the work.

How to Improve the Product Trio

> " We lack the UX capability as a function available for all teams to utilise. Having design more readily available would be the change.

> " Have dedicated Eng teams, instead of them being assigned on a "per project" basis.

> " In some teams engineering aren't actively involved enough in what problem we solve and will sit back and just wait for requirements to implement.

> " More dedicated focus from UX and engineering partners instead of them being shared across multiple areas.

> " It's evolving now and I need to let it reshape without letting it fall apart. The two big factors are: 1. Smaller squads - we're moving away from a tech lead. 2. Vibe prototypes - this has disrupted our ideation phase and I want to see how this changes the process and relationships in the trio.

> " Quality of my engineers, which is awful to say, but engineering leadership won't make tough decisions.

> " My trio is tech, Product and project manager. That results from the project culture.
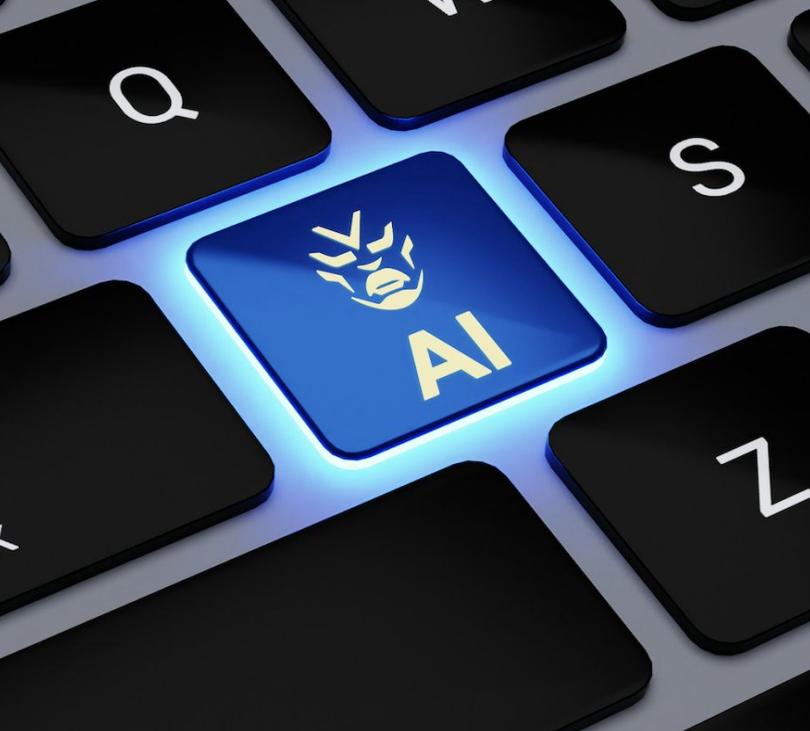
> " I'd love all my teams in one time zone and I'd like my engineering team to have way less pressure to execute in too short of timelines.

The Use and Impact of AI

The State of B2B Product Management
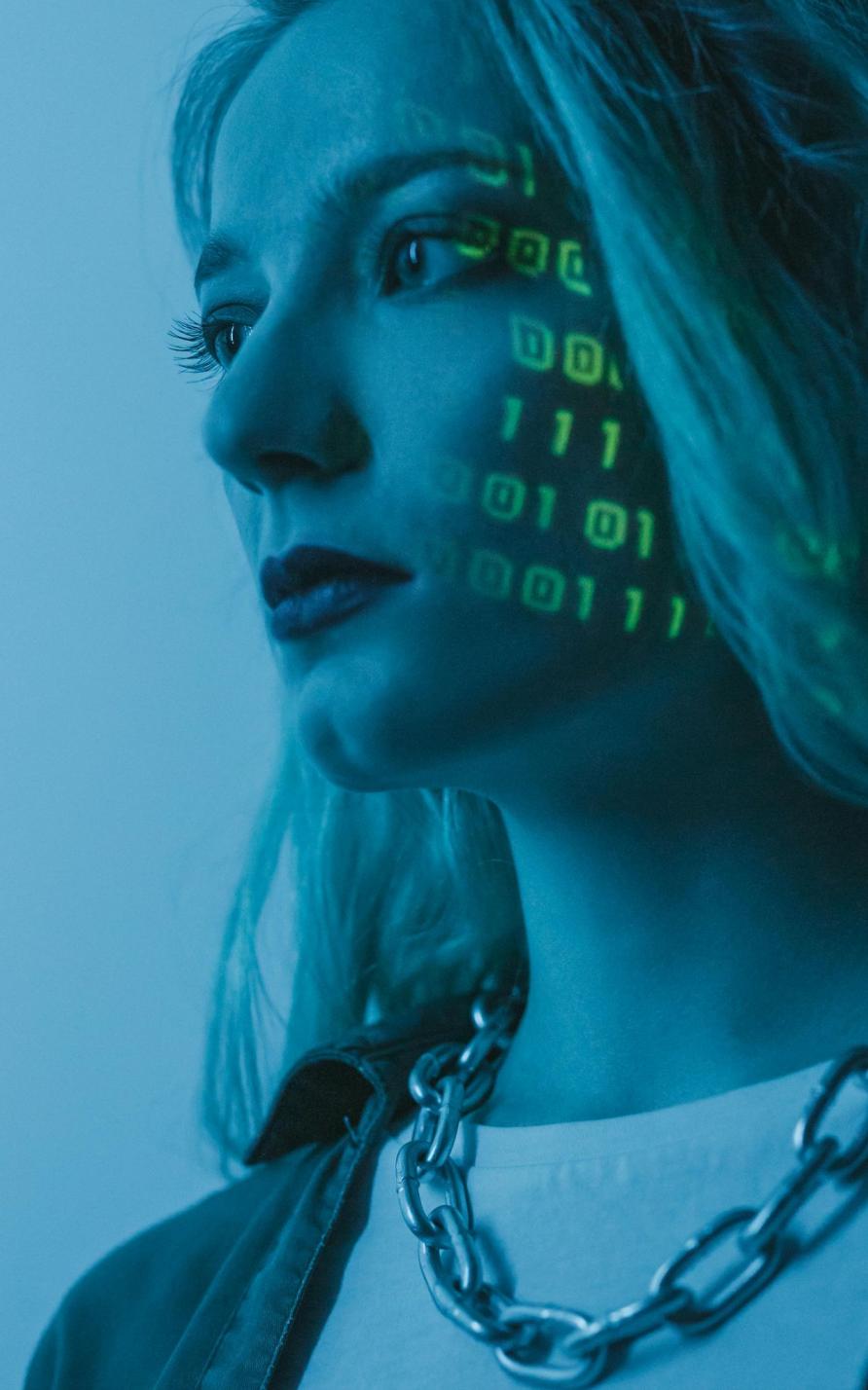
The Use of AI

1 RESEARCH FOCUS

Without a doubt, AI tools are becoming critical to in product management work and it's important to understand their impact, and the types of work they're being used for.

2 THE HYPOTHESIS

We expected widespread usage of AI tools for product management, driven by social media hype as well as the fact that AI is being put into every software tool that product managers use.

3 KEY FINDINGS

AI usage is widespread but still with plenty of room to grow. Leaders are using AI tools more than ICs, but both are using it frequently. Use cases are varied, but skew heavily towards "classic" LLM use cases like document generation and research.

Frequency of AI Use

Delta

Every Day

+9%

51% (% Leaders using AI)
42% (% IC PMs using AI)

Several Times Per Week

+2%

38% (% Leaders using AI)
36% (% IC PMs using AI)

Once a week or less

−6%

10% (% Leaders using AI)
16% (% IC PMs using AI)

Don't currently use AI in my work

+3%

9% (% Leaders using AI)
6% (% IC PMs using AI)

■ % Leaders using AI
■ % IC PMs using AI
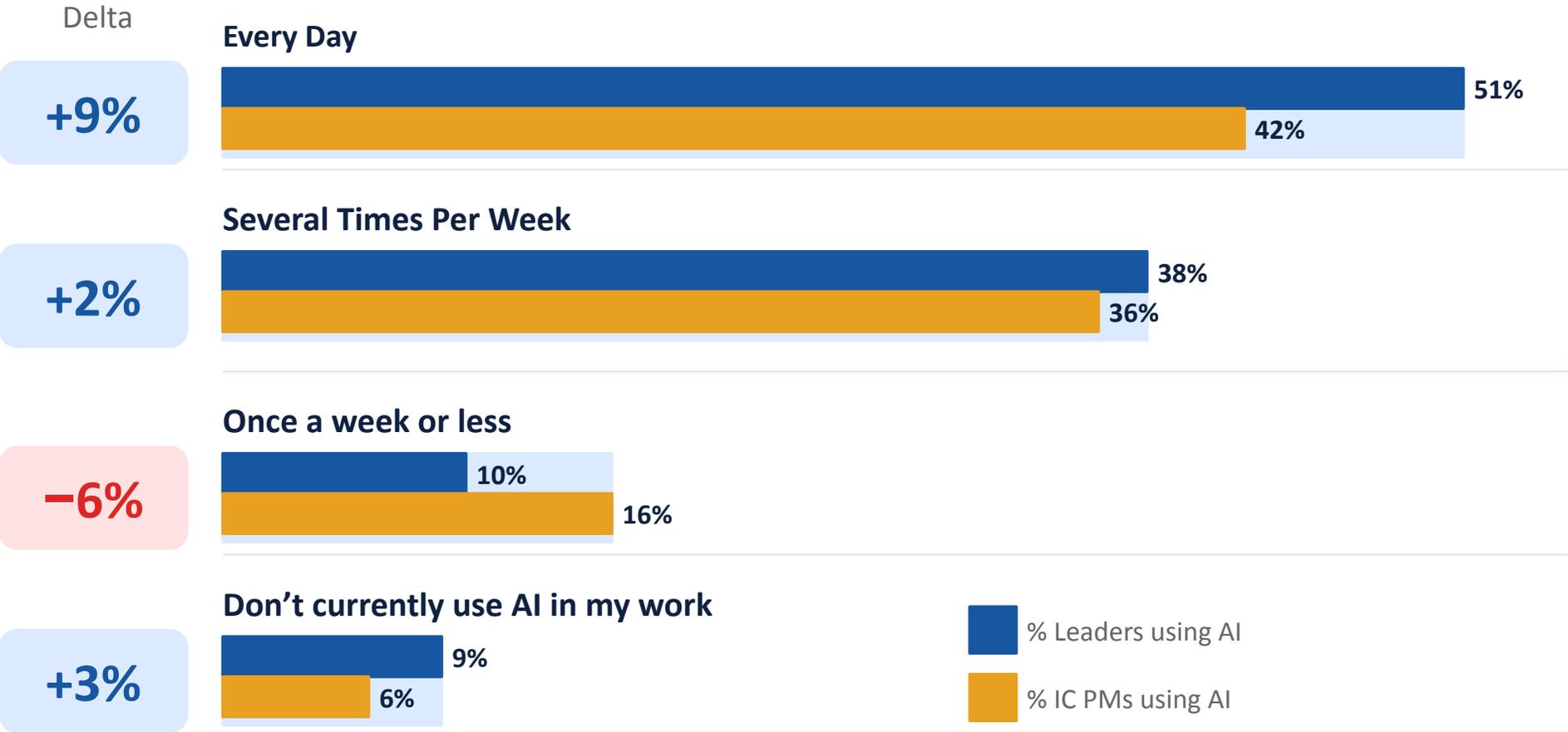
KEY FINDINGS

The vast majority of participants, unsurprisingly, are using AI several times a week or every day. Leaders are using it slightly more than ICs, but overall usage is consistently high.

RECOMMENDATIONS

As AI usage becomes ubiquitous, make sure you allow your teams space to use it, and give them access to the tools they need. Work with sceptics to understand their hesitation, and help them to take the first meaningful steps to gain confidence in the tools.

AI Use Cases - Leaders vs IC PMs (1/2)

■ % Leader
■ % IC PM

Delta

Market & competitive research
- % Leader: 71%
- % IC PM: 50%

+21%

Idea Generation & brainstorming
- % Leader: 70%
- % IC PM: 61%

+9%

Summarizing meeting notes
- % Leader: 70%
- % IC PM: 58%

+12%

Writing tasks (emails, other documents)
- % Leader: 69%
- % IC PM: 69%

0%

Creating product requirements documents
- % Leader: 56%
- % IC PM: 45%

+11%

Summarizing interviews
- % Leader: 48%
- % IC PM: 34%

+14%

KEY FINDINGS

The "classic" AI use cases are highly represented across both leaders and ICs. This is not a surprise, and we're glad to see people using LLMs for what they're good for.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Keep using AI tools for what they're best suited for. Be careful not to over rely on automated summaries or creating generic, boilerplate documents or PRDs. Make sure you're using AI to sharpen your thinking rather than replace it.
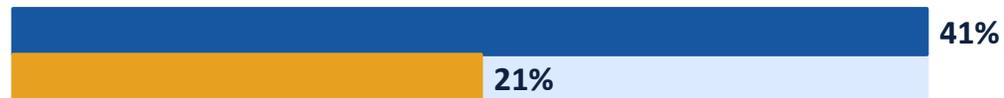
AI Use Cases - Leaders vs IC PMs (2/2)

% Leader
% IC PM

Delta

+5%

Creating wireframes / Prototypes
- % Leader: 42%
- % IC PM: 37%

+20%

Strategy generation
- % Leader: 41%
- % IC PM: 21%

+7%

Code generation / Vibe coding
- % Leader: 38%
- % IC PM: 31%

+5%

Product analytics assistance
- % Leader: 34%
- % IC PM: 29%

+4%

Synthetic User Interviews
- % Leader: 14%
- % IC PM: 10%

−6%

Prioritization
- % Leader: 10%
- % IC PM: 16%

KEY FINDINGS
Moving away from the types of use case that everyone is using AI for, there is some usage for more specialised or emergent use cases of LLMs. These are growing, and deserve monitoring.

RECOMMENDATIONS
Be curious and keep an eye on developments, be also be careful. Vibe coding has its place, but isn't a replacement for real software development. LLMs can frequently hallucinate when analysing data. Synthetic users are interesting, but not a replacement for speaking to real customers.

Impact of AI over the next 12 months

> *We need more prototyping best practices to accelerate discovery. I see this becoming the norm and reducing discovery timelines.*

> *It will ruin trust of produced artifacts because teams will not bother analyzing them. A lot of incompetency would be shadowed because everyone has access to knowledge. But increase in productivity is extremely positive.*

> *Positive - more realistic user testing. Closing gaps between design and delivery. Negative - the floodgates of ai prototypes submitted by colleagues pitching their views rather than helping and building together.*

> *In the short-term there is a negative impact of everyone's head spinning trying to keep up. In the long term: It will change which PM software tools we use, how we think about our roadmaps, what we build, and the timeline to build.*

> *I am worried we will degrade the design function as we come under pressure to just throw things at AI tools rather than applying proper design thinking.*

> *More reluctance to hire entry and mid level roles so our organization will stagnate in terms of feeding the talent pool. Because everybody thinks that AI can do everything and we don't want to hire junior roles now we might no longer have a pipeline of talent and a career progression path.*

> *Everyone thinks they are a product manager with copy paste from LLMs to show solutions.*

> *Faster, more rigorous docs for our Product Lifecycle / SDLC process. Faster UI and data mocks. More consistent Issues creation and User stories.*

Concerns about the impact of AI

> " I feel that a lot of companies lack the strategic moderation which gives room for team reflection. A lot of teams are experimenting with it, some are more effective than others to utilise it. It takes either a dedicated individual or leadership to conclude what that means for outcome and output generation. Those organisations that can critically reflect together and challenge the hype have a chance to achieve something great. But that is a skill the org needs to foster.

> " I'm on the fence, I can see there are huge benefits. I worry that if I don't level up quickly, I won't have a job in 2-3 years as it will be taken by either a super AI user or AI itself. I also find AI tooling clunky and spend more time reviewing and amending what it summarised as it has hallucinated. Plus the company is not fully onboard with AI tooling.

> " Most people have little or no understanding about the topic.. in particular the underlying mathematics and thus have difficulty in understanding, explaining and selecting appropriate models for a given task.

> " I still think caution is needed to avoid missetting customer expectations while testing with vibe coded prototypes (as opposed to low fidelity designs). I also don't want these prototypes to get in the way of collaboration and shared understanding within the product trio.

> " My role mostly requires creative and critical thinking, and extensive communications. Using AI tools to delegate those aspects is like for a pro-athlete to eat at McDonald's - counterproductive.

> " Those who rely on AI for discovery will end up with a cookie-cutter product.

The Future of Product Management

The State of B2B Product Management

The Future of Product Management

1 **RESEARCH FOCUS**

Given all the change that is happening around us, we wanted to see how PMs and Product Leaders are feeling about the future of product management.

2 **THE HYPOTHESIS**

There's been a lot of talk about people dissatisfied with product roles, quiet quitting and tiresome tropes about how "Product Management is Dead". This along with numerous tech layoffs has made for a difficult few years, and we expected sentiment to be low.

3 **KEY FINDINGS**

We were surprised that sentiment was generally positive, or at worst neutral. There seems to be widespread positivity about the possibilities for product management teams, either using AI, or getting closer to the business and being strategic partners rather than delivery drones.

Sentiment about Product Management over the next 12 Months

Delta

+8%

Very Positive

% Leaders: 26%
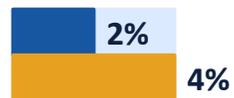% IC PMs: 18%

−1%

Positive

% Leaders: 35%
% IC PMs: 36%

−8%

Neutral

% Leaders: 23%
% IC PMs: 31%

+3%

Negative

% Leaders: 14%
% IC PMs: 11%

−2%

Very Negative

% Leaders: 2%
% IC PMs: 4%

■ % Leaders
■ % IC PMs

KEY FINDINGS

Despite all the uncertainty in the tech industry and the potential disruption from AI, the majority of respondents were Positive or Very Positive about the future, with leaders being more positive than ICs. Product Management is not dead yet!

RECOMMENDATIONS

Product Management is a hard role and it's not going to get any easier. Invest in your teams' development, but also prioritize team-building, company product events, hackathons, communities of practice etc.

Positive views about the future

Product Leaders

> As GenAI enables faster code and app development, it still is critical to have a strong product manager to ensure we are solving the right problems. The quality of questions/prompts still matter.

> The AI-driven collapse of team sizes highlights the importance of product management.

> The PM role may be threatened by AI for tasks but not in decision making and aligning priorities. The role has matured and proliferated in the past 25 years and I feel with new technologies, solutions, processes that Product Management is needed now more than ever.

> I think product managers are in a position to leverage the changes that will come to the product development process better than any other role. I also think (and am seeing) the need for more PM resource due to agentic development. I have eng teams shipping much faster now so the needs in terms of research/discovery, requirements, launch, sales enablement, monitoring, etc are going way up.

IC Product Managers

> The strategic decision-making of a seasoned PM cannot be easily replaced or replicated, in my view, especially when people are key to the strategy's success or failure.

> LLMs can't replace strategy or experience. I'm the orchestrator. If I had less experience then I would use it incorrectly and build some sh*tty sh*t. Which is what is happening now. In the next few years people will realize they need us because AI didn't work to replace us.

> For many of us, the AI wave is great. Watching some of the incredible ways that people are organizing their work environments and bringing fun and learning to their jobs is inspiring!

> If vibe coding shows one thing, it is that you cannot automate critical thinking, selecting the right problems to solve, etc. It might take a bit until the hype wears off, but then what remains is a learning that critical reflection takes time and skills — skills that PMs have.

Negative Views about the future

Product Leaders

> Product managers without product marketing skills are going to become blockers soon with no real value.

> Everyone wants 20 years of experience for 5 years of salary and they think AI is gonna make everything so easy and fast for us that I see job hunters are being discredited and employers are not properly valuing our talent.

> While I see value in PMs driving strategy and understanding risk I do feel the role will collapse at the higher end with more executive functions and at the lower end with aspects of other roles. It feels a luxury to maintain distinct disciplines when companies are shrinking and AI can do a lot.

> With the current AI hype, many SaaS companies that offer decent products and grow at steady (but not "AI-level") rates will cease to exist. And the AI bubble will burst too. I predict unprecedented levels of unemployment. It's very sad.

IC Product Managers

> Human tendency for magical thinking and searching for silver bullets. Justifying good product management practices has always been hard, and the hype flowing out of Silicon Valley isn't helping.

> I'm not seeing companies make adequate investment in it and they're pushing for process change that creates short term efficiency but I think loses the long term edge of innovation.

> I see a lot of burn out and same issues at different companies. I question whether its us as people who are dysfunctional or (which is what I think it is) our system (organisations and funding of them) is genuinely broke and it's breaking people (its employees).

> In my company you need to be lucky to be in a valued area and with great leader that champion you. In a little over a year I'm heading to my 4th line manager. And it's not a startup. Not sure if companies are raising the bar with AI so high that everyone will get sick from the ridiculous invented pressure too. It might be just the hype from social media too.

Next Steps

The State of B2B Product Management

It's clear that there are multiple challenges across B2B product organizations, but all is not lost!
Here are some things you should consider doing right away:

1. ASSESS YOUR ORGANIZATION

Given the findings in this report, there are multiple potential areas to assess and improve.

As every organization is different, there is no "standard" set of issues that impacts everyone:

- Sit down with your team(s) and listen to their concerns.
- Use the structure we've used, or a different one, but try to be systematic about it.
- Get clarity on the issues, work with your teams to identify the most pressing ones to address and then address them systematically.

2. TRAIN YOUR PRODUCT LEADERS

Strong product organizations need strong product management teams who need strong product leaders.

Our findings show that there is a large disconnect between product leaders and individual contributors (slide 23), and product managers are not making the impact they could. Invest in your product leaders and see the benefits:

Identify gaps or areas of weakness in product leader skills:
- Hire coaches, advisors or other experts to work with leaders to address areas of need

3. ADDRESS SKILLS GAPS IN YOUR TEAMS

Product Managers have a difficult job, even in the best of situations. They need a broad set of knowledge, skills and understanding to deliver results for their products and the business.

Skills like Discovery, Strategy, Competitive Research, Stakeholder Management all are critical skills for success:

- Identify any skills gaps in your teams
- Decide if internal mentorship, coaching or external training is required.
- Put a plan in place to upgrade team skills to drive better outputs and outcomes.

There is a lot of data in this report about the issues faced by Individual Contributor Product Managers.
Here are some ideas on how to leverage it and help your leaders improve your product organization.

1. SHARE THE REPORT WITH LEADERS

The report is a great conversation starter. It's better to share the report, rather than simply point out what you think is wrong, That might come across as political.

- Share the report by saying *"Here's an analysis of what's happening in the industry, how do we measure up?"*
- This creates a context for a discussion without pointing fingers
- Don't push to get things fixed right away. Try to gauge if there is a willingness to listen and acknowledge that problems exist.

2. BUILD A COALITION

There is strength in numbers, but it is also important to understand if your views are held by your peers, or if they're seeing different issues

- See if other trusted IC PMs share views of pain points that need to be addressed.
- This strengthens the message and lessens the possibility of you being viewed as a complainer
- Frame issues in ways that benefit the company, not simply as beneficial to the PMs.

3. PROPOSE EVIDENCE-BASED SOLUTIONS

If you do bring solutions to leadership, do it in a structured way that is meaningful to them. This is the same way you'd frame customer problems, but in this case, you're the customer.

- Clearly articulate the problem you see
- Share the evidence - painful anecdotes, or other stories that will resonate.
- Use the report as supporting evidence
- Articulate how the problem is negatively impacting the company (cost, delay, lost opportunity etc.)
- Propose a couple of solutions so you are presenting a choice to leadership vs. a yes/no decision.

How We Can Help You

ORGANIZATIONAL ASSESSMENTS

A deep dive into how your organization works and how it builds products. The goal is to provide more than just a simple analysis, but to provide a prioritised, actionable set of best next steps for you to improve in the areas that are holding you back the most.

GROUP OR TEAM COACHING

While workshops teach specific skills, implementing them requires applying those skills in the hectic, constrained environment we call "the job". We can coach individuals or groups and provide context specific guidance to overcome specific challenges Product Managers face to help them succeed in their roles.

PRIVATE TEAM WORKSHOPS

Upskill your team's performance, address skills gaps or teach new techniques. Have your entire team using effective, consistent practices. Topics include, Discovery, Strategy, Product Launch, Roadmapping, Stakeholder Management and more. Workshop can be delivered online or in person, and can be customized if need.

PRODUCT LEADERSHIP COACHING

Product leaders have a difficult job and often need additional guidance and support from experienced peers. Whether it is organizational change, implementing proven practices or building higher performance teams, we provide that tailored guidance based on decades of real-world B2B experience.

WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU

This research is the result of the input from the worldwide product community.

But it doesn't end with us publishing this report.

We'd like to hear from you about your thoughts on this report.

- Is it helpful, useful?
- Were there any specific insights that were valuable to you?
- What could we add or improve next time?
- Are there specific topics or questions you'd us to look into.

Please tell us. We look forward to hearing from you

Use the link or QR code to the right and give us your thoughts.

https://tinyurl.com/b2bpmreport
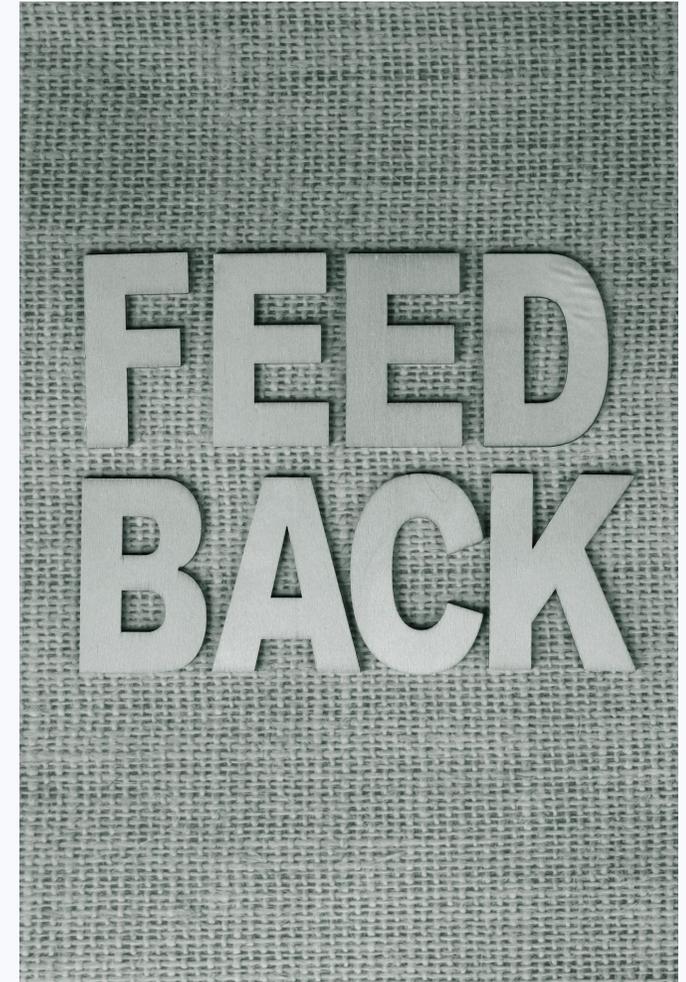
Contact Us

If you would like to discuss any of the findings in this report, go deeper into the data we collected, or speak to us about how we could help your organization, email us: info@b2bproduct.io

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