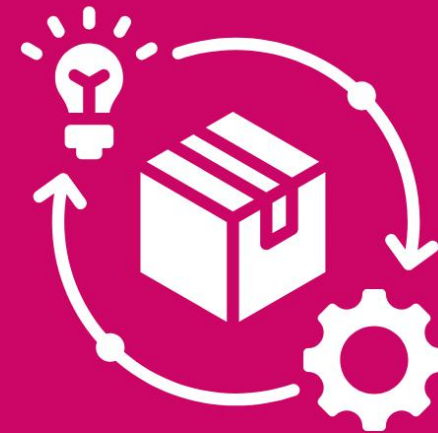


xcede

EVENT REPORT

AROUND THE PRODUCT TABLE





INTRODUCTION

We have been hosting in-person Product and Design networking events since 2019, typically featuring industry-leading talks aimed at individual contributors. However, after our recent smaller, more intimate events, we recognised the need for events where senior Product leaders can discuss their unique challenges.

This inspired us to innovate our events by combining the roundtable format with a speed-dating twist, enabling focused discussions and debates among a larger group of industry leaders. Our goal was to create a platform where department Heads, Directors, VPs, and C-suite executives could connect with like-minded individuals, share insights, and find common ground across diverse industry backgrounds, commercial experiences, and skill sets, including Product Management, Design, Project Management, User Experience (UX) and User Interface (UI).

The recent widespread public adoption of AI has placed economic pressure on our daily work, and we believe it is crucial for Product leaders to discuss issues, exchange ideas, and walk away with valuable insights. By bringing together such a diverse group, we aim to spark innovative conversations that will drive the industry forward. We would also like to thank Ticketmaster for hosting this event. Their support and hospitality were instrumental in making it a success.



ANDREW BARNETT
Associate Director

ABOUT THE EVENT

In preparation for this event, we held several discussions with our expert chairs and requested input from the participants to determine the 3 most critical pain points that would form the focal points of the evening's discussions:



WATCH THE EVENT
HIGHLIGHT VIDEO [HERE](#)

THE CHAIRS



Alexis Ringbord
Director of Product
at Stuart



Amitabh Ghatak
Ex-CPO at Dojo



Dan Cohen
VP of Product
Management at BP



Etienne Martin
VP of Product
at Algolia



Fernando Fanton
CPO at Monzo



Jim Veevaert
CPO at Memrise



Kim Faura
Ex-CPO at Checktrade



Maud Larpent
CPO at Treatwell



Nani Nitinavakorn
Ex-CPO at
Atom Learning



Rags Valali
CPO at token.com



AI within Product: How to Create ROI

AI has the potential to streamline processes, boost productivity and accelerate product development however successful ROI requires a balancing act with human oversight to maintain quality and a customer-centric approach.



Career Progression for Senior Product Leaders

The path to becoming a Senior Product Leader balances technical and soft skills, requires understanding the importance of SME and generalist roles, and mastering essential career progression strategies such as prioritisation and mentorship.



Building Leaner Product Teams

The key to building leaner Product teams involves leveraging singular expertise, upskilling team members, and optimising processes rather than increasing team size. Discover best practices for solving impactful problems, balancing leadership pressures and empowering teams for enhanced efficiency and collaboration.

TOPIC 1:

AI WITHIN PRODUCT: HOW TO CREATE ROI

AI has the potential to streamline processes to reduce time and effort, allowing businesses to focus on areas where AI is less applicable. Tools such as ChatGPT can significantly accelerate the process of understanding customer needs and preferences by analysing large volumes of data quickly. This enhances productivity, allowing Product Managers (PMs) to engage in strategic tasks that require human judgment, creativity, and relationship-building.

AI can generate synthetic data during the product development lifecycle, which is especially valuable for start-ups. This data can accelerate product development by providing robust datasets for testing and iteration without needing extensive real-world data collection. By leveraging AI to simulate various scenarios and user behaviours, companies can optimise their products more efficiently and adapt quickly to market demands.

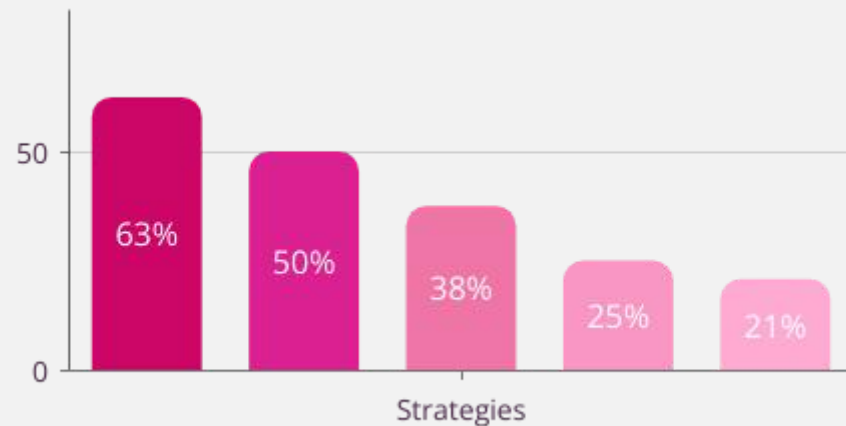
However, despite AI's capabilities, it cannot replace crucial soft skills. Building strong relationships with customers and stakeholders and understanding customer emotions remain irreplaceable. Moreover, over-reliance on AI might reduce necessary customer interactions, which are crucial for gathering qualitative insights and fostering customer loyalty.

The process of implementing AI also comes with challenges. Centralising user behaviour data from multiple platforms to enhance ROI can be costly and complex. Highly regulated industries need help in adopting AI due to stringent compliance requirements, which can slow down AI integration in product development and management. While leadership may drive AI adoption, not all customers may demand or benefit from AI-enhanced products. PMs must manage executive expectations with actual customer needs to ensure meaningful AI implementation.

What is the biggest blocker when attempting to create ROI?



What is the most essential focus for career progression as a Senior Product Leader?



- People management
- Revenue generation
- Solving customer problems
- Subject Matter Expertise (SME)
- Other

TOPIC 2:

CAREER PROGRESSION FOR SENIOR PRODUCT LEADERS

ARRIVING AT A SENIOR PRODUCT LEADER POSITION:

Transitioning from a subject matter expert (SME) to a generalist can accelerate your career however deep expertise in a specific product or industry can be crucial for genuine user empathy and storytelling. If SME skills aren't your strength, focus on customer curiosity and make informed decisions based on user insights. A deep understanding of the user and the ability to communicate this effectively to your team is vital for senior roles. Whether you choose to specialise or become a generalist, balancing strong technical and soft skills as well as understanding your company's technology is essential.

ESSENTIAL SKILLS FOR CAREER PROGRESSION:

- Honing your craft: Continually refine your skills and stay in touch with your Individual Contributor (IC) side, which can lead to higher titles like Director, VP, or Head of Product.
- Right place, right time: Luck and strategic decision-making in choosing the right company play a significant role.
- Startup/scale-up experience: Working in startups or scale-ups offers opportunities to diversify your skills and mentor others, enhancing your IC abilities
- People management: This is a crucial skill for career progression. The ability to effectively share your experience can support and develop your team members, leading to stronger team performance and fostering career growth for everyone involved.
- Ruthless prioritisation: Master the ability to prioritise tasks and projects effectively to drive growth and success.

IDENTIFYING THE NEXT STEPS:

Whether you desire to be CEO, COO, or CPO/CPTO, you need to engage with investors and strategists who can provide insights into these career paths. It's vital to make your ambitions visible to executives and demonstrate your capabilities while exploring horizontal growth to expand your skill set.

TOPIC 3:

BUILDING LEANER PRODUCT TEAMS

JUSTIFYING THE EXISTENCE AND SIZE OF PRODUCT TEAMS:

- **Value proposition:** Highlight the value in bridging the gap between product and business needs, bringing velocity, and solving critical problems.
- **High number of PMs:** Justify based on the number and complexity of problems being solved, the size of gaps between data and product, and the specific needs of the business.
- **Value of singular expertise:** A highly knowledgeable individual can add more value than multiple less informed ones. For example, one PM overseeing 15 engineers who all understand their roles in problem-solving and work in tandem can be more effective than several PMs with diluted focus.
- **Optimising team processes:** The problem might not always be the team size but how processes are structured. Streamlining processes can enhance team efficiency.

WORKING METRICS AND LEANER FOCUS:

- **Solving fewer problems well:** Prioritise solving fewer but more impactful problems. Use the rock, pebble, and stone categorisation to allocate resources effectively.
- **Empowering offshore teams:** Provide them with ownership of specific areas rather than just outsourcing.
- **Balancing Lean and Optimisation:** Leaders need to balance pressures from founders/CEOs with the need to maintain morale and performance effectively.
- **Upskilling product individuals:** Upskilling team members can match the effectiveness of a specialised team. However, while versatile teams are beneficial initially, they might require specialised hires later. Larger businesses with narrow-scoped PMs might struggle with internal mobility and limited scope.
- **Challenges with leaner teams:** Junior PMs often feel the strain of leaner teams, including managing overtime and morale post-redundancies. Clear responsibilities and team structure are crucial from the outset.
- **Making room for discovery:** Always ask "why" to understand customer usage and product fit. Use evidence and prioritisation to focus on meaningful discoveries.

What is the most important factor when trying to build a leaner Product team?



TESTIMONIALS



"One of the best roundtables I've been to with a large and talented group assembled with everyone rotating to get exposure to different people. I made some great connections. As a mentor myself, I enjoyed the chat about how best to develop product teams. Valuable insights and connections to take the discussion further."

William Hand, Director of Product @ Paddle



"A really enjoyable evening meeting and learning from so many Senior Product leaders."

Ben Wynne-Simmons, Senior Director of Product @ VEED.IO



"It was a pleasure meeting so many product leaders from diverse industries at the event. It was fascinating to discover that, despite our different fields, we face remarkably similar challenges, and I was inspired by the creative solutions others have implemented."

Bhavesh Daryani, Senior Product Manager @ SkyScanner



"Xcede's networking event was a great opportunity to come together with peers from a range of industries to share experiences and learnings around common product leadership challenges. Leadership can be isolating, so building connections with others facing the same challenges is hugely rewarding."

Sophie Valentine, VP of Product @ Healios



CONTACT US

We have a proven track record of delivering tailored talent solutions for diverse short and long-term projects worldwide. Through our long-standing time in the industry, we have built a reputation as a reliable talent acquisition partner. Our high-quality service delivery of top Technology talent to our clients' projects has led us to where we are today.

If you are hiring across Data, AI & Machine Learning, Product, Software, Cloud, or Cyber, get in touch with us today at info@xcade.com



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