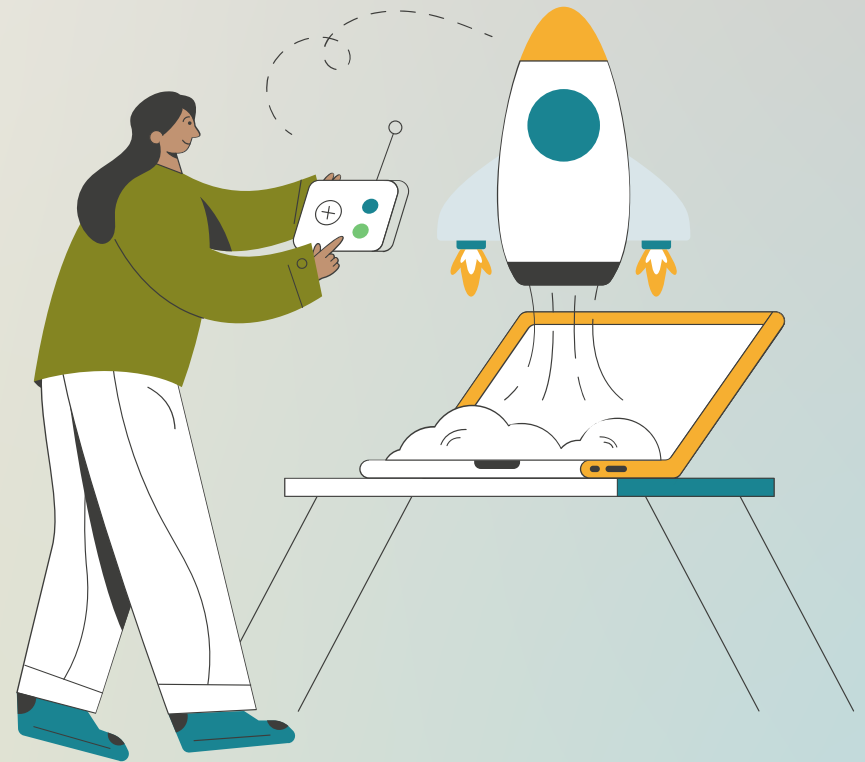


Product Skills 2027: The Skills Gap Product Leaders Can No Longer Ignore

How to develop the skills of your product management team to succeed in an AI accelerated world



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Contributors



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Product & Growth Advisor and former
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Swati brings over two decades of strategy, product, and commercial leadership experience across global B2B SaaS, including executive roles at Sovos, Paycor, and Thomson Reuters. She has spearheaded major organic and M&A-led platform transformations, steering organisations through rapid scale and AI-driven evolution.

Today, Swati advises CEOs and CPOs on building high-velocity product organisations, guiding teams through multi-product portfolio shifts, operationalizing AI into core product roadmaps, and aligning product investments directly with ARR growth.



Debbi Roberts

Product Leadership Consultant
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Debbi is a product executive with deep experience managing multi-product, global product portfolios and leading diverse teams across both public and PE-backed SaaS. She has advised portfolio companies on product operating model transformation and AI readiness.

Debbi's corporate board experience includes serving as an Executive Board Member, and as an Outside Board Director for a SaaS company.



Robert Sinfield

Global Senior Vice President Product and Head of ERP,
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Robert is a seasoned professional with extensive leadership experience, specialising in enterprise resource planning (ERP), manufacturing, and operations solutions.

Robert's expertise spans business strategy, product management, and global team enablement to meet evolving technological and market demands.



Garry Avery

Chief Executive Officer,
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With more than 20 years' experience building successful products and product teams, Garry has worked across the full product journey, from early-stage start-ups, to global technology companies.

Today, Garry works with organisations around the world to build stronger product capability, develop high-performing teams, and help companies deliver products that create real customer and business value.



Ian Harrison

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Ian is a highly commercial leader with multi-year experience of leading large-scale product, technology, operating model and agility transformations.

Ian has taken on leadership roles within product, commercial/finance, technology, strategy and HR functions.



Introduction

Product managers are masters of managing change. Today's generation of product leaders have lived through a series of world-changing trends from the growth of the internet and the dawn of e-commerce to the mobile revolution and digital transformation.

This time we're in the midst of a megatrend.

AI is set to transform how we live in ways we can't yet imagine. The sheer pace and scale of change is presenting a whole new set of challenges for the product world.

Much of the hype around AI is justified – used well it will help product teams streamline the way they work and enhance the products they deliver. As a result, the expectations of customers and stakeholders are at an all-time high.

Product teams will need to build new skills to be able to compete in an AI accelerated world. However, too many organisations are training their product teams for yesterday's job rather than preparing them for tomorrow's AI-enabled role.



“The world is completely changing around us because of AI. We’re in a heightened stage of technology adoption unlike anything we’ve seen before.”

Robert Sinfield

Global Senior Vice President
Product and Head of ERP, Sage.



The fact that we have technology which can analyse thousands of user stories in minutes, and spin up prototypes in a matter of hours, presents the opportunity for product teams to focus on those skills that AI doesn't have – judgement, empathy and critical thinking.

To survive, organisations must be able to combine AI capability with human insight.

Technical skills will need to change too, with less of an emphasis on building from scratch, and more on understanding which AI tools to use, and how and when to use them, so teams can develop products with real value to the user.

The next two years will see some AI technologies emerge rapidly to become household names, while others fall by the wayside. That's why organisations need a product skills roadmap which they can adapt and refine as the technology evolves.

This eBook explores the skills product teams will need to develop over the next two years, with insight from product leaders.



The challenges for product teams

With AI technologies developing at breakneck speed, people's knowledge, adoption and use of AI vary enormously. Everyone is learning and experimenting at a different rate, some with enthusiasm and others more reluctantly.

This makes it difficult for chief product officers (CPOs) to prepare for the AI revolution and bridge the skills gaps in their teams.

These are the challenges facing today's product teams.



Lack of AI strategy

Organisation leaders may agree they should be embracing AI-driven innovation, but without a clear strategy, AI adoption will be patchy and fragmented. Leaders should ask the question, 'What exactly do our product teams and customers need from AI?' 'Can this be achieved through automation, generative AI or agentic AI?'

"The big challenge is thinking about AI on two levels: empowering product managers to redesign their processes, simplify workflows, and build more scalable ways of working across every stage of the lifecycle – and embedding AI into the products they build to deliver measurably better customer outcomes. You're not just transforming how your product management organisation operates, you're transforming what your customers experience."

Debbi Roberts

Product Leadership Consultant and former Chief Product Officer.



Gaps in AI knowledge

The rapid pace of AI advancement means that some individuals within an organisation have more opportunity to develop AI literacy than others. This can result in a product team with uneven skills levels, separating AI 'power users' from everyone else, and making it hard for teams to assess their product skills with both depth and breadth.

"Every CEO right now is being asked by their board what they're doing with AI. The CPOs who will have genuine influence at the top are the ones that help answer that question – not with a technology roadmap but with a real business case."

Swati Garodia

Product & Growth Advisor and former
Chief Product & Strategy Officer



"Companies need a strategic vision for AI. Otherwise, they feel the pressure to simply do something with AI because that's what their shareholders expect or what the market demands."

Ian Harrison

Head of Enterprise Product Operations,
London Stock Exchange Group.



The challenges for product teams



Expectation vs reality

There are high expectations around AI which could result in leadership, stakeholders and customers demanding more from their product teams than is technically possible or commercially viable. This makes it difficult for product managers to manage expectations.

“There’s a popular view that if you’re not on the cutting edge of AI, it will be the death knell for your product. It’s a concern I see some less experienced product managers struggling to rationalise.”

Robert Sinfield

Global Senior Vice President Product and Head of ERP, Sage.



Bottlenecks in the workflow

Development cycles have accelerated significantly, but other important aspects of product delivery such as governance, legal and compliance have not yet caught up. While the front of the product lifecycle is moving faster, it doesn’t necessarily mean products will go to market any earlier.

“Much of the current governance is built around fixed and predictable delivery, i.e. this product will be delivered on this date as agreed. This can hold back the important product management skill of continuously improving a product through learning and experimentation.”

Ian Harrison

Head of Enterprise Product Operations,
London Stock Exchange Group.



The challenges for product teams



Lack of regulation

New AI tools are emerging all the time, but we don't have the guardrails in place to ensure they are used safely and ethically. Organisations may not yet have policies in place to protect against their data being released into the public domain through an LLM, for instance.

“The pace of AI expansion feels like the Wild West right now. There always seems to be something better around the corner tomorrow, next week or next month, so how do we keep a pulse on what is changing and make sure we are using it ethically?”



Debbi Roberts

Product Leadership Consultant and former Chief Product Officer.

We cannot predict exactly how technology adoption will evolve over the next two years, but for well-prepared organisations this is a time of great opportunity. Success depends on gaining clear visibility of an organisation's product skills – which skills are essential, where the gaps are, and how to fill those gaps.

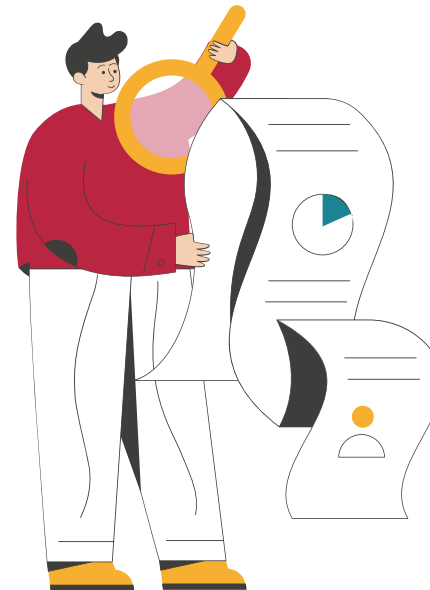
The following sections look at the human skills and the technical skills product teams will need to develop over the next two years.

“The internet caused businesses to thrive or fail. Blockbuster Video was hugely successful, but it failed to reinvent itself and continued to deliver its product in the old way, rather than embracing digital streaming. This is what we're seeing with AI – businesses have to reinvent their product delivery to survive.”



Garry Avery

Chief Executive Officer, Tarigo.



Human skills to develop over the next two years

It's an interesting paradox that in the age of AI, it's the human, or 'soft' skills, which will become more valuable than ever. These are the power skills that will help organisations challenge AI output, gain a deeper understanding of the customer and get the most from AI tools.

Now that AI is giving everyone the tools to perform more effectively, human skills are the key differentiator. These skills are no longer nice to have in a team, they are critical to an organisation's future. It's the human skillset which will make or break a product team.

"AI can write specifications for very complex problems in a matter of minutes, but what it can't do is walk a shop floor, or understand what it's like to work in the same industry for forty years and have to start learning a new business process."

Robert Sinfield

Global Senior Vice President
Product and Head of ERP, Sage.



Critical thinking

AI can generate a multitude of solutions, but even the most sophisticated AI model could suggest a route which is discriminatory, unethical or simply doesn't work for the user. Critical thinking is a key power skill for product managers, and one that cannot be ignored. It's that voice which distinguishes what *should* be built from what *can* be built.

"It's very easy to become carried away with designing products with complex functions, but sometimes simplicity is the absolute key for the user. Product managers need the critical thinking skills to focus on the logical workflow that is essential for a product's success."

Robert Sinfield

Global Senior Vice President Product and Head of ERP, Sage.



Human skills to develop over the next two years



Empathy

Today's product managers need to develop an even deeper empathy with their customers, because it's more important than ever to understand customers' needs, behaviours and pain points. This will enable product teams to identify those nuanced opportunities AI could miss, such as the frustration of having to click multiple times to open an application, or the joy of using a truly intuitive interface.

“The speed of AI allows us to go deeper with customers than ever before. This is game changing if we take advantage of it. Spend more time with customers, listening, observing and asking the right questions. We'll expand our own customer empathy, delivering greater customer outcomes. That's something no chatbot can really do.”

Debbi Roberts

Product Leadership Consultant and former Chief Product Officer.



Curiosity

Curiosity is an essential quality in a product manager if they are going to stay ahead of rapid technological change. When product leaders encourage their teams to experiment with new tools and approaches rather than relying on tried and tested solutions, they create a culture of continuous learning which is vital in a fast-moving climate.

“Nobody has this figured out — the tools are changing every few months. The product managers I want on my team are the ones who are comfortable with uncertainty and experimentation. Who'll try something, get it wrong, and keep going without needing the playbook to exist first.”

Swati Garodia

Product & Growth Advisor and former Chief Product & Strategy Officer



Human skills to develop over the next two years



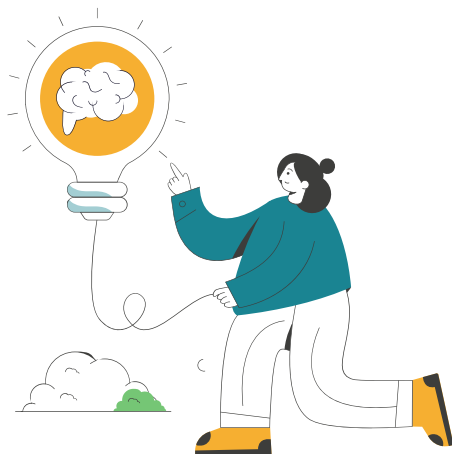
Imagination

The famous quote attributed to Henry Ford, “If I had asked people what they wanted, they would have said faster horses,” suggests that people knew they wanted faster travel, but couldn’t imagine the concept of a motor car. With so much extreme innovation, today’s product managers need to imagine possible solutions for their customers, even if it is something their customers cannot yet articulate.

“One of the challenging things a product manager does is to take everything they have learnt and translate it into a value proposition. AI can help with that, but to deliver the art of the possible to your customer, you really need that deep customer understanding from the humans in the loop.”

Debbi Roberts

Product Leadership Consultant and former Chief Product Officer.



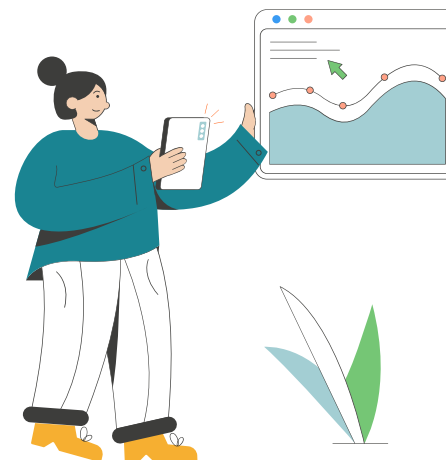
Accountability

The AI enabled product manager needs to become more comfortable with delegating the tasks they used to do to AI so they can take on more of the strategic vision. Product managers will be increasingly accountable for financial and commercial outcomes as well as addressing customer pain points.

“Product teams will be able to work at a faster pace than before, so prioritisation is going to be really important. They will be responsible for bringing the customer voice into the room, and deciding where to spend their time and money.”

Robert Sinfield

Global Senior Vice President Product and Head of ERP, Sage.



Human skills to develop over the next two years



Communication

Communication has always been an essential power skill for a product manager. But with so many options opening up through AI, being able to listen to colleagues, customers and end users, and communicate solutions to them is central to the survival of today's product teams.

“In the ambiguous world of AI, the ability for a product manager to be able to communicate clearly, simply and compellingly with multiple groups becomes even more important. Communication is key in keeping everyone aligned with the goals we are trying to achieve.”



Ian Harrison

Head of Enterprise Product Operations,
London Stock Exchange Group.

By delegating many of their routine tasks to AI, it will be possible for product teams to reimagine their role as strategists, critical thinkers and problem solvers.

It's becoming increasingly urgent for organisations to make the culture shift which will allow product managers to refine the human centred power skills they need to thrive in the years ahead.



Technical skills to develop over the next two years

With the march of technology, product managers have always had to learn and develop new technical skills. However, the advent of AI has shifted the emphasis away from coding and analysis, and more towards testing hypotheses and interpreting data.

The evolving technical skillset will look quite different over the next two years, and organisations cannot afford to stand still. Product teams will not only need to develop a deeper understanding of which tools and systems to combine in their role, they will also have to focus on how best to embed AI in product design and workflows.

“It used to take weeks of effort to analyse 1,000 customer interviews. Now it takes AI five minutes to provide a well-structured, comprehensive conclusion. Today’s product managers need to focus not on acquiring this knowledge but applying it.”

Garry Avery
Chief Executive Officer, Tarigo.



AI Literacy

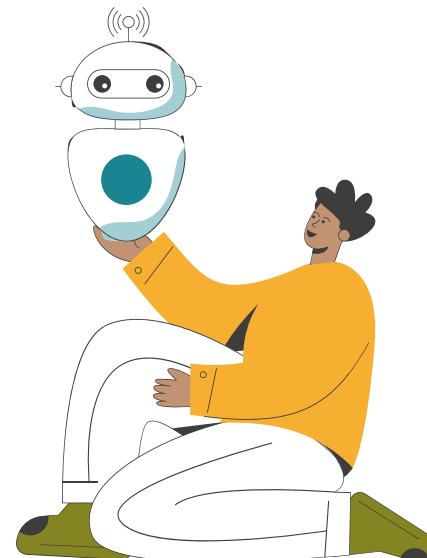
AI literacy will be a foundational skill for any product manager over the next two years. This includes understanding the different forms of AI, and knowing the capabilities and limitations of each. It will also be essential to have in-depth awareness of the risks of AI, such as hallucination, over-confidence and bias.

“As a product manager you need to know how to use the whole AI suite to increase your own productivity and allow you to concentrate on more strategic activity. This requires you to understand the tools you have and how to quality control them.”



Ian Harrison

Head of Enterprise Product Operations, London Stock Exchange Group.



Technical skills to develop over the next two years



Orchestration

With such an abundance of AI tools and systems, product managers will need to understand how these can integrate so the whole solution is worth more than the sum of its parts. A key role of the product manager will involve bringing together the best AI can offer to create a tailored solution for customers and end users.

“Some are still looking for the one AI tool that does it all. But that’s not how this works. What product managers actually need to get good at is figuring out how different tools and agents fit together to solve a specific customer problem — and that’s a new skill that product teams must develop.”

Swati Garodia

Product & Growth Advisor and former
Chief Product & Strategy Officer



Prototyping

The AI enabled product manager will increasingly use AI to build high-fidelity prototypes quickly and test them thoroughly. There will be less call for deep coding skills. Instead, product managers will use vibe coding, or describing requirements to AI in natural language rather than writing code manually, to generate, refine, and debug applications.

“The product requirement document is becoming less relevant. With AI, we can now prototype in an afternoon and put something tangible in front of developers and stakeholders in a fraction of the time. That’s genuinely exciting. But it doesn’t tell you whether anyone actually needed the thing. The teams that will benefit most are the ones who figure out how to validate with customers just as fast.”

Swati Garodia

Product & Growth Advisor and former
Chief Product & Strategy Officer



Technical skills to develop over the next two years



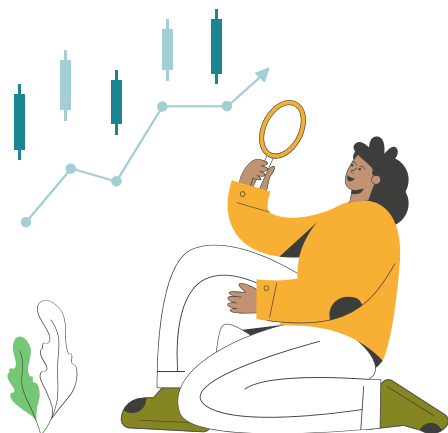
Agentic AI

The evolution of agentic AI, or autonomous systems which can interact with each other to carry out complex actions, is creating new possibilities for product managers to interact with agents as they would with human colleagues. This will be transformational to the product management function, and those who don't embrace agentic AI risk being left behind.

“Imagine building a team of AI agents. The first agent crunches the numbers, the second interprets the data points, the third provides a recommendation. The fourth agent is the contradictory voice in the room which challenges assumptions, the fifth collates the requirements and the sixth provides me with recommendations that have been checked, double checked and challenged. This gives me six people to do my research.”

Robert Sinfield

Global Senior Vice President Product and Head of ERP, Sage.



Monetisation

Traditional pricing models are likely to change, with higher AI compute costs and expensive specialist AI tools in the mix. Profit margins will be less predictable in the future, and product managers will need to become more involved in outcome-based budgeting, commercial negotiation and pricing.

“Many product managers have never really had to think about pricing. But every AI feature has a real compute cost behind it, and if that's not factored into how you package, deliver, and charge for the product, you can end up building something that's hard to make profitable. That's not a conversation product managers can sit out anymore.”

Swati Garodia

Product & Growth Advisor and former Chief Product & Strategy Officer



Technical skills to develop over the next two years



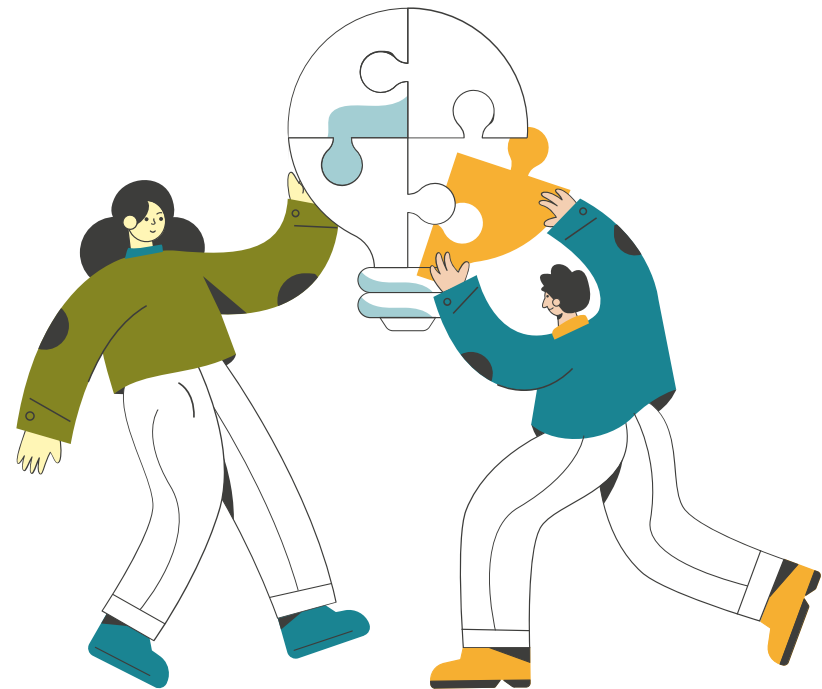
Collaboration

The boundaries between product, engineering and design teams are rapidly blurring because AI is relieving product managers of some of the tactical work, such as writing user stories and product briefs, and enabling them to create sophisticated code. Product teams will have to explore new ways of working with other business functions.

“Successful product managers will be good partners to their cross-functional teams. They will be working with design and engineering to translate workflows into clear customer outcomes while leveraging AI to carry out routine tasks.”

Debbi Roberts

Product Leadership Consultant and former Chief Product Officer.



AI literacy is an imperative for today's product teams. Product managers need to get up to speed with AI fundamentals, and continue developing their use and understanding of AI over time. Meanwhile, they should keep a critical eye on new tools and systems to see which are valuable to the product lifecycle, and which are best left aside.

As product managers develop their AI literacy, they will be able to work more closely with AI as a collaborator, using sophisticated prompts to develop and test prototypes and create agents to challenge solutions.

The next two years will see a rapid shift towards orchestrating systems and identifying where AI adds real value, while linking product decisions to cost and revenue. Product teams which understand this shift stand the best chance of success.



How to build the skills in your team

The next two years are likely to see vast and rapid change in AI technology. It will be a time of great uncertainty, and great possibility. Product teams with a learning mindset will be best placed to build the human and technical skills they need to succeed.

These are some of the key shifts that product teams need to make on their two-year skills road map.

1 Develop AI literacy and adoption

Ensure everyone in your team is well versed in the AI fundamentals such as when to use LLMs, automation and agentic AI, and whether a deterministic or probabilistic system is needed for a solution. Encourage the AI power users in your team to support their coworkers in developing those skills.

2 Build deeper customer empathy

Create more opportunities for active listening to customers so your team can 'feel' customer pain. Train product managers to ask better questions of customers, end users and AI agents to get to the heart of the desired outcomes and imagine the art of the possible.

3 Encourage experimentation and safe failure

Give your product team the freedom to build curiosity and openness to AI. Where there is reluctance, bring excitement by creating space for learning and practice. This will enable your teams to identify where AI adds real value across the product lifecycle.

“Start by picturing the organisation you want to become and use this to define your target operating model. Then work backwards by taking a careful look at your current capability and pinpointing the skills gaps you need to fill.”

Garry Avery
Chief Executive Officer, Tarigo.



4 Focus on human judgement

Emphasise the importance of critical thinking and never taking AI output at face value. Your team will need to make the final decision about whether a solution will work for an end user. Give them the confidence to evaluate the risks and biases inherent in AI.

5 Remodel the product manager role

Support your team as they get used to working across blurred boundaries with other business functions and being measured on revenue and outcomes. Help them collaborate effectively, develop their domain expertise and build commercial and business acumen.



The AI enabled product team

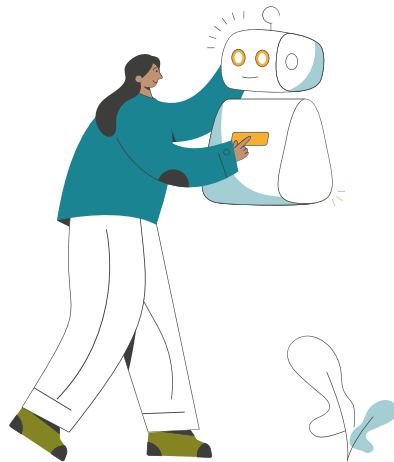
The AI revolution is driving a shift in the way organisations work, and product leaders who can support their team through the shift stand the best chance of success in the coming years.

A product team with the essential human and technical skills will flourish in an AI accelerated world.

“A radically changing technology landscape should be the ideal environment for the superpowers of a product manager.”

Ian Harrison

Head of Enterprise Product Operations,
London Stock Exchange Group.



From outputs to outcomes

As organisations move away from measuring success by activity and deliverables, there will be an increased focus on business impact, value and profitability. Product teams will be truly accountable for outcomes rather than output.



From builder to decision-maker

AI can automate time-consuming tasks and complete them in minutes, giving humans the time and space to provide judgement, decision-making and vision. Product managers will focus on the aspects of the role they do best – delivering solutions to customers' pain.



From customer needs to customer aspirations

Product teams which develop true customer empathy will go beyond meeting the stated needs of the customer, and will anticipate future possibilities and 'dream on behalf of the customer.'



From knowledge to experimentation

The new product manager will have a deep curiosity and enjoyment of experimenting with new tools and approaches. They will always be challenging themselves to design better AI enabled solutions grounded in real-world user experience.



Conclusion

We have already seen extraordinary change driven by developments in AI technology, and the next two years will bring further transformation which will redefine the role of product management.

To grasp the opportunities and develop an AI enabled team, product leaders urgently need to rebalance the skillsets of their product managers. Organisations that invest in both AI literacy and human skills will be those that flourish, while those that continue equipping their teams for the old ways of working will fail.

Human capabilities, or power skills, are taking a whole new significance, as we prepare to hand over many of the tasks we used to do to AI. Skills such as critical thinking, questioning and judgement are essential in a product manager, and these need continual refinement and practice as technology evolves.

Technical skills are changing too, and the priority for product teams now is to develop a deeper understanding of the capabilities and limitations of AI, and to interact with AI as a collaborator rather than using it as a tool.

As CPOs reskill their teams, they will also be overseeing a culture shift, where product managers are valued as AI enabled decision-makers and strategic visionaries.

The future belongs to product teams that can combine critical thinking with technical knowhow, empathy with realism and curiosity with understanding. With the right balance of skills, product managers will not only adapt to change, they will master it once again.

“I’m incredibly excited about the future. I believe that AI is going to allow product managers to do the things we love most, which is solving problems for our users and delivering value to our customer and to our business.”

Debbi Roberts

Product Leadership Consultant
and former Chief Product Officer.



Assess Your Team with the Product Skills 2027 Calculator

Understanding the skills is only the first step.

This report has explored the skills that will define successful product teams over the next two years. The next question is simple...

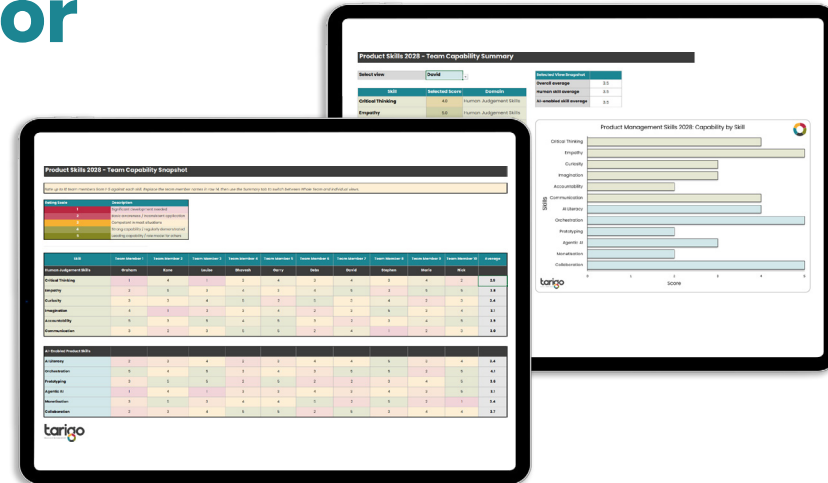
How does your team compare?

To help answer that question, we've created the Product Skills 2027 Calculator - a practical tool that allows product leaders to quickly assess their team against the 12 skills identified in this report.

Designed as a simple Excel-based assessment, the calculator helps you build a capability snapshot of your team across both Human Skills and Technical Skills, highlighting strengths, development priorities, and potential capability gaps.

What the calculator helps you do

- ✓ Assess up to 10 team members against all 12 Product Skills 2027 competencies
- ✓ Compare Human Skills and Technical Skills capability across your team
- ✓ Identify areas of strength and potential risk
- ✓ Generate simple visual summaries to support team discussions
- ✓ Prioritise development activities based on evidence rather than assumption



Start the conversation

The calculator is not intended to be a formal assessment. It is designed to spark meaningful conversations about capability, growth, and future readiness. Use it with your leadership team, product managers, product owners, and cross-functional teams to understand:

- ✓ Which skills are strongest across the team?
- ✓ Which skills represent the greatest risk?
- ✓ Where are you dependent on a small number of individuals?
- ✓ Which capabilities will matter most over the next two years?

Download the Product Skills 2027 Calculator and create your team's capability snapshot today.

[Download your free copy here](#)

About Tarigo

At Tarigo, we help organisations build product teams that can thrive in changing markets, complex environments, and increasingly AI-enabled ways of working.

As product management evolves, success depends on more than access to new tools or one-off training programmes. It requires a clear understanding of the skills that matter most, visibility of where capability exists today, and a practical roadmap for developing stronger product teams over time.

That is why our work combines product management training, capability assessment, and consultancy to help organisations move from activity to measurable improvement.

We work with product teams and leaders to identify future-critical skills, assess current capability, uncover the highest-impact development priorities, and build learning programmes that create lasting behavioural change. This includes accredited product management training, leadership development, product management bootcamps, AI for Product Managers programmes, and structured product skills assessments designed to support both individual growth and organisational performance.

By combining evidence-led skills assessment with practical development pathways, we help organisations ensure investment in product capability is targeted, measurable, and aligned to customer and business outcomes.

Since 2004, we have supported product managers and product leaders across global organisations to deliver stronger products, better decisions, and more confident product leadership. We have trained more than 25,000 product professionals across 30 countries in businesses of every size and sector.

If you would like to explore how your product team's skills compare to the capabilities needed for the next stage of product management, we would be happy to help.

Find out more here: productmanagementtraining.com

Or book a short introductory conversation with our team here: productmanagementtraining.com/contact



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