

**TRANSFORMATION**

# **IMPLEMENTING PRAGMATIC**

## **MAXIMIZE THE VALUE OF YOUR TRAINING INVESTMENT**



Product **Growth**  
Leaders

*"I sent my team to the Pragmatic classes but now they're struggling to apply the techniques to our organization and our products."—VP of Product*

**P**roduct professionals who attend Pragmatic classes come away energized. Great stories. Great framework. But they are often confused about where to begin. With so many fun stories and new ideas, it's hard to know how to apply them to your situation.

Pragmatic Institute (formerly Pragmatic Marketing) offers a popular series of seminars for product management and marketing as well as courses on design and data science. Grounded in the philosophy of being market-driven, the proprietary Pragmatic Framework details 37 activities in seven categories, spanning strategy, planning, marketing, and sales. It is not uncommon for the Pragmatic Framework to be found hanging on the walls of cubicles and offices.

**How can you implement the Pragmatic framework in your organization?**

# 1

## START WITH A GAP ANALYSIS

---

**B**egin with a gap analysis to profile each of the 37 activities on the Pragmatic framework. Determine each activity's importance and assess its current state. For example, consider win-loss analysis. Is this important to your product's success? (It is!) How well is it being done? (Poorly in most organizations.) With a high importance score and a low execution score, this should be an area for your focus.

Which of the 37 activities include areas of conflict? Continuing the example of win-loss analysis, many sales teams resist anyone doing this analysis. They fear it'll be a "witch hunt" that will embarrass the salespeople. But what's commonly found is not sales *team* problems but sales *enablement* problems.

Another common area of conflict is requirements or stories. These are critical for most products, yet often rate low in execution. Most teams struggle with the level of detail. Some product teams write lousy requirements, it's true, but many technical teams want ready-to-code specifications. This high-importance, low-execution activity warrants your attention, perhaps with a story-writing workshop with both product and technical teams to practice the level of precision needed to communicate clearly.

Pragmatic offers a gap analysis spreadsheet to customers. However, some of the items on the Pragmatic framework may not be as important while items *not found* on the framework might be critical for your organization. Moving these activities to a simple spreadsheet allows you to insert additional items on the list to evaluate. For example, win-loss analysis involves multiple steps with different owners: win-loss *reporting* is typically done by sales teams; win-loss *interviews* should not be done by sales teams; the analysis of multiple interviews is commonly done by product marketing managers.

On completion of your gap analysis, look for two kinds of activities: truly important or critical stuff (such as win-loss analysis) and quick wins for more tactical items (such as a story writing workshop).

One customer used their gap analysis to identify these top priorities:

-  Redefine roles and activities
-  Inventory sources of market data and insights
-  Begin discovery interviews (facilitate direct access to customers)
-  Focus requirements on problems instead of features
-  Personas, both buyers and users
-  Positioning (without features)
-  Sales enablement (to reduce sales support for product managers)
-  Roadmapping [using the now, next, later format]
-  Win/loss reporting and analysis
-  Define and refine a repeatable sales process

# 2

## DEFINE YOUR ROLES

---

**A**s you perform your gap analysis, it will become clear that clarity in ownership is a big issue. In most cases, you're not sure who, if anyone, is currently responsible. In other cases, you realize that the wrong role is doing the work.

Ownership is a tricky term. What does "ownership" mean exactly? Is it the same as responsible? Or is it accountable? Consider expanding your ownership column to RACI, a popular approach that includes four areas:

**Responsible.** Those who must do the work to complete the task.

**Approves.** Those who must sign off (approve) work before moving it forward.

**Consulted.** Those whose opinions must be sought and with whom there is two-way communication.

**Informed.** Those who must be kept up to date on progress and with whom there is one-way communication.

A key word here is "must." A smart product manager may consult many people, but a RACI specifies who must be consulted.

Considering the cross-functional nature of managing and marketing products, there are many cases where one team does the work, but the work must be approved by another

team. For example, some marketing teams are responsible for buyer personas, but these must be approved by a product manager or product marketing manager before going into production.

The number of titles and roles can be confusing too. What one organization calls a product marketing manager, another calls a product manager. Is a product owner more like a product manager or more like a business analyst? Are product managers responsible for product design? (The correct answer is 'no.')

Too often, product roles are picking up the slack for under-staffed or under-skilled teams.

Consider three areas of responsibility: product strategy, planning, and growth.

**Product Strategy.** Product strategy managers are first and foremost business leaders. They propose new products based on a deep understanding of the market, research and analyze the business and competitive aspects of new offerings and empower other teams to build a suite of products and services that solve real customer problems. Common titles in product strategy are VP of Product, Senior Product Manager or Portfolio Manager.

**Product Planning.** Product planning managers develop a deep understanding of the product and its technical capabilities; they achieve this by working with the product, by discussing it with customers and colleagues, and by keeping current on the industry. Product planning managers work closely with designers and developers to solve a specific market problem. Those with titles such as technical product manager or product owner are focused on this stage.

**Product Growth.** Product growth managers, often called Product Marketing Managers, are focused on markets, either vertical or geographic. They use their market expertise to empower product management, marketing, and sales teams with the requirements and language of their market, and they serve as the chief liaison from the market to the company. The product growth manager focuses on sales enablement and go-to-market planning so that when the product is delivered, there are people who want to buy it.

## **Don't confuse people skills with role skills**

When assigning roles to activities, focus on the roles, not your existing staff skills. One product leader insisted that an activity belonged in a certain group because one of their people was really good at it. But if that person leaves, does the activity remain in the department?

Set your current org chart aside and define roles first. Then determine if your people should have their titles revised.

## **Consider moving people to new roles**

There's room on the org chart for everyone. Some people just may be in the wrong roles. Or some may have an affinity for a role but need training to qualify. Use this effort to redefine roles and move people into the appropriate role or department.

Many with product management titles are actually doing sales engineering; consider moving those folks into sales. Others are prototyping solutions or assigning development tasks and should more properly be in a design or development role.

# 3

## DESIGN (OR REDESIGN) YOUR PROCESS

---

**T**he Pragmatic Framework defines many of the common activities related to products, but it's a framework, not a process—and it's not intended to be.

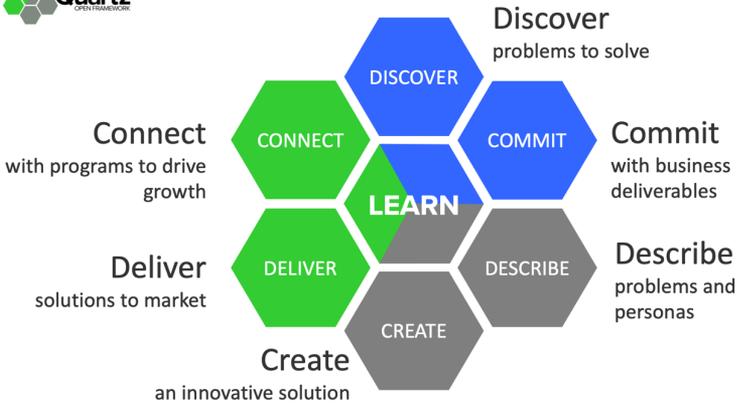
The framework is oriented by column: activities associated with the market in the first column, then a column for focus, business, planning, and so on. However, the columns are a common area of confusion for many. There's an implication that you start at the left and work to the right when in fact, these activities are not sequenced. These are categories, not stages or phases.

As an industry, we've learned to be more iterative rather than sequential. We embrace continuous learning with metrics and market listening posts. Many teams now use the **Quartz Open Framework** to refine their process from idea to market.

The Quartz Open Framework is an open-source framework specifically designed for defining the scope of product management and product marketing. It was created by leveraging the experience of dozens of product professionals and industry thought leaders.

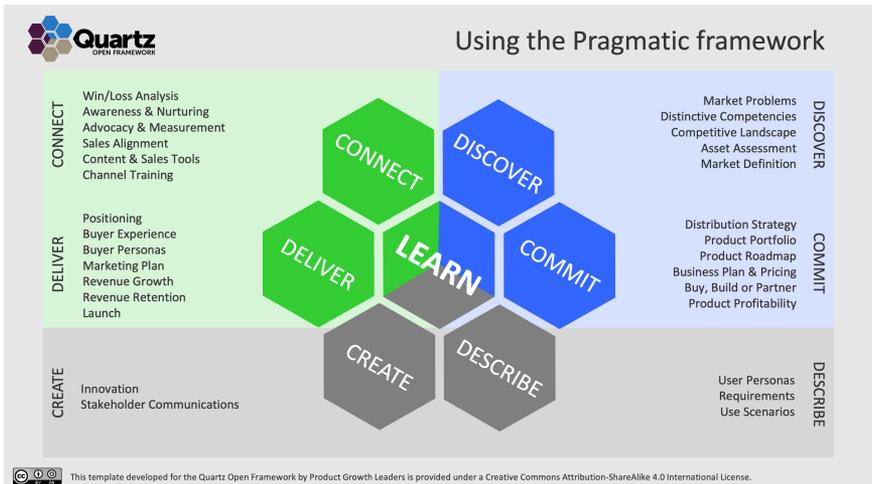
The Quartz Open Framework defines six phases of defining and delivering products. From discovering problems to solve, to describing those problems to the technical and customer-

facing teams, to delivering the product to market with effective launch strategies.



© Product Growth Leaders LLC

Take all the artifacts and activities from your gap analysis and RACI assignments and move them into one of the phases of the Quartz Open Framework.



This template developed for the Quartz Open Framework by Product Growth Leaders is provided under a Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 International License.

This gives you an even better procedural approach to applying the Pragmatic framework in your organization, starting from DISCOVER and going clockwise to CONNECT. And note this: you don't always start with DISCOVER. Sometimes you begin at DELIVER with launch planning. Or at DESCRIBE with release planning. That's why the Quartz Open Framework is a wheel. You go 'round and 'round from product concept to retirement.

The Pragmatic framework shows the scope of work; the Quartz Open Framework helps sequence the work into logical phases. Add items unique to your organization and create your own product playbook.

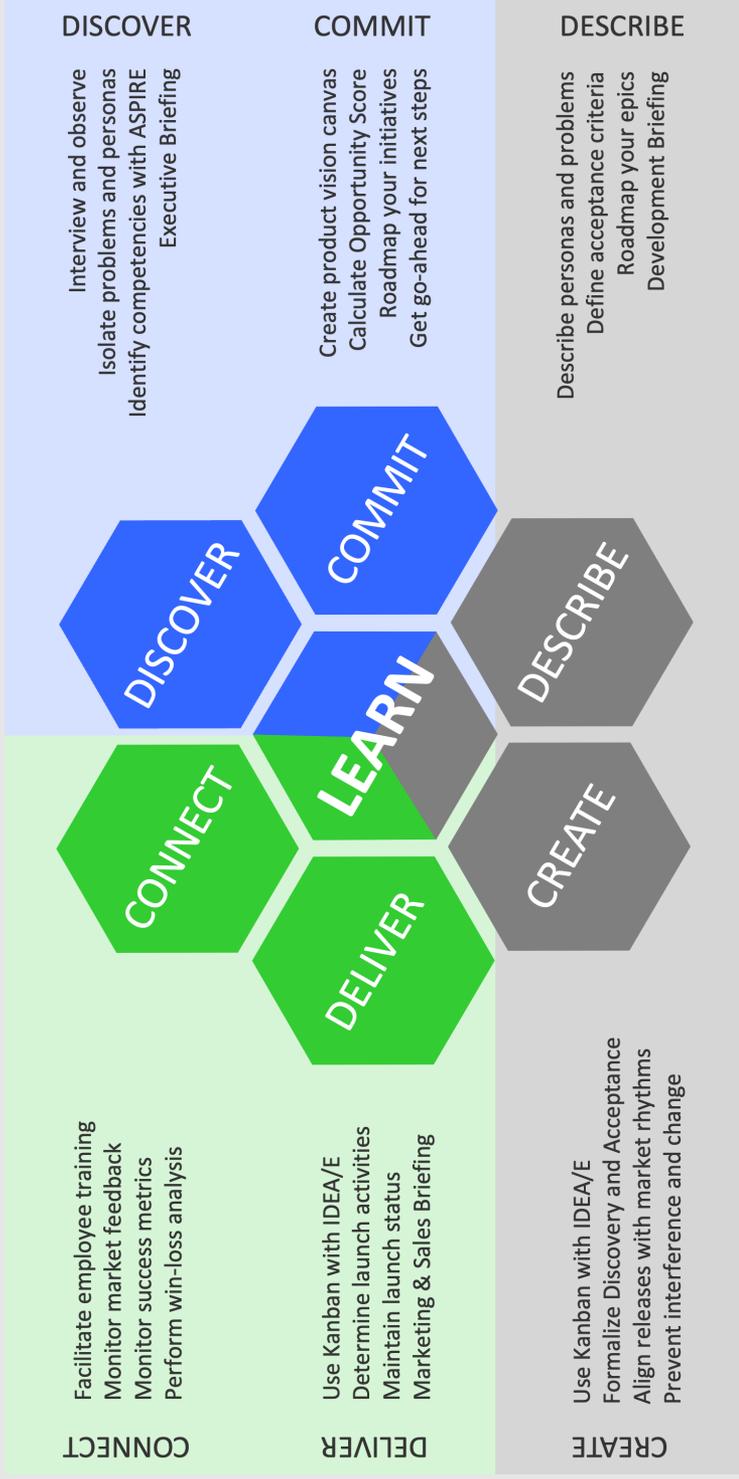
## Fundamentals of Managing Products



In *Turn Ideas into Products*, author Steve Johnson, co-founder at Product Growth Leaders and architect of the Quartz Open Framework, introduces a nimble idea-to-market process with a strong emphasis on personal experience with customers.

The following page shows the process described in [\*Turn Ideas Into Products\*](#) and used in our [\*Fundamentals of Managing Products\*](#) course.

# The Fundamentals process from Product Growth Leaders



# 4

## CREATE YOUR PRODUCT PLAYBOOK

---

**B**uild a playbook of the necessary templates and models for each activity and deliverable. The playbook provides consistency across all products. It helps quickly onboard new product professionals. Most of all, a playbook adds a level of professionalism when all team members use a consistent format for all communications with other teams and stakeholders.

### Templates you'll want in your playbook

- Quartz Open Framework process canvas
- Business plan or canvas
- External and internal roadmaps
- Personas (both buyer and user)
- Requirements and stories
- Marketing asset brief
- Launch canvas

You'll want to adapt templates from Pragmatic or other sources to better align with your business or organization.

Your organization is unique, so your process and your deliverables will be too.

Is a buyer persona's education relevant? If so, add it to your template. Is title relevant to your user persona? If not, remove it from your template.

What tools do you need to communicate among and between teams? A one-page product canvas explains what it is and who it is for, and why they should care. Personas describe who buys and who uses the product. Requirements or stories get into the details of specific problems to solve with use scenarios and acceptance criteria. Align your marketing and launch teams with asset briefs and launch canvases.

Most products need only a few documents—usually fewer than 10—to keep all your teams informed.

# 5

## LEARN LEARN LEARN

---

**T**im Cook, CEO of Apple, said, “Analysis is the only way an organization learns.” Make time for product professionals to analyze what’s working and what isn’t.

A key Pragmatic philosophy is to listen to the market. Conduct frequent customer visits and consistent win-loss interviews and analyses. A training course or seminar is a good first step. Now keep it going.

Sadly, product professionals rarely get together to discuss their work and methods. They get together to help others plan an event or a launch or a sales kickoff, not to explore new techniques or methods in their roles.

Consider starting a monthly or quarterly learning event. Run a periodic retrospective on personas, stories, win-loss results, roadmaps, and prioritization methods. Or start a channel on Slack or Teams to share examples of the work: “Here’s my persona document. Please share your comments and edits.”

Ultimately, our goal in product management is to systematically turn good ideas into successful products.

### **You need a product leader**

And here’s a final truth: Transformation is not accomplished with training from consultants. Transformation must be driven from the inside. You need a product leader to own the

change—someone who actually knows what product management is and should be doing.

Here's what's needed to make change stick:

- People must know why they're changing.
- People must have the skills and tools to change.
- People they respect must support the change.

A transformation can only succeed with active support from senior leadership.

# NEXT STEPS

Now that you've read about the steps you should take, we invite you to watch our free on-demand program **Implementing Pragmatic** for a visual walk-through of the process, a demo of the assessment tool, and a link to the Quartz Open Framework and templates referenced in this ebook.

- |                       |                            |                              |                               |
|-----------------------|----------------------------|------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| <b>1</b> Gap analysis | <b>2</b> Define your roles | <b>3</b> Design your process | <b>4</b> Create your playbook |
|-----------------------|----------------------------|------------------------------|-------------------------------|



**Steve Johnson** leads you through a 7-video program to help you optimize your team's skills and processes. Total video time is about 20 minutes.

After completing this program, get a one-hour consultation with a Product Growth Leaders coach and the ready-to-use assessment spreadsheet for an additional charge.

**Join the free on-demand program**

If you're interested, Product Growth Leaders can guide you and your team through implementing the principles of Pragmatic with team assessments, process definition, applied coaching, and playbook creation.

If you enjoyed this book,  
please tweet about it.

**Tweet this**

# ABOUT PRODUCT GROWTH LEADERS

---

**P**roduct Growth Leaders remove chaos in three areas: clarity in organization and roles, clarity in strategy, and clarity in process, supported by **research** on best practices in product management and marketing for technology-empowered organizations.

Guided by Steve Johnson, an industry pioneer with decades of experience training and coaching product professionals, our offerings address the most common areas of confusion in product strategy, planning, prioritization, and standardizing roles and processes.

As an executive and instructor at Pragmatic Marketing and now with Product Growth Leaders, Steve has helped tens of thousands of product professionals understand the fundamentals of product management. And inspired leadership at thousands of firms to embrace the strategic role of product management.

**More about Product Growth Leaders:**

<https://www.productgrowthleaders.com/approach>



© 2022-23 Product Growth Leaders, LLC

Please feel free to share this on your blog, your internal web site, or with anyone you believe would benefit from reading it.



Licensed under Creative Commons Attribution.

[230407]

<https://www.productgrowthleaders.com>

