

STATE OF PRODUCT OPS

REPORT 2023

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Introduction

The role of product operations has emerged recently as a critical position within the realm of product management. This role focuses on overseeing and improving how the entire product team functions, from aligning goals and improving communication to streamlining processes.

As product operations continues to expand, it's time to dive deeper into its current state. Is this function truly necessary? Does it play a pivotal role in product organizations, or is it just a trendy solution for existing issues?

Product operations has sparked intense discussions among industry experts. It seems like everyone is buzzing about it. That's why we're excited to present the State of Product Ops 2023 Report, which provides a comprehensive view of where this function stands, how it's evolved, and what lies ahead.

And if you're short on time, don't worry. We've got you covered with the [highlights of the report's key stats right here](#).

So, welcome to the State of Product Ops Report 2023. Let's embark on this journey together as we explore the fascinating world of product operations.

Part 1

Who took part

Who took part

Our survey included an incredible group of participants. They represent a diverse range of companies, varying in size and scale. Here's a glimpse:



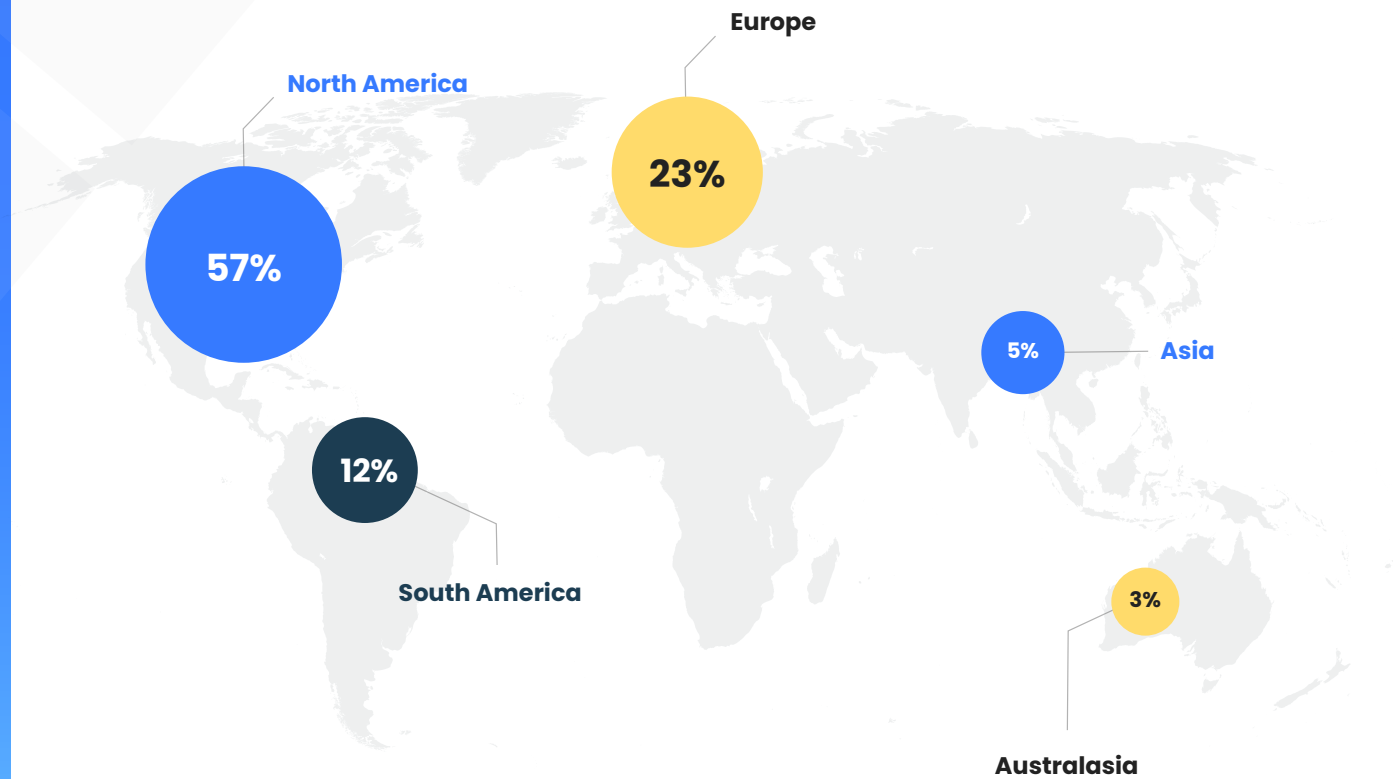
Adevinta



Who took part?

By region

Our respondents came from all corners of the world, making our survey truly global. The majority (**57%**) were from North America, rocking the largest sample size. Europe (**23%**) claimed the second spot, while South America (**12%**) also brought in a solid contribution. It's truly amazing to see such diverse participation from around the globe!



North America: USA, Canada

Europe: United Kingdom, France, Germany, Netherlands, Hungary, Portugal, Spain

South America: Brazil

Asia: Armenia, Nepal

Part 2

Principles over process with Hugo Froes

We sat down with Hugo Froes, Leading Product Operations at OLX Motors Europe, to hear what he had to say about using principles over process in the PLG world. He dug deep into the philosophy, how it's put into practice, and what it looks like in product ops.



Principles over process

Can you explain the concept of principles of a process in product ops and why it's important for organizations to adopt this approach?

For me, Principles over Processes is about focusing on the guiding principles to create guidelines and guardrails for the organization rather than defining strict or over-engineered processes. It's about accepting the complexity of ever-changing product organizations built of diverse people.

The advantage for product organizations is that it moves them away from trying to control every little aspect of the development process. It also gives teams space to explore, adapt and approach the work in a way that works for them, as long as they follow the same principles. I would even suggest it's actually the quintessential way to achieve true agility.

You focus more on the actual guiding principles rather than the process. So, what happens is that you define a set of guardrails, and you give people a direction. It's similar to a north star metric, but it's a north star metric for your ways of working. You define those but don't put in this huge, fixed, strict process.

And why is it important? It's important because it gives you that space to be organic, adaptive, and agile to an extent. It's principles rather than the process.

Look at it this way: how you work is potentially different from how I work. Ultimately, if we both manage to reach a similar result, who is wrong and who is right? No one.

Principles over process

It's like when Elon Musk said on Twitter, 'Tell us what products we need to build.' Everyone was going crazy and saying, "That's not how you do product management." Well, I say, what if he gets it right? What if it works? We assume it should be done a different way, and I can see why it should be done differently. But what if it actually works?

So, we can't ever assume that any way is completely wrong. It's just about setting those guardrails and giving people direction, which helps the teams be as organic and adaptive as possible.

How would you suggest implementing changes to avoid excessive complexity and processes? Are there any practical strategies or approaches that you can recommend?

One of the first things I like to do is lay down the first draft of these principles, get people working on them, and see how they adapt to them.

Then I try to identify the key points where there has to be consistency or connectivity. You've got this entire process that goes on, and people will go off into one room and do another thing. But you have to have specific points where they connect.

We try to keep it as light as possible and find those little levers and switches where the work connects. That's what I think is important because there needs to be some consistency. We have to be a bit more strict on some things, but it's not across the board. And that's where I think many people make the mistake.

Principles over process

It's actually easier than it seems, and in truth, most people in the product organization have already acquired the knowledge and skills necessary to solve the problem as long as we learn to look at a product organization as an internal "product."

Here are some basic principles I like to live by:

- Experimentation and iteration are key
- Apply first principles thinking to everything
- Always be clear on what you are trying to achieve
- Define what success will look like
- Remember that people need less complexity, not more
- You will always get pushback

And here are some tactics I try to apply in most cases:

- Inside the complexity of it all, try and identify the levers or specific points of the processes that will have the most impact.
- What is the smallest/simplest version of the new "process" you can implement to validate the hypothesis? Do that and iterate depending on learnings.
- Look at the potential scalability of the process. Be critical, and you will generally find many things that will break easily. That usually helps me to accept that maybe I've added too much complexity and go back to simplicity.

Principles over process

Can you provide some more insights on the concept of first principles thinking and how it can be applied to product operations? How does it differ from a focus on specific methodologies like Agile, Lean, Scrum, or Kanban?

The way I often talk about product development, it may seem I am against many of the existing frameworks, but in truth, I'm a huge fan of all of these frameworks and see great value in them.

The problem is that each of those frameworks was developed trying to solve what the others supposedly don't, which means that they, in themselves, are stating that the other frameworks don't work, and they believe their framework will work better. All those frameworks have added so many levels of complexity, and each is geared to specific situations or contexts.

Adopting first principles thinking takes us back to the grassroots of things. It takes us back to the main question, "What are we trying to achieve as a product organization?" We could easily forget that our objective is to build the right product the right way and not about focusing on which framework we adopt. Those frameworks are a means to an end, not the end state.

We need to adopt a methodology-agnostic approach, where we focus on all frameworks and none at the same time. We focus more on what we want to achieve and mix the "pieces" from those methodologies to help us achieve those goals. Not the other way around.

First principles is going back to the simplest solution. A straight line is the quickest distance between two points; first principles keep you anchored to that thought. Whereas all the other ones turn around and say, "Well, we've got to think about this, and we've got our personas. We've got to think about that." And they go off on these different tangents.

We tend to overcomplicate because we have so many things at hand. We've got so many resources. First principles brings us back to the beginning.

Principles over process

What are the key principles that you believe should guide product orgs in their ways of working? How can these principles provide connectivity and purpose while still allowing for adaptation?

It's not an easy question to answer because each organization is different.

I think it's important that an organization assesses themselves first and says, "Who are we? And what do we want to do?" It's not "What do we want to do" because it's trending or cool. They have to focus on the "What do we want to achieve?" And, "Who are we?" I think a company has to identify its identity.

What's important is for the company to also recognize where they are right now. If they want to change and be different, they also have to recognize that because some companies sugarcoat it. So, that's the first step, identifying clearly where you are. And then the second part is going and defining those principles and being very strict on this. These are the types of things that you want to define. I've got guiding principles that I use in terms of product operations, but other than that, each company has to build its own.

Principles over process

But, in terms of general principles to live by, I like to use these myself:

- Empower teams to take charge and do the work they need to do.
- Don't over-engineer anything. Keep it simple.
- Trust in the capabilities or potential of people.
- No real change is going to be easy.
- Your plans will almost always fall apart, so prepare for that.
- Everybody owns the change, but you may get called out when it goes haywire.
- Don't be too proud to change your plans.
- Keep an open mind.

At the end of the day, it all goes back to the Hippocratic Oath. First, do no harm. And that's a simple one to guide most companies. If you keep that in mind, number one, you consider the impact it'll have on the users, the impact it'll have on the environment, and the impact it'll have on the world in general.

But at the same time, you have to hold yourself accountable and look back and say, "We've built a product that keeps making us money, but we've created dark patterns. We've destroyed the lives of customers; we've destroyed environments." Things like that. You can go back to that. So, I think it's a good way of making sure you're always building the right things in the right direction.

As a baseline, I strongly recommend reading these two books that go into a lot of detail about how you can build effective organizations by empowering the people on the teams to get the work done: 'Empowered' by Marty Cagan and 'ReWork' by David Heinemeier Hansson and Jason Fried.

Principles over process

How can principles-based approaches in product ops help maintain autonomy for teams while also ensuring alignment with the central strategy and vision of the organization?

The principles-based approach alone can't maintain autonomy while ensuring alignment because we also need to create the connective tissue between all the working parts. Depending on the situation, this can be achieved in various ways. The north star metric, or Objectives and Key Results (OKRs), for example, are two ways we can create that connectivity, but also in how we create some rituals or how we use them.

However, the principles-based approach helps us empower the teams to be autonomous in the processes and decision-making as long as it connects to the bigger picture. It can provide the teams with the space to test out methodologies and find their ideal working structure based on competencies, personalities, etc.

As a simple example, let's say we present teams with the following points:

- We want to achieve this (NSM, Vision, Strategy, etc.).
- When trying to achieve that, always keep X, Y, and Z in mind.
- Make sure you're able to present updates/metrics/results at the following intervals or situations.
- Now, go forth and conquer.

Principles over process

In that scenario, a team feels they can adapt their approach if they don't see the results they expected. They can tell us how they will achieve those results. They have the power in their day-to-day work.

But there's an important thing here, which is that you empower your teams. If you read Marty Cagan's book, he talks about how you can empower teams and give them autonomy, and I think that's really crucial.

If you use the principles of a process and the first principles, what happens is the product organization, or top-level, will give these guiding directions like the vision, the strategy, and, if it's well done, even the north star metric. You'll give them a notion of where we want to go this year, and you'll even set some goals for each organization for that year and things like that.

You then turn around to the teams and say, "Now, you tell us what you think you should build for us to try and get there." And, so, you've got this meet in the middle. It's not top-down, it's not bottom-up, it's meeting in the middle.

And then there has to be discussion back and forth because people have different maturity levels. With some PMs, you'll know that what they'll present will be good and connected to a certain strategy.

With others, you'll have to coach them and help them through it, and it's okay in the beginning because they're learning. And that's the thing. It gives us this connectivity, but they control their own space and can define how this works.

This is also a danger because we can do this with teams, and then they feel abandoned because they don't have the capabilities yet.

So, what you do is turn around and say, "Don't worry. We'll hold your hand if need be in the beginning. We'll help you. And if you can't figure out a process that works for you and your team, product operations or even a product leader can come in and help guide and coach you until you find your ways of working."

Principles over process

But, at the same time, when they feel great, and you step back, they'll say, "I want to try out something new." And if it goes wrong, just go back in six months. It's not a problem. You give them the space to almost fail in the way they work, and that's okay because we have to learn what works. It depends on your team, the people, the personalities, and how people communicate. It gives them that space.

Can you provide any examples of how methodologies can be leveraged within a principles-based approach to enhance product operations?

It's funny because I write a lot of articles about how people need to stop connecting only to frameworks. So, there's potentially an assumption that I don't like those processes or frameworks. In actual fact, I love every single one of them. I read extensively on the different working methods and get to know them all.

You're given a bunch of tools to make decisions, prioritize, and move things forward to build the right product. In regards to adapting to the personality and purpose of the company and things like that, you'll look and think, What parts of this will work depending on certain factors? I've found that, even if you're working at a strategic level, certain aspects of one process will work. Other pieces of that will work if you're working at a tactical level.

Sometimes I tell people, "Guess what? There are times when the waterfall methodology makes 100% sense." Then they'll argue that we have use Agile, and I say, "Okay, describe what the Agile methodology is to me." Every description is completely different for each person.

Principles over process

The problem is, and I've seen it with OKRs, that they read OKRs and Agile and say, "Well, we have to work this way." And then, they try and implement them and realize that they don't exactly fit with their theme. And rather than admitting that they have to cut out a piece of it, they start adapting what OKRs are and what Agile is. They start adapting these things to try and fit their reality.

You look at this and say, "Well, the problem there is that you're trying too hard." Instead, they need to take a step back and say, "I love this about OKRs or Agile, but that doesn't work. So let's use this part." It's taking things from all of these, mixing and matching them, and sometimes even creating something new because it'll work in your company.

Even with some of the results I've achieved here, I've achieved them because of a particular context, a specific time, a specific phase of the company's evolution, or a very specific team. If I had to go to another company and try to replicate what I've been able to replicate here, I'd potentially have to take a totally different approach. But that's okay.

It's funny because I've gone to different companies and sat in a room of people talking about Agile, and then I'll talk about Lean. If another company talks about Lean, I'll talk about Kanban. I always try to challenge their way of thinking to consider other options.

When I present some change or implementation, I never try to say it's based on the Agile methodology, and we have to think this way for everything, for example. Instead, I'll use words like, "This can help us be more Agile minded. This can help us be more adaptive. This is catered to how we talk with our local markets."

I focus on that because I've seen people justifying the bastardization of OKRs because they think that's what we want to hear.

We have to use and know them, and it's good to know them. But we also have to take it back to the basic principle of what each of those processes or frameworks tries to achieve. That's what we have to extract from there. And sometimes, you might not extract anything, and that's okay.

Part 3

Is product ops expendable?

That's the question on everyone's minds.

In our quest to uncover the truth, we've reached out to a panel of surveyed experts in the field. These experts bring a wealth of experience and knowledge, and we can't wait to hear their opinions on the matter. Are organizations better off without product ops, or is it an indispensable function? Stay tuned as we delve into their insights and get closer to the answer.

Is product ops expendable?

Does your company have a product ops function?

We kicked things off by exploring whether the companies we surveyed had a product ops role in place. The results were quite encouraging, with the vast majority (**91%**) confirming that they did have a dedicated product ops function. Only a small portion (**9%**) stated that they didn't currently have one.



Interestingly, this is exactly the same percentage compared to last year's report. Evidently, the demand for this role is steady as product teams expand, refine their practices, and gain access to more data.

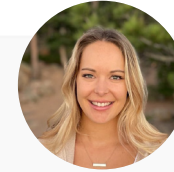
Let's take a look at the necessity of the product ops role.

Is product ops expendable?

First, let's meet the product ops panelists..



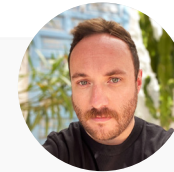
Antonia Landi
PM Consultant & Coach in
Product Operations



Gabby Peralta
Product Operations at
Tealium



Graham Reed
Product Ops Leader at
Cobalt



Chris Compston
Leading Product Operations
at Bumble



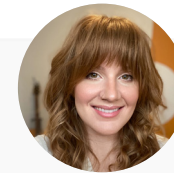
Hugo Froes
Leading Product Operations
at OLX Motors Europe



Camila Gargantini
Chief of Staff role for the
Strategy & Workplace
Officer, formerly Senior
Product Operations Manager
at Oyster



Shintaro Matsui
Product at Amplitude



Lindsey Bell
Strategic Operational
Leadership for Product,
Engineering, and Design
Teams



Jess Burgamy
Product Operations and
Business Planning Leader
at Infoblox

Is product ops expendable?

How essential is product operations in ensuring the success of a product?



“Product operations as a discipline is not essential and may never be. Whether dedicated operational staff is necessary highly depends on an organization’s product management maturity, the people within it, and where they want to go. However, we need to make an important distinction between product ops as a discipline and product ops work. The latter has always existed in our orgs and will continue to do so. Good product operations differentiates average products from great ones, enabling product teams to do their best work. Whether and how organizations prioritize this type of work can have huge implications for the business.”

Antonia Landi, PM Consultant & Coach in Product Operations



“This depends very much on the maturity of the business and the definition of success. Clearly, no one would suggest that a business needs product operations as their first, second, or even third product hire. Startups muddle through to prove a hypothesis and begin generating income and are less concerned with standards and efficiency. But, as a business grows, more people join with new ideas on how to operate. Businesses need more support in the operational characteristics of product functions to support growing in a scalable, sustainable way. Businesses can succeed without product operations – they historically have done, but the value the role brings to teams across the organization is significant.”

Graham Reed, Product Ops Leader at Cobalt

Is product ops expendable?



“We need to consider this through the lens of the product stage and organizational maturity. When an organization has a product that has found market fit, they plan to go public soon or grow at a pace that could become unsustainable without operational oversight – this is when product operations could be essential. Operational efficiency is one of the factors that will differentiate an organization from its competitors. If the product teams can get products to customers and learn from them with much faster feedback loops than their competitors, they will ultimately be more successful.”

Chris Compston, Leading Product Operations at Bumble



“There is an ancient form of architecture called dry stone building, which is building with stone, but without mortar. The results can be beautiful and strong. Similarly, building a product organization without an associated operations team is possible. However, the fastest and most efficient way to support a product organization today is to leverage a product operations team that can scale and enable growth by creating the mortar that holds the team together.”

Jess Burgamy, Product Operations and Business Planning Leader at Infoblox

Is product ops expendable?

Can a company realistically function without a dedicated product operations team, or would it result in decreased efficiency and effectiveness?



“Companies have been functioning without a dedicated product operations team for a long time already! That’s not to say that people haven’t been doing the operations work. It all comes down to how much the leadership in those organizations wants their teams to focus on ‘how’ they work versus ‘what’ they work on. Personally, I’d prefer a product team to spend more time talking to customers, building experiments, iterating on learnings, and successfully launching product changes.

“For me, that is more important than them thinking about the best way to communicate internally, where their customer insight can be found, what tool to use for roadmapping, how their work aligns with the product strategy, or what experimentation methodologies are best in different circumstances. This is where product operations can add value and where we see the best organizations investing in them.”

Chris Compston, Leading Product Operations at Bumble

Is product ops expendable?



“A company’s operations will exist and evolve over time, regardless of whether they are intentionally designed or not. In other words, operations are not something that a company can choose to ignore or neglect; operations happen organically as the company grows and evolves. While many may assume that product operations is only necessary for mature companies seeking to optimize their operations – to fix the organically formed operations (reactive) – implementing product operations at an earlier stage can help build a solid operational foundation –to build & maintain chosen operations (proactive).

“Neglecting operations or failing to establish chosen operations with the company’s culture can lead to inefficiencies and misaligned goals, ultimately hindering growth and success. This is where product operations can play a critical role in helping a company build and maintain a strong operational foundation that aligns with its culture and strategic objectives. This is not to say specialized operations, like product operations, is the solution in every case, but rather the function of operations generally should be explored as a potential option for problems that hinder growth, efficiency, and success.

“By bringing in an operations team, companies can ensure that their operational infrastructure is aligned with the company’s cultural and strategic evolution, helping the company continue (or reignite) its growth trajectory while avoiding potential operational pitfalls that can hinder progress.”

Lindsey Bell, Strategic Operational Leadership for Product, Engineering, and Design Teams

Is product ops expendable?



“Yes, it certainly can. But that doesn’t come without trade-offs and doesn’t mean product operations is not needed. The problem lies when a team is expected to function without product operations while also doing the role of the product operations team. That is unrealistic. Suppose the choice is made not to have a dedicated team. In that case, it’s the company’s/manager’s responsibility to be clear on the expectations and support teams in goal setting and prioritization so they can focus on the most important things. “

Camila Gargantini, Chief of Staff role for the Strategy & Workplace Officer



“While it is technically possible for a company to function without product operations, I wouldn’t advise this if the goal is to enhance a product development team. If a company lacks ProdOps, the associated responsibilities are likely taken on by the Product Managers or Product leadership. Product Managers are notorious for owning competing priorities. Adding operational tasks to their workload hinders their effectiveness and adds unnecessary strain.

“Product operations can effectively streamline stakeholder communication, drive efficient roadmap prioritization, facilitate strategic planning, and implement process improvements – allowing PMs and Product leadership to focus on what they do best and enhancing the overall effectiveness of the product organization.

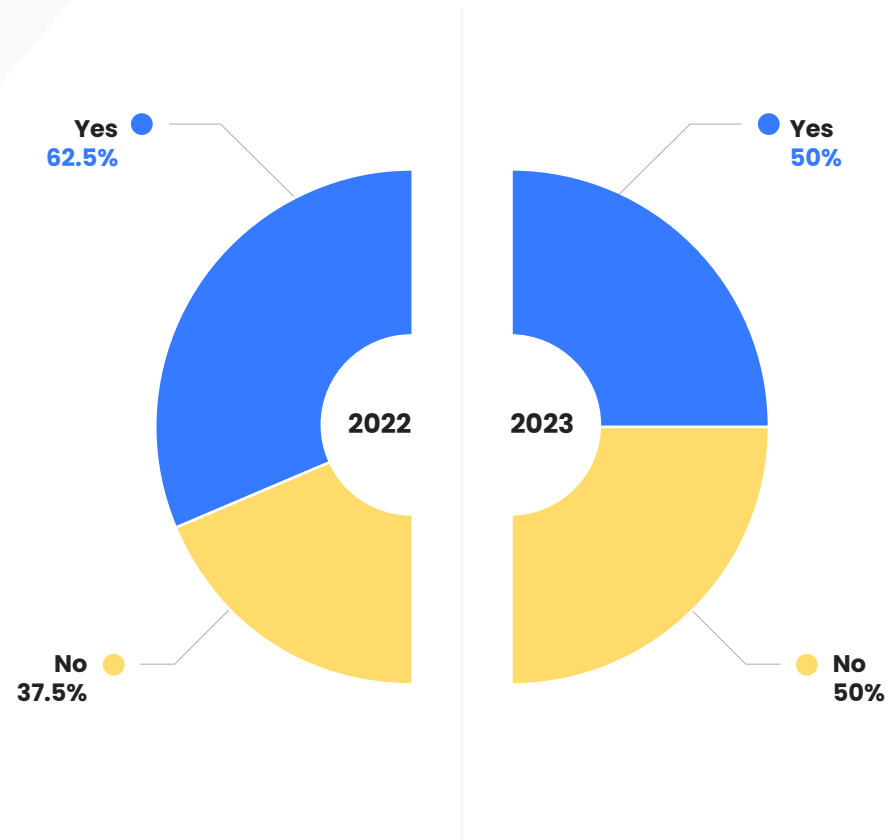
“By recognizing the value of product operations, companies can strive for optimal product outcomes.”

Gabby Peralta, Product Operations at Tealium

Is product ops expendable?

Will your organization develop a product ops role in the next 12 months?

Out of those that didn't currently have a product ops role, exactly half (**50%**) confirmed that they'd be developing the function in the next 12 months. This is down from last year when more organizations might not have already had a product ops role and wanted to develop one.



Is product ops expendable?

What's the most important principle of product ops?

We asked our experts what the most critical principle of product ops was to their business growth. A third (**32%**) said enabling product teams was the most important aspect, followed by maximizing product value at **18%** and bolstering organizational communication at **9%**.

The least important were cross-functional collaboration at **6%**, designing processes to prevent problems at **5%**, and prioritizing customer feedback at **5%**. No one opted for vertical alignment, taking it completely out of the equation for individual principles. A quarter chose all of the above (**25%**), going for a more holistic approach.

There is a clear drive for businesses to incorporate a bigger-picture approach when it comes to choosing guiding principles. People want harmony between goals and to work together rather than singling them out.



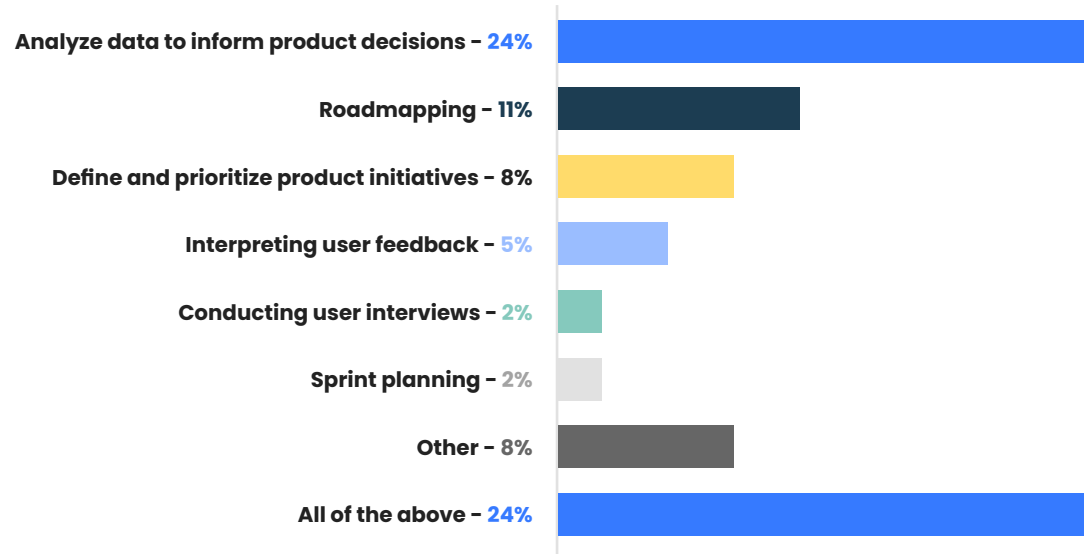
Is product ops expendable?

What is the most important role of product ops in the product development process?

Product ops plays a crucial role in the product development process, acting as the backbone that ensures smooth operations and successful launches when used right. In a rapidly evolving market, product ops is the secret ingredient that helps companies stay ahead of the curve and drive sustainable growth.

We asked our survey pros to select a few of the most important roles in product ops. It was a tie between all of the above and analyze data to inform product decisions at **24%** both.

Coming behind and a lot further down the ladder was roadmapping at **11%**, with define and prioritize product initiatives at **8%**. The rest came under or were at the **5%** mark, excluding other, which hit **8%**.



Respondents could select more than one answer.

Is product ops expendable?

Those who said other listed several other main responsibilities, including:

“Give support to PMs so they can efficiently define and prioritize product initiatives.”

“Enabling cross-functional collaboration.”

“Maximizing efficiency across product teams.”

“Providing guidelines for portfolio management.”

What specific roles and responsibilities do product ops professionals have, and how do they contribute to a company’s overall goals?

Graham Reed, Product Ops Leader at Cobalt, gave us a thorough overview of his overall goals.



“Here are the Pillars of Product Operations, curated by myself with some of the top Product Ops professionals around the world:

“Strategic support: Product operations teams assist and enable the product management teams, squads and tribes in the production and maintenance of product strategy by ensuring effective, reliable communication, providing necessary resources and tools, and facilitating cross-functional collaboration to build, publish and execute the plan.

“Business alignment: Product operations teams are not only concerned with supporting the product function and, by extension, the technology function within a business, but are there to support and enable the entire business with what they need from the product teams to sell, support, and market the product(s). Product operations teams, like other ops teams in modern businesses, support the business but through a product lens and product focus.

Is product ops expendable?

“Data-informed decision-making: Product operations teams leverage and provide data and analysis to inform decisions, identify trends, and uncover insights that drive continuous improvement and help guide the overall product strategy. They facilitate the establishment of key performance indicators (KPIs) and ensure these metrics are tracked and reported consistently across teams.

“Valued communication: Product operations teams ensure that the product communicates clearly, efficiently, and regularly with internal stakeholders with valuable information and updates that they can easily consume and reuse in their own roles. Communication guidance focuses on delivering value to the right audience at the right time with the right level of information. Formalized feedback routes for suggestions, ideas, and opportunities support efficient, focused inbound communications.

“Iterative improvement: Product operations teams ensure existing product operating processes, frameworks, and methodologies are needed, add value, or require iterative improvement. This usually focuses on processes for data, communications, collaboration – other product operations pillars – but applies to the unique needs of each team and each business.

“Cross-functional collaboration: Product operations teams foster open communication and facilitate alignment between various groups, such as product management, engineering, design, and marketing, ensuring everyone works towards common goals.”

Graham Reed, Product Ops Leader at Cobalt

Is product ops expendable?



“It depends on the challenges an organization is facing. Common responsibilities I’ve seen for Product Operations roles are:

“Strategic alignment: Ensuring that product initiatives align with the business’s overall goals, creating transparency in the product roadmap, and facilitating the process for defining a clear vision. This alignment helps prioritize the initiatives that drive the business goals.

“Process optimization: Standardizing processes, optimizing current workflows, implementing tools, and creating feedback loops. This increases efficiency, enables innovation, eliminates inefficiencies, and allows product and development teams to deliver quality products faster.

“Data-inspired decisions: Gathering insights into product performance, analyzing user feedback, implementing cleaner data practices, and tracking KPIs enable the overall business and product team to make better-informed product decisions regarding product direction and resource allocation.”

Gabby Peralta, Product Operations at Tealium

Is product ops expendable?



“There is one aspect of product operations that I think about a lot, and I’m not sure it’s gotten a lot of “air time.” It is the role that product operations plays in culture creation. Product operations is often the one team that sits horizontally across the verticals within the product organization. This means that we are in a position to empower and enable. We can amplify ideas from individual contributors that need to be heard. We can set the tone for collaboration and transparency. We can break down silos between organizations.

Dysfunctional corporate cultures often can’t meet their goals. Too much in-fighting on priorities, high attrition, and siloed secrecy can impede a company’s progress. It’s not just about what product ops does but how we do it.”

Jess Burgamy, Product Operations and Business Planning Leader at Infoblox

Is product ops expendable?

Those who answered other gave their suggestions, such as:

“Plan alignment between Engineering, Design, Marketing, and Support parts of the org.”

“Role clarity and understanding what great looks like.”

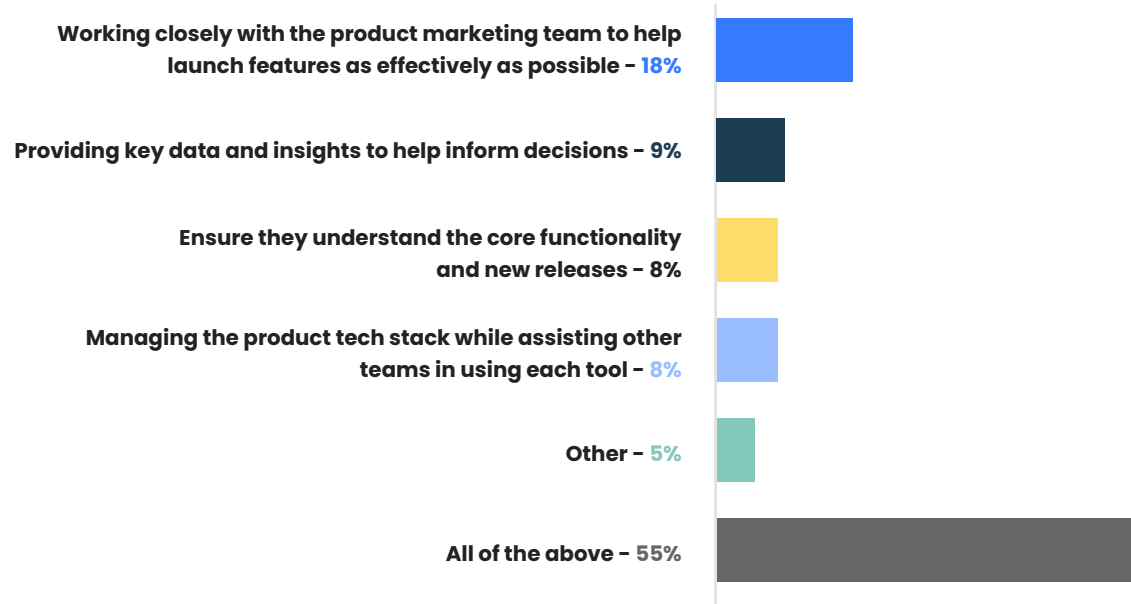
“Fostering open communications.”

How does product ops work most effectively with cross-functional teams?

The most successful product ops teams are the ones that know how to work effectively with other divisions. Over half (**55%**) of those we surveyed agreed that all aspects needed to come together for maximum results. The single most selected answer, working closely with the product marketing team to help launch features as effectively as possible came in at just **18%**.

There was a drop until providing key data and insights to help inform decisions came in at **9%**, followed by ensuring they understand the core functionality and new releases at **8%**. Managing the product tech stack while assisting other teams in using each tool tied with other in last place at **5%** each.

The trend is that teams across the organization are looking to work more closely and holistically with one another rather than focusing solely on individual aspects. Collaborative forces make for easier communication between teams, leading to better-designed products.



Part 4

Design thinking could be product operations' secret weapon

Product operations teams can potentially unlock a new level of innovation and effectiveness by integrating the human-centered, iterative problem-solving approach of design thinking into their practices.

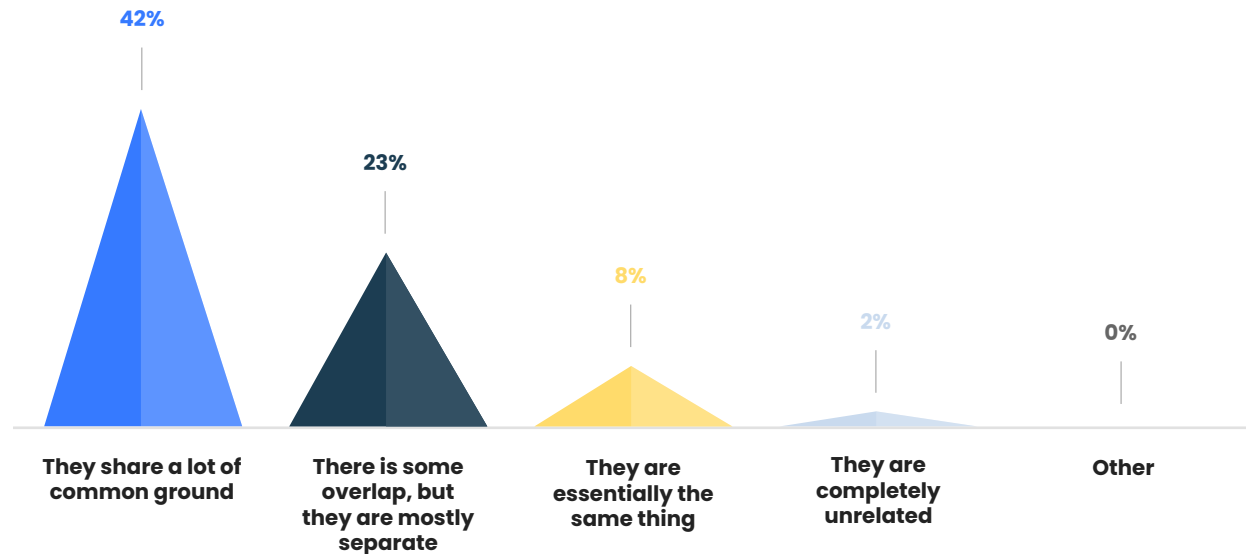
We asked our participants what they believe design thinking brings to the product ops table. Does it allow product ops professionals to understand user needs better, generate innovative solutions, and optimize processes? Read on to find out.

Design thinking

How do you think the phases of design thinking relate to product ops?

Design thinking is a problem-solving approach that emphasizes a human-centered process to address complex challenges. It's a framework that's becoming more popular these days, one that encourages empathy, creativity, and collaboration to generate innovative solutions. Design thinking is often associated with designers but can be applied by individuals and teams from various disciplines.

When we asked our experts to pick their top reasons design thinking relates to product ops, **42%** said the two share a lot of common ground. Coming in at just under a quarter (**23%**), people agreed that there is some overlap, but they are mostly separate. Only **8%** thought the two are the same thing, while **2%** thought they are completely unrelated.



Respondents could select more than one answer.

Design thinking

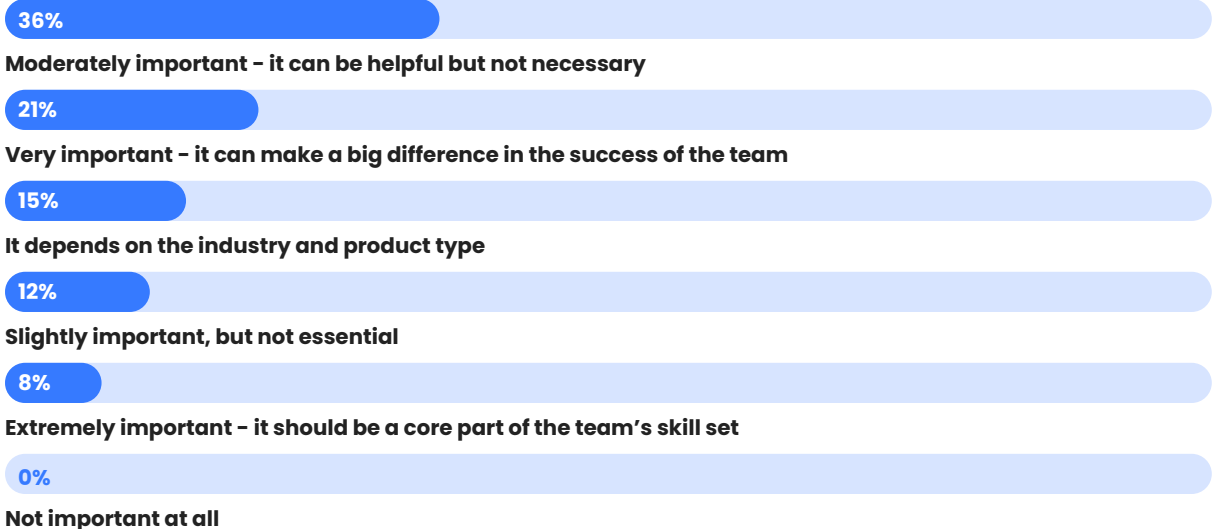
How important is it for a product ops team to be familiar with design thinking principles?

Design thinking empowers us to think outside the box, challenge assumptions, and iterate on ideas, leading to more effective and impactful outcomes. Embracing design thinking principles can unlock a fresh perspective and drive positive change. It can be a game-changer that fosters innovation and fuels success in a rapidly evolving landscape.

We wanted to know if our experts agreed.

We asked just how important product ops should be familiar with design thinking principles, and **36%** agreed that it was moderately important but not necessary. **21%** thought it was very important and could make a big difference to the team's success. Only **15%** believed it depends on the industry and product type, while **12%** thought it was slightly important but not essential. Surprisingly, only **8%** agreed it was a core part of the team's skill set.

It's clear that design thinking is divisive in the product ops community. It will be interesting to see if more organizations adopt the practice going forward.



Respondents could select more than one answer.

Design thinking

How can design thinking principles and methodologies enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of product operations?

Graham Reed, Product Ops Leader at Cobalt, gave us a thorough overview of his overall goals.



“Suppose we boil design thinking down to user-centricity and tight feedback loops. In that case, it is easy to see how it can accelerate the process of getting both the product team and the product to a state where they are more efficient and effective. By focusing on the needs of product managers and enabling them to do their best work, product operations teams can help design the ecosystem product teams need to deliver value to customers continually. And, at its core, that’s what design thinking really is.”

Camila Gargantini, Chief of Staff role for the Strategy & Workplace Officer



“At Amplitude, we do quarterly process reviews whereby we ask stakeholders (PMs, GTM, Leadership) to stack rank all of our existing processes. We then modify or deprecate low ranking processes and double down on our highest rated ones. The biggest challenge is determining what is signal and what is noise when it comes to feedback. Product operations professionals need to trust their gut and pattern match the feedback with what they are hearing from other parts of the organization.”

Shintaro Matsui, Product at Amplitude

Design thinking



“Product operations teams should be built with a culture of continuous improvement and collaboration from the outset. The hiring managers need to ensure they’re bringing in people with the right level of experience with the mindset built in to back it up. Design thinking is a methodology I’d expect all product operations practitioners to have experience with, and it should be a pretty standard way of working for them.

“The questions here are a little hard to answer as I don’t think product operations applies design thinking to itself, more so the methods are applied when considering any form of change within an organization. Everything we do, whether it’s introducing or reducing, should be done with an iterative and experimental mindset. These teams should already be comfortable and experienced with collaborating with a diverse group of people, co-creating inclusively, and experimenting with humility. Design thinking is just the way we work.”

Chris Compston, Leading Product Operations at Bumble

Part 5

How is product ops defined?

Product ops may be defined differently across various organizations, but we're on a mission to unravel the true essence of this vital function. With our report, we dove deep into the diverse perspectives and understandings of product ops.

By gathering insights from a wide range of professionals, we painted a comprehensive picture of how product ops is defined and practiced in different contexts. Join us as we break down the barriers to better understand this dynamic field.

How is product ops defined?

How would you define product ops?

The definition of product ops often remains obscure due to its novelty and evolving nature. As a relatively new function within organizations, product ops is still finding its place and establishing its identity. Different companies may interpret and implement product ops in various ways, further adding to its definition's ambiguity.

The role of product ops can also vary depending on the organization's size, industry, and specific needs. With time and industry-wide collaboration, the definition of product ops will likely become more standardized and clarified. Engaging in discussions, conducting research, and gathering expert insights can help shed light on this emerging field and contribute to a clearer understanding of what product ops truly entails.

Product ops might seem elusive to a lot of people who aren't in the industry, so we asked our respondents how they define the role. The most common answer, coming in at just under a quarter (**21%**), was fostering cross-departmental collaboration and utilizing product insights to identify improvement areas and inform key decisions. **12%** agreed that all the options provided came together for the best definition. Tied at **12%** was managing the product tech stack, establishing internal best practices, and ensuring team members are using tools effectively.

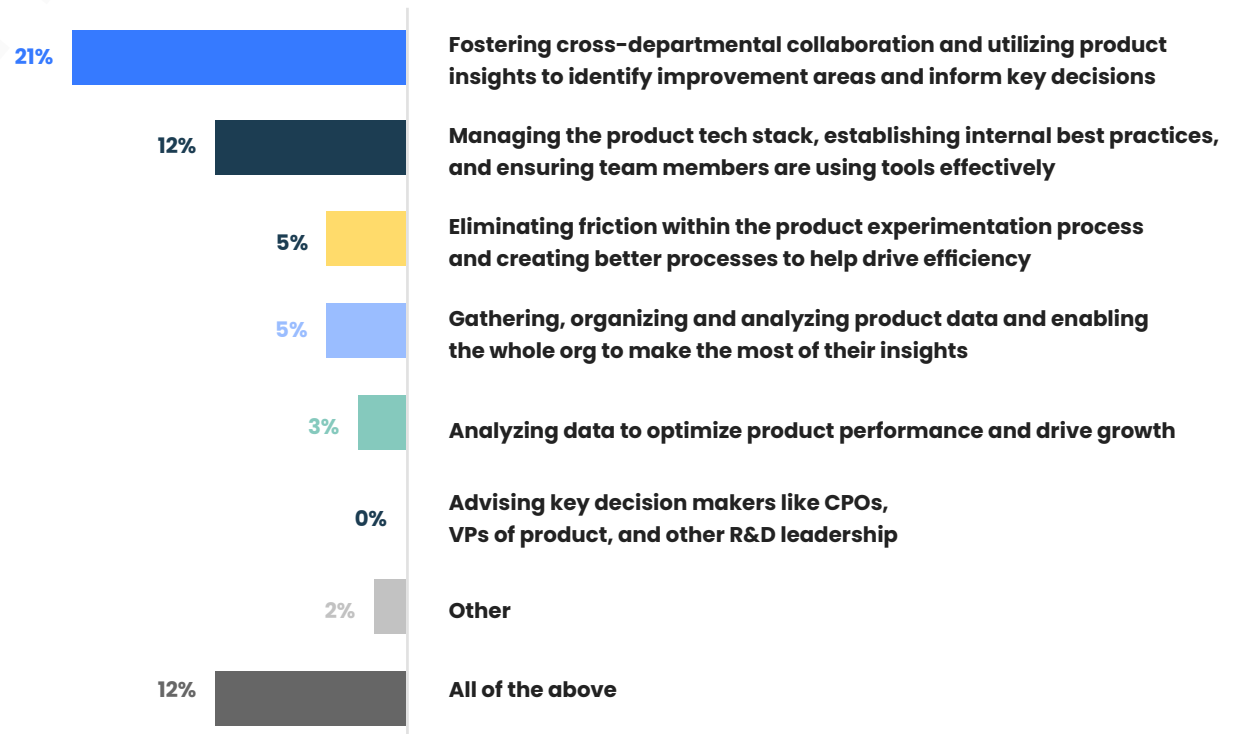
Only **5%** agreed that eliminating friction within the product experimentation process and creating better processes to help drive efficiency was the best answer. It was tied with gathering, organizing and analyzing product data and enabling the whole org to make the most of their insights. Coming in last was analyzing data to optimize product performance and drive growth at **3%**.

The industry still fights for a unified definition of product ops, but that doesn't take away from the importance of the role in the ever-changing product world. One suggestion from someone who selected other was:

How is product ops defined?

The industry still fights for a unified definition of product ops, but that doesn't take away from the importance of the role in the ever-changing product world. One suggestion from someone who selected other was:

"[Product Ops] brings teams together in how they work, and more widely align the company on how product teams operate. Provide the means for product teams to complete routine and strategy tasks themselves as efficiently as possible. Work continuously and iteratively to improve how teams work, removing barriers and bottlenecks, reducing time spent on processes or tasks, and providing everything teams need to do the best job they can."



Respondents could select more than one answer.

How is product ops defined?

How much closer are we to actually having ops defined and matured to where it's clear to those outside of product ops?



"We're not even close to having a consensus on whether product ops is a discipline to be invested in – talking about whether the role is maturing is premature, to say the least.

"Here's the interesting thing, though; places like the Product Operations Manifesto are starting to define the discipline, but those definitions are, by default, quite broad. In some sense, that's inevitable because product ops is broad by nature. However, we're further along now than we were two years ago because we've concluded that, while our day-to-day might look different, we're ultimately aligned when it comes to our principles and what we aim to achieve.

"Product ops looks different at every company because we're there to remove barriers to product excellence. What those barriers look like is unique to each organization, although we are starting to see trends and core competencies emerge. The difficulty arises when we try to 'sell' Product ops to people who are either skeptical or have never heard of the discipline before because those people are looking for certainty – and right now, there's little certainty and a whole lot of ambiguity in our role.

"Instead of striving for a 'this is what Product Ops is, and everything else is wrong' definition, we should embrace the fact that it can take many shapes and that, ultimately, the execution of those principles depends on each individual organization."

Antonia Landi, PM Consultant & Coach in Product Operations

How is product ops defined?

How much closer are we to actually having ops defined and matured to where it's clear to those outside of product ops?



"We are close, but only to those that want a definition, but there are many detractors of this way of thinking. The Definition of Product Operations, as curated by the team at www.productopsprofessional.org, is: 'The work to do is not to define it better or more for professionals, but to define it for hiring managers, recruiters, and business leaders to understand the value and where the role fits into their organization.'"

Graham Reed, Product Ops Leader at Cobalt



"For me, product operations is now well defined, and further discussion on the topic will still happen, but it's becoming less important. What is more vital now is to talk about the outcomes product operations will bring, the impact we can have, and the value we're going to show. However, I believe product operations roles require further definition as there can be substantial differences between people with this title. Even though generally we are of the same mindset, these differences are often down to overall product development experience, leadership capability, and personal growth aims."

Chris Compston, Leading Product Operations at Bumble

How is product ops defined?



“Product operations has made strides in establishing maturity. As recently as four years ago, there was little to no information available about what this role was supposed to solve. Today a wealth of resources are available, offering guidance to individuals and companies alike. Dedicated groups of ProdOps professionals have even collaborated to establish a definition and shared understanding of Product Operations.

[The Product Operations Hub](#)

[The Product Operations Manifesto](#)

“Although there is a defined framework for product operations, implementation of this function tends to vary across organizations. Similar to product management, though there is a common thread, the responsibilities can vary from company to company. This adaptability allows organizations to tailor the role to their unique needs. Just as product management has evolved at Airbnb, we’ll see the same with product operations.”

Graham Reed, Product Ops Leader at Cobalt



“We are very close to defining product ops. Documents such as the DragonBoat [Product Ops Playbook](#) or this annual report on the State of Product Operations clearly articulate the wide range of activities that a product ops could potentially take on. Product ops maturity is not a linear path. A team cannot juggle all balls in the air at the same time. The key is to ensure your product ops team is not over-indexing in one area or being spread too thin.”

Jess Burgamy, Product Operations and Business Planning Leader at Infoblox

How is product ops defined?

Which of the following best describes the role of product ops in your org?

Since the definition of product ops changes for each company, we asked how each org describes the role for themselves. The most common answer was to collaborate with cross-functional teams to help launch features as effectively as possible, coming in at **34%**. There was a severe drop to the next option, to take operational and time-consuming tasks off product managers, which only garnered **15%**, followed by to gather and analyze data to inform key product decisions at **9%**. Tied for last place were to identify user needs and translate them into product requirements and to prioritize customer feedback and ensure the best customer experience with the product at **7%** each.

A substantial amount of people chose other (**28%**), providing their own definitions, including:

“To enable roadmap planning, to gather and consolidate data, empowering PMs to make data-driven decisions, to own the product tech stack and ensure teams are trained, to collect and triage stakeholder ideas for the roadmap.”

“Communicate cross-functionally with other teams, manage tech stack, and help prioritize the roadmap across all products for effective communication.”

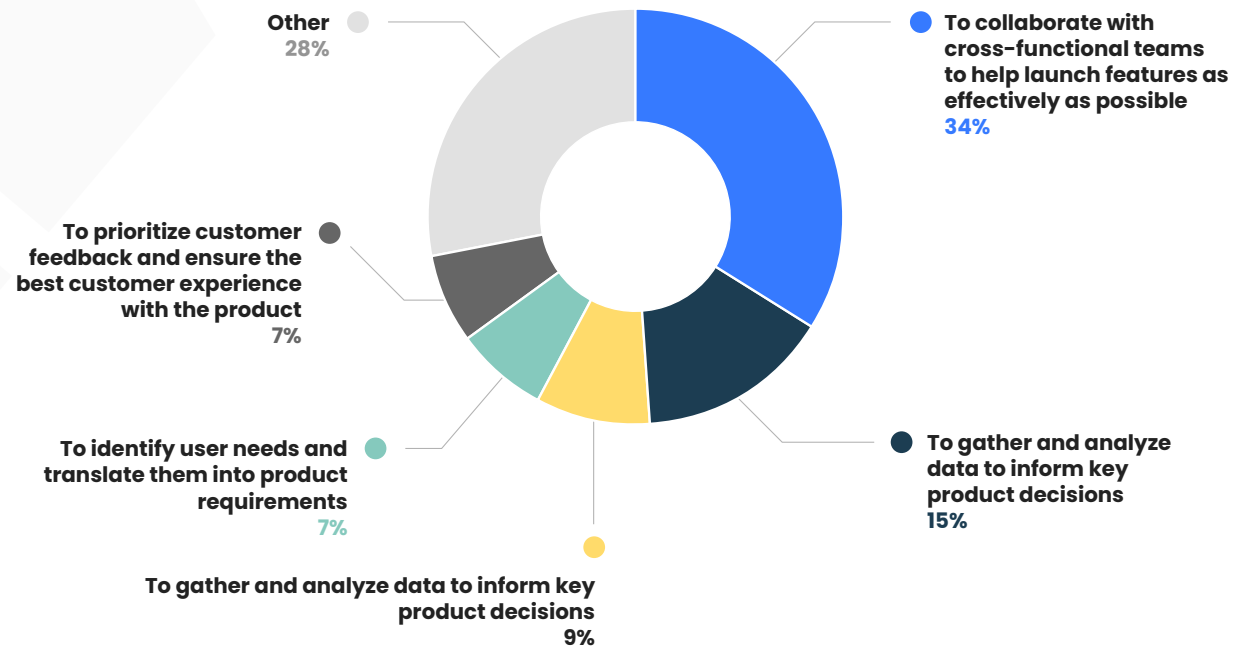
“Optimizing the end-to-end lifecycle of a product, driving cross-functional collaboration, and enabling product teams to focus on what they do best. build great products.”

“[To] act as a product manager for the product organization. To manage the product organization’s people, process, and tools to optimize for customer value.”

“To empower product organizations to collectively, effectively, and efficiently drive the most meaningful outcomes for customers.”

How is product ops defined?

Which of the following best describes the role of product ops in your org?



How is product ops defined?

How much closer are we to actually having ops defined and matured to where it's clear to those outside of product ops?



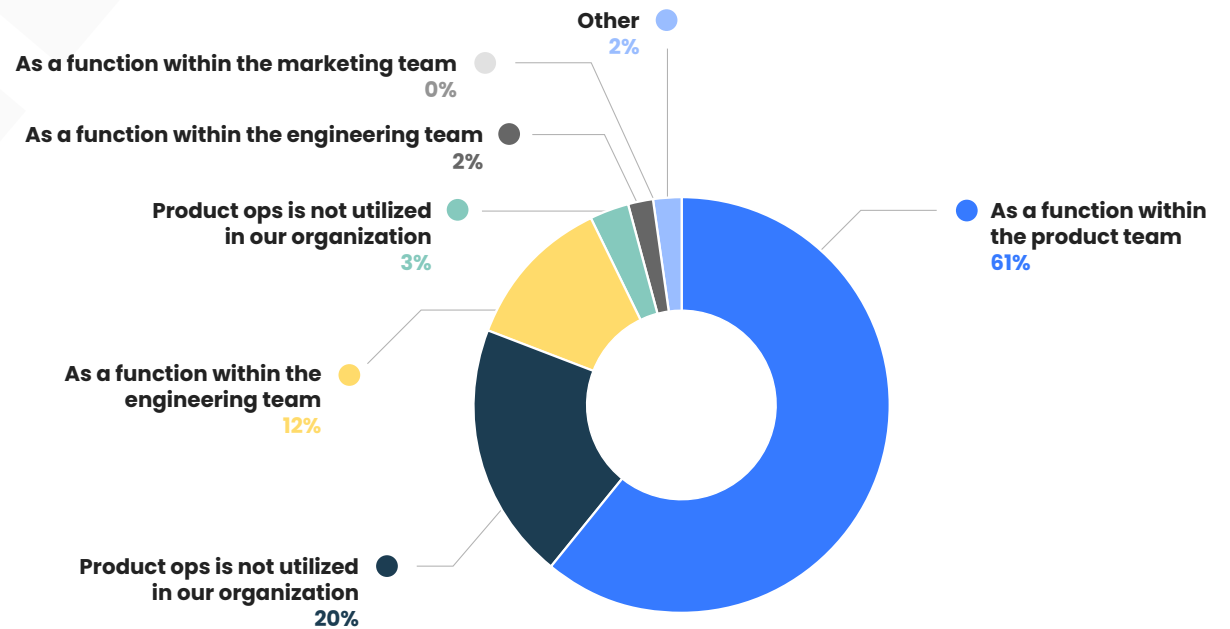
"In 2020, the role was hugely popular among those familiar with it, and in 2022, we saw people outside the realm trying to understand it better. However, due to its varied applications, a universal definition of product ops is still a bit elusive. I don't foresee a nailed-down definition ever. A product operations function depends on the complex system it enables – mostly made up of people problems."

Lindsey Bell, Strategic Operational Leadership for Product, Engineering, and Design Teams

How is product ops defined?

How does your organization utilize product ops?

We wanted to know how people are using product ops in their org. A high **61%** said they use it as a function within the product team. Coming in at a low **20%**, people said they use it as a separate team or department. Only **12%** agreed they use it as a function within the operations team, while **3%** opted for product ops not being utilized in their organization, and only **2%** used it as a function within the engineering team.



How is product ops defined?

Can a company realistically function without a dedicated product operations team, or would it result in decreased efficiency and effectiveness?



"Of course, a company can function without dedicated product ops team members – millions do so as we speak. Whether these companies operate with a high degree of effectiveness is a wholly different question. It's important to remember that not every company strives to be great, and that's fine, too! Trying to force product operational excellence onto everyone without regard for their specific goals is counterproductive.

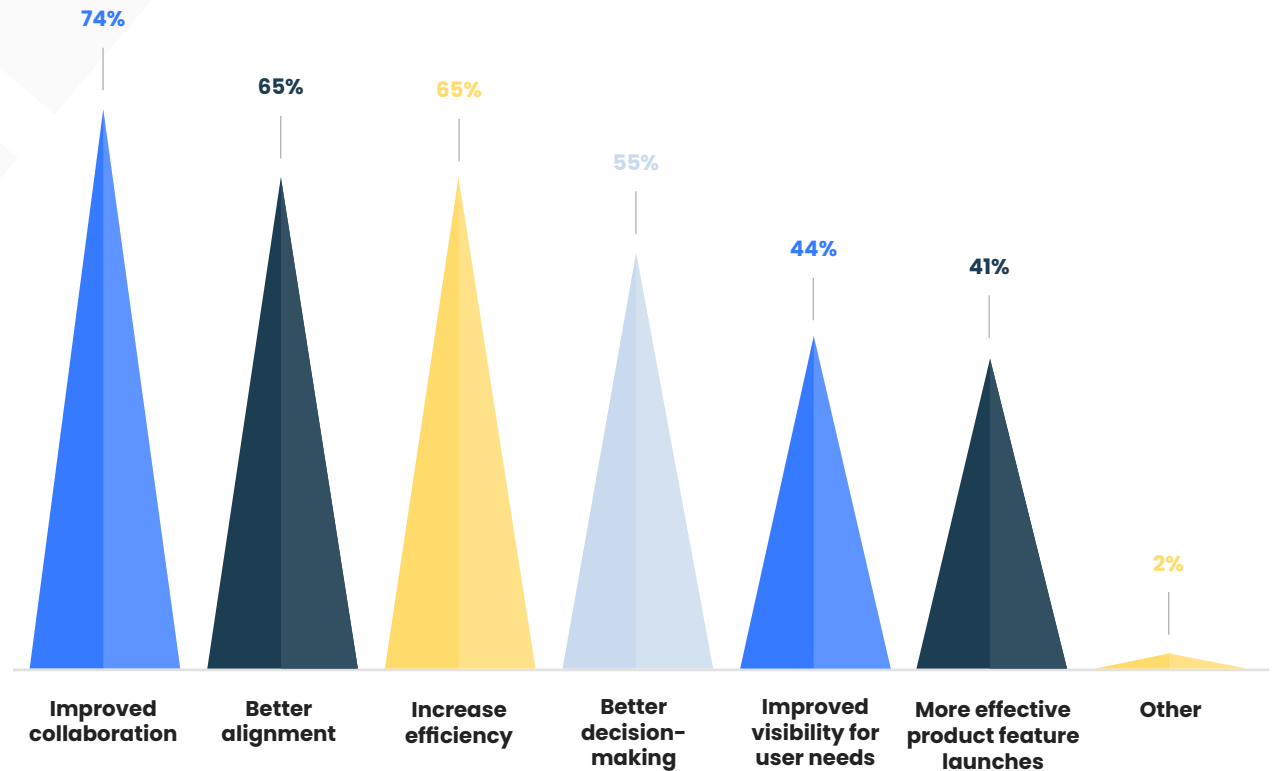
"A company needs to make a deliberate commitment to change if a product operations function is ever to be successful – and those who are unwilling to do so may never be able to embrace this new role."

Antonia Landi, PM Consultant & Coach in Product Operations

How is product ops defined?

What benefits does product ops bring to your organization?

The benefits of product ops can't be understated, so we asked our respondents exactly what the role does to lift their org up. The top answer came in at **74%**, being improved collaboration, followed by a tie, where both better alignment and increase efficiency came in at **65%**. Better decision-making struck a chord **55%** of the time, while improved visibility for user needs and more effective product feature launches came in at **44%** and **41%**, respectively.



Respondents could select more than one answer.

How is product ops defined?

How has the role of product operations evolved, and what new challenges are emerging in this field?



“Product operations as a role hasn’t been around long enough for much evolution, in my opinion. When we look at this from a functional perspective, we can see that product teams and leadership have always been doing this type of work for years or even decades. There’s nothing new here. However, the scale in which this currently happens in those organizations without a dedicated role will always be constrained.

“Practices and processes that could be even more valuable broadly are often confined to one product team or area as they look for success. Often, these teams have little to no capacity to think of anything broader than their own challenges. Amplifying the good is an important consideration, and the value that product operations practitioners can bring is scaling the already good practices across the organization in which they work. That in itself is a significant challenge!”

Chris Compston, Leading Product Operations at Bumble



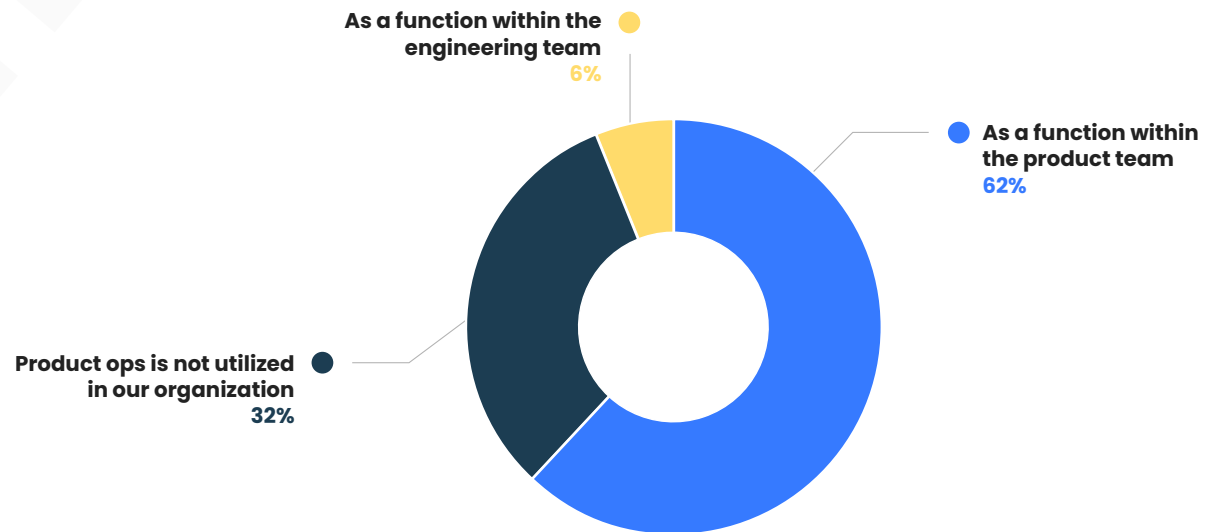
“New challenges are alignment across the community, and industries, as to what the role is and what value it brings. While the role has to remain flexible to suit the needs of the business, this does not mean it is a dumping ground or a catch-all for everything a product or a business wants to throw at it. And so, a definition and structure to the role will bring stability to businesses creating, hiring into, and growing product operations functions. And with this comes the value of the role, which at a time of financial crisis and tightening of budgets, is critical for both the growth of the role and retention of those already in the role.”

Graham Reed, Product Ops Leader at Cobalt

How is product ops defined?

How important do you think product ops is to the success of a product or organization?

There's much talk on the importance of product ops in organizations. The majority seem to be in the camp that it's an integral part of the PLG process. **62%** of our surveyors agreed that the role is extremely important to their organization, while **32%** thought it was somewhat important. Only **6%** said it was moderately important, with no one thinking it had no place in the product world at all.



0% ● Not very important

0% ● Not at all important

How is product ops defined?

How and why do you think companies have approached the decision to lay off product operations professionals, and what factors come into play when making these decisions?



"I was impacted by a layoff this year. I will say I don't think this was an outcome of my product operations role, but that said, it is happening. Two reasons speak loudest to me:

1. Operations is natural: Operations happens naturally when a team is formed. The question is whether those operations are enabling you or slowing you down.

In our great macroeconomic environment, I see tremendous value in keeping 'force-multiplier' roles in keeping traditional 'hands-on keyboard' teams effective to maintain speed. However, sales are faltering for many companies. In this case, a slow day may not be bad if the goal is to wait out a storm. I think more organizations fit in this camp. For us operations professionals, or anyone really, growth organizations are teams not slowing down – look for that.

2. Operations is a cost center: This is a true statement. However, I think operations doesn't show value like other R&D teams do, or it's harder for our partners to see. If your leadership doesn't value operations in the same way as they do other R&D teams, you are vulnerable. You are first on the chopping block for operations teams without solid leadership, lagging measures, and bloat. There are still many organizations where operations is a bit of a 'lost kid' without a consistent home, a team of one or two, or a team reporting to a leader with a bias towards their team that mirrors what they know (i.e., engineering). These are general statements, but to combat "operations is a cost center we can't afford," you need strong leadership to have a strategy, measurement, and value. To be clear, this doesn't have to be a leader – anyone can step up, and now is the time."

Lindsey Bell, Strategic Operational Leadership for Product, Engineering, and Design Teams

How is product ops defined?



“This is quite simple – while it is a strategic role, it is also a support role that is not on the front-line of production, and so it is easier to justify those decisions. Product teams survived without Product Ops before it was a role, they CAN survive for a time again, if not as effectively. The role is absorbed back again by product management or into other supporting roles. Ultimately, this is an easy decision when the organization or the industry does not yet realize the value of product operations at large. And this is what has to change.”

Graham Reed, Product Ops Leader at Cobalt



“We’re seeing huge tech layoffs in general; product operations has been affected just like every other function! As mentioned previously, organizations can still operate well enough without product operations, which is maybe why we’re seeing some of them reducing the size of their teams. But that comes with the challenges of scaling mentioned previously. It could also be down to the fact the product org is now functioning efficiently and effectively enough, given its scale and maturity. This could be attributed to a product operations team and their good work.”

Chris Compston, Leading Product Operations at Bumble

How is product ops defined?



“Right now, product ops as a discipline is at a make-or-break point – the reason for this is our perceived inability to tie our work to the bottom line. Enabling roles are typically the ones to be laid off first, as we don’t actually ‘do’ any of the work; we just enable others to do theirs. And, in the past year, that might have seemed like a luxury many companies could no longer afford.

“The interesting thing is that all those layoffs dramatically impacted the organizations going through them, as the people that remained needed to re-learn how to work together and do more with less. Nearly every layoff round came with a re-org, and people and teams were reshuffled, re-focused, and strategies changed – and guess who would’ve made that transition so much smoother? Laying off Product Operations staff at a time when your organization is going through one of the most turbulent chapters of its life is a quick way of successfully shooting yourself in the foot.”

Antonia Landi, PM Consultant & Coach in Product Operations

How is product ops defined?



Companies are cutting all types of roles. If we want to protect our product ops teams from budget cuts, then we need to gather data to show our value proposition and ensure the data is shared with leadership. Here are some data gathering and sharing ideas.

- Send out a monthly accomplishment email. Brag about what went well, acknowledge what didn't go well, and propose improvements for next time.
- Set quarterly or annual Objectives and Key Results (OKRs) for your team.
- Survey your stakeholders. For example, survey the audience after a Quarterly Business Review or after an Agile planning increment, and ask for feedback on what went well and what could have gone better.

Jess Burgamy, Product Operations and Business Planning Leader at Infoblox

Part 6

Measuring success in product ops

Measuring success in product ops is a fascinating challenge, but we've cracked the code! With our survey, we dove headfirst into understanding how product ops professionals define and measure success in their organizations. We aimed to uncover the key metrics, practices, and strategies that drive success in product ops. Read on to see the secrets of measuring success and how the way for excellence is paved in the world of product operations.

Measuring success in product ops

How does your organization measure the success of product ops?

Success can be measured in so many ways, so we wanted to get to the bottom of it among our experts. Surprisingly, **41%** said they do not measure the success of product ops, while **29%** agreed that success is measured by the number of better decisions made.

After a steep dive, the numbers hovered around the similar mark, with success being measured by user satisfaction with the product coming in at **15%**, the amount of clearer visibility into the product roadmap, upcoming releases and launches hitting **14%**, and by having a consistently better understanding of new feature functionality and the value they bring to customers being selected **12%**.

Successful measures like the number of bugs decreased in the product development only came in at **9%**, and customer retention and loyalty only hit **8%**, the same as the number of at-risk customers saved due to insights gained.

Success is very dependent on the org, and we couldn't fit all options into the survey. Many people offered how they measure success, such as by looking at the following:

"Qualitative Metrics. By NPS questions related to collaboration and cross-team communication."

"Increased trust in the product team."

"General product delivery process effectiveness."

"Cross-functional team partnership."

"Internal staff satisfaction."

"The increase of business results."

"No hard measurements. In soft terms, we measure based on the product team's feeling about how processes are working well/not well."

Measuring success in product ops



Respondents could select more than one answer.

Measuring success in product ops

How frequently are product ops people not brought on to do the job they expect they'll be doing?



“Actually, I wouldn’t say it’s that frequent. Of course, I’ve heard stories that would make me believe it relatively often, but is that just because those people are more vocal about their challenges? For the most part, I think product operations have been hired in, or built internally, with a clear enough description of what is expected. I think the issue can often be down to candidates believing product operations will hold a higher position within these organizations, a position that is often not required of them. In these cases, it’s just a mismatch in aspiration, experience, or capability.”

Chris Compston, Leading Product Operations at Bumble



“A lot, but it is improving. However, there are so few professionals (compared to product managers, for example) with the role only having been properly established in the last few years, and so few businesses with the role available that both employee and employer do not necessarily know what to expect, often with it being the product operations professional themselves defining the role once in position.”

Graham Reed, Product Ops Leader at Cobalt

Measuring success in product ops



“Starting a new role always entails a certain level of uncertainty, particularly for folks in product operations. Despite having a defined definition, product operations can still be subject to interpretation, resulting in unclear responsibilities. Unfortunately, in cases where ambiguity exists, ProdOps is more likely to become a dumping ground for projects lacking clear ownership.

Consequently, the scope of product operations deviates from its intended purpose and causes frustration for everyone in the long run. In order to be successful, the role needs to be defined effectively with clear expectations, and key stakeholders need to be aligned before accepting an offer.”

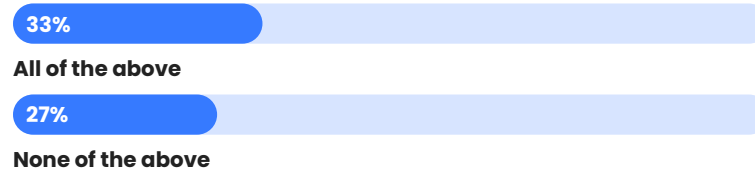
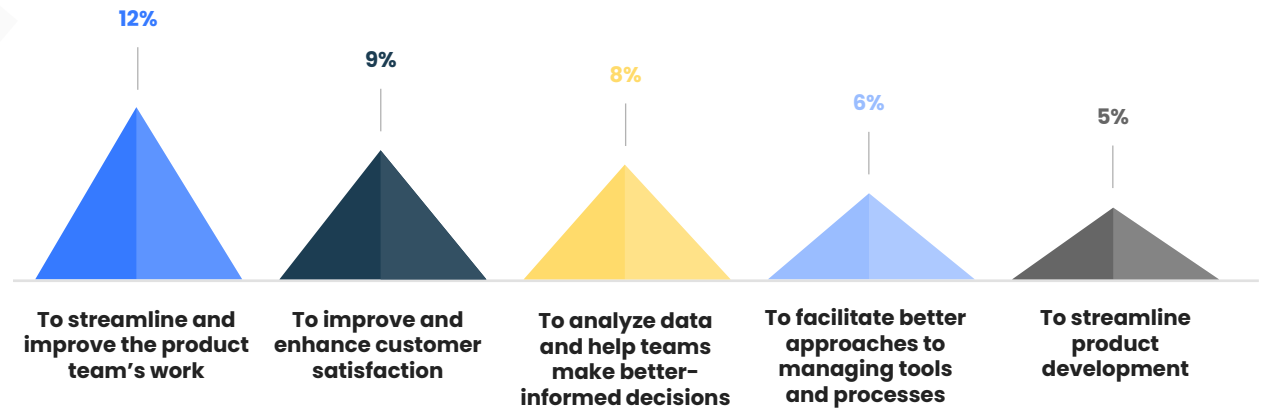
Gabby Peralta, Product Operations at Tealium

Measuring success in product ops

Which of the following is the primary goal of product ops?

Everyone in an organization should have common goals, so it's important to outline them beforehand. We asked what the primary purpose of the product ops team was and got some interesting results.

33% agreed on all of the options collectively, while **27%** didn't agree on any of them. The top individual one, to streamline and improve the product team's work, was chosen by **12%** of the respondents, while to improve and enhance customer satisfaction was only chosen **9%**. To analyze data and help teams make better-informed decisions was selected by **8%** of people, and to facilitate better approaches to managing tools and processes was only chosen **6%**. Only **5%** picked to streamline product development.



Measuring success in product ops

Are product ops people frequently not given the space to do the ops work where they can bring the most value?



“Not in my experience, no. I am given the freedom and autonomy to bring the right value to where it is needed across the business. This is based on my own extensive experience in product management. Having seen it over the years, I know where gaps will appear and where problems lurk. I am fortunate to work for an exec team that provides that responsibility and autonomy to its second-tier leadership to do what is needed and given the resources to implement.”

Graham Reed, Product Ops Leader at Cobalt



“Honestly, I think product operations practitioners need to find that space, and that can be hard! Product teams and leadership are nearly always under pressure to deliver and meet challenging business targets. The amount of capacity they can give to support product operations initiatives is hard, or even impossible, to find.

“I’ve spoken about this recently in Hamburg at the Product at Heart conference. It takes time to understand the challenges of an organization and its people, to highlight a problem space to have an impact, and then to scale an operational mindset. But that is where product operations can add value in building a network of partners with their own operational improvement initiatives and connecting them across the organization.”

Chris Compston, Leading Product Operations at Bumble

Measuring success in product ops

Which metrics are most important to measure in product ops?

Metrics make the business world go round, so we were curious to see what product ops pros were measuring as their most important KPIs.

The top metric was split evenly, with Feature adoption rate and Time-to-market hitting at **52%**. The next contender was Revenue growth at **41%**, with Customer satisfaction coming in at **35%**. This was tied with Net promoter score. Churn rate came third last at **23%**, and Customer lifetime value brought up the end at only **18%**.

It's clear most orgs are focusing on the ability to hit the market quickly and have their customers adopt new features just as fast. There seems to be less concern about the long-term benefits customers can bring and their churn rate. Perhaps most orgs hope to keep their business growing, so churn and CLV aren't as heavy hitters as they used to be.

Of the **6%** who picked other, they mentioned:

"It depends on initiatives and the business problems we are addressing."

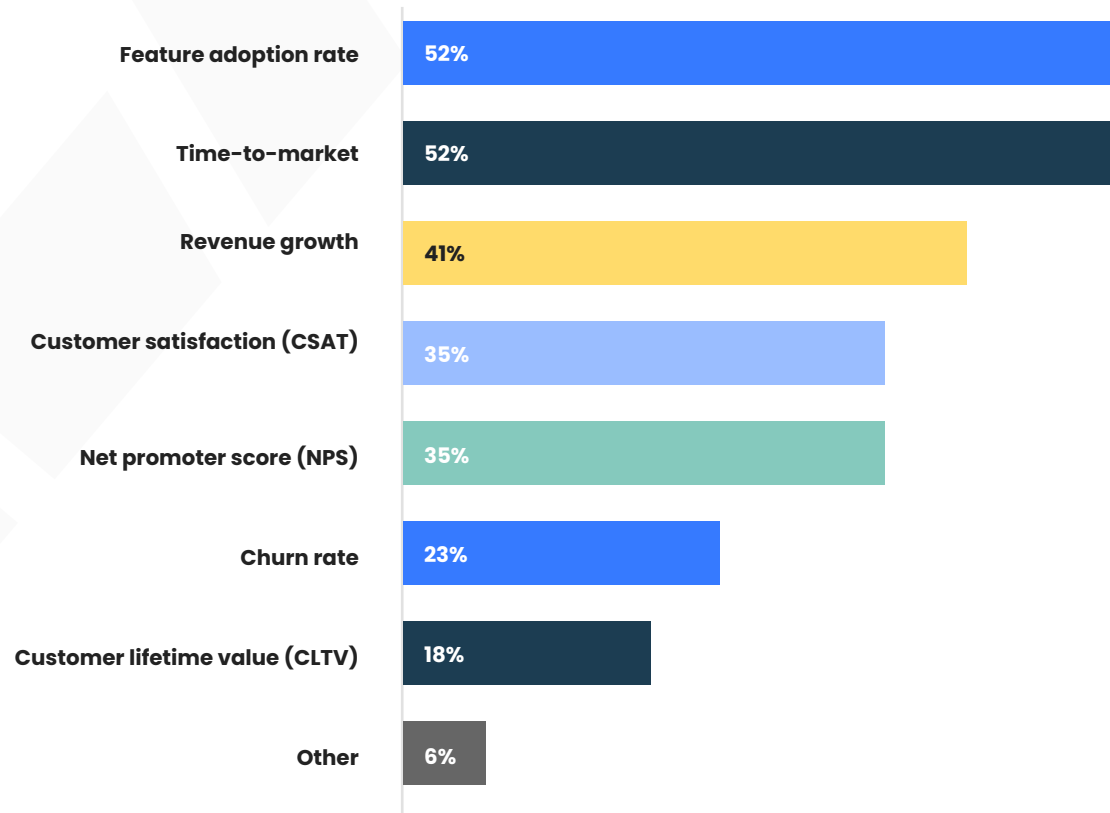
"OKR Achievements."

"Unclear."

"None of these."

Respondents could select more than one answer.

Measuring success in product ops



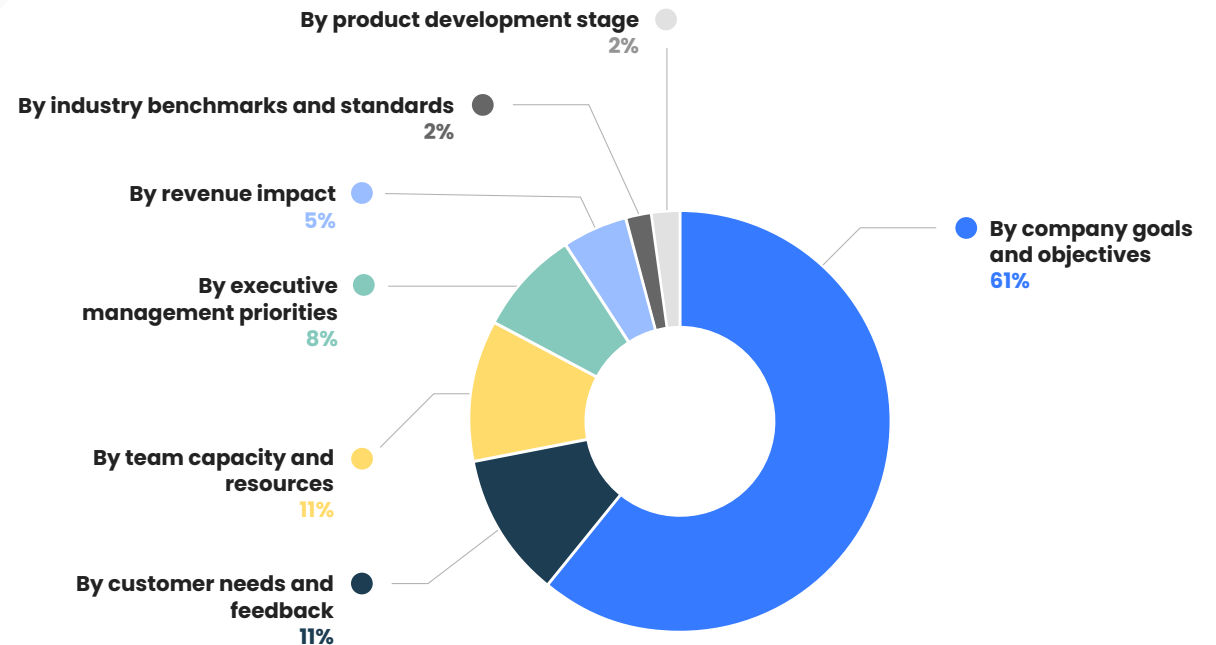
Measuring success in product ops

How do you prioritize which metrics to measure in product ops?

Choosing which metrics to prioritize over others can be difficult, but our product ops pros know their business inside and out and gave us the rundown on which ones they think are the best for them.

Company goals and objectives came in at a massive **61%**, with customer needs and feedback coming second at **11%**. Similarly, team capacity and resources also hit **11%**, while executive management priorities was selected by **8%** of respondents. Revenue impact reached **5%**, and industry benchmarks and standards plus product development stage only got **2%**.

Goals seem to be the driving force behind product ops. In an ever-changing industry, good leaders focus on their overall objectives to drive the ops teams forward.



Measuring success in product ops

What skills are must-have characteristics when you think of someone in product ops?

People are at the core of product ops, so we wanted to know what characteristics companies look for when hiring for the role.

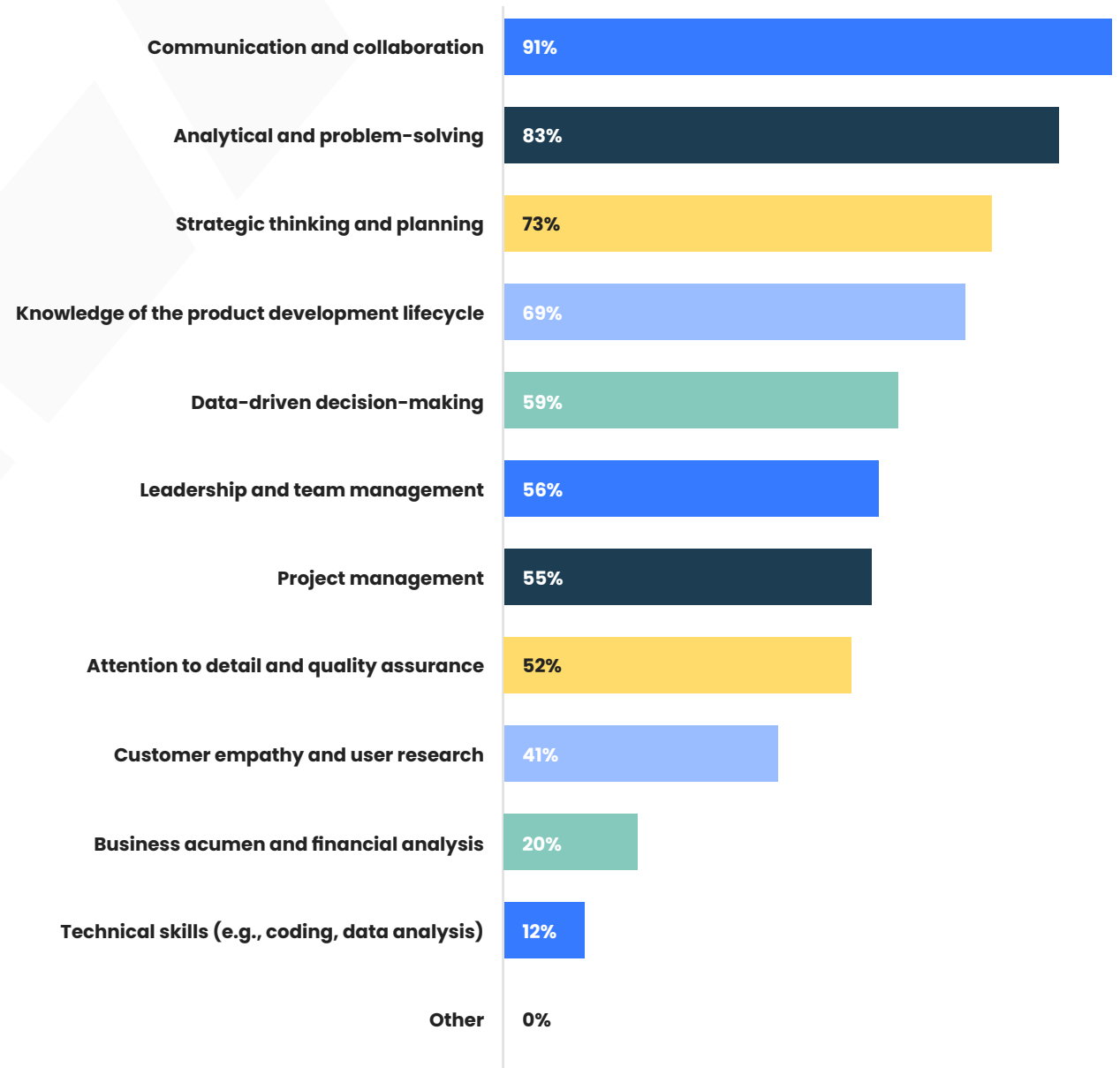
The top characteristic was good communication and collaboration, with **91%** of the votes. Second place was awarded to analytical and problem-solving skills at **83%**. Analytical and problem-solving came in at **73%**, followed by knowledge of the product development lifecycle at **69%**. In the 50 percentile, data-driven decision-making got **59%** of the votes, with leadership and team management hitting **56%** and project management coming in at **55%**.

Less likely to be sought after were attention to detail and quality assurance at **52%** and Customer empathy and user research at **41%**. Far down the list was business acumen and financial analysis at only **20%**, and technical skills came last at **12%**.

There is a clear desire for a balance between collaborative and analytically minded individuals, showing teams want the best of both worlds.

Respondents could select more than one answer.

Measuring success in product ops



Part 7

Product ops future predictions

We've gathered insights from product ops professionals to better understand how this dynamic field will evolve. We wanted to know what trends, challenges, and emerging practices would shape the future of product ops.

Stay ahead of the curve in the ever-evolving landscape as we illuminate the future of innovation and success in product ops!

Product ops future predictions

What do you think the future holds for the role? How do you see the function developing over the next 12 months?



“As product operations as a discipline gains more visibility, companies will have to decide whether and how they should invest in this new role. For many, product ops is still a black box. This new fad will eventually disappear, a luxury that’s only really relevant for huge corporations or simply a waste of time and money.

“And, while we’ll inevitably keep asking ourselves, ‘What is product operations?’, my hope is that the muddy waters will start to clear – if not entirely, then at least somewhat – and we’ll be able to start talking about doing product ops successfully; whether as a separate discipline, in a consulting capacity, or as a shared responsibility.

“The truth is that product operations won’t gain a foothold in the mainstream until we can prove that what we do makes financial sense. For us product ops professionals, the time has come to prove our value by doing what we do best and showing tangible results instead of just talking. If we do that collectively, product operations might have a future far beyond being the latest trend.”

Antonia Landi, PM Consultant & Coach in Product Operations

Product ops future predictions



“This is where I spend a lot of my cycles. It’s important for me as an individual to have sight of my next step, and if I’m honest, I find it difficult today. It’s fun to think about, but it certainly isn’t secure. I like to recognize my bias towards long-term perspectives, and that’s my hope for product ops.

“I believe that the future of product ops lies in its ability to move away from a narrow scope, such as pairing 1:1 with PMs on scrum teams, and embrace a broader mission to enable entire product teams – engineers, designers, various program managers, and beyond – to build products that customers love. Perhaps product ops will evolve into a kind of R&D Ops that unites all forces towards a common goal. Whatever form it takes, the focus should always be on solving what needs to be solved while keeping our eyes on the mission.”

Lindsey Bell, Strategic Operational Leadership for Product, Engineering, and Design Teams



“There is a LOT of education to happen for business leaders more than professionals themselves, and a lot of proving value as the world economy continues to realign. The next 12 months will be about survival for most, with only a handful able to take the role forward and be even more strategic.”

Graham Reed, Product Ops Leader at Cobalt

Product ops future predictions



“Over the next 12 months, we will see fewer questions or commentary about what product operations is and more about the value the function can bring to an organization. The types of organizations that could benefit from a specific product operations function should also become clearer.

“At the same time, I expect organizations hiring for product leadership roles to look to more experienced product operations practitioners to lead their teams. Because we should be building empowered product teams with enough autonomy to be flexible and creative in solving customer problems. Experienced product operations practitioners are well-placed to do that effectively.”

Chris Compston, Leading Product Operations at Bumble



“I see strong prod ops teams taking on more scope of adjacent functions (e.g., product documentation, user research), and applying an operations rigor around them to make them successful.”

Shintaro Matsui, Product at Amplitude

Part 8

Conclusion

Conclusion

Here are your stat highlights:

- **91%** of those surveyed have a product ops function in their organization.
- The most important principle of product ops was voted to be enabling product teams, coming in at **33%** of all the choices.
- Of all the roles in product ops, analyze data to inform product decisions was voted the most important at **24%**.
- The most agreed-upon definition of product ops was fostering cross-departmental collaboration and utilizing product insights to identify improvement areas and inform key decisions, coming in at **21%** of the votes.
- **61%** of those we surveyed utilized product ops as a function within the product team.
- The vast majority agreed that improved collaboration was the most beneficial aspect of product ops, with **74%** of the votes.
- Well over half (**62%**) agreed product ops was extremely important to the product development process.
- **52%** of those who took the poll agreed the most important metric to be measured was Feature adoption rate.
- When asked how success was measured, **62%** agreed company goals and objectives were the top considerations.

Conclusion

Product operations is definitely here to stay, and the impact it's making in product organizations is crystal clear, as revealed in the report. Despite its still undefined nature, there's no denying its growing significance and demand.

Just like our experts have highlighted, it's an incredibly exciting time for product ops, and we can expect more and more companies to embrace it as courses, certifications, and resources on the role become more readily available.

Sure, there's still some ambiguity and areas to be ironed out, but product ops is blazing a trail, empowering product managers to innovate faster and operate with greater agility and efficiency. The enthusiasm for this function is spreading like wildfire, prompting organizations to invest like never before. The future is promising, and we can't wait to witness the remarkable impact product ops will continue to have.

Conclusion

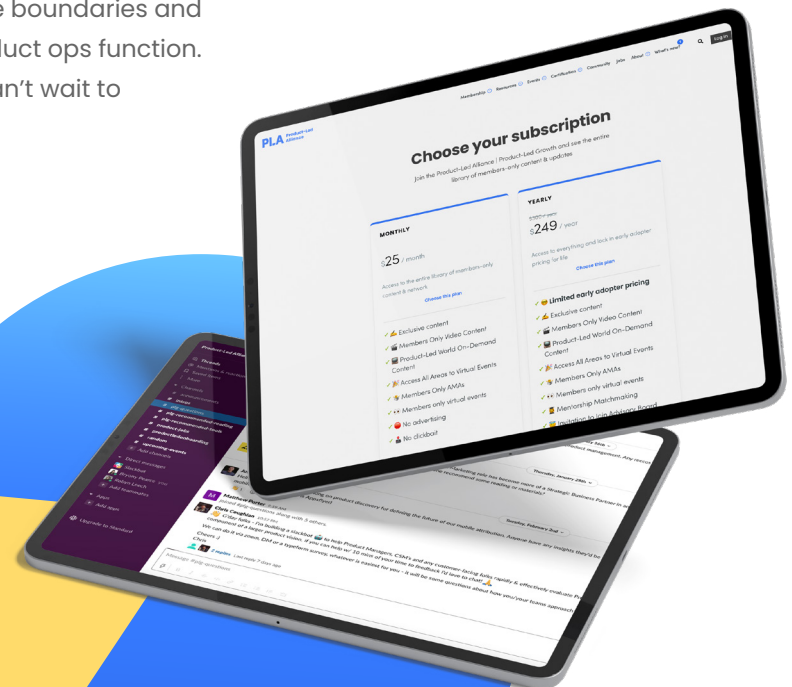
Thank you

We extend a massive thank you to everyone who participated in the survey, as well as our incredible experts who shared their incredible insights. Your contributions have been invaluable, and we appreciate your involvement in shaping the future of the product ops function.

If you're eager to join the ongoing discussion and be part of our vibrant community, we invite you to [join our growing Slack community](#). Connect with like-minded professionals, exchange ideas, and stay up-to-date with the latest trends in product ops.

To take your involvement even further, consider [signing up for a PLA](#) membership plan. Gain exclusive access to resources, networking opportunities, and educational materials to enhance your product ops journey.

Together, let's continue to push the boundaries and unlock the full potential of the product ops function. Exciting times lie ahead, and we can't wait to embark on this journey with you!



Conclusion

Discover Product Operations Certified

Ready to level up your product ops skills? Join our fun and interactive course with 5 modules, 21 chapters, and over 3 hours of content!

Get an official certification and learn at your own pace with 100% self-guided learning.

[Sign up now](#) and start building world-class product communities today!



One resource to rule them all...

Here at PLA, we're on a quest to provide a (warning, cliché alert) 'one-stop shop' for product ops content...

...and so the [Product Ops Portal](#) was born! A handy hub full of useful articles, podcasts, videos – the lot.

[Dive in](#) or, if you'd like to contribute something, drop us a line.

Contributors



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Content Manager

Adam is a Content Manager at PLA, who also works across a number of the other forward-thinking and progressive communities in The Alliance. He's had a passion for producing rich content for years, and thrives on being able to truly captivate, inspire and make a lasting impact on audiences.



Millie McCaughrean

Community Manager

Millie is the Community Manager for PLA. She will do everything to provide your community with value and is constantly seeking out new ways to grow the community too. She fully understands the importance of community through fostering engagement and providing value and seeks to achieve growth in all that she does with the utmost efficiency.



Rebecca Madro

Midweight Copywriter

Rebecca is our midweight copywriter here at PLA. With a passion for creating engaging content, she's committed to delivering excellence. If you have any specific topics you'd like us to explore or if there's another report you'd love to see published, don't hesitate to reach out. Your ideas and feedback are always welcome and highly valued.



Faye Lloyd

Graphic Designer

Faye is our graphic designer and looks at all our design requirements. She's responsible for the layout and visual elements in this report and is always happy to hear your thoughts!



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