Cabinet Office

Creating Product Roadmaps

Roles and Responsibilities Guidance

Jon Forman, Amy Fox, Tom Natt

Introduction

How to use this guidance

- This guidance has been created to help support the continued use of product roadmaps at GDS
- It is intended to be a helpful starting point for Product Managers, Delivery Managers and Technical colleagues in programme and product teams to agree roles and responsibilities when creating and maintaining roadmaps
- Although the guidance discusses the creation of product roadmaps, it remains relevant and valid as a starting point for general discussions on roles and responsibilities in product and service teams
- It is not intended to be prescriptive, or to prevent individuals from agreeing specific roles and responsibilities based on their preferences, strengths, and the needs of their teams

What is a product roadmap?

- A roadmap describes the value you propose to deliver to your users and the business
- A roadmap is a tool to rally support and coordinate effort amongst your team and stakeholders
- Roadmaps can take many forms and aren't necessarily a single artifact or document

The key purpose of a roadmap is to create a shared understanding of where you're going and why.

Further Reading:

- "Product roadmaps in five easy pieces" - Scott Colfer
- Service manual - developing a product roadmap
- "Product roadmaps relaunched". C. Todd Lombardo, Bruce McCarthy, Evan Ryan, Michael Connors (2018)
- GDS product roadmap template

Product roadmap best practice

A roadmap should:

- Focus on delivering value to users and the business
- Get users excited about the product’s direction
- Embrace learning as part of a successful product development phase
- Put the organisation's plans in a strategic context
- Rally the team around a single set of priorities

A roadmap should not:

- Make promises the team are not confident they can deliver-on
- Require overly wasteful up-front design and estimation
- Be conflated or confused with a project or plan or release plan

How to use your roadmap

- Make it the basis for all prioritisation and planning discussions
- Use it to communicate and agree decisions with stakeholders
- Show it to your users
- Talk about it in your next team meeting
- Decide when and how you will review and adjust it

Roles and responsibilities guidance

Delivery Management

During the creation and maintenance of product roadmaps I am typically accountable for:

- Collaborating with PM and Technical colleagues to create an ambitious and feasible product roadmap
- Creating an environment with the relevant team members to create or update the product roadmap
- Planning and facilitating roadmap sessions, asking structured and sometimes provocative questions to ensure we produce the right results
- Identifying and manage organisational and delivery dependencies with other teams and services
- Identifying and manage key delivery risks and issues
- Feasibility of delivery (time, cost) and challenging scope if unfeasible
- Ensuring we have buy in from teams and that the vision and roadmap is collectively owned, and publicised internally including changes and updates
- Ensuring we have the people and resources in place to deliver the current iteration of roadmap
- Removing blockers to delivery of roadmap
- Collaborating with the PM to create Management Information and reporting on delivery of output and outcomes, following lean agile governance principles
- Creating or updating the delivery plan to deliver the roadmap
- Advocating and championing the product delivery team members, team health and sustainable pace
- Facilitating an agreement on definition of done

Product Management

During the creation and maintenance of product roadmaps I am typically accountable for:

- Collaborating with DM and Technical colleagues to create an ambitious and feasible product roadmap
- Building the right thing - the ‘what’ and the ‘why’
- Defining and communicating long-term product vision and value proposition, based on user need (can be created collaboratively), linked to the wider GDS strategy
- Defining and communicating product strategy (can be created collaboratively)
- Prioritising and communicating the outcomes we aim to deliver for users (described in missions), supported by data where possible
- Defining the Objectives and Key Results by which we will measure that the outcomes of the missions have been achieved
- Prioritising both functional and non-functional work (e.g. tech debt)
- Communicating, evangelising and validating the roadmap with stakeholders and PM counterparts
- Collaborating with the DM to create Management Information and Reporting on the delivery of output and outcomes
- Leading the definition of the operational requirements and Service Level Agreements
- Agreeing the definition of done with the Architect / Dev / SRE and Team, and managing quality

Architect / Developer / SRE

During the creation and maintenance of product roadmaps I am typically accountable for:

- Collaborating with DM and PM colleagues to create an ambitious and feasible product roadmap
- Owning and voicing the technical direction of the product, including architecture vision and technical debt
- Ensuring technical direction is consistent with the wider GDS technical strategy and the GDS Way
- Championing the use of TechOps solutions
- Identifying existing solutions within the programme, and bringing technical learning from other programmes
- Championing non-functional improvements and describing their potential impact
- Championing quality engineering, and knowing the implications for rate of delivery and service operation
- Being ready to challenge the feasibility of delivery and making recommendations (e.g. delivery might be improved if features were developed in a different order)
- Discuss options beyond "build" (e.g. “buy” or “borrow”)
- Support discussions about measurements of success
- Support discussions and provide rough estimates for technical work
- Advise on the technical skills required for successful delivery
- Agree the definition of done with the PM and Team