



Guideline for Managing Product Team Meetings

Created by

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Managing Product Team Meetings

Protocol and Practices

The product team meeting presents a number of challenges and opportunities. It is a forum for 'running the business,' sharing information, making critical product team decisions, and a place for functional organizations to bring their subject matter expertise and insight to the table. There are several factors that contribute to the success of product team meetings. Some of the following should be considered:

- a) Do the people who are participating provide the right mix of experience and subject matter expertise so that there can be balanced, energetic discussions of the topics to be discussed?*
- b) Does the meeting have clarity and purpose?*
- c) Does everyone in the meeting agree on the meeting goals?*
- d) Are there any logistical obstacles keeping the right people from being at the meeting at the appointed time?*
- e) Can the product management leader manage the interpersonal dynamics during the meeting?*
- f) Do meeting participants feel that their ideas and issues have been heard and given fair consideration?*
- g) Does the product management leader follow up with timely feedback?*
- h) Are cross-team issues being addressed and are appropriate action plans established?*

Product team meeting practices may appear to be simple, but having some key protocols established and agreed to as the teams meet and as they evolve, can enable the teams to be more successful in the work they accomplish.

There are three phases to the establishment and carrying-out of product team meetings: meeting planning, conducting the meeting, and follow-up. At each phase, it is critical that positive, purposeful, and effective communication take place between the product management leadership and all functional participants. This guide and checklist will enable you to effectively plan, conduct, and to employ effective follow-up practices.

Planning the Product Team Meeting

The planning phase of a product team meeting is important. Better planning results in better meeting outcomes. Here are some of the key elements you'll need to plan for your meeting:

- **General Planning**
 - *Make sure to create a the objectives for the meeting and communicate to all functional team members in advance*
 - *Have a list of needed participants and business functions*
 - *Make sure they can participate. If not, select the % majority of members attending needed to achieve the goals of the meeting*
 - *Use SMART objectives (specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and timely)*
 - *Create an agenda (in collaboration with all stakeholders)*
 - *Allow enough time to achieve those objectives*
 - *Prepare questions and issues to be addressed*
 - *Define decisions that have to be made at the meeting*
 - *Ask for questions and issues to be submitted in advance to the participants*

- **Logistics**
 - *Make sure to have a well designed meeting room that is conducive to conduct of the meeting*
 - *Have all audiovisual equipment, video conferencing arrangements, conference call-in bridge phone numbers arranged in advance*
 - *Make sure you have flip charts, a screen, a projector, markers, and other supplies that are important*
 - *Arrange for the conference room far enough in advance*
 - *Send out the agenda in advance to confirmed attendees*
 - *Order food and drink as needed*
 - *Have the capability to record the meeting if it needs to be documented (video camera, tape, etc.)*
 - *Provide note-taking materials*

- **Communication**
 - *Follow up with phone and email to make sure everyone will be there*
 - *Personally contact functional team members in advance to set up the discussions in advance, or to make sure they're thinking of the issues that will be addressed*
 - *Make sure contact information on each participant is made available to all team members*
 - *Notify management if they need to participate in key decisions*

Conducting the Product Team Meeting

Effective product team meeting provides tangible benefits during the actual conduct of the meeting. Anticipating the kinds of issues to be addressed, the needs of the participants, and what it takes to achieve the goals of the meeting makes for a highly productive meeting. Here are some of the things the product team leadership should consider as the meeting is conducted:

- *Arrive early enough to make sure the room is set up and all arrangements done in advance have been carried out*
- *Make sure you have well thought out opening comments*
- *Show the agenda and make sure that everyone agrees on the goals and desired outcome of the meeting*
- *Make sure that all cell phones, pagers, blackberry's, and other electronic communicators are turned off (they are distracting and introduce delays if they are kept on)*
- *All participants should have the chance to present their information*
- *The product management leader should make sure that all issues for all participants are addressed within the context of the agenda. Off-agenda items should be tabled for future discussion, or in a manner agreeable by all concerned*
- *Keep the meeting focused. If interpersonal issues arise, it is up to the meeting leader to put the meeting in perspective, and ensure that the goals of the meeting are met.*
- *Keep track of agreements between functional organizations*
- *Record items that are to be deferred (as needed)*
- *Re-review the agenda as the meeting draws to a conclusion*
- *Conclude the meeting on time*
- *Thank everyone for participating*

Product Team Meeting Follow-Up Protocol

- *At the conclusion of every meeting send a thank-you email or note to each participant or create a general thank-you note to all participants. This acknowledgement of their participation serves as a powerful tool to:*
 - *Reinforce positive meeting behaviors and interactions*
 - *Include any important items discussed*
 - *Re-state the decisions taken*
 - *Describe the agreed-to follow-ups*