

GLASSBOX

From Agile to Actionable

How Data Is Transforming Digital Product Management



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Introduction

Take a look around—we're living in the Golden Age of Agile. Or at least, we should be. Seven out of ten U.S. companies have adopted Agile in some form—an increase of nearly 90% since 2002. There are over 70 product management solutions on the market to help support Agile workflows.

Over two decades later, Agile has sprawled far beyond DevOps, finding an especially comfortable home on product teams—and for good reason. Agile teams are **2X faster to market** than non-Agile teams. Although product management as a function came long before Agile, digital product management and Agile go hand-in-hand. While Agile became an advanced and refined methodology, digital product management similarly evolved as both a discipline and organizational function.

Product teams are no longer shuffled under the CMO by default—**over one-third** of Fortune 100 companies now employ a chief product officer. Even

relatively newer product positions are becoming a mainstay. In 2023, **62% of teams** have a designated product ops role and 36% plan to have one in the next year.

In a lot of ways, customers have never had it better. Just think about who they have working for them behind the scenes, any time they purchase a new consumer app or B2B SaaS product:

- A dedicated product team to focus on delivering as much value as possible
- An engineering or DevOps team to make sure everything works like it's supposed to
- Possibly even a customer experience (CX) team to ensure every interaction is both seamless and delightful

Now wrap this all up in an Agile process designed for frequent improvements, and throw in an exhaustive supply of data to refine every last click, tap, swipe and scroll. What's not to love? By all logic, the combination of mature digital product teams, robust product resources and Agile's dominance as a choice methodology should result in more organizations quickly and consistently delighting customers.

However, this isn't always the case. There has never been more support for Agile teams, but product managers are still frequently hindered by people, practices and processes alike. The reason almost always boils down to data that is some combination of:

- Disparate
- Disorganized
- Misaligned
- Obsolete
- Inaccurate
- Unusable

And that's the thing. Even an impeccable methodology like Agile will fail if there's insufficient data behind it, which ultimately wastes time, drains resources and stalls time to value.

Now is the absolute worst time for organizations to fall behind:

- Customer acquisition costs **increased 222%** from 2013 to 2022, putting a greater burden on retention efforts.
- Impatient customers expect instant gratification, but may be willing to pay less for it in an economic downturn, putting extra pressure on those who serve them.
- Low-code and no-code technology has significantly weakened the barrier to entry for competitors, affording customers a wealth of alternatives to choose from the second a product fails to deliver.

This is the reality in 2023, and moving fast doesn't guarantee you can keep up. In fact, Agile can just as easily propel you into a brick wall as it can your next stage of growth. It's crucial to have effective control measures in place to ensure multiple teams—especially product, DevOps, marketing and CX—are working with the same reliable, accurate and meaningful data. Otherwise, agility only makes it easier to ship features that miss the mark with customers—over and over and over again.

Forward-thinking product teams have already started to adjust their sails and reconsider what kind of data is most effective in steering product management to consistently, predictably delight their customers—and how that data can be leveraged for maximum benefit. As a result, they’ve bolstered their Agile processes to run like a well-oiled machine, eliminating even the most perplexing and complex roadblocks in the process.

There’s no reason why you can’t do the same.

Agile product management is long overdue for its next stage of evolution. The good news is that you don’t need to reinvent the wheel or implement a brand new methodology to get start-

ed. It’s all about using the right data, in the right way. Consider this your trusty field guide to a new and dramatically improved approach to Agile product management. You’ll learn:

- Why traditional analytics tools and processes keep getting in the way of customer delight
- What “better data” actually looks like in Agile product management—and why you need it to deliver successful products in 2023 (and beyond)
- How leading product teams are leveraging better data to accelerate time to value
- Tips, tricks and best practices you can borrow to similarly leapfrog over your competitors

Let’s get started!



Part 1

Houston, we have a (data) problem

Data is literally everywhere. Nearly **90% of companies** increased their data investments last year, and nine out of ten companies will do it again in 2023, despite economic uncertainty.

There's no shortage of data and analytics tools out there—from web analytics and product analytics, to performance monitoring and voice of the customer (VoC)—all available to help product managers (PMs) understand what's happening with their products. Yet **less than half**

of product professionals (47%) are confident their product roadmap reflects the needs of users. With similar pricing and products, many companies compete on the customer experience they offer.

Clearly, there's a disconnect between organizations' technical ability to collect mountains of data and the customers' ultimate experience. A lot of information gets lost in the shuffle. And that's just the thing. There's a difference between having a fancy tech stack and using a formal system to ensure your product team can collect, analyze and deploy the right data effectively. The two aren't mutually exclusive, but the latter is often underutilized. This makes it difficult for product teams to quickly and consistently deliver real value to customers—or be truly Agile.

Ironically, “data-driven” product organizations who have heavily invested in traditional analytics solutions often face greater risk of getting it wrong when it comes to new products and features. For starters, an abundance of tools, dashboards and reports doesn't guarantee meaningful insights that reliably boost engagement, retention and revenue. Worse, they may even provide a false sense of security. You feel like you have all your bases covered, but too many data sources, without an effective means to consolidate and compare against real customer behavior, only increases the risk for gaps and disparities.

Product teams aren't just hindered by the data itself, but by the people, practices and processes around it, like:

- Product, DevOps, marketing and CX teams using different tools and data to monitor, measure and analyze the customer experience, with none having a complete picture.
- Decision making heavily informed by stakeholder and customer requests, with PMs focused on short-term “to-do lists” instead of expertly guiding development towards long-term value.

Oh. My. God. Becky. Look. At. That. Data. It's so bad.

61% of companies think fast data growth limits their ability to harness it fully. →

89% of product directors cite reporting and analytics as a major challenge. →

Over **80%** of data in an enterprise organization is not usable or actionable. →

- Product managers and owners getting redirected from product vision and strategy to backlog administration or operating as a messenger between designers and engineers. This leaves product designers further removed from the technical performance that could impact post-release success, while DevOps experiences a weaker connection between the output of their work and actual business outcomes.
- Legacy systems mandating a hybrid Agile-waterfall approach, which exacerbates inconsistent processes, miscommunication and redundancies—and stalls time to market.

These are all symptoms of a bigger issue. No matter how you slice it, the ultimate threat to successful Agile product development boils down to data problems. Think about it:

Shipping a new feature customers request but then never use? Inaccurate data.

Stakeholders jockeying over prioritization because there's no universally accepted alternative to determine high-value and low-value features? Incomplete data.

Waiting months to implement customer feedback in sprint planning because the backlog was already full? Obsolete data.

So why is this happening?



The sources of bad data on product teams

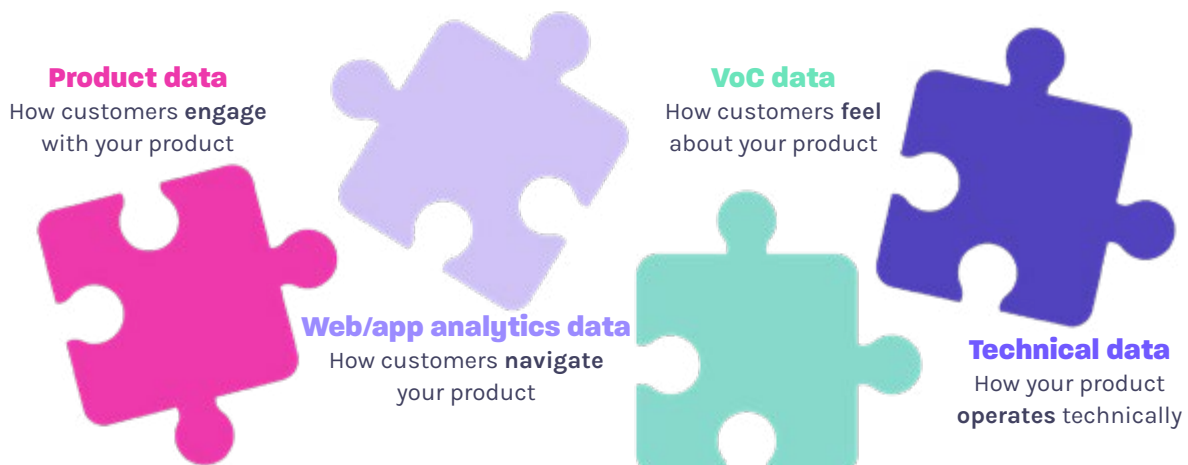
It doesn't make sense that product organizations with robust analytics capabilities still struggle to get their hands on useful data that actually grows revenue. However, when you take a step back and look at the primary culprits, they can be difficult to tackle:

1. Silos

Product, DevOps, marketing and CX teams all have a significant impact on customer experience. But typically, each is working with their own data in separate analytics tools. While you're entrenched in product data, DevOps is combing through error reports and marketing is off to the side with some digital analytics platform you've probably never laid eyes on.

In some ways, it's perfectly understandable that different teams performing different functions would use their own purpose-built tools to collect different types of data. The issue is that product analytics, web analytics, technical performance and VoC data are all deeply entwined and relevant to one another—especially when it comes to assessing and refining customers' overall experience.

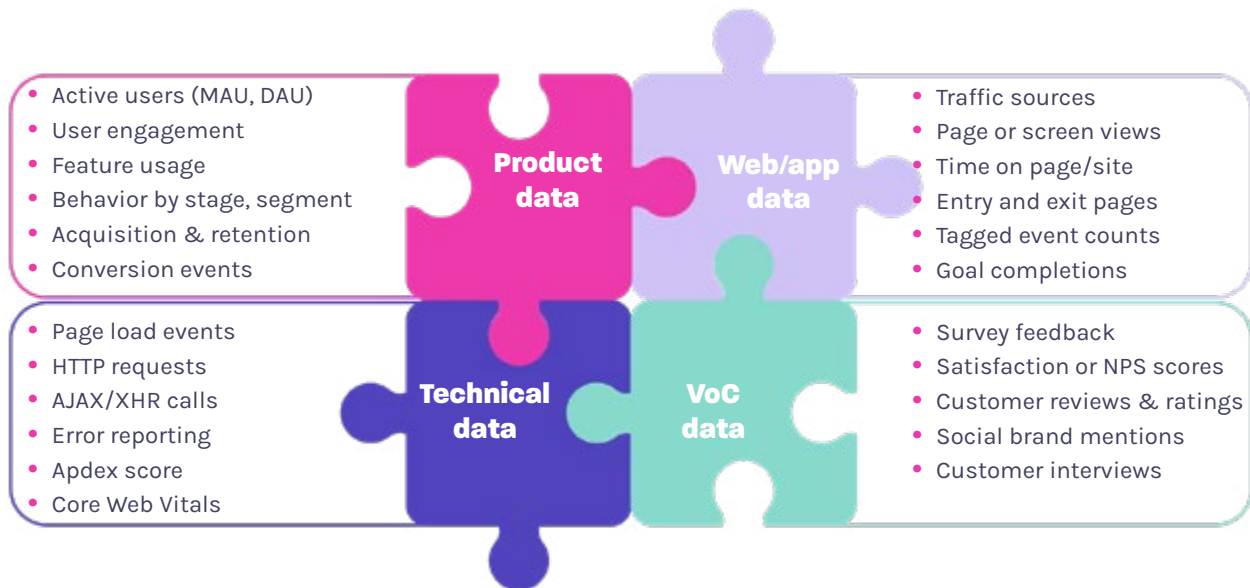
Sure, any decent product analytics tool will help uncover trends in adoption, feature usage and in-app behavior over time. But the technical events enabling specific functionality are often locked up in an APM solution that's almost impossible to decipher without a computer science degree. Product teams also may lack sufficient access to web analytics or VoC data, making it difficult to fully measure, analyze and interpret different behavior, and guide new features accordingly.



With these critical data points fractured across a mishmash of platforms, dashboards, reports, KPIs, OKRs and other metrics, it's almost impossible for any one team to form a complete picture. You can see what is

happening in the product data—just like DevOps can do with technical performance data, and marketing with web analytics—but no one has access to all the puzzle pieces required to understand why.

Aggregating data for a complete view of your product experience



2. Distrust

Let's be honest. A lot of companies don't trust their own data. In fact, **38% of decision makers** don't trust their data and analytics specifically related to customer insights. This is a natural byproduct of data silos. When there's a gluttony of analytics tools at play, it becomes harder to establish a common language and framework to analyze and compare data across multiple teams. However, this can also be an issue just among PMs, especially when there's no consistent

terminology to describe different actions and experiences users may encounter in the product.

Distrusting your data means you can't act on it quickly, which stalls time to market even further. **Forty-two percent of product professionals** say delivering products to market faster is their biggest challenge.

Pricing pages can be overview pricing or detail pricing. Is it **Profile** or **Account Settings**? These might sound like the same thing but are different in many products. The lack of shared language starts to render the data useless. It takes a lot more time to have a thoughtful discussion with other teams about the data or get to a common understanding of what the data actually means. Even worse, teams might think they have a shared understanding when they really don't. This friction commonly leads to frustration and avoiding using data at all.

Crystal Widjaja, CPO at Kumu →

3. Messy, inconsistent Agile processes

Agile processes often aren't well-defined or regularly assessed and updated like the products they're designed to support. What's worse, many organizations still use legacy systems that are inherently at odds with true Agile practices, forcing teams into various hybrid processes that can compromise data even further. **Half of Agile practitioners** use a combination of Agile, waterfall or iterative methods, while 42% still work with legacy systems.

Another common issue is lack of support. According to the **2022 State of Agile Report**, 42% of respondents said

the biggest barrier to Agile adoption was a lack of support from leadership. Product teams are often shoehorned into Agile-ish processes that lack accessible, meaningful data, yet still expected to deliver on aggressive goals. These processes offer reassurance of surface-level Agile, but are bogged down with inefficiencies as soon as you take a closer look, including:

- **Conflicting preferences:** Should your team plan their next release around business priorities or customer feedback? Are you using KPIs or OKRs? How are you evaluating stakeholder requests? Without a standardized approach, PMs can waste valuable time debating these details.

- **Tool sprawl:** Data silos often lead to a tangle of tools intended to fill in the gaps. This can making it difficult to keep everything updated, including critical resources like product roadmaps. **Less than half** (41%) of product professionals say they can keep product roadmaps up to date, compared to 57% a year ago. At the same time, duct taped tech stacks can cause critical capabilities to get lost in the shuffle.
- **Too many cooks in the kitchen:** **The majority of companies** don't assess their product teams' level of experience, maturity and expertise on a regular basis. This can make it harder to designate clear roles and tasks effectively and lead to redundant efforts which hinder the process even further.

For instance, **only 29% of product teams** have a dedicated tool for post-release evaluation and reporting, making it the least utilized category of any product management solution.

So how do you fix all of this? Data challenges can hinder Agile product teams at any stage, but they manifest differently, depending on the task at hand. In the following chapters, we'll break down some of the biggest hurdles across various product functions to diagnose the problem—and share the solution.

Defining “better data”

PMs are up to their eyeballs in data. However, that data is worthless if it doesn't enable consistent customer delight. Forward-thinking teams aren't pioneering the next generation of Agile product management with more data, but better data. That means:



Action-oriented: Customer sentiment and feedback are correlated with behavior—specifically, how users interact with the product.



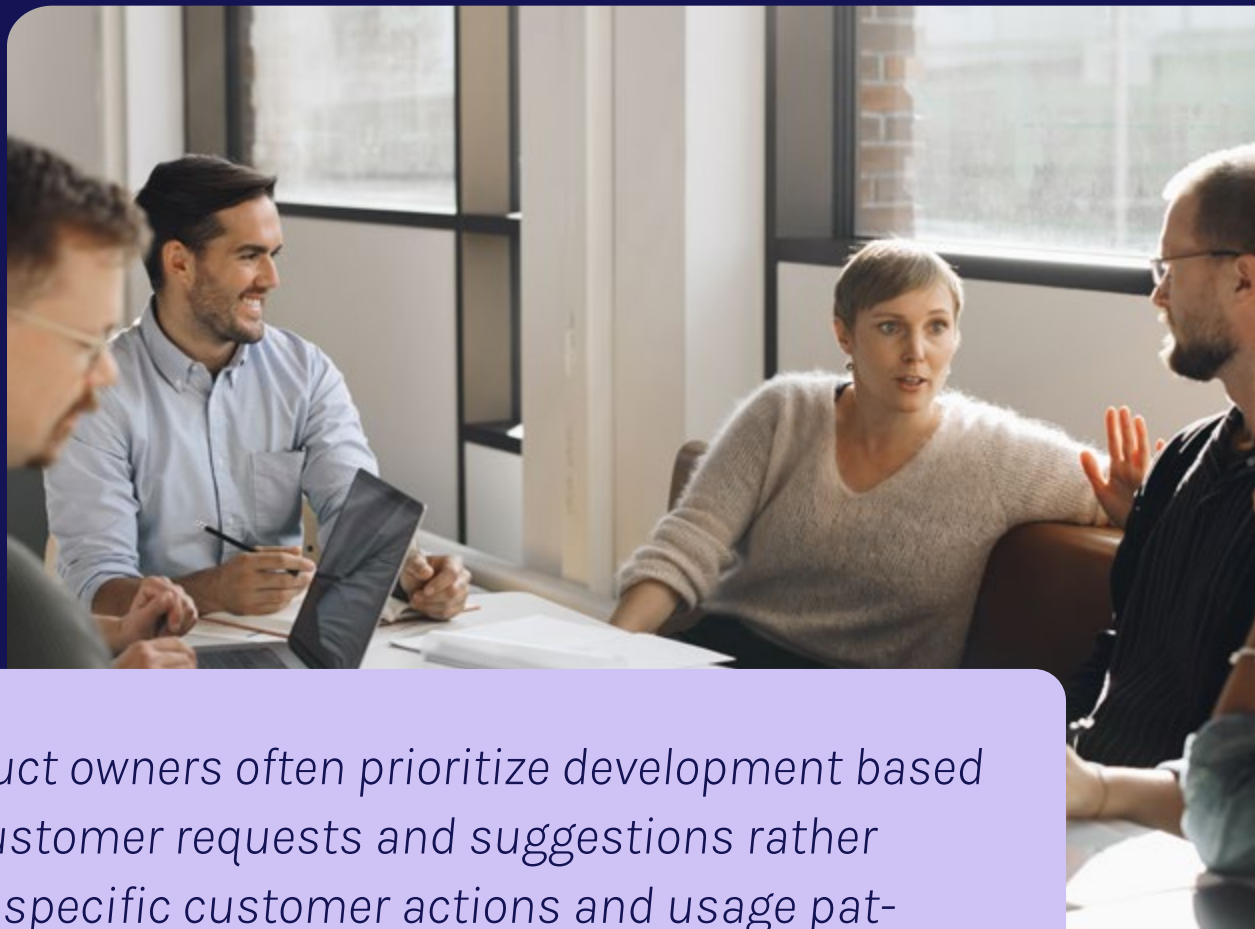
Unified and accessible: Product data isn't analyzed in isolation, but in context of the entire customer experience. Silos are replaced with a single, integrated view of product analytics, web/app analytics, technical performance and VoC data, shared across multiple teams.



Revenue-focused: Behavioral patterns, sources of friction and technical errors can all be quantified by impact on conversion, retention and ultimately revenue.

Part 2

Product planning & roadmapping



Product owners often prioritize development based on customer requests and suggestions rather than specific customer actions and usage patterns correlated with retention.

David Geffen, VP, Product Marketing at Glassbox

What's wrong?

Feature prioritization is more frequently guided by stakeholder requests than predictable impact on revenue

RICE. MoSCoW. KANO. Opportunity scoring. Value vs Effort. There's no shortage of frameworks out there to help manage feature prioritization. And yet **41% of PMs** still cite prioritization as their top challenge. So what's going on?

Let's take a quick pause and think about how software actually gets built. The most popular Agile methodology, Scrum, operates with a clear "definition of done" (DoD). These concrete, verifiable and universally agreed upon requirements for feature completion ensure there's no ambiguity among engineers as to what constitutes a state of "done." For example: Code is committed to source control, peer reviewed, tests passed, brand compliant, and live on production.

The issue is, product teams typically don't have similarly objective criteria defining what constitutes the state of "high-value" and "low-value" before a feature even makes it into the backlog.

Ideally, prioritization would be simple and straightforward: what measurable impact will this feature have on revenue? But too often, no one really knows for sure.

You can see usage trends in the product data, but then maybe sales comes in and insists on prioritizing New Feature A, which they promised to a big target account they're trying to close. The customer marketing team, meanwhile, is lobbying hard for New Feature B, after noticing a surge in user requests. And then, of course, you have leadership pinging you with requests of their own.

It doesn't take much for stakeholder interference to spiral out of control, with triple checks and approvals bringing an Agile process to a standstill.

If the flurry of input wasn't difficult enough for PMs to navigate, another issue is that stakeholders themselves are often making educated guesses based on their own data and assumptions. Without a common equation spanning multiple teams to connect improvements to predictable, quantifiable revenue, the floodgates fling wide open to conflicting interpretations, goals and priorities. This is especially true since the product directly impacts every go-to-market function, especially sales and marketing.

Business impact is critical to ground the planning process to big picture goals. Otherwise, product teams can default to focusing on short-term output over long-term outcome. **More Agile teams** are measured by on-time delivery (47%) than business objectives achieved (44%). Additionally, **one in five Agile practitioners** still aren't sure what's being used to measure business value.

Disparate data sources make it impossible to understand in-app behavior in relation to a broader digital experience

Another challenge is that PMs often have equally limited insight into customers as stakeholders. When data is fractured between different teams, platforms and processes, it's a lot harder to fully understand, explain



In theory, product managers should get to make decisions for their responsible product areas—just like how marketers get to decide how campaigns should be run and engineers get to decide how code should be written. But this is often not the reality... Even on the most empowered product teams, PMs spend a substantial portion of their time executing bets placed by others. This is usually not due to a lack of ownership but, rather, to the fact that product work is so intertwined with every aspect of the company, and you simply cannot have clear-cut authority on everything.

Austin Yang, Lead Product Manager at Softr →



and contextualize different types of behavior. **Only 31% of product professionals** believe roadmaps provide adequate context.

Sometimes, the only way to anticipate what customers want is by asking them directly. This may sound like a preferable roadmap guide to stakeholder requests, but can similarly leave product teams stranded.

Why? Because humans are notoriously bad at predicting the future, especially when it's about themselves. It's not just good old fashioned psychology working against you either. Customers also don't have a nuanced enough understanding of your product to anticipate the "technical cost" of implementing particular features and how that may influence their behavior as well.

Customers don't (always) know what they're asking for

Back in 2006, Google decided to **conduct an experiment**. When they asked users how many search results they wanted to see, the overwhelming majority answered: more. Google responded by increasing the number of pages displayed from 10 to 30.

Afterwards, traffic and revenue plummeted by 20%, even though Google had given users precisely what they had asked for. Upon further observation, Google discovered the additional pages added a half second delay in loading time. Users weren't just growing impatient, but also lacked the ability to anticipate the technical implications of minor tweaks to the product—and how they would respond to it.

That's the danger of implementing a laundry list of customer requests and suggestions. Customers will happily sound off their ideas and suggestions, but that doesn't mean they'll be equally content to stick around if new features cause even the slightest bit of friction.

How to fix it

Replace data silos with an integrated, 360-degree view of the entire digital experience

The next generation of Agile product management leverages better data to contextualize product engagement within a broader customer experience. Considering seemingly separate and external factors affords more depth and nuance—like how air turbulence causing a drink to spill and stain a flawless carry-on bag will affect your air travel experience (even if it's not the airline's fault).

Digital experience intelligence, which consolidates vast combinations of data sets spanning product analytics, web analytics, technical performance and VoC data, among others, enables

product teams to quickly and accurately observe the impact of technical events and sources of friction on different outcomes, including conversion, adoption, abandonment, churn and renewal.

Quick fix

Even if an analytics upgrade is off the table for now, you can still use existing tools to make improvements. Turn a standard spreadsheet into a makeshift dashboard, where product, DevOps, marketing and CX can drop links to their latest reports. If you're worried about permission settings or lack of participation, opt for a simple shared document to facilitate knowledge sharing instead. That way, when it's time for something more robust to consolidate critical data, you'll already be in the habit of comparing notes.

Digital Experience Intelligence: Correlating data & outcomes



Reverse-engineer conversions, renewals and churns to identify related user actions—and to more accurately predict future behavior

Product analytics tools already record user actions like clicks, taps, swipes and views. Digital experience intelligence pushes these insights further by automatically analyzing and determining patterns, trends or sequences within those actions, as well as cross-referencing them with technical events and sources of friction. This makes it easier to identify the cause of different types of behavior—as well as make more accurate predictions for the future.

For example, instead of flagging at-risk users by inactivity, digital experience intelligence can essentially reverse-engineer churn among different user segments to identify common actions across multiple channels preceding the cancellation. Let's say 24% of active users with a “Pro” business account ignored three consecutive emails containing helpful product tips and downgraded to a free account at least two weeks before they canceled altogether.

This gives you a baseline to more effectively align different behavioral patterns, including sequence,

frequency and timespan, with conversions, upgrades, downgrades, renewals and cancellations. Active users with a “Pro” account who have ignored two consecutive emails and visited their account settings page—indicating they're considering a downgrade—are tracking to churn according to your own benchmarks.

Beyond improving predictions, you can also act on the data sooner. Assessing which features had the biggest dropoff in usage among churned customers before the first two emails were ignored, and then checking technical performance data to see if any errors or glitches occurred during that time, gives DevOps the ability to quickly isolate and correct the problem. Marketing, meanwhile, can launch a re-engagement campaign before churn-risk “Pro” users actually go ahead and downgrade their account, taking another step closer to cancellation.

Use historic impact on revenue to establish high-value and low-value product improvements

Uncovering specific behavioral patterns associated with conversion, retention and renewal and churn is invaluable—even more so if you can associate them with actual revenue. One major benefit of digital experi-

ence intelligence is that you can integrate CRM data to measure infinite variables against revenue won or lost. This enables teams to identify the most important, highest value paths to optimize or improve, as well as the biggest issues to solve.

For instance, let's pretend that over the past week, two thousand users encountered a checkout error when they were in the process of upgrading their account, causing them to abandon the purchase. Digital experience intelligence can calculate the average membership upgrade—an extra \$15 per month—to determine that this single error cost \$30,000 per month

in revenue. If the error continues to affect the same proportion of users moving forward, that's \$360,000 per year.

Using predictive impact on revenue as a guide for talking about product improvements, whether requests, ideas or troubleshooting, is equally beneficial to DevOps as it is to product teams. With traditional analytics, engineers can access technical event logs in exhaustive detail, but there's no way to see if or how those events are actually impacting user experience and behavior, including adoptions, renewals and retention.



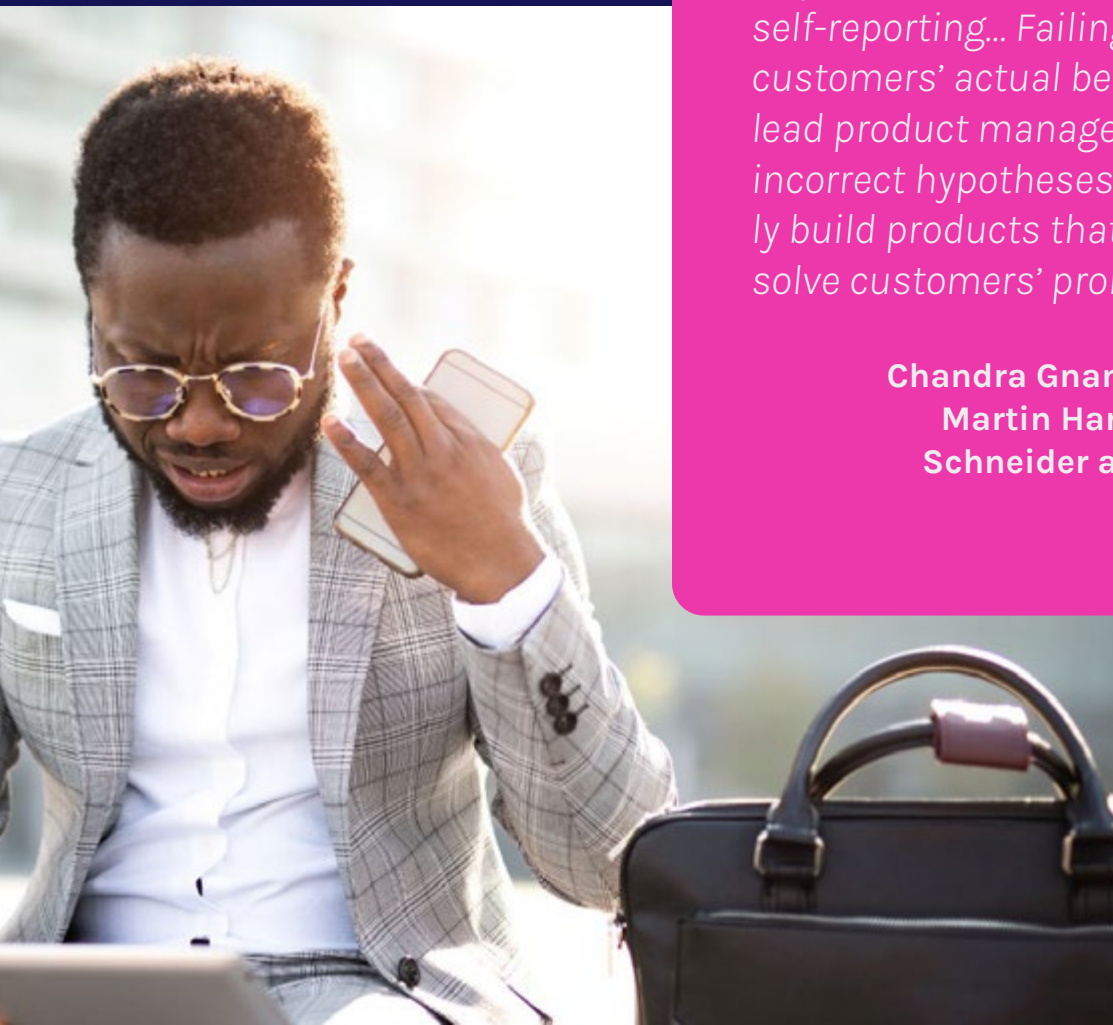
Part 3

User research & customer feedback



Identifying true customer patterns and behavior can be done only by observing customers in their “natural habitat.” Although interviews can be a good source of insight, top product managers don’t rely on just customer perception and self-reporting... Failing to observe customers’ actual behavior can lead product managers to pursue incorrect hypotheses and ultimately build products that don’t truly solve customers’ problems.

**Chandra Gnanasambandam,
Martin Harrysson, Jeremy
Schneider and Rikki Singh
of McKinsey**



What's wrong?

It's not easy to quantify immediate value of customer conversations

User research and customer feedback can lead PMs to a treasure trove of insights. But operational practices often get in the way. For starters, customer conversations rarely produce immediate, tangible ROI. Subsequently, PMs may find themselves feeling the heat from stakeholders to focus their attention elsewhere—like the latest batch of feature requests. This leads to the common problem of getting so deep into the product that users become an afterthought.

It's difficult to correlate different types of customer feedback at scale

Feedback may originate from interviews, surveys, A/B tests or satisfaction scores like customer satisfaction scores (CSAT) or Net Promoter Scores (NPS). However, these typically constitute different units of measurement. Are you comparing sound bites from a one-on-one interview or an aggregate score from your latest NPS survey? The ability to capture the data is there, but it's difficult to consolidate and identify trends across various sources—at least at pace and scale.

Customer research efforts don't always generate usable, accurate insights

Even if your team does gather feedback, the primary methods of interviews, surveys and satisfaction scores frequently fail to capture actionable and reliable insights into real experiences and behaviors.

Interviews

Customer interviews can be invaluable as a source of empathy and understanding. However, they're also notoriously:

- **Time-consuming:** Coordinating and conducting customer interviews is a lengthy process, and feedback may be obsolete by the time it can actually be incorporated into product planning and roadmapping.
- **Difficult to scale:** Conducting effective customer interviews is a delicate art and science, not to mention a highly specialized skill. Deeper insights don't just depend on asking the right questions, but delving into responses to strip down assumptions and uncover the root cause of a particular problem (i.e. the first principles method). This is difficult to execute at scale.
- **Costly:** Another hindrance to interview scalability is the cost. Product teams are almost always limited

in their ability to fund the research with a sufficient number of users to fully understand the needs across audience segments, markets and demographics.

Surveys & satisfaction scores

Thirty percent of Agile practitioners rely on customer surveys to measure against business metrics and 25% use NPS. However, while surveys may be easier and faster to deploy than interviews, they're equally susceptible to inaccuracies, especially since feedback typically represents a small minority. VoC feedback is provided by **just 4-7% of users** (and our own research has found this closer to 4%).

Multiple choice surveys and preference testing can also be unreliable. Decades of **psychological research** have shown that individual preferences are highly contextual and can emerge differently depending on the circumstances and environment. Asking customers to choose between Option A and B only provides a snapshot of what they prefer in relation to the alternatives at that specific moment in time. This doesn't provide enough nuance to build products that consistently delight your customers.

The combined limitations of surveys and interviews often starves product teams of substantial insights. When that happens, product owners are forced to guide critical decisions with either high-level input that reflects

a fraction of users, or feedback that fails to enable consistent, reliable predictions.

Customer feedback is fragmented

When feedback is disjointed and scattered across a whirlwind of interviews, surveys and satisfaction scores, it's impossible to consistently gain real empathy, knowledge and understanding of your customers—at least not at an Agile pace.

- **40% of product managers** cite disparate sources as their biggest challenge with customer feedback.
- Only **12% of product professionals** capture customer feedback from all available sources.
- **Less than half** (47%) of product professionals are confident that product roadmaps reflect the needs of users.
- **Less than half** (42%) of product teams have a system for capturing customer feedback.
- **27% of product teams** say their customer feedback collection process is non-existent.

Customers don't know what they want. At the end of the day, even with the best tools and processes, product and research teams consistently find that customers just don't know what the features or experience they're looking for. In the absence of seeing, touching

or feeling something, they are often unable to define their need for it explicitly.

How to fix it

Give voice to the silent majority

The majority of users will never let you know when they're frustrated with your product. But that doesn't mean they aren't providing feedback. It's just that they're doing it with their actions instead of words.

For example, let's say 800 users dropped out of the same upsell funnel, but only 25 complained about the checkout page not loading properly. With traditional VoC data focusing on direct feedback, the majority of affected users would be untraceable. Those 25 complaints can certainly help identify the source of friction, but don't accurately represent the scope of impact.

Since digital experience intelligence leverages AI, it can form a precise timeline of user actions across the 25 sessions and automatically compare them with all other sessions that

Actions speak louder than words

In 2016, the team at Calm, the mindfulness and meditation app, made an interesting discovery. Users who set daily meditation reminders retained at a 3X higher rate than the rest of its customer base. However, only 1% of users were enabling reminders—a minor feature that was difficult to locate in the app. When Calm initiated a prompt for new users to set reminders, the results were staggering:

40% of users who saw the prompt turned on reminders

Retention increased by **3X**

This insight was only possible by observing real user behavior. Interviews and surveys wouldn't have helped—how would customers know that meditation reminders would influence their retention if they didn't know the feature existed?

occurred over the same period. This is how you can uncover the remaining 775 users who encountered dead clicks and page reloads on the checkout page, indicating they were similarly affected.

Differentiate between what customers say they want and how they actually behave

There's a difference between customer requests and real-time interactions with your product—especially since wants, needs, preferences and behaviors often evolve over time. Standard product analytics tools already report on in-app activity and events. However, digital experience intelligence connects the dots between product analytics, web analytics, technical performance and VoC data, providing the context necessary to examine customer behavior within a holistic experience.

Depending on your tech stack, a more integrated approach to behavior analysis could mean:

- Leveraging journey maps to determine which paths are most effective. For example, if a minority of users continued their session after viewing a screen with a high background abandonment rate, where did they navigate to next?
- Digging into funnels to see how struggles with the product or underlying technical events impact conversion and retention. Struggle scores, which calculate the effects of technical issues (such as slow page loads or dead links) and user behavioral issues (such as rage clicks), can help explain low adoption of a particular feature.
- Applying tools more commonly associated with web analytics to the product itself. Session replays, for instance, let you view any interaction from the customer's perspective, including moments of hesitation and sources of struggle.

Pulling everything together gives you a deeper understanding of how each user is experiencing your product, as well as broader behavioral patterns and trends that indicate the likelihood of success for new features.

Hot tip

Fully understanding the user behaviors associated with conversion, adoption and retention can help justify more traditional customer interviews to dubious stakeholders. You're not "trying to understand customers" in a general sense, but addressing proven patterns directly connected with revenue.

Part 4
**Adoption &
retention**



What's wrong?

You know what is happening with feature adoption but not why

Data silos don't just impact roadmapping and prioritization, but feature adoption and retention. Let's say you recently shipped a new feature based on customer requests, but now, hardly anyone is using it. You can easily see what is happening in the product data, but the reason isn't so obvious. Is it because this new feature doesn't actually add value like customers thought it would? Is there some technical glitch making it difficult to use? Or were customers impacted by friction elsewhere, which made them more likely to leave without even giving the feature a try?

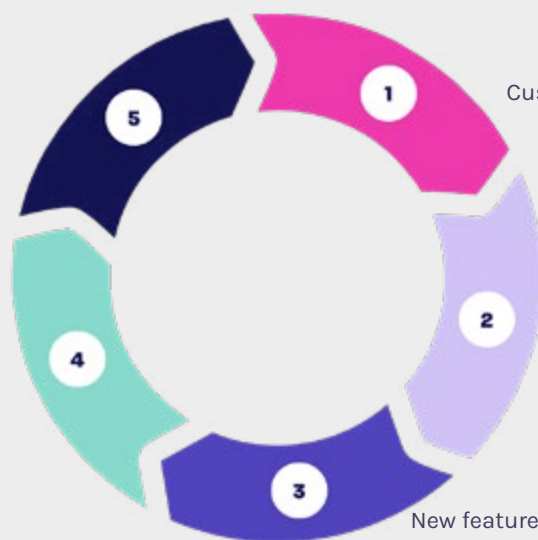
Teams may consult different data sources, but they still have the same impaired vision. The entirety of the customer experience is unknowable and trapped inside a black box.

Even worse, if customers don't find value in new features, product teams may be left scrambling to figure out why. When users churn, most won't grant you a tell-all interview or even a simple survey response to help fill in the gaps—**91% of unhappy customers** will leave without complaining. This can be especially problematic when it comes to underused features or improvements customers themselves requested. Product, DevOps, marketing and CX each know the what and how within their respective domain, but are missing all the puzzle pieces to fully understand the why.

Customer requests + insufficient data = vicious cycle

Unable to correlate the feature and its performance impact, product team initiates more user research

Frustrated customers use product less, derive less value and ultimately churn



Customers request a new feature

PM asks DevOps to prioritize in next sprint

New feature is deployed, but impacts performance

How to fix it

Use digital experience intelligence to consolidate your digital analytics

The next evolution of Agile product management doesn't just eradicate barriers stalling time to value. It also focuses on improvements that customers will find meaningful. Leading product teams don't necessarily have access to more data than other organizations, they're just using it more effectively—by integrating and consolidating data to analyze feature usage or identify retention opportunities.

Digital experience intelligence platforms will do this automatically, but even manually consulting other sources is a vast improvement over trying to understand customer interactions without knowing what their overall experience looks like.

Don't just ask product questions

Better data is only half the battle. It's also important to ask the right questions. When you can analyze the entire customer experience, don't limit yourself to product considerations. Since web analytics, technical performance and VoC data can all shed light on in-app behavior, make sure this is addressed in your analysis as well.

- Did feature usage change after a specific date? Were there any technical anomalies within that feature after the release?
- How does the use of one feature influence conversion and drop-off rates? What technical events occur when these features are used?
- What did interactions with a feature actually look like? Did any recurring sources of friction interfere with adoption or task completion? If so, what was the cause?

Hard numbers tell an important story; user stats and sales numbers will always be key metrics. But your users are sharing a huge amount of qualitative data, too—and a lot of companies either don't know how or forget to act on it.

Stewart Butterfield, Founder at Slack →

Final thoughts

Agile + data = holy grail

Organizations face increasing pressure to deliver as much value in as little time as possible. For its indisputable advantages, Agile still isn't enough to ensure product teams can consistently meet customer demands—especially during a downturn, when products are forced under the microscope with greater urgency. If the benefits aren't immediately clear, customers will bolt before you've even had a chance to address the problem.

You can't afford to rest on your laurels. It's time for product teams to rethink what it means to be truly Agile—not just by having the right process

in place, but driving it with better, deeper, more actionable data. That's the real differentiator.

Twenty years in, most organizations are Agile—at least to some degree. The teams coming out ahead aren't shipping features faster, but predictably delighting their customers. And they're doing it with better data—to guarantee customers will continue to choose their product, time and time again, even when the market is flooded with alternative options.

Because at the end of the day, better products are built from better data.

Getting to profitability is no longer a distant, post-IPO nice-to-have, but a short-term necessity for survival. But how to do that without cutting off the legs of the product team? By using better tools and techniques, that's how.

David Heinemeier Hansson, Creator of Ruby on Rails →

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