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From Agile to Actionable

Best Practices for Data-Driven Product Planning & Roadmapping

TLDR; Agile can just as easily drive you into a brick wall as it can your next stage of growth.

Even an impeccable methodology like Agile will fail if there's insufficient data behind it.

With skyrocketing acquisition costs, incessant customer demands, a recession putting the pressure on time to value, and lower barriers to entry for competitors, now is the worst time to trip over bad data and fall behind. Forward-thinking product teams have responded by re-evaluating what kind of data is most reliable in steering Agile product management, so they can consistently delight their customers—and eliminate complex roadblocks in the process. There's no reason why you can't do the same.

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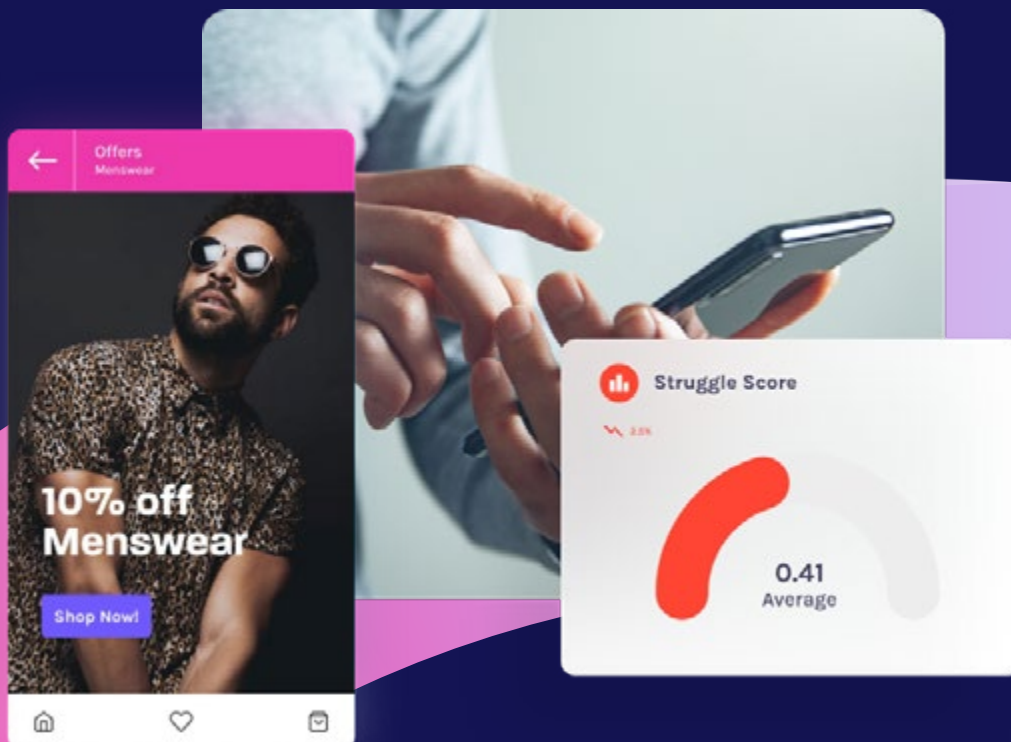
Despite better tools, data and methodologies, building a bullet-proof roadmap remains an uphill battle.

There's no shortage of data and analytics tools to measure customer engagement. And yet less than half of product professionals (47%) are confident their product roadmap reflects the needs of users. There is clearly a disconnect between product teams' technical ability to collect mountains of data and the customer's ultimate experience. In this guide, we're taking a quick look at some of the biggest challenges with product planning and roadmapping and how to fix them with a new approach to data and analytics.

What's wrong?

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

Forty-one percent of PMs cite prioritization as their top challenge, even with an abundance of prioritization frameworks available. Software engineers often operate with a clear "definition of done," a set of concrete and verifiable requirements for features to be accepted as completed. But most product teams lack similarly objective criteria defining what constitutes the state of "high-value" and "low-value" before a feature even makes it into the backlog.

Ideally, features would be prioritized by measurable business impact. But when product, DevOps, marketing and CX teams are consulting different data sources, no one has the full picture—and that's without factoring in other stakeholders who can influence product planning as well.

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It doesn't take much for stakeholder interference to spiral out of control, especially with everyone making educated guesses based on their own data and assumptions.

2. **Disparate data sources make it impossible to contextualize user behavior with a broader digital experience**
When data is fractured between multiple teams, platforms and processes, it's a lot harder to understand, explain and contextualize different types of behavior in relation to the entire customer experience. 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. Humans are notoriously bad at predicting the future—espe-

cially when it's about themselves—but it's not just good ol' fashioned psychology working against you.

Customers also don't have a nuanced enough understanding of your product to anticipate the "technical cost" implementing even minor tweaks and how that may affect their behavior as well. Just think back to Google's famous experiment in 2006, where they obliged users requesting more pages in the search results—only to see traffic and revenue plummet by 20%. Why? Because the additional pages added just half a second delay in loading time.

That's the danger in 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.

Houston, we have a (data) problem

Product, DevOps, marketing and customer experience (CX) all have a significant impact on how customers experience a product. But when different types of data are siphoned across separate analytics tools, everyone can only see what's happening in their respective domain. Teams often don't have the context they need to understand why, especially since product and web analytics, technical performance and VoC data are all deeply entwined and relevant to one another.

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How to fix it

1. **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 data sets spanning product analytics, web analytics, technical performance, VoC data and more, 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.

2. **Reverse-engineer conversions, renewals and churns to identify associated user actions—and more accurately predict future behavior**
Digital experience intelligence doesn't merely record user actions. It automatically analyzes and determines patterns, trends or sequences within those actions, as well as cross-references 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 example, instead of flagging at-risk users by inactivity, digital experience intelligence can re-

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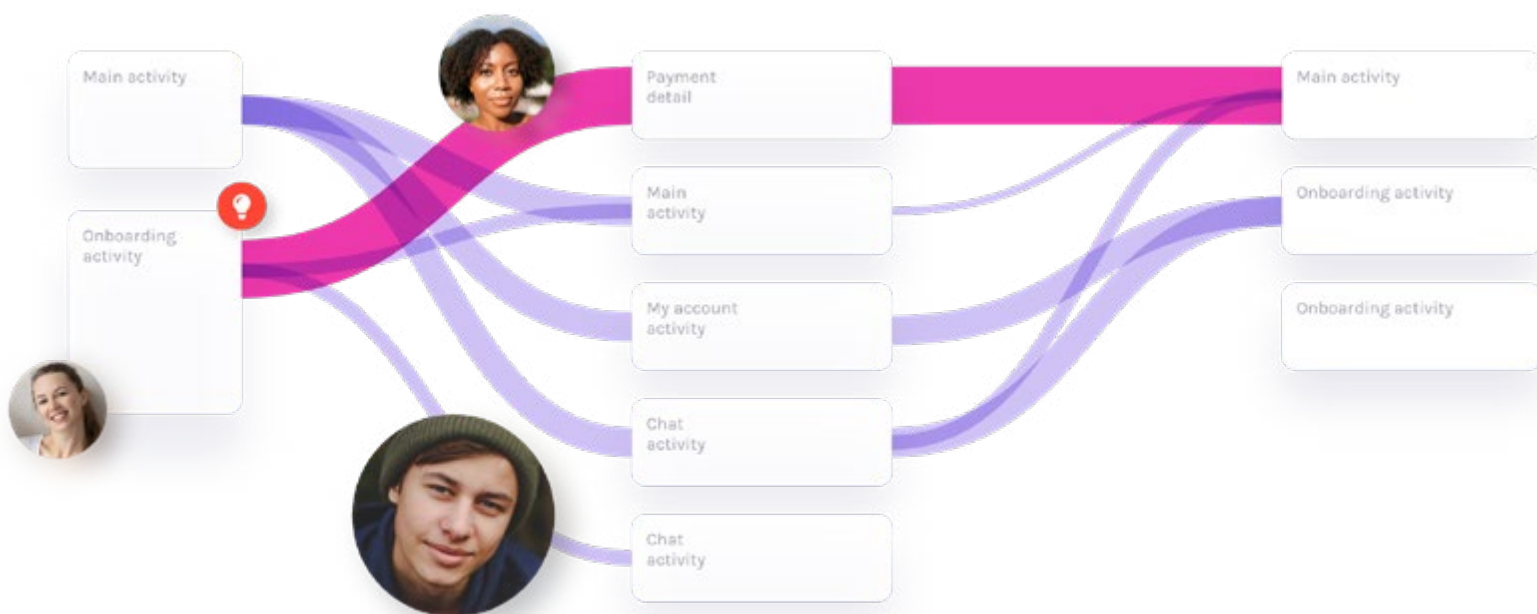
verse-engineer churn among different user segments to identify common actions that occurred across multiple channels preceding the cancellation. Let's say 24% of active users with a "Pro" account ignored three consecutive emails containing helpful product tips and downgraded to a free account at least two weeks before they canceled altogether.

This gives you a baseline to more effectively align different behavioral patterns with conversions, upgrades, downgrades, renewals and cancellations. The data is also immediately actionable—Pro users who ignored your latest product tips but haven't yet downgraded their account may still respond to a re-engagement campaign.

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

Integrating CRM data with digital experience intelligence makes it possible to measure specific behavioral patterns associated with conversion, retention and renewal and churn against revenue won or lost.

Let's say over the past week, 2,000 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 monthly membership upgrade—an extra $15—to determine that this single error is costing $30,000 per month in revenue.

With digital experience intelligence, product teams can quickly identify the highest value paths to optimize or improve, as well as the biggest issues to prioritize.

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There's more where that came from!

We wrote an entire playbook for digital product managers on leveraging better data to consistently delight customers—in one of the most cutthroat markets ever.

Download now

About Glassbox

Glassbox empowers digital product teams to predictably delight their customers with high-value features and frictionless in-app experiences. Our digital experience intelligence platform leverages AI-driven visualization and analytics tools to form a 360-degree view of the customer's entire digital experience. Consolidating product analytics, web analytics, technical performance and VoC data in real-time, Glassbox brings better data, deeper insights and vastly improved visibility to product management.

Learn more at **glassbox.com**.

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