

Getting That PM Promotion

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How PMs Can Achieve Their Goals

In the history of Products That Count, we have seen our network grow to more than 300,000 product managers and leaders. PMs have counted on the collective knowledge shared by incredible C/VP-Level product innovators to position themselves for a promotion or continue their journey up the corporate ladder to earn more senior-level roles.

In many ways, product managers are just like the products we build. Each product manager is a brand that needs to be tested, improved upon, marketed, and sold (in this case, to whoever might be hiring or promoting in an organization).

For PMs to continue to grow and advance within our careers, we need to do these things well. This ebook will share experiences and best practices from some incredible product leaders on how to get a promotion.

We turned to the Products That Count crew to help in this endeavor. On top of their thriving careers in product, they are Product Talk podcast hosts, Products That Count chapter heads, Executive Contributors to our blog, Product Awards Advisory Board members, and so much more. The product leaders offering advice in this eBook have walked the walk by recently accepting a promotion.

James is the Chief Product Officer at Products That Count as well as our Austin Chapter Head. His background includes product management, data science, engineering, IT operations, and consulting. This has shaped his approach to building, operating, and selling software products. James is the founder of Graymatter Strategy. There he helps people monetize their career offerings, both as a full-time employee and those that also run a sideline business.



James Gray
Products That Count,
Chief Product Officer

Getting That PM Promotion

As product managers, we come to our roles from many different backgrounds. Additionally, the demands on PMs are always high. With those challenges, it can be tough to find a way to stand out internally at a company and get that promotion. So, how can PMs level up?

What follows are ways in which product managers can **join, shape, and drive** the product conversation in a way that will help you get noticed by product leaders and executives and get your career on a fast-track internally.

Patrick is the Head of Product Marketing for nate. You do the shopping. nate does the checkout. He is passionate about stories. High quality, amped-up, compelling narratives. At the core, a good story is about people overcoming obstacles to become their best selves. And isn't that the arc of what makes a great product? A tool that identifies a pain point and improves that to change lives for the better.



Patrick Blute
nate, Head of Product Marketing

Matt is the COO for ErisX. He is a serial entrepreneur, adviser, and investor with experience building successful, disruptive technology startups. Matt is a frequent industry speaker and panelist. He has domain expertise in regulated financial markets, market structure, trading technology, electronic marketplaces and exchanges, blockchain and distributed ledger technology, cryptocurrencies, and crypto assets.



Matt Trudeau
ErisX, Chief Product & Strategy Officer

How To Stand Out In Your PM Role

You'll have to stand apart from the competition to earn any promotion. There are several ways that product managers can get noticed.

Leveraging your network is a great way to help you stand out within your industry and our product community at large. You always hear, it's not what you know, it's who you know. In product, what you know is also very important. However, there may be times where the best path towards a promotion or a better role is to reach out to the network you've developed during your career.

It will also help to develop thought leadership by having meaningful conversations with the individuals in your network.

"Building a community has led me to have the right types of connections and conversations and helped me to bring a new perspective into the product conversation," explained Patrick Blute. "Something that keeps your idea generator going is engaging your network and making that a huge part of your development process."

Investing in core development early on in your career will pay dividends when it comes time to seek out a promotion. That could be as narrow as becoming an effective requirements writer or effectively managing the tools you might be using, such as JIRA or Confluence. They're technical skills that as you develop more competence and capability in those, you start to think about developing your technique and your style. Additionally, challenging yourself and pushing yourself out of your comfort zone will help you accelerate growth and prepare you for those next steps.

"Visibility isn't always working on things that are the priority or the thing that's generating the most revenue," acknowledged Matt Trudeau. "When those things become more interesting or more important to the company, it'll differentiate you because you made that investment and took that risk."



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Our product leaders also recommend **checking in with your managers** and asking them where the company or industry's growth opportunities exist. Identifying those places before anyone else will help you develop thought leadership in that space early on in the conversation.

“Ask them to help you find an area with an opportunity for growth,” suggested James Gray. “People will start to know you as that person. It can lead to opportunities to speak inside your company, host brown bag events, and increase your visibility as a thought leader. If you can build a following around your ideas and you've got a lot of passion, you'll find yourself writing and talking about it. That will create a lot of exposure across your company.”

Standing out is only the first step to earning a product management promotion. As product managers, we also need to get buy-in from the individuals responsible for making those decisions.



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James Gray
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How To Influence Stakeholders To Earn A Promotion

When we think about promotions, certainly in larger organizations, there are often multiple people involved in the decision. As PMs are progressing in our careers, we have to effectively manage relationships, influence stakeholders involved in the promotion process and evolve our identities to be commensurate with that next role that we're going after.

“There's the practical, and there's the tactical,” analyzed Patrick Blute. “The tactical is more about the actual conversations and making sure that people are aware of your involvement and roles. The practical is making sure you're qualified whether it's a technical skill, whether you've met a certain threshold, or that you make sense for the opportunity based on the experiences you've had.”

Given that threshold, it's crucial to be competent. However, we also have to be planning for the future and creating enough pressure where it's clear that we're qualified. PMs want more, and frequently we're deserving of more. The right people need to agree that a promotion is in order.

“Put all of the necessary information and analysis together that gets you to a point where you can make a recommendation or take a position on it to help someone else with the authority to make the decision, shared Matt Trudeau. “Eventually, it will make more logical sense to transition the decision making authority on such

things to you. Earn that trust to then be able to take on those decisions.”

The notion of influencing people within an organization is critically important. PMs desiring a promotion need to have people who are advocating for us.

“Product managers, and people in product organizations, are uniquely positioned inside of an organization because they can think of everybody internally as their customer. If you think of them that way, treat them that way, and you interact with them in that way, then you will do things that are helpful to them that help them be successful,” continued Matt Trudeau. “If you have that currency, it helps you build up goodwill. People will remember when you’re seeking to get that promotion.”

As product managers, we’re often operating as internal champions where we have to bring along many people. So there’s an excellent opportunity for people to see us in a role of helping other people be successful.

“I had aspirations to be a director at Microsoft and asked my manager who was involved in the process to earn the role. That allowed me to think about who those people are and how I could make sure I was on their radar,” noted James Gray. “I looked for opportunities to develop relationships with those people directly. I attended meetings and events they were participating in.”

The people responsible for promoting you will also often need to see you evolve your brand and identity much like we do managing products. At Products that Count, we talk about **finding ways to join, shape, and drive the product conversation.**

“Get more involved in the company. I volunteered and held different roles within the Digital Analytics Association. Eventually, I was asked to be the president of that organization,” recounted James Gray. “I was hosting the events we ran at Microsoft. I’d have coworkers come up to me afterward saying they didn’t know I did all those things I’d discussed. Think about those opportunities as well.”

Now that we’d touched on how to stand out and make the stakeholders responsible for our promotions notice us, let’s look at some more best practices for manifesting your next role.

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Best Practices For Earning A Promotion

Every company is different, but there are some constants when it comes to earning a promotion. We need to **be passionate about our role and the products we build, and our customers**. It's also necessary to demonstrate our abilities and readiness.

"The most important thing is to **feel authentic to what's coming up next**," asserted Patrick Blute. "To take on a more senior leadership role within product, you need to be in love with it. That passion becomes natural when you feel connected to the next chapter in the evolution and growth of the product, and it's something you're excited about."

Seeing the bigger picture within your company is a crucial step as your role grows. As product managers, we're uniquely positioned to excel here, as we're already working in a cross-functional capacity. Seeing beyond product and understanding the business side of the equation will also help you reach that next level.

"I couldn't manage the product organization, marketing, or market operations if I hadn't previously had exposure to those functions and built some skills relating to those functions," admitted Matt Trudeau. "That doesn't necessarily mean I had to go in and do the marketing, be the marketer, or be on the support desk. I have to understand what a day in the life of those individuals looks like so that I can help them."

The Age of Product is upon us where the best products win. So, now is the time to take the information here and earn your promotion. As PMs, we achieve our dream jobs by embracing the growth mindset and influencing stakeholders. Put the love for our careers and the products we build on full display. Learn to see the big picture beyond our product teams. Following these best practices will help us reach that next level. We've earned it.

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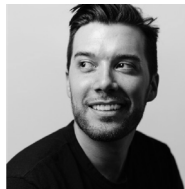
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About Us

Products That Count is the most influential Product Acceleration Platform in the world.

Empowers 300,000+ PMs via:

- 100+ events globally each year
- Thousands of videos, podcasts and articles online
- Best practices from Netflix product VP, Box CPO and more
- A focus on answering the question, “What makes a great product?”
- Its commitment to inclusion and increasing diversity in product



Products That Count is the original and most influential product acceleration platform in the world. Almost 300,000 product managers globally read, watch, attend and listen to our 3,000+ free blog posts, videos, webinars and podcasts.

C/VP-level product executives such as Netflix Product VP, Coinbase CPO, and Box CPO share best practices and raise their profile at our curated product salons, podcast show and mastermind circles. Leading brands such as Autodesk and Capital One join as corporate members to turn their product teams into a competitive advantage. Hyper-growth companies like Amplitude have generated 10X ROI from marketing partnerships.

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