

# Getting That Senior PM Dream Job

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# How PMs Can Achieve Their Goals

As we seek to advance our careers, we can apply a product mindset to ourselves as a product with unique expertise. We can A/B test the work environments and roles that best suit us, market ourselves to earn those next jobs, and sell ourselves to hiring managers. To earn that next product management dream job, we need to excel at those things.

The next role isn't always going to come from the company at which we currently work. The opportunity for growth won't always be there, or we may just come to realize we're a better fit elsewhere. In this eBook, we will share experiences and best practices from some incredible product leaders on how to know when it's time for your next challenge at the Senior PM level or above, whether that's at your own company or elsewhere.

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 new roles that align with their unique talents and aspirations.

Those product leaders, and countless others, are a part of the Products That Count story of which I'm quite proud. 2020 marked the fifth anniversary of Products That Count. In that time, **we've watched as our network of product managers and leaders has ballooned to more than 300,000**. We've become a trusted resource thanks to the incredible knowledge shared by C/VP-level product innovators. We do not take our role lightly in helping PMs grow and learn. We're proud to support them as they continue their pursuit of career development on their way up the corporate ladder as they become recognized with more senior-level roles. I hope that this eBook will help you to do the same.

**James Gray 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**  
Chief Product Officer  
Products That Count



# Getting That Senior PM Dream Job

More than 75 percent of PMs have been in the role for less than two years. That makes experienced product managers precious commodities, which means as you learn and grow within your position, the value you offer increases significantly.

Here, we'll discuss what product leaders have done to join, shape, and drive the product conversation and get that product management dream job.

**Katherine Kornas is the VP of Growth Product & Marketing at Betterment. Prior to developing the growth product and marketing practices for Betterment, she worked on the activation product team focusing on conversion rate optimization. Formerly, Katherine was the SVP of Product at Havenly and Director of Product Management at Pandora. Katherine also serves as a guest lecturer on Product Management at the Stanford University Graduate School of Business and Columbia Business Schools.**



**Katherine Kornas**  
Betterment, VP of  
Growth Product &  
Marketing

**Neja Taleja is the Director of Product at Prezi. She's built product teams that are driven by data, empathy, and effective cross-functional collaboration resulting in products that have led to purposeful pleasant product experiences, provided actionable insights to decision makers, and empowered teams to achieve success metrics. Neha also had the honor to contribute in the non-profit sector, bridging access to the quality education gap in underserved communities in over 13 countries.**



**Neja Taleja**  
Prezi  
Director of Product

# How To Know When It's Time To Move On

Most product managers are ambitious by nature, so it's not a surprise that many PMs keep an eye on getting to that next level in their careers. But how do you know when it's time to move on? **What tells you that you're ready to make a transition to growing into a more senior role?**

"Shortly before I left my role at Pandora, I knew that I wanted to be in a product leadership position, owning the whole product experience," revealed Katherine Kornas. "I had that as my north star vision. I was ready to make a change. I recognized that I had acquired a lot of different skills in many different industries, in a lot of different types of product roles. I wanted to bring that culture and skillset to a smaller organization and shape a product practice at a fast-growing, intense company."

For others, it's more of a mathematical equation that lets them know when they're ready for more.

"I had that 80/20 moment in my career. I was getting 80% of my work done with 20% of my time invested," said Neha Taleja. "I realized that I'd become efficient in my job and that it was time for me to challenge myself and iterate to the next level."

For some, it's knowing you're ready for the next step, whether feeling it or doing the math in your head. Others may have to do some more work to get to that point. Let's look at how to approach that scenario.

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**Neha Taleja**  
Prezi  
Director of Product

# How To Identify Your Gaps in Knowledge or Skill

We know some of the best PMs believe in what they're good at and understand where they need to up-level their competency. The ability to embrace a growth mindset can help us identify gaps and work to improve upon them.

**The interview process can be an excellent opportunity to measure where you stack up with your competition.**

"I have a whole matrix that I use. If I don't meet at least a 60% benchmark for each skill or responsibility, and at least 80% on one, I don't consider myself a fit. The more I did that with different job descriptions, I started seeing myself as an 80% match for a director-level position," described Neja Taleja. "I started applying to those jobs. I was able to show them what they were looking for and a matrix of where I overlap with some clear, tangible examples. That preparation grid and being able to communicate it visually also helped me discover things I didn't know about myself or my capabilities."

"I've found the interview process to be more effective and powerful than just networking with the people I know," added Katherine Kornas. "It gives you an insider look at a company and the caliber of talent they're looking for. You don't always get that from your network."

Now that we've touched on knowing when you're ready, it's time to find yourself that dream job.

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# Best Practices For Earning Your Senior PM Dream Job

Product managers are talented. We've got a diverse set of skills. There are many choices around the path that we can pursue. However, there are some best practices and approaches PMs may find helpful to clarify the opportunities and experiences that we want for our next dream job.

Thinking of yourself as a product can help you stand out for your next opportunity.

"We have to develop a roadmap for ourselves as we go through different phases of our career. Productizing yourself and adopting that mindset is valuable as you think about your career. Develop that over time."

Spending the time to take stock of what you're looking for and what you want to get out of your next job can help you find the perfect fit.

"Two things that I discovered about myself were that I am a storyteller. I like talking in front of people and sharing my expertise. The second thing was respecting the fact that the process is valuable. Taking a very deliberate approach to identifying and solving problems is important," explained Katherine Kornas. "I wanted to make sure that these were things my next company and role also valued and wanted out of a candidate like me."

Every PM knows about product-market fit. One way to find a senior product manager role is to identify where you'd find product-market fit within your position at a company. It's really no different.

"I felt strongly that if the things I was looking for weren't present in my next role, I would not be successful, happy, or impactful," said Katherine Kornas. "It was critical for me to find that level of fit."

When the time comes, you may realize that what you thought your dream company or role would be isn't the right fit for you. That's OK! That just means your real dream job awaits elsewhere.



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**James Gray**  
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“When you expose yourself and your vulnerabilities throughout the interview process, you’ll learn a lot,” Neha Taleja pointed out. “You may pivot based on identifying that product-market fit.”

Once you find where you’d be a perfect fit, it’s time to give yourself the best chance to land the job. **Great product leaders aren’t lucky. They make their luck.**

“One thing that I was always told throughout my career is to start doing the job before you ask to get promoted. I actually think that’s bullshit. Nobody except you knows that you’re trying to get to that next level. They see you at the level you’re currently at,” stated Katherine Kornas. “As you start to envision your next step, particularly when it’s within your existing company, you need to have buy-in from people who will help open the doors for you to make sure that people see you contributing at that level and are valuable at that level. Otherwise, you’re not going to get the opportunity to really show off that level of skill.”

“Make your boss look like a rockstar. Take away the challenging aspects of your boss’s job and do them really well, even before they ask you to do it, and allow them to take the credit,” suggested Neja Taleja. “There’s a natural sense of empathy. They’ll see that you deserve a promotion. I made my luck that way.”

Smart and talented PMs do just that: **we make our luck.** That way, when it comes time to find our next dream job, we’re ready. Hiring managers will take notice.

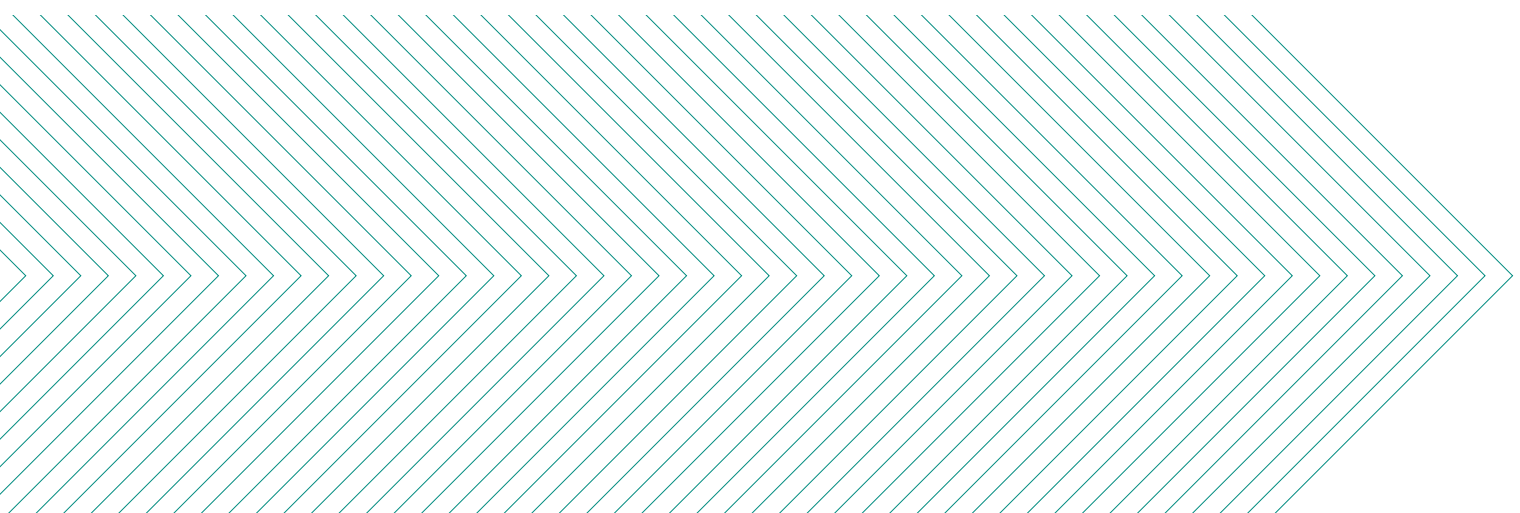


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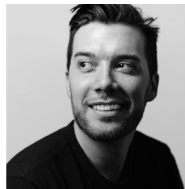
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## About Us

# 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.

Learn more at [productsthatcount.com](https://productsthatcount.com)





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