

Product Management and company culture



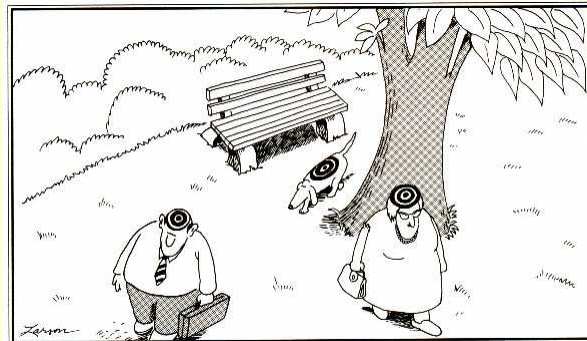
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How birds see the world

Overview



- Smaller company culture can be classified by the domain in which their CEO / Founder is most proficient - engineering, marketing or sales.
- These differences often manifest most clearly in their impact on product management within the company. Engineering driven companies may be the most challenging, as the engineers are empowered to take over the product definition process. Product management is often not considered knowledgeable enough.
- I'll bring examples of such situations, and real life stories of how product managers succeeded and failed in such environments

Introduction



- What is culture?
- Who defines culture?
- Why should I care?
- Really, why should I care?

General Concept

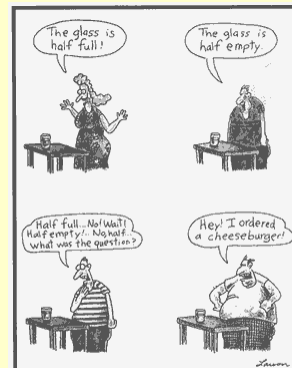


- Culture driven by people, defined by personalities
- “Top dog calls the shots”
 - Indoctrination
 - selective hiring
 - random process
- CEO / Founder / General Manager

Personalities



- Many many ways to classify
- Classification driven by business behavior
- Stereotypes are useful
- Typical roles:
 - Marketing
 - Sales
 - Engineering



The four basic personality types

Roles & Personalities



Engineer

- Detail oriented
- Drill down, deep focus
- Technology driven
- Respects knowledge

Marketing

- Feature oriented
- Verbal / Image oriented
- Form driven
- Customer Focus

Sales

- Goal oriented
- Sow your seeds
- Results driven
- Respects power

You?

Example 1 – Avionics



- Technology leader / pioneer / innovator
- Founder and CEO - Engineer / Pilot
- Encourages all employees to get pilot license
- MIT graduate, hero culture

Example 1 - continued



Processes

- New Product Definition
- Customer interaction
- Sales cycle
- Engineering development



Example 1 – Product Manager



- Focus on defining market share, timing
- Leave product features to engineering
- Bring customer's word to the table

Example 2 – Internet Gambling



- Company is leader in USA legal online gambling
- CEO is serial entrepreneur
 - Sales background
- Technology is a commodity
- Industry heavily regulated by politicians

Example 2 - continued



- No formal processes in company
- Creative, game concepts rule
- Look, “fun factor” is everything

Example 2 – Product Manager



- Follow CEO lead, ideas and hunches
- Focus on detail work with game designers
- Very little engineering interaction (?)

Example 3 – Networking infrastructure start-up



- CEO from engineering background, but has Marketing / Sales personality
- Two product positions:
 - Product manager, ex CEO, reports to VP Eng.
 - Product marketing, founder, reports to VP Marketing
- Engineering located in Israel, HQ in USA

Example 3 – continued



- Challenge in separation of authority
 - Frequent travel
 - Engineering team getting one side of story
 - Marketing / Sales never knowing exact product roadmap / features
- Company operating in constant version 2.0 mode when 1.0 hasn't been built yet

Example 3 – Product Manager



- Harmonize CEO, PM and Marketing often
- Customize product management documents to fit impromptu operating mode
- Act as the voice of the customer

- Know when to “cut your loss”

Recipe #1



- Bring Value Add to the company
 - Find out what aspects of product management are not being addressed
 - Become involved without taking ownership of product management tasks driven by others
 - Educate management about what they should expect from product management

Recipe #2



- Help others bring Value Add to the company
 - Engage in informal and formal training
 - Offer to review documents produced by various product management “squatters”
 - Promote PM best practices

Summary



- Product Management does not have a universally accepted definition and scope
- Senior management style and personality often offer clues to how product management is done at company X
- Go with the flow, making the most of the support you are getting by having other company employees do your work

Thank You

