15.S72 Introduction to Product Management
Spring H1 2015 (6 class sessions, 3 units)

Class Meetings
Wednesdays 10:00 – 11:30 am, Spring Semester H1 only, Room E62-250

Overview
This course provides an introduction to product management (PM) with an emphasis on its role within technology-driven enterprises. Key aspects of product strategy, product development, and product lifecycle management are discussed, as well as the associated responsibilities of the product manager. This course is intended for students seeking a PM position in either a new or established enterprise. The course augments classes that PM students should be taking in strategy, marketing, product development, and entrepreneurship. Class sessions consist of lectures, discussions, and guest speakers on PM topics. Students work on a team-based PM project in the field.

Instructors

Steven Eppinger
Professor of Management Science and Engineering Systems
MIT Office: E62-468, Email: eppinger@mit.edu

Jim Baum
Lecturer
MIT Office: E40-160, Email: jimbaum@mit.edu

Josh Forman
Entrepreneur-in-Residence, Martin Trust Center for MIT Entrepreneurship
MIT Office: E40-160, Email: jforman@mit.edu

Grading
40% class participation (attendance and contribution to class discussions)
60% team-based field project
**Topic Schedule**

| Class 1  | February 4 | Product management roles and responsibilities  
|          |            | Product strategy, roadmaps, and portfolio planning  
|          |            | Project assignment  
| Class 2  | February 11 | Opportunity discovery  
|          |            | Product development processes  
| Class 3  | February 18 | Go-to-market strategies  
|          |            | Product testing  
|          |            | Product life cycle management  
| Class 4  | February 25 | Project leadership  
|          |            | Financial responsibilities  
| Class 5  | March 4 | Product management careers panel  
| Class 6  | March 11 | Student project synthesis and discussion  

**Class Resources**

The course web site at [stellar.mit.edu](http://stellar.mit.edu) includes presentation materials and readings to follow up each topic. We also strongly encourage you to take advantage of the network and resources available through the Sloan Product Management Club as well as the Martin Trust Center for MIT Entrepreneurship.

**Project Assignment**

In this course, you are learning about the various roles and responsibilities of PM, where PM fits in a technology-based organization, how to formulate and articulate a product strategy, how to discover opportunities in the market and structure a product development process that best captures those opportunities, and how to bring a product to market and manage it through its lifecycle.

The purpose of this project is to explore and critique how these responsibilities are manifested in a current, real-world situation. In particular, these questions:

- What is the PM role at the company?
- What is the product development process at the company?
- Why is this role and process appropriate or inappropriate for your company?
Teams of 2-3 students will identify a technology-based or consumer-product company to investigate the role of PM within the organization, focusing on a specific PM-related question or issue the organization has recently faced. You should conclude this project having deeply familiarized yourself with the role of product management at the target company, and you should critique the role given the company’s goals and structure.

Project Due Dates
- February 11 (before class): Project proposal (team and company)
- February 18 (before class): Participation agreement with the company
- March 6 (11:59pm): Deliverable 1 – PM metrics survey
- March 11 (before class): Deliverable 2 – Project report

Project Deliverable 1: PM Metrics Survey
Fill out the PM metrics survey on Google Docs with data related to the PM role at the company you are studying. The survey will allow us to compile summary data about your projects and discuss the range of PM roles and activities in the last class session. Note that your survey responses are due before the project report is due. This includes the following questions (subject to change):

Qualitative
- What is the PM org held accountable to?
- What are individual PMs held accountable to?
- What does the company look for in hiring a PM?
- What activities does the PM engage in (with a rough breakdown of time spent)?
- What deliverables are PMs responsible for?
- Is there a product roadmap? Describe it, and how it is formulated.

Quantitative
- Is the company B2B, B2C, or other?
- Is the company public or private?
- If private, approximately how much capital has been raised?
- How many full-time employees does the company employ?
- How large is the PM organization?
- How many people in the PM organization hold a variant of the title “product manager”?
- How many engineers are there at the company?
- How many product designers are there at the company?
- What proportion of the PM organization has an MBA?
- What proportion of the PM organization has a technical degree?
- What executive does PM roll up to?

Project Deliverable 2: Project Report
Submit a 5-page report that includes the following information:
- Describe the PM function, including its staffing, responsibilities, reporting relationships, and placement within the company.
• Document the PD process, including the primary stages, spirals, iterations, and test activities.

• Analyze a recent product-related PM decision, including the importance of the decision to the success of the product, how the decision was reached, and some critique of the quality of the decision.

• Critique how the responsibilities and structure of the PM organization could be improved to better achieve the goals of the company.