



Introduction to Product Management

A Comprehensive Beginner's Guide to Product Management – Complete with Nigerian Product Examples

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01 — What Is a Product?

A **product** is anything offered to a market to satisfy a need, solve a problem, or fulfil a desire. It gives value to a user in exchange for money, time, or attention. Think about daily life in Nigeria: you wake up, use your **Infinix phone** (a physical product) to open **Opay** (a digital product) to send money. Both are products – built to solve a problem.

Physical Products

Tangible items you can touch, hold, and transport.

- Indomie Noodles
- Peak Milk tin
- Tecno / Infinix Smartphone
- Dangote Cement

Digital Products

Intangible software accessed via a device – unlimited, instantly delivered.

- Flutterwave & Paystack
- Piggyvest & Cowrywise
- Kuda Bank App
- Carbon (formerly Paylater)

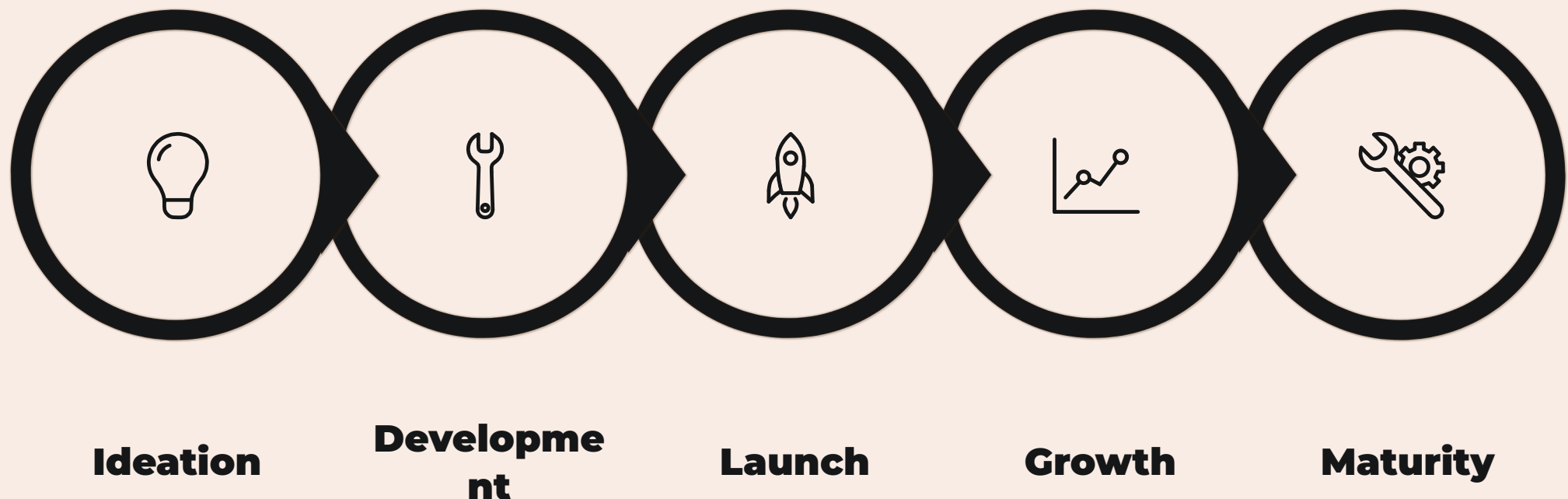
 Key difference: Physical products can run out of stock and cost money per unit to duplicate. Digital products have near-zero duplication cost and can be updated continuously.

02 — What Is Product Management?

Product Management is the process of planning, developing, launching, and continuously improving a product throughout its entire life – from an idea all the way to a finished product customers love. Think of it as the **engine room** of any company that builds a product: deciding WHERE to go, WHY, and HOW to get there.

📌 *Nigerian Example: Imagine Piggyvest when it first launched. Someone had to decide: "What problem are we solving? What features should we build first? How do we know if users love it?" – That is product management.*

The Product Lifecycle



Every product – from Piggyvest to Paystack – passes through these stages. Product management guides the product at every phase, using user feedback and data to continuously iterate and improve.

03 — Who Is a Product Manager?

A **Product Manager (PM)** is often called the "**CEO of the product**" – not because they have power over everyone, but because they are accountable for whether the product succeeds or fails. The PM sits at the intersection of **business, technology, and user experience**.

Nigerian Example: Think of a PM like the Producer of a Nollywood film. They don't act or direct – but they decide what story to tell, manage the budget, coordinate the cast and crew, and ensure the final film is loved by viewers.

What a PM is NOT

Not a Project Manager

PM focuses on WHAT & WHY;
Project Manager focuses on
HOW & WHEN.

Not the Boss of Engineers

PMs collaborate – they don't
manage engineers directly.

Not the Designer

PMs work with designers but
don't create the visual
interface.

Not Only for Tech

PMs exist in banks, FMCG,
healthcare, and many more
industries.

04 — Roles & Responsibilities of a Product Manager

On any given day, a PM might interview users in the morning, review a design by noon, and analyse app metrics in the afternoon. Here are the core responsibilities:



Vision & Strategy

Define where the product is headed long-term. Write the product vision and roadmap. *E.g., Opay PM: "Become the most trusted financial super-app for everyday Nigerians by 2026."*



Define Requirements

Write PRDs (Product Requirements Documents) explaining what a feature should do, who it's for, and why it matters.



Track Metrics

Define KPIs like DAU, retention rate, NPS, and conversion rate. Monitor them regularly to measure product success.



User Research

Talk to real users via interviews, surveys, and usability tests. Never assume – listen. *E.g., Kuda Bank PM interviews students to understand why they abandoned sign-up.*



Prioritise Features

Use frameworks like RICE, MoSCoW, or Kano Model to decide what gets built first. *E.g., Paystack PM: Apple Pay support vs. bulk transfer – which first?*



Stakeholder Communication

Regularly present product updates, results, and plans to leadership, investors, and partner teams. *E.g., Interswitch PM presents monthly performance to the CEO.*

05 — All Skills for a Product Manager

Hard Skills (Technical & Analytical)

- User Research & Interviews
- Data Analysis (Mixpanel, Google Analytics, Excel)
- Wireframing & Prototyping (Figma, Miro)
- Writing PRDs & User Stories
- Roadmapping (Jira, Notion, ProductPlan)
- A/B Testing & Agile/Scrum
- Market Research & Basic SQL
- API Understanding

Soft Skills (Interpersonal & Leadership)

- Communication – explain complex ideas clearly
- Critical Thinking & Problem-Solving
- Empathy – deeply understand user feelings
- Leadership without Authority
- Prioritisation – the skill of saying "not now"
- Stakeholder Management
- Time Management & Curiosity
- Resilience – products fail; great PMs iterate

✅ **Key Insight:** Many of Nigeria's top PMs at Paystack, Flutterwave, and Cowrywise started by learning one skill at a time. Focus on **user research and communication first** – they are the foundation of everything else.

06 — Product Organisation & Its Partners

A PM never works alone. They are surrounded by a diverse team of partners, each playing a unique role in building and growing the product.

Chief Product Officer (CPO)

Most senior product leader. Defines overall product vision and strategy across all teams. Reports to CEO.

Product Designer (UI/UX)

Responsible for how the product looks and how easy it is to use. Creates wireframes, mockups, and prototypes.

Product Owner (PO)

Manages the product backlog and works with the engineering team on what to build each sprint.

Product Marketing Manager

Bridges product and marketing. Owns product launches, positioning, and go-to-market strategies.

Engineers

Frontend, Backend, and Mobile developers who actually BUILD the product – every button click is powered by their code.

Customer Support & Success

Handle user complaints and ensure users get value. A goldmine of user insight for the PM.

07 — Product Manager's Tech Stack

A PM's tech stack is their digital toolbox – tools for planning, designing, collaborating, analysing, and testing. Here's the complete guide by category:

	Roadmapping Jira, Productboard, Notion, Trello, Linear
	Design & Prototyping Figma, Miro, Marvel App, Balsamiq, Adobe XD
	Product Analytics Mixpanel, Amplitude, Google Analytics, Heap, Segment
	User Testing Maze, UserTesting.com, Hotjar, Lookback.io, PlaybookUX
	User Feedback Typeform, Google Forms, Intercom, Canny.io, SurveyMonkey
	Experimentation & Feature Flags LaunchDarkly, Optimizely, Firebase Remote Config, GrowthBook

 Nigerian Example: A PM at Cowrywise checks Mixpanel and discovers "60% of users who start the investment flow drop off at Step 3 – why?" – then uses Hotjar session replays to find out.

08 & 09 — Challenges in PM & Beyond Tech

Key Challenges in Product Management

- **Saying No to Stakeholders** – Not all ideas should be built; prioritisation requires confidence.
- **No Direct Authority** – PMs lead engineers and designers through trust, not orders.
- **Dealing with Ambiguity** – Markets shift; CBN policy changes forced Nigerian fintech PMs to rapidly adapt in 2023.
- **Speed vs Quality** – Moving too fast leads to buggy products; balance is a constant challenge.
- **Team Misalignment** – Marketing, Engineering, Legal, and Design rarely share the same timeline.
- **Imposter Syndrome** – Very common for new PMs; continuous learning is the cure.

PM Exists in Every Industry

Product Management is not only for tech companies. Any organisation that creates value for a customer is doing product management – the title just changes.

- **FMCG:** Brand Manager – Nestle Nigeria, Unilever
- **Banking:** Digital Product Manager – GTBank, Zenith, UBA
- **Telecom:** VAS Product Manager – MTN, Airtel, Glo
- **Healthcare:** Clinical Product Specialist – GSK Nigeria, Emzor Pharma
- **Retail:** Category Manager – Jumia Nigeria, Konga

- ❏ Dangote Group makes cement, sugar, and flour – but someone inside is deciding product mix, packaging, and pricing. That is product thinking.



10 — PM vs Project Manager vs Product Owner

Criteria	Product Manager	Project Manager	Product Owner
Primary Focus	WHAT to build & WHY	HOW & WHEN to deliver	Managing the dev backlog
Orientation	Strategic & outcome-focused	Operational & process-focused	Tactical & delivery-focused
Time Horizon	Long-term (months-years)	Short-to-medium (weeks-months)	Short-term (1-2 week sprints)
Nigerian Example	Kuda PM decides to build 'group savings' from user research	GTBank PM oversees 3-month core banking migration	Paystack PO writes user stories for the dev sprint

✔ **QuickRide Story:** The PM discovers drivers want to see rider ratings → decides to build it. The Project Manager plans the 8-week timeline. The Product Owner writes the sprint user stories. In small Nigerian startups, one person often plays all three roles simultaneously.

Key Takeaway

A product can be physical (Indomie) or digital (Piggyvest). PM is the bridge between business, tech, and user. The role exists in every industry.

Build Products That Matter

The best PMs in Nigeria never stop asking "why?" and never stop listening to users. Curiosity, empathy, and continuous learning are everything.