Agenda:

Keys to Effective Collaboration
PM & TL Frustrations Examples
Conflict Resolution Scenario
About Khadija

Director of Product @Better.com - “We are Hiring”

Lead Product Manager @ Compass

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About Jean

VP Engineering @ Komodo Health

Director of Engineering @ Compass

VP Engineering @ Tradeshift

Co-Founder & Organizer, CTO School

http://www.meetup.com/ctoschool/
About Us

- Worked together closely for 18 months @ Compass
- Shipped 3 New Products Together, Major Revamps on 2 more
- Had some ups and downs, but figured out a way to work together
Defining Keys To Effective Collaboration
Keys To Effective Collaboration

- Empathy
- Building Trust
- Communication
- Role Clarity & Accountability
- Negotiation & Conflict Resolution
1. Empathy

Perspective Taking - Being able to understand another person’s perspective and context. Putting yourself in their shoes.
2. Building Trust

You are able to rely on someone else to do the right thing. You believe your partner will follow through. You're able to put yourself on the line, at some risk to yourself.

Dimensions - Intent and Capability
3. Communication

Sharing information and context with each other. Both talking and **actively listening**. Working to understand each other.
4. Role Clarity & Accountability

Understand each other’s roles and boundaries of responsibilities. Holding yourself and each other accountable.
Let’s Define Roles - Tech Lead & Product Manager

● Engineering - Owns The How
● Product - Owns The What and Why
● In practice, there are a lot of gray areas....
Tech Leads - The How

- Technical delivery strategy to support business / product strategy
- Focused on medium to long-term aspects of the system
- Support Engineering Processes such as deployment
- Non-functional Requirements - performance, scalability, security, etc.
- Point of view on technology needs and non-functional things
- Understand the Business
- Coach & Mentor Engineers on the Team
Why do product managers exist?

- Understanding what to build is crucially important, but is also very hard to define.
- Help to facilitate solutions and product strategy between engineering, design and business stakeholders.
5. Negotiation & Conflict Resolution

Equal partners must discuss any disagreements to arrive at the best solution.
Great Opportunity For Win-Win

The Roles are fundamentally in conflict

They need each other to get things done, and each brings their own perspective.

The perspectives are in tension with other.

When the collaboration works well, great results follow - a lot of value delivered at reasonable cost.
Product & Engineering have fundamental tension as they have different goals.
Keys to Effective Collaboration

- Empathy
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Let’s Look at Some Scenarios

In practice, there is a lot of nuance and gray areas
PM Frustration:

Architecture! Engineering wants to spend weeks of time thinking about it.

#communication #negotiation #empathy #trust
A PM asks for a large feature. There are obvious ways to phase and experiment before developing all of functionality.

#negotiation #empathy #role_clarity
PM Frustration:

Engineer wants the perfect spec or a user story that has every detail defined.

#role_clarity #negotiation #empathy #trust
Eng Frustration:

When PM does not act as the CEO of the product. They should be calling all the shots.

#role_clarity #empathy
PM Frustration:

TL is involving himself / herself in ideation phase of the product. Feels like he is trying to play a bit of a product role.

#role_clarity, #communication #negotiation #trust
Eng Frustration:

PMs don’t include Eng in planning process

#trust #role_clarity #empathy #communication
TL does not give options or explain trade-offs

#role_clarity #communication #trust
Eng Frustration:

PM does not prioritize technical debt

#role_clarity #negotiation #trust
Negotiation & Conflict Resolution
Example Scenario

Product puts pressure on Engineering to deliver on something quickly
PM:

- Holds Eng Accountable #role_clarity
- Explains the pressure they are under #empathy #trust
- Explains biggest sources of business value #communication

TL:

Clarifies business drivers. #communication
- Looks for most important value to the business #negotiation #empathy
- Explains engineering trade offs #communication

Problem Solving Together #negotiation #communication

Compromise - solution gives the most business value in given time, but also ensures Engineering priorities are met.
Summary
Keys to Effective Collaboration

- Empathy
- Building Trust
- Communication
- Role Clarity & Accountability
- Negotiation & Conflict Resolution
Thanks!

Both Komodo Health & Better Are Hiring!