



Sink or Swim - Effective Collaboration Between Eng & Product

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Agenda:

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

About Khadija

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

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COMPASS

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About Jean

VP Engineering @ Komodo Health

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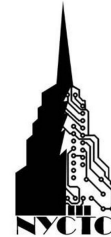
Co-Founder & Organizer, CTO School

<http://www.meetup.com/ctoschool/>



COMPASS

TRADESHIFT





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.



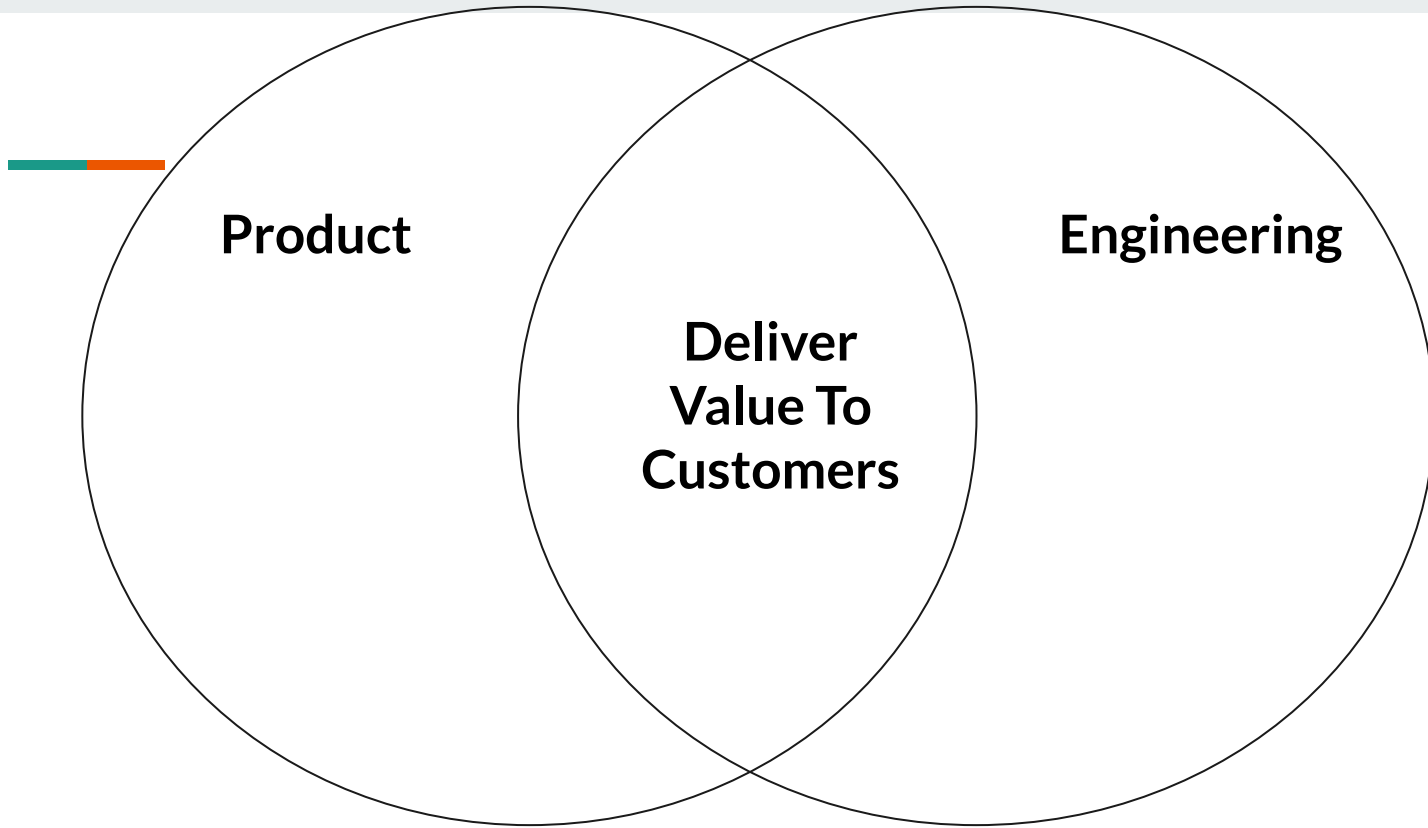
Great Opportunity For Win-Win

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.



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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

Eng Frustration:



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

PM Frustration:



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



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Thanks!

Both Komodo Health & Better Are
Hiring!