



Mind the Gap

Planning an effective training strategy to
maximise product team capability



Optimising Team Skills and Capability

Introduction


Mind the Gap is a 360-degree review that identifies skill assets within a Product Management team as well as building a strategy that will be most effective for upskilling your product team in order to hit annual targets in the most effective way. We understand that it isn't always the easiest to understand what training would be most beneficial to your team and the truth is that each member of your team is going to require something slightly different.

But, one thing we can agree on are the annual goals of the business, and those goals can be prioritised as well as aligned with the specific skills required to achieve each goal in the most efficient and effective way.

Enter, *mind the gap*.

The basic template of this exercise is as follows:

1. Choose five business priorities/goals for the upcoming year.
2. Align a skill from the skills matrix with each of the goals.
3. Plot each team members score for each skill.
4. Once the scores are plotted, identify members as 'Learn it', 'Do it' and 'Coach it'.
5. Finally, using the information produced from this exercise, plan a training strategy that is both cost effective and most relevant to every member of the product team!!



Team planning board

2018 Priorities

- Launch product x in Q2
- Diversify into new markets
- Review and report on subscription pricing
- Improve presentation skills
- Maximise impact of current product suite

2018 Skills

- A. Launch Management
- B. AIKT sizing
- C. AIKT research
- D. Presenting with impact
- E. Value prop building

Skills	A	B	C	D	E
20					
19					
18					
17					
16					
15					
14					
13					
12					
11					
10					
9					
8					
7					
6					
5					
4					
3					
2					
1					



PM action card

Skills	A	B	C	D	E
20					
19					
18					
17					
16					
15					
14					
13					
12					
11					
10					
9					
8					
7					
6					
5					
4					
3					
2					
1					

Summary

2018 Activities

Coach

Train

Learn

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PM skills and priority setting

To complete the first step of this exercise we need to understand a subset of PM skills and how to align them with goals or priorities.

Skills can be defined using different language and intentions, so make sure that you are clear about what each skill you define will entail. With this in mind we have a subset of skills that we associated with the *Mind the Gap* tool, though you are **NOT** limited to the skills in this set.



In order to set priorities, we look at the overall roadmap for the business and the main activities that are planned for the coming year.

- Is there a number of product launches planned for next year?
- Are we trying to push innovation and new ideas?
- Does there need to be a focus on internal communications?
- Is our product suite filled with long term existing products that to be managed strategically?

These are the sorts of questions we need to ask in order to determine how we set our priorities. So, for our example, let's say the answer to all the questions above is yes.

We could set a priority for each:

1. Many Product launches
2. Pushing innovation and ideation
3. Improved internal communications
4. In-life product strategy

We can match each priority to a PM skill:

1. Product Launch planning/market readiness
2. Ideation Management
3. Cross-team Working
4. Mega-trending

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Plotting team skill

Once we have a set of skills aligned with the company priorities then it is time to start assigning a score for each skill to each team member being evaluated.

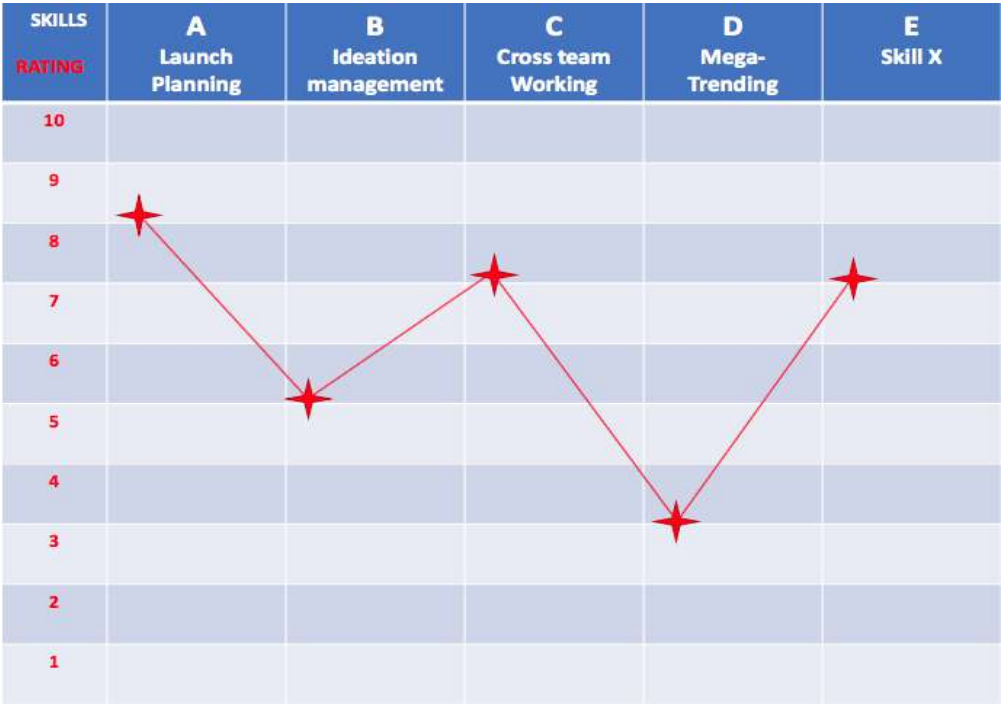
As a side-note it is worth mentioning that we often have our senior trainers conduct interviews with each team member individually in order to score them. This is part of the service we provide when conducting out 360-degree review of a product team, we start by mapping out a strategy for the training we plan to deliver, bespoke and personal to the company needs.

There are a number of ways to assess each individual on the chosen skills, you could quiz them, conduct a peer review with the full team or have them self-assess.

From these interviews, a score for each skill can be deduced and plotted on to the mind the gap chart. Equally, these scores can be attained with a combination of self-assessments, peer reviews and interviews that look at how each individual performs in each of the key areas.

Once a score has been given for each skill, we can plot an individual ‘PM 1’ across the chart, and that may look a little like this...

This graph clearly shows that PM 1 needs to upskill their mega-trending capability and could improve their ability to manage ideation.



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Once this is plotted for a number of PM's we can then look at the category that they fall into within each skill with regards to 'learn it' - 'do it' - 'teach it'.



A simple upskilling activity to do here is utilise the skills of the team to align or improve those under-performing in skill areas, one way to do that is to use those who are rated within the coach it level of a skill to upskill and teach those that are rated in the learn it level of the same skill!

Simply, take PM 1 who is borderline Learn it for skill D in the above graphic. PM 2 would be able to help PM 1 improve as they scored much better for that particular skill.

This works well in smaller teams but, what if there are some common gaps within your team, or a lack of those confident or equipped enough to help upskill colleagues?

To combat this, the final stage of Mind the Gap is to create actions cards for each team member and then produce a training programme that focuses on the areas of need. The aim here being to produce a plan for training and upskilling your team in the most effective way that is focused on the goals and priorities of the company.

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Action card and training plan

First, produce a summary for each skill score, this should detail how well the individual scores and their suitability to performing the associated tasks or teaching that surround the skill.

That last section to fill in is the table to that individual as to whether they will coach, do or learn that skill. As well as defining their level in this way, we can describe the actions they are going to take with regards to each skill.

For example:

- for skill A - PM 1 is going to work with PM 3 and attempt to improve their own Skill A performance by completing tasks under the supervision and guided by PM 3.
- For Skill B - PM 1 is going to work with PM 2 and attempt to demonstrate the most effective and efficient methods for completing these tasks in order to improve skill B of PM 2.

A training plan can be created once all of these actions are understood. Any gaps in skills can be addressed with professional training that is tailored to the needs of the delegates.

Product Management training week					
	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri
AM		Product Management Bootcamp	Core Topic 4 Core Topic 5 Core Topic 6	Core Topic 10 Core Topic 11	
PM		Core Topic 1 Core Topic 2 Core Topic 3	Core Topic 7 Core Topic 8 Core Topic 9	Pricing Masterclass	

Conclusion

The reason we often start with this activity when reviewing product teams is so that the training plan can be planned to be as useful and relevant as possible, the result is a totally bespoke training plan that suits the immediate business needs for the next 12-24 months.

The Mind the gap tool is useful for leaders of product teams to use just as a way of evaluating the skill assets within your team. Understanding who is good at particular tasks also means that when you are planning and assigning roles, you are able to assign those that are very capable of product launch planning, for example, to the task of planning a product launch.

Improve your team's skill set, improve understanding of the team and individuals' capabilities and improve the effectiveness of the professional training that your team receives.