



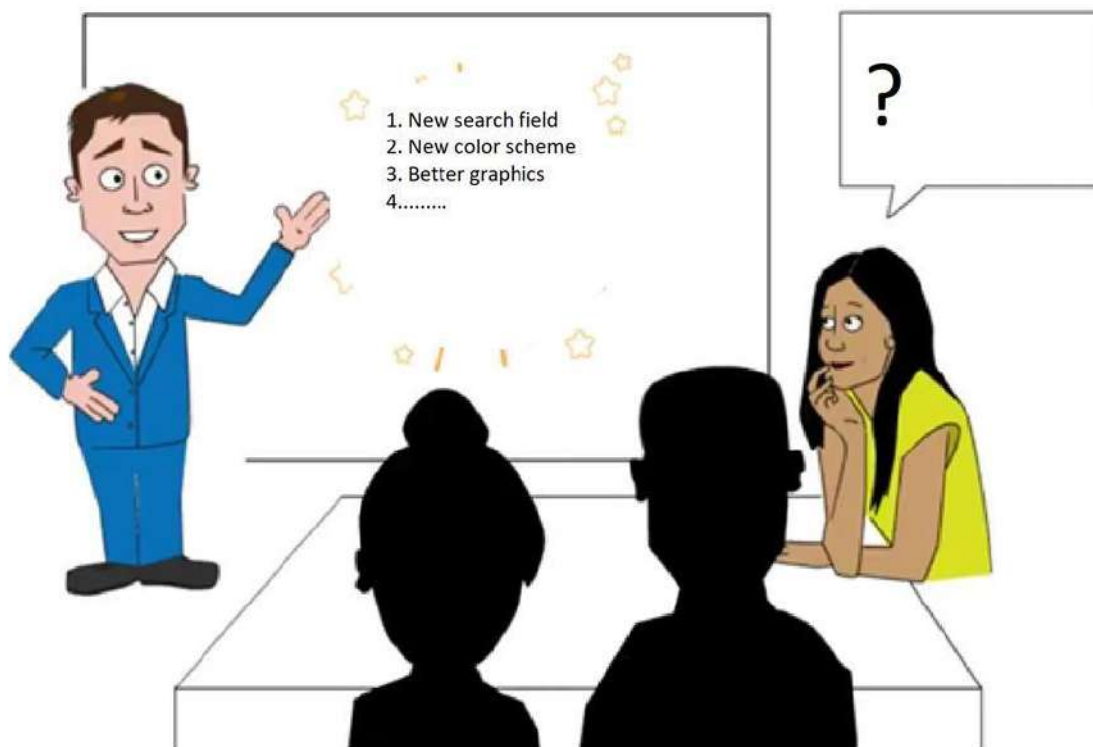
## Theming your product release to deliver impact



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## Introduction

Watching paint dry or being presented with an endless list of features that describes everything a product manager is planning to add to their product over the next twelve months. They compete for the title of “Most boring thing I can imagine doing”. From a customer or an internal stakeholder perspective, trying to deduce where the value might be in the list of the 100 features the product manager plans to add is mind-numbing. And the risk? All that hard work from development gets lost as customers simply can’t see the value to them. A better approach is to group features into themes – each theme conveying the core value and most features demonstrating delivery of that value. It builds a more interesting, more engaging, more *valuable* story for our customers.



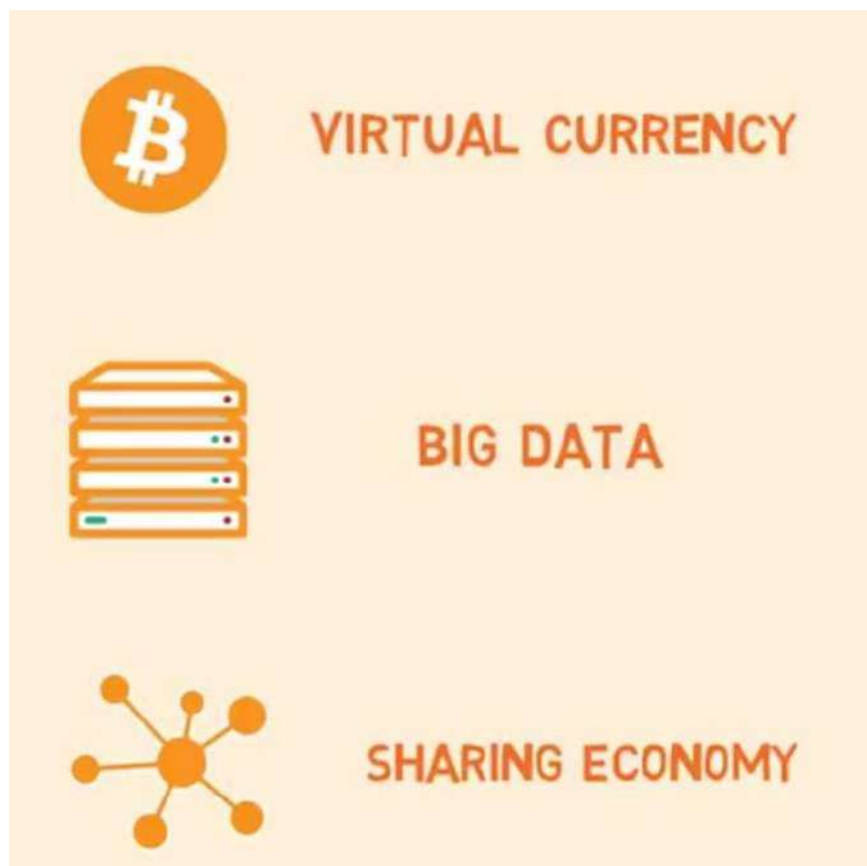
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## What is a Theme?

Themes are groupings of features. They describe the value that a customer can gain from using the features within a theme.

A theme describes the core value and each feature is a proof point of how that value is being delivered.

The feature and the theme rely on each other; No theme = no message and no feature = no proof point. For example, in light of recent breaches Facebook has a theme of “Put privacy first”. A raft of new features has been added such as “privacy shortcuts”. The “Put privacy first” theme lacks credibility without features to support it and the “privacy shortcuts” feature would get no attention without a theme to message it.



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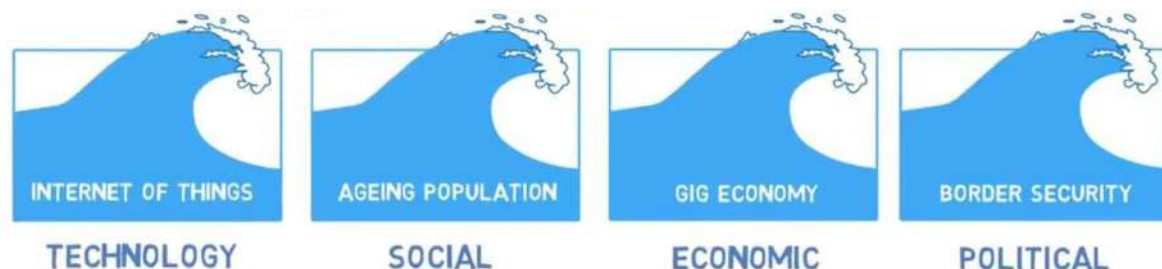
## Building Themes

Like features, themes can come from anywhere, but they must resonate with your target market. For example, a theme of “Enabling mobile working” would be irrelevant if your target market is office based and has no plans or desire for mobile working.

Themes can relate to feedback your get from your user community “Improving usability”, to regulatory themes “Meeting GDPR 2018”, through to technology themes “IoT ready”. There are two critical validations for a theme:

1. Does it resonate with our target customers?
2. Can we credibly add value for the theme?

If the theme cannot realistically address both of those points, then the chances of success are vanishingly small.



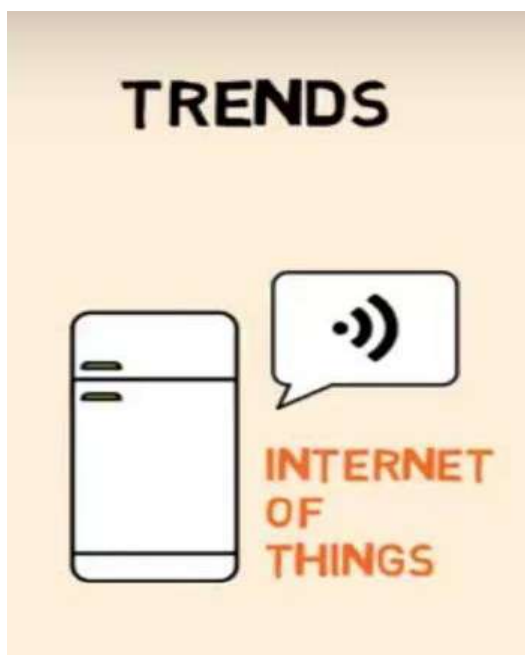
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## Building a themed roadmap

So where do you start with a themed roadmap? These are the building blocks

### 1. Start with a vision

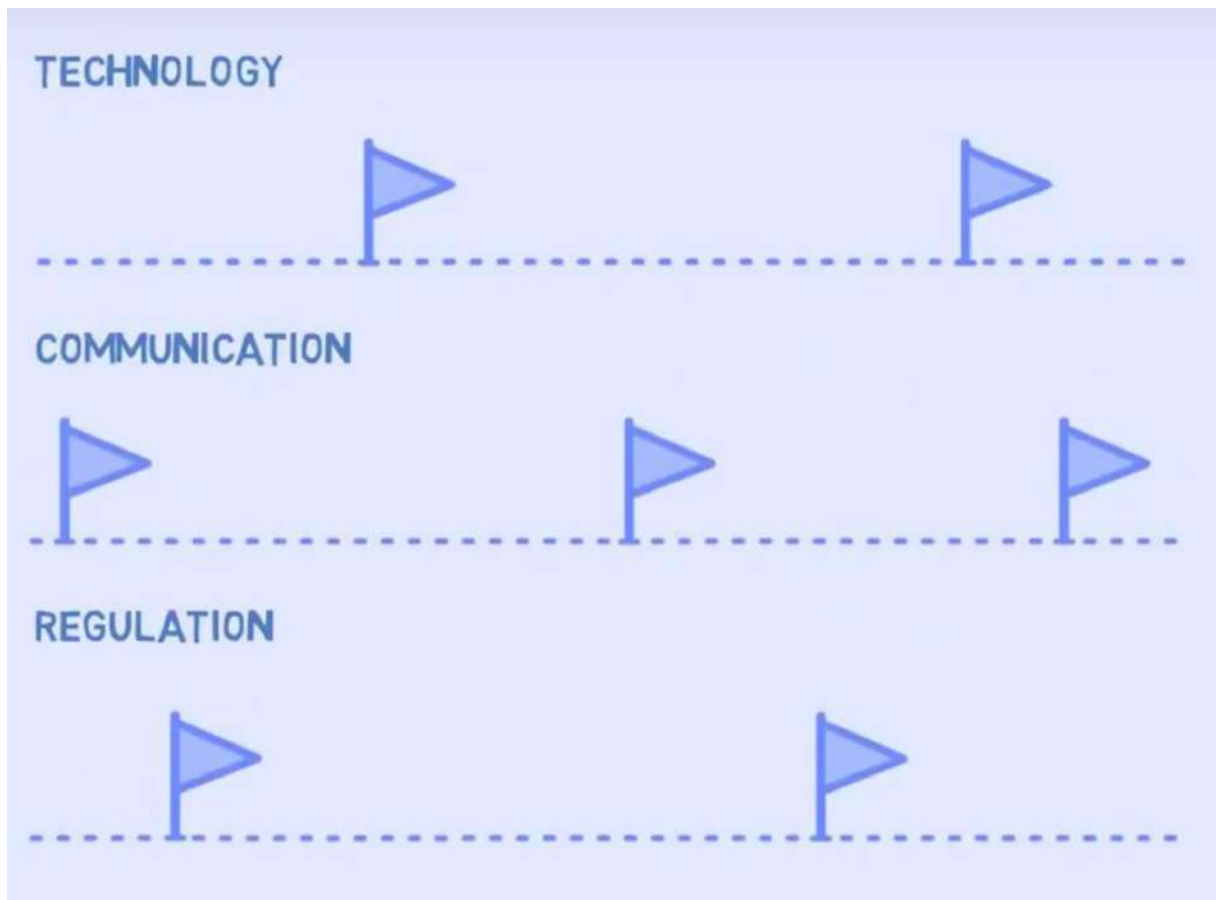
If you don't start with a vision, then your roadmap runs the risk of meandering – going nowhere useful simply because you haven't set an end goal. Think 2 – 5 years out into the future and describe where you want to take the product.



### 2. Break it into key streams

Think of key streams such as technology “What are we delivering”, communication “What are we going to say” and architecture “What do we need in place to deliver”.

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## 3. Build in iterative steps

For each stream describe what you plan to do in three-month steps and the value it delivers.

## 4. Test it

Review your roadmap with selected customers (ensure appropriate confidentiality is in place) and make sure its credible, coherent and compelling.