Burns Sheehan

Unlocking Product Growth:
How Product Teams Can Drive Real Commercial Impact

How can product teams think and operate more commercially, without losing sight of long-term impact and customer experience:

CHALLENGES

??? Should product teams own revenue?

- Inconsistent KPI definitions across teams cause confusion.
- Product teams are often held accountable for commercial outcomes they don't fully control.
- Tension between short-term commercial targets & long-term product value. Commercial teams focus on hitting monthly/quarterly revenue; product focuses on sustainable user value.
- Conflicting incentives—bonuses or performance reviews are often tied to metrics that clash.
- Product teams risk becoming client-servicing arms when client-specific demands override strategic thinking.
- Globalisation challenges – navigating conflicting market priorities & balancing immediate revenue impact against longer-term product vision / expansion plans.
- Poor quality or incomplete data undermines the ability to build robust business cases or forecast ROI.
- Can be difficult to prove ROI on new product features –experiments take time to yield results, but commercial stakeholders often want fast impact.
- Products that are overly optimised for commercial outcomes (e.g. ads, upsells, subscriptions) compromise the user experience—this trade-off is harder to manage under revenue pressure.

SOLUTIONS

BETTER STRUCTURES & ALIGNMENT

- Cross-functional leadership groups with shared KPIs (e.g. product + commercial + marketing) to reduce silos and align incentives.
- KPI trees to unify team-level metrics under a single business outcome, ensuring teams work towards a common goal while owning individual contributions.
- Lifecycle-based squads (e.g. acquisition, conversion, retention) create clear ownership of parts of the funnel, aligning closer to commercial value without overlapping responsibilities.

TRANSPARENT PRIORITISATION

- Pitching sessions allow ideas from across the business to be prioritised fairly, using consistent criteria like estimated revenue impact, effort, and strategic fit.
- Spend as much time discussing what you're not doing - & why - as you do on roadmap decisions.
- Prioritise a mix of functional and user-delighting initiatives each quarter, using tools like the "hierarchy of needs" triangle.
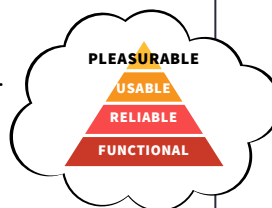
SHARED OWNERSHIP & HEALTHY TENSION

- Encourage healthy tension between product and commercial, but give both sides shared accountability and a seat at the table.
- Shared KPIs like retention or attach rate offer common goals while allowing teams to own the parts they directly influence (e.g. activation, UX, campaign execution).
- Ensure product teams are present in commercial discussions to explain the "why" behind prioritisation, technical trade-offs, or customer impact.

PLEASURABLE
USABLE
RELIABLE
FUNCTIONAL

Louise Smith
Senior Director - Head of Product & Delivery
Burns Sheehan

Louise leads our Product & Delivery function, hiring Product, Delivery, Design, and Research talent across a range of industries.

SESSION LED BY:
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BEAUTY PIE

To learn about how to be involved in future events, reach Louise at louise@burnssheehan.co.uk