



## What CEOs expect from new product hires in their first 90 days

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Whether you're a newly hired product associate or a full-fledged product executive, transitioning into a new role can be stressful. During the first 90 days, you'll be introduced to stakeholders, users, customers, and—in some cases—a whole lot of data.

While expectations for new product hires can vary from organization to organization, we've interviewed a set of CEOs from B2B and B2C brands to help advise you on making your first 90 days as impactful as possible. By adopting their strategies, you can build your team's trust, develop connections with users, and grow as a professional and partner to the C-suite.

These experts have shared their advice for newly hired product professionals:

- [Pearl Collings](#), CEO of Contently
- [Shane Snow](#), CEO of SHOWRUNNER
- [Kristina Roth](#), CEO of MIXOLOSHE

And thanks to [Kristen Poli](#) for crafting this piece for GoPractice.

**Kristen Poli** is a product leader and tech journalist.

She previously held the position of product manager at Contently and was the product management lead at Curacity.

Her articles have been published in outlets like WIRED and Hackernoon.

## What should new product managers focus on during their first 90 days?

During their first 90 days, newly hired product managers should prioritize listening and learning from customers, internal stakeholders, and end users. By developing a robust understanding of users' challenges—and how a company has approached these challenges historically—product managers can set themselves up for long-term success.

At the end of their first 90 days, product leaders should be able to present a well-developed strategy based on their learnings. To build trust with their C-suite partners, product strategies should maintain a focus on north star metrics and be coupled with roadmaps.

Small, but visible, successes



**Shane Snow**  
CEO of SHOWRUNNER

I'm a big believer in the power of small wins. Whereas it may take a product manager a few months to become an expert on the product, its history, its users, and its competition—which are all must-dos in the first 90 days—getting some early, visible successes in will help the rest of the team feel enthusiastic and supportive of the new product manager.

These can be anything from discovering and sharing insights learned in the onboarding process, implementing some quick and uncontroversial improvements to the product, or improving the product management process in small ways to make things easier on the rest of the team. The worst thing a product manager can do in the first 90 days, in my opinion, would be the opposite: spend the whole time doing nothing visible except for implementing a more arduous product process that creates more work for people.

Listening, applying, and leading—in that order



**Pearl Collings**  
CEO of Contently

My recommended 30-60-90 day plan for all functions, including product, is based on a simple formula: "Listen-Apply-Lead". During their first 30 days, product leaders should seek to understand, rather than influence, their peers. The best PMs familiarize themselves with their product and their team, as well as engineering partners and business stakeholders.

New hires should also seek out historical context on product metrics, business goals, and key challenges—the best product leaders understand that listening is the most important thing they can do when transitioning into a new role.

After the initial 30-day mark, effective PMs prioritize user and client listening tours to solicit further understanding of common delights and pain points. In addition, they [study the competitive landscape](#) and begin to shape early insights and recommendations.

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In the following 30 days, product leaders can begin to anchor their strategy around potential north star metrics. By identifying which user actions lead to adoption, acquisition, retention, they can select metrics that closely indicate business outcomes. This is an extremely important step: product leaders need to ensure that new investments in features optimize the user's experience and effectively drive growth. At the end of a product leader's first 90 days, they will have a solid product roadmap in place.

Identifying top-line KPIs



**Kristina Roth**  
CEO of MIXOLOSHE

During their first 90 days, new product managers should focus on understanding the goals of the company and how success is measured. After that, success is based on hitting the ground running as fast as possible.

I recommend that new PMs try to add value by filling in gaps or identifying additional areas where they can help based on their particular expertise. In any position, I'm always looking for team players who are capable of supporting organizational needs.

There's an easy way to check to see if you've added value after the first 90 days. If people trust you with key projects and ask you for advice after that time, you're on the right track.

## What challenges might new product hires expect to face during their first 90 days?

As product managers enter into new roles, they can expect to face a series of challenges. Product leaders, in particular, are presented with a difficult scenario: they must show their capacity for persuasion and leadership while also demonstrating curiosity and humility. Similarly, product managers are expected to generate strategic, long-term plans while keeping short-term fixes top-of-mind. Balancing stakeholder inputs, requests from users, and marketplace influences can prove to be difficult during a PM's first 90 days (and beyond).

Understanding a product's history



**Shane Snow**

CEO of SHOWRUNNER

Everyone who's been there before you knows the product better than you do. So as a product hire, you'll be challenged to show that what you have to offer is valid even though you don't have all the context others do. That's why learning not just the ins and outs of the product is important, but learning the history of how the product developed and why decisions were made is essential.

The circumstances in which a decision was made in the past may have changed, and if you understand that, you'll have a much easier time pushing through change than if you tell people the way they're doing things now is simply wrong. In a nutshell, being persuasive while demonstrating intellectual humility can be a new product hire's biggest challenge.

Developing a growth mindset



**Pearl Collings**

CEO of Contently

While product leaders need to be highly intuitive and customer-obsessed, they must also have a keen eye on how their portfolio drives business impact. During the first 90 days, it can be tempting for new product hires to generate lots of new feature ideas, but they should be careful not to overdo it: it's the execution of great ideas that really helps a business grow. Product managers can meet this challenge by maintaining their intellectual curiosity and their commitment to users, clients, and stakeholders.

To be proactive in shaping the future of a product beyond their first 90 days, I recommend that PMs develop a growth mindset. This way, they can work on long-term innovations in parallel with short-term fixes.

## What expectations do you have for new product hires? How might you measure their success?

While CEOs expect that product leaders have demonstrated business and product success in the past, our experts emphasize that all new product hires should focus on developing a growth mindset, fostering their intellectual curiosity, and maintaining humility. PMs who believe that they have the capacity to improve over time—with hard work and dedication—are capable of achieving much more than PMs with a fixed mindset. Similarly, PMs who can maintain a sense of curiosity and humility while facing challenges can excel. By embodying these characteristics, product managers can develop into resilient professionals and strategic partners to members of the C-suite.

Intellectual curiosity and humility



**Shane Snow**

CEO of SHOWRUNNER

I expect new product hires to come in ready to learn why things are done the way they are, and to frame proposed changes in terms of that history that the rest of the team has experienced. A product hire who comes in declaring that they're going to change things before they seek to understand the history is a

product hire who's going to lose the faith of the team—and the boss. I'll measure their success by their ability to help us see what we need to see and make improvements without creating unhelpful conflict within the team. A little bit of conflict is good, if it's brought with humility and care.

Evidence of execution



**Pearl Collings**  
CEO of Contently

CEOs look for product leaders with a proven track record of setting clear objectives and translating those objectives into measurable KPIs. I expect product leaders to have met objectives in previous roles while maintaining an excellent experience for users. It's easy to welcome new hires to Contently who have great stories to tell about their previous successes and clear plans for the future.

## Conclusion

Many of the challenges faced by product managers during their first 90 days are not unique to the onboarding period. Finding ways to consistently engage with users, balancing long-term objectives with short-term wins, and maintaining curiosity under pressure are all hallmarks of a product manager's professional journey. PMs who are able to flex these skills while transitioning into a new role will be able to build a strong foundation for their future success.

That said, product managers who can effectively prioritize their actions during this critical time—by focusing on listening, learning, and the strategic application of their knowledge—will find it easier to manage their workloads later on. PMs who can employ onboarding strategies with agility, humility, and curiosity will have an advantage over others.

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