

# Top Product Management Challenges

## Some Quick Poll Results

An online poll was conducted in early May 2009 asking Product Managers to select their biggest challenges from a list or providing their own selections. The poll ran for just over a week and a total of 24 Product Managers responded and provided 63 different selections. The response rate from those who hit the page was about 25%. The aggregated results are provided in this article.

The poll unfortunately got off to a rough start as we got greedy in attempting to collect detailed comments for each selection. After a few days with only a minimal response, we simplified it by removing the request for supporting comments. This helped to improve the response rate, but unfortunately at the cost of valuable detail. Poll & Survey 101.

It is acknowledged that with the limited number of responses, the statistical validity of the results is not warranted. Take them like you would your focus group results.

### Overall Responses

The poll consisted of 2 questions: 1) Your top challenges? and 2) Size of your company? The poll questions are shown in the screenshot below. Most respondents provided 3 selections, with the average number being 2.6.

---

**Please select up to 3 of your top product management challenges\***

---

- Having clear roles & responsibilities.
- Having clear goals & objectives.
- Getting adequate department resources.
- Getting stuck in day-to-day tactics.
- Managing market/customer input.
- Roadmap planning & commitment.
- Release planning & requirements.
- Launch planning & execution.
- Driving product marketing activities.
- Getting top management participation/support.
- Working with other departments.
- Other 1
- Other 2

---

**What size company are you working in?\***

---

- Tiny (less than 100 people)
- Small (100 - 500 people)
- Mid-sized (500 - 2500 people)
- Large (2500 - 10,000 people)
- Huge (>10,000 people)

Figure 1 - Poll Questions

The overall results are shown in Figure 2 below.

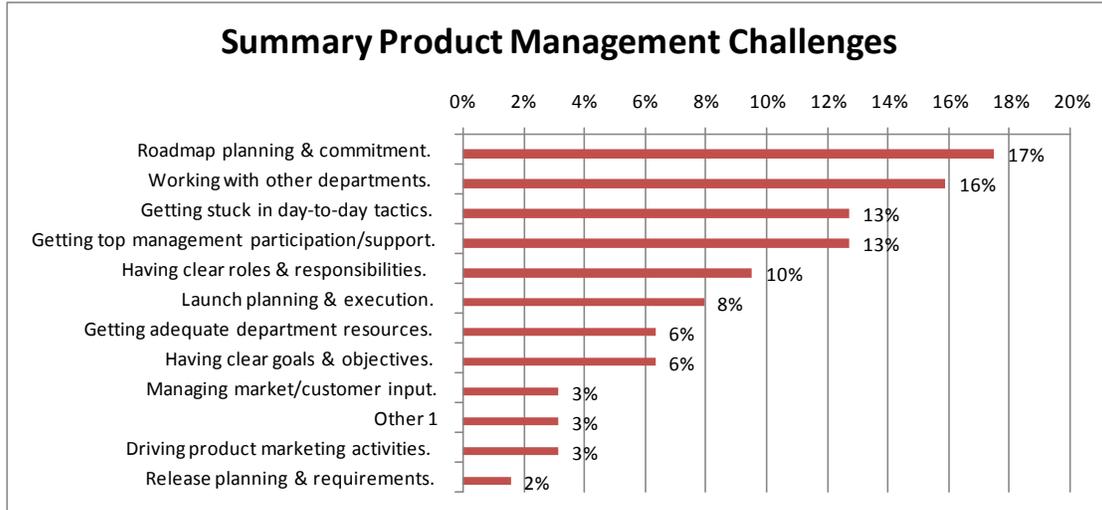


Figure 2 - Overall Poll Results

The top four results are a mix of both strategic and tactical activities. There was an interesting coupling of responses within this group. Nearly half of the respondents who selected roadmap planning (#1) as a challenge also selected getting stuck in day-to-day tactics (#3). Perhaps the issue is roadmap planning (and other strategic issues) take the back seat to tactical activities. (Oh, for want of the detailed comments.... c'est la vie.)

Similarly, half the respondents who selected working with other departments (#2) also selected getting top management participation (#4). Two likely suspects of the “other departments” are Development and Sales and without top management attention, getting resolution to issues will be much more difficult.

One surprise could be the relatively low position of getting adequate resources (#7), given the current economic conditions. Another explanation could be that it's already incorporated into #1. One reason that planning the roadmaps is challenging is because they are on hold.

Moving on to company size, it was a fairly even distribution, with Mid-sized at about a third:

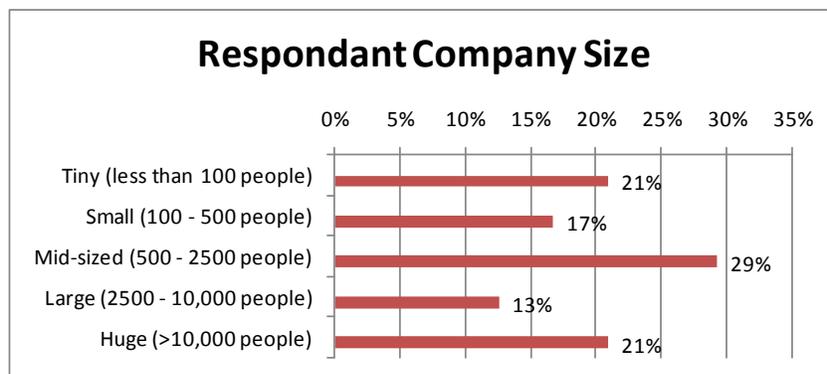


Figure 3 - Company Size

## Results by Company Size

This is a bit of a stretch given the limited number of respondents but it makes for great fun in attempting to summarize it in an informative way. Here goes...

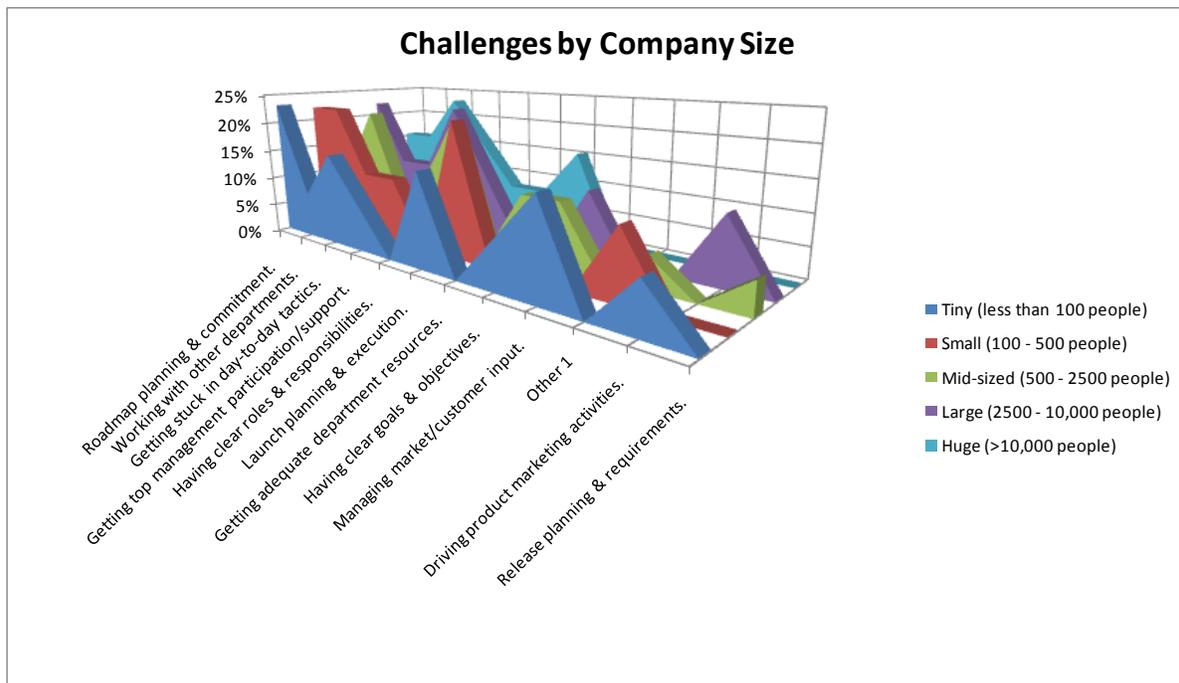


Figure 4 - Individual Size Results

(Note that at the company data level, there can be multiple issues tied with the same scores)

- Roadmap planning was a #1 or #2 issue for every sized company.
- Working with other departments was a #1 or #2 in every company except Tiny.
- Getting stuck in day-to-day tactics was the #1 for Huge companies and a #2 for all the others except Mid-sized.
- Getting top management participation was a #1 or #2 for all except Tiny.
- Having clear roles was a #1 or #2 for Mid-sized and Large.
- Launch planning appeared as a #1 or #2 for Tiny and Small.
- Getting adequate resources was a #2 in Mid-sized and Huge.
- Having clear goals & objectives was a #2 in Mid-sized and Large.
- Managing market/customer input was a #2 in Tiny.
- Driving product marketing activities was a #2 in Large.
- Release planning & requirements got few votes in any sized company.

A few Others were submitted and are:

- Getting the product right the first time in a Small company.
- Avoiding non-productive work for other departments in a Mid-sized.

## Summary

While the poll response rate was not high, the top issues that surfaced were pretty consistent between company sizes. Stay tuned for future articles on these topics. [www.product-arts.com](http://www.product-arts.com).