# Beyond the BA Role:
# Charting a Path to Product Ownership

Kent J. McDonald
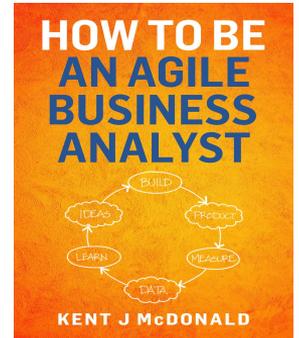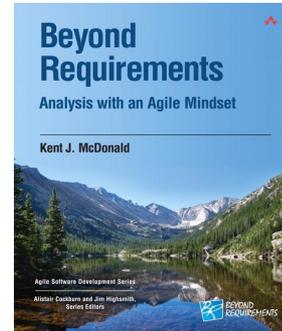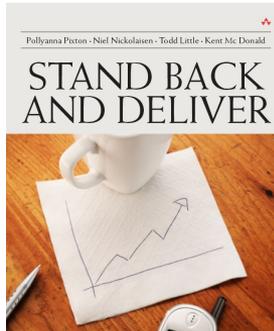
https://insideproduct.co/beyond-ba-role

# A little bit about me

**Product Manager**
**(building internal products)**

**Writer/Advisor**
**(helping others build internal products)**

# What is product ownership?

# What does Scrum say…?

Product Owner

...maxim... ...m the work o...
...y acro... ...duals.

...for e... ...ich includes:

- Transparency
- Inspection
- Adaptation
- Scrum Values
- Scrum Team
  - Developers
  - Product Owner

For Product Owners to succeed, the entire organization must respect their decisions. These decisions... ...e in the content and ordering of the Product Backlog, and through the inspectable Increment at t... ...w.

...Product Owner is one person, not a committee. The Product Owner may represent the needs of... ...holders in the Product Backlog. Those wanting to change the Product Backlog can do so by tryi... ...ince the Product Owner.

**EFFECTIVE PRODUCT BACKLOG MANAGEMENT**

**DEVELOP AND COMMUNICATE THE PRODUCT GOAL**

**ORDER PRODUCT BACKLOG ITEMS**

**MAXIMIZE THE VALUE OF THE PRODUCT…**

**CREATE AND COMMUNICATE PRODUCT BACKLOG ITEMS**

**ENSURE PRODUCT BACKLOG IS TRANSPARENT, VIABLE & UNDERSTOOD**

**…RESULTING FROM THE WORK OF THE SCRUM TEAM**

**REPRESENT NEEDS OF STAKEHOLDERS**

**MAKE DECISIONS**

In practice:
A subset of product management focused on the team

# Product Ownership

**Strategic**

**External** / **Internal**

**Tactical**

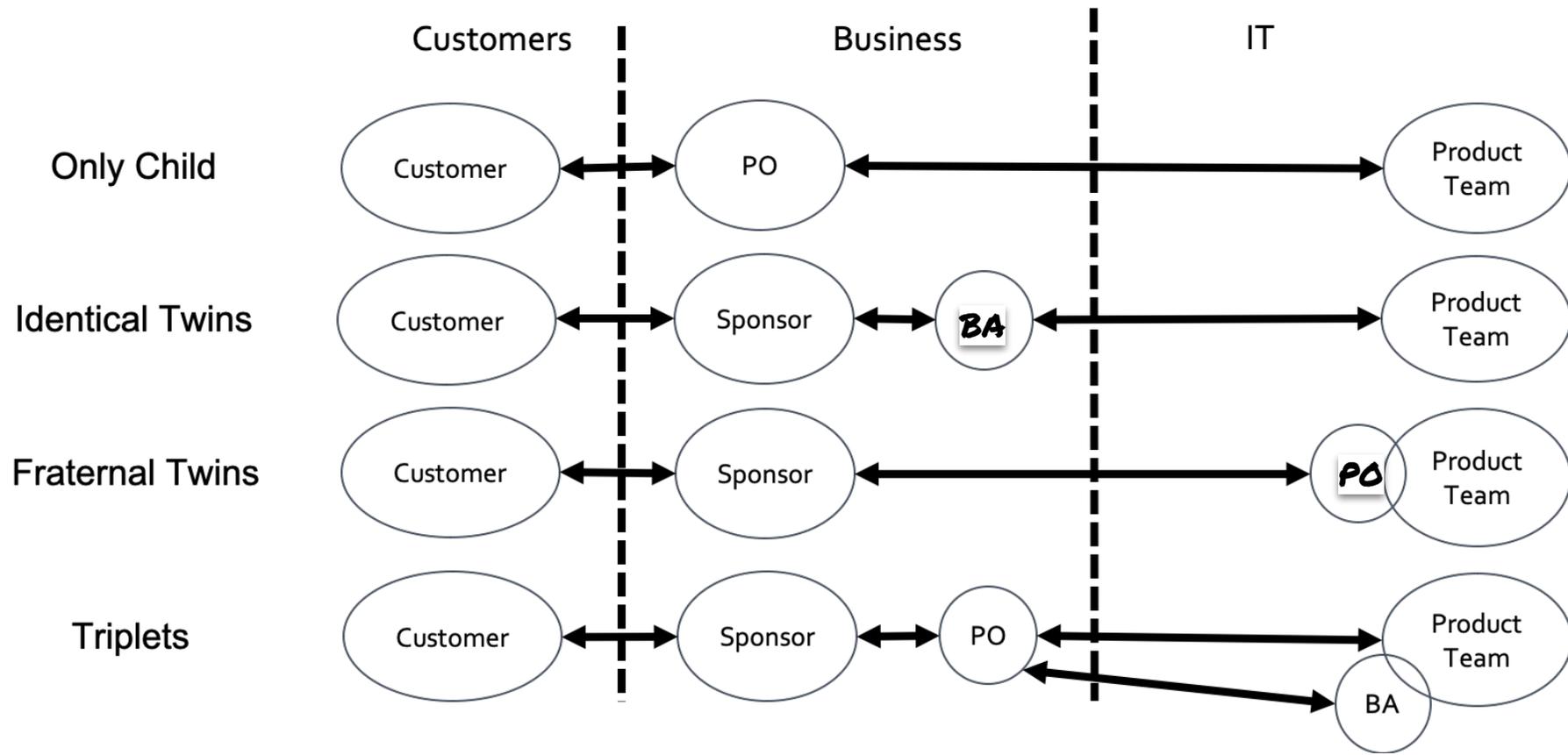| Users | Market | Core Product | Business | Technical |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Segments & Personas | Market Positioning | Product Vision | Product Council | Innovation |
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One organization's
product owner
is another organization's
product manager
(or business analyst)

# Product People - External Product

| | Customers | Business | Engineering |
|---|---|---|---|
| Only Child | Customer | Prod Mgr | Product Team |
| Identical Twins | Customer | Prod Mgr — PO | Product Team |
| Fraternal Twins | Customer | Prod Mgr | PO — Product Team |
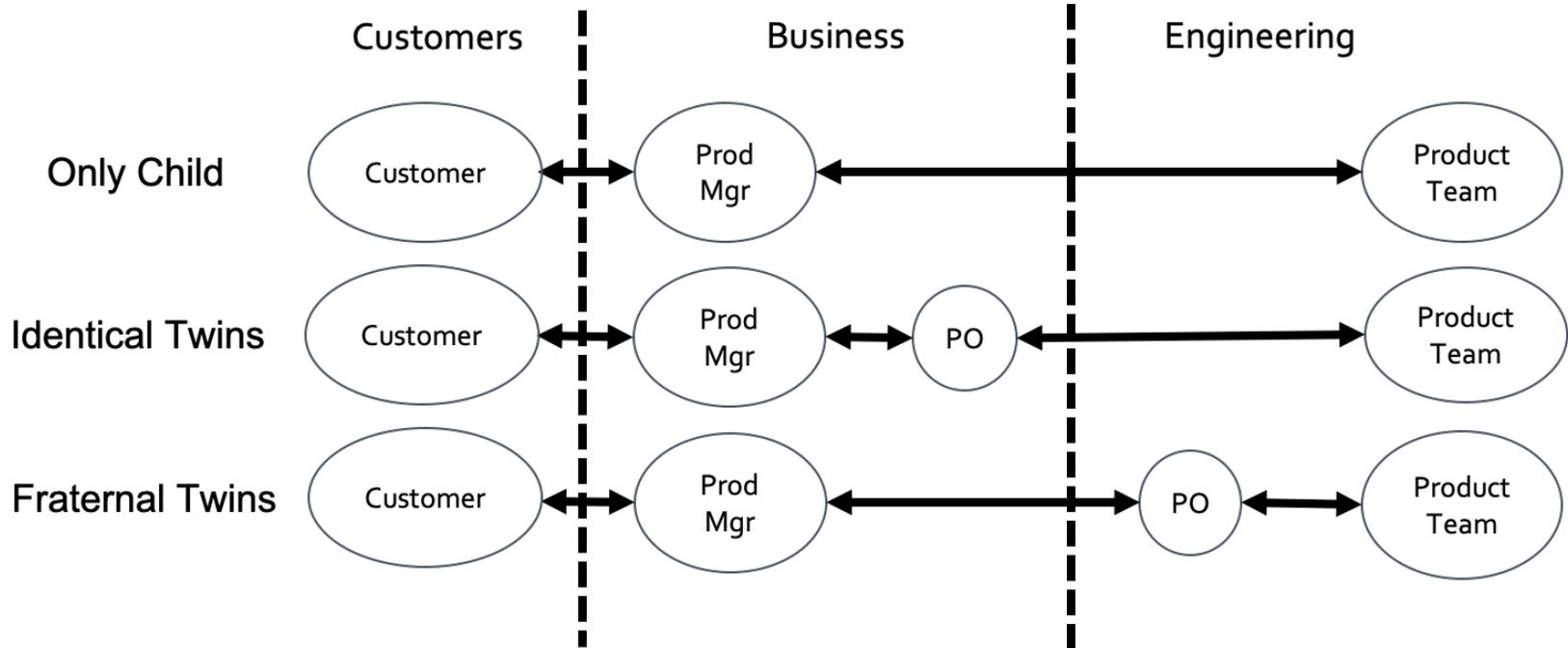
Source: Todd Little

# Product People - Internal Product

What we'd like
product to be

"All models are wrong, but some are useful."
- George E. P. Box

# The Product Model



**And meets business Goals**

**Business**

**Technology**

**Create a tech-powered solution**

**Customer**

**That solves a customer problem**
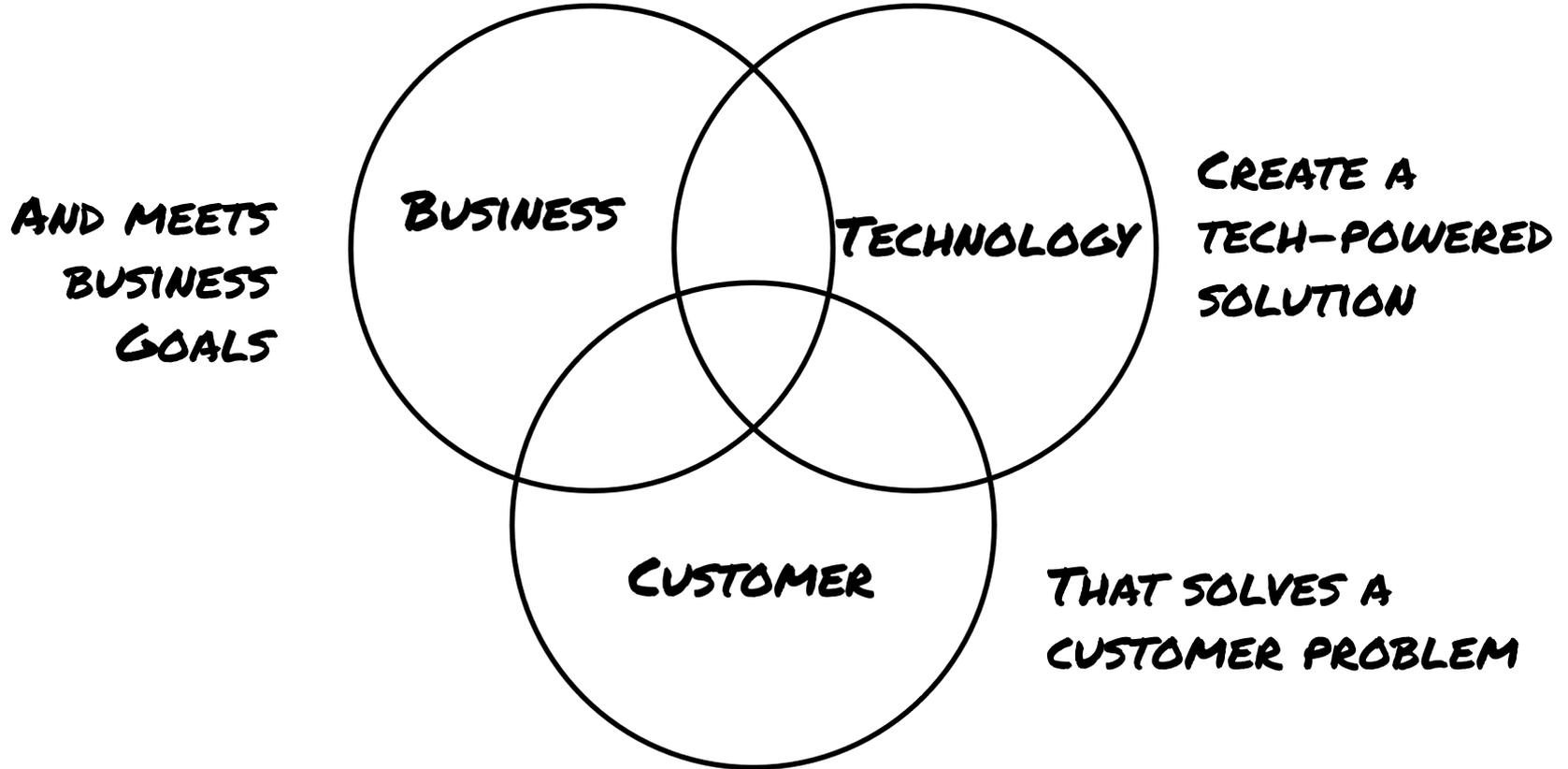
# How you decide which problems to solve
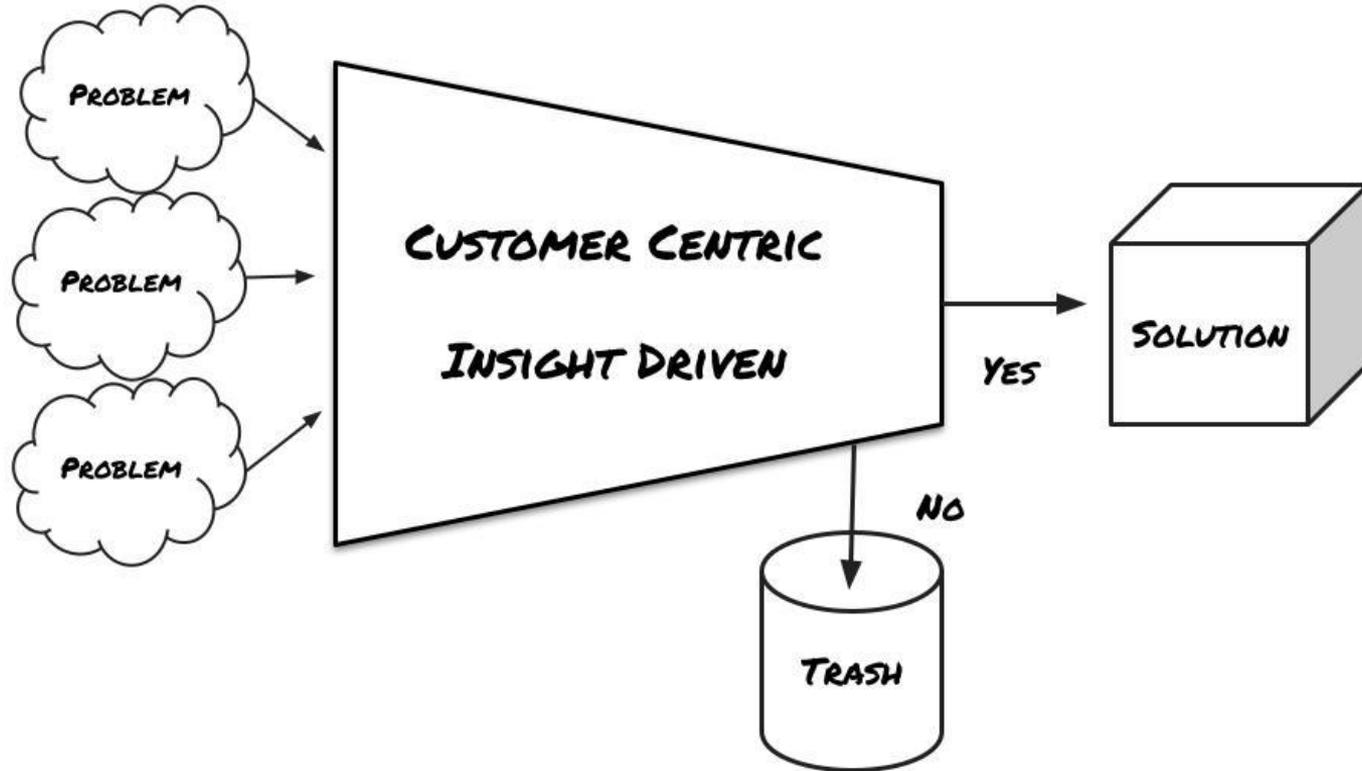
# How you solve problems

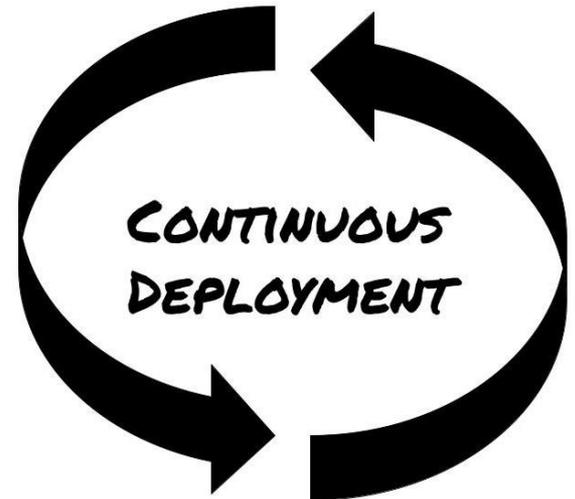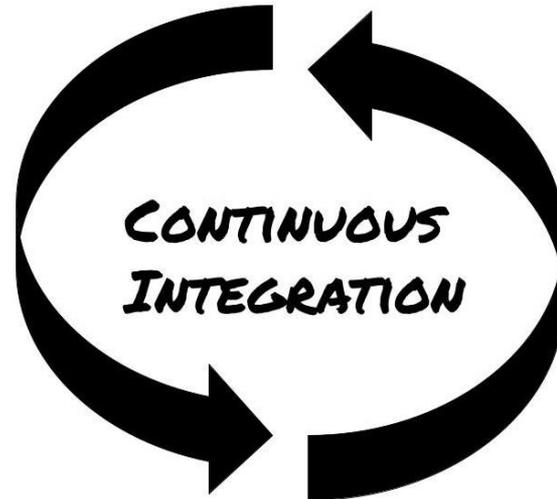Teams find solutions that address four product risks

**Value**

**Feasibility**

**Usability**

**Viability**

# How you build solutions



Small, frequent, reliable releases

Continuous Integration

Continuous Deployment

## The benefits of agile without the baggage

# From Project to Product

| Project Orientation | | Product Orientation |
|---|---|---|
| How much will this cost? | Budgeting | How much are we willing to spend? |
| Fixed Duration | Time Frame | Entire Product LifeCycle |
| Deliver an assigned solution | Defn of Scope | Asked to Solve a problem |
| Output, on Time, in Budget | Success | Accomplish Outcome |
| Temporary, Split Focus, Pulled from Resource Pools | Team Makeup | Stable, dedicated, All Needed Skills |
| Build only | Team Owns | Build and Run |
| Expense | IT Org | Investment |

# How to move into product

# Business analysts deal with viability

**Viability means your solution works within constraints of the departments that use it.**



**Data**



**Processes**

Role A    Role B    System
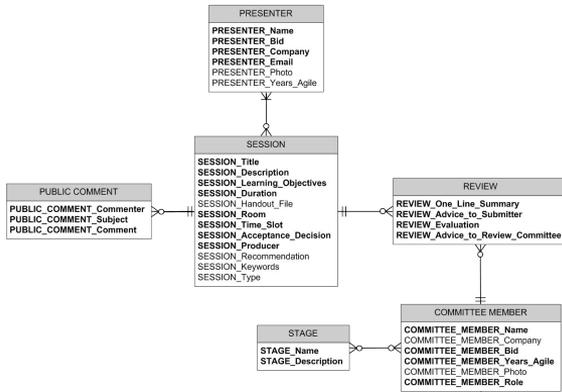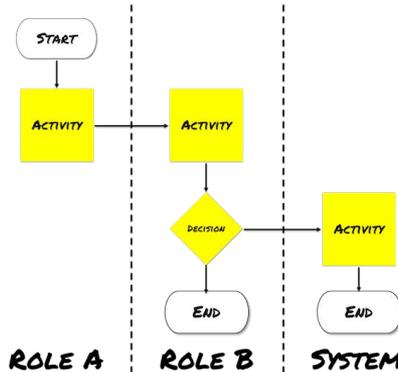


**Business Rules**

# Business analysts deal with value

**KNOW HOW YOUR ORG MAKES AND SPENDS MONEY**

**KNOW HOW WHAT YOU DO CONTRIBUTES TO THAT**

# Business Analysis



|  | Strategic | | | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Segments + Personas | Market Positioning | Product Vision | Product Council | Innovation |
| User Scenarios | Opportunity Discovery | Product Roadmap | Portfolio Planning | Technical Partnerships |
| User Interviews | Competitive Gap Analysis | Feature Prioritization | Business Case | Build vs Buy |
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|  | Tactical | | | |

External — Internal

# Internal product



|  |  | STRATEGIC |  |  |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| SEGMENTS & PERSONAS | MARKET POSITIONING | PRODUCT VISION | PRODUCT COUNCIL | INNOVATION |
| USER SCENARIOS | OPPORTUNITY DISCOVERY | PRODUCT ROADMAP | PORTFOLIO PLANNING | TECHNICAL PARTNERSHIPS |
| USER INTERVIEWS | COMPETITIVE GAP ANALYSIS | FEATURE PRIORITIZATION | BUSINESS CASE | BUILD VS BUY |
| USERS | MARKET | CORE PRODUCT | BUSINESS | TECHNICAL |
| WIREFRAMES | PRODUCT MARKET FIT | BACKLOG REFINEMENT | BUSINESS ANALYSIS | SYSTEM ANALYSIS |
| USER REQUESTS | CONVERSION OPTIMIZATION | PRODUCT REQUIREMENTS | BUSINESS RULES | API SPECIFICATIONS |
| MONITOR FEEDBACK | A/B TESTING | ACCEPTANCE TESTING | SALES SUPPORT | SQL QUERIES |
|  |  | TACTICAL |  |  |

EXTERNAL — INTERNAL

# Lessons Learned

# Don't worry about title, focus on skills



**Title: Delivery Lead**
**What I Did: Map current state, design database, model processes, Identify Business Rules, Coach team**

# Explain how BA experience applies to Product Ownership

**Product Manager**

Corteva Agriscience · Contract

Mar 2019 – Jan 2021 · 1 yr 11 mos

Des Moines, Iowa Area

Deliver an internal product for a leading agriscience company that determines production costs and manages risk for seed production.

* Keep product team focused on outcomes over outputs
* Build a shared understanding among product team and stakeholders
* Make sure decisions get made to maintain forward progress

**Skills:** Product Management · Writing · Business Analysis · Data Analysis · Process Improvement · Agile Methodologies · SQL

Focus on accomplishments instead of activity

How did you help customers solve problems, and meet business objectives

# Do Discovery (and Analysis) in increments



**Refinement Board**

**Delivery Board**

# Acquire additional skills while in your BA role



**Usability Testing**
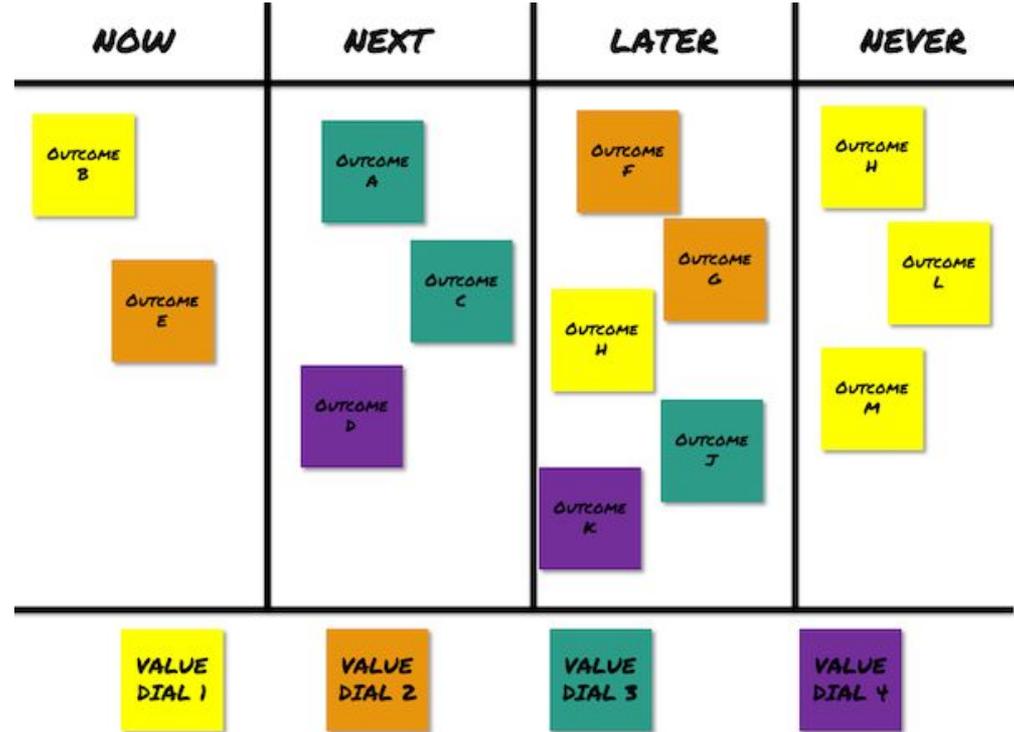


**Roadmap**

# Much Thanks To

**Beth McHugh** · 1st
Product Discovery Strategist & Coach | Let's build better prod...
Washington DC-Baltimore Area
Experience: Tillta Consulting, The Product Refinery, and 9 more

**Stephanie Cooper** · 1st
Product Manager at Tidelift
Austin, Texas Metropolitan Area
Experience: Tidelift, metadata.io, and 5 more

**Stephanie Lewandowski** · 1st
Digital Product and Program Management
United States
Experience: WillowTree, Teachstone, and 4 more

**Neal Cabage** · 2nd
Product Leader & Founder
Redondo Beach, CA
8K followers
Talks about #startups, #productstrategy, and #productmanagement

**Muhammed Zaulifqar** · 2nd
Product @Hungerstation&DeliveryHero. Consultant & Mentor
Riyadh, Saudi Arabia
2K followers
Talks about #ux, #tech, #growth, #marketing, and #productmanager

INSIDE
PRODUCT

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https://insideproduct.co/beyond-ba-role

## Are you a Business Analyst or Product Owner who's constantly thinking:

*"How do I demonstrate my value?"*

*"Does this solution actually solve the problem or just address symptoms we thought we already tackled?"*

*"Which features will have the greatest organizational impact?"*

Or maybe you've (finally) realized that your boss isn't actually concerned with your career.

You're not alone.

If you're shaping internal products but want to stay hands-on, Inside**Product** is for you. Our curated weekly newsletter is specifically designed to provide valuable insights and deep expertise for individual contributors. Combined with coaching and career guidance, Inside**Product** helps you continue to demonstrate your value at every stage of the internal product lifecycle.

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A weekly collection of pragmatic tips for business analysts, product owners, and product managers who build or configure internal products.

By Kent J McDonald

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# Appendix

# Internal product



|  | STRATEGIC | | | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
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|  | TACTICAL | | | |

EXTERNAL — INTERNAL

|  | **Current Org** | **New Org** |
|---|---|---|
| **Revenue Product** | TEAMS THAT OWN YOUR ORGS PRODUCTS | B2C OR B2B SAAS PRODUCTS |
| **Internal Product** | TEAMS THAT OWN SYSTEMS IN YOUR ORG | SAME TYPE OF SYSTEM, DIFFERENT ORG |
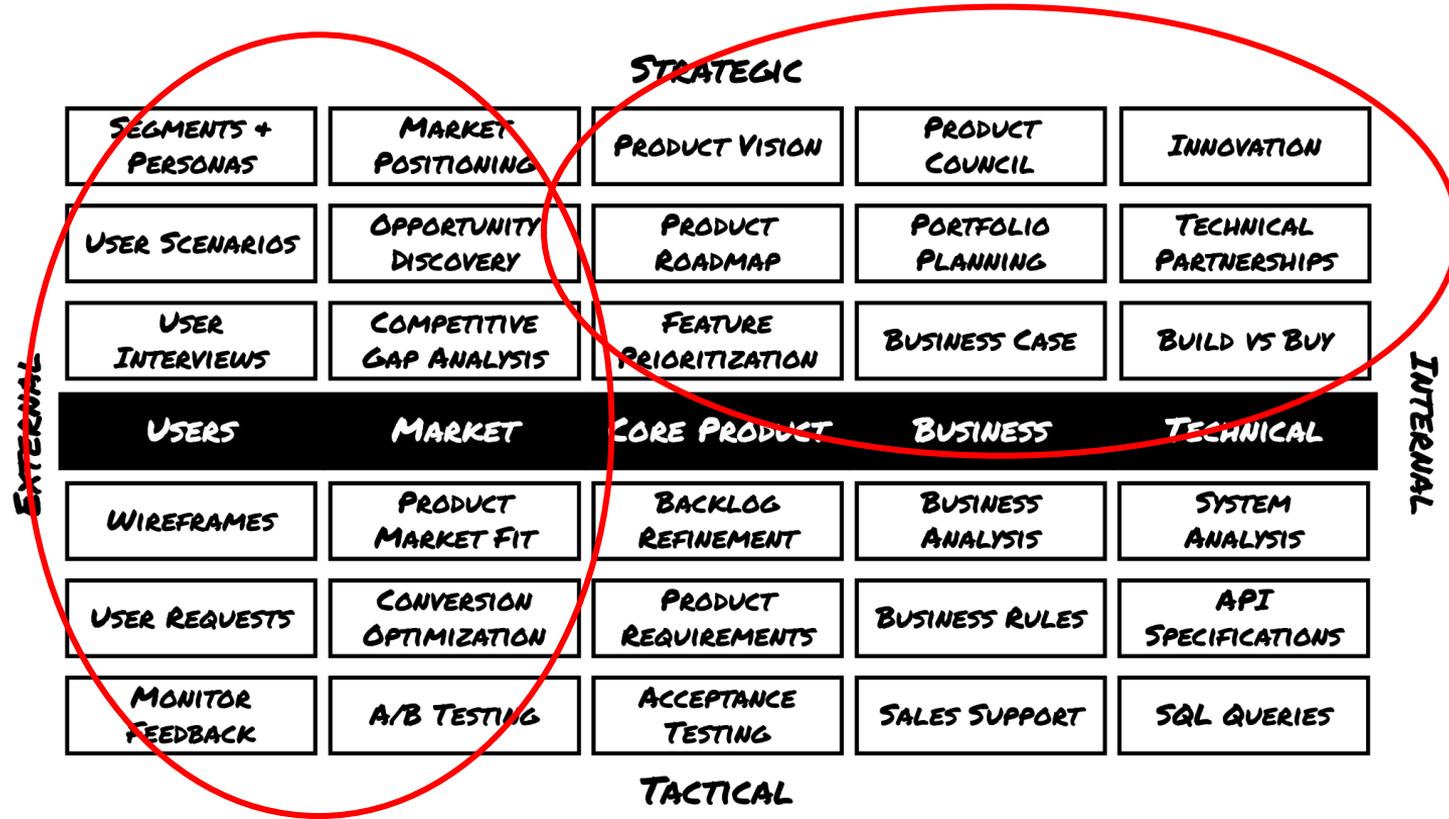
Gratuitous 2x2 Matrix

# Revenue Product



| Strategic | | | | |
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External     Internal

Tactical

REVENUE PRODUCT

INTERNAL PRODUCT

CURRENT ORG

NEW ORG

TRY. THE. PRODUCT.

B2C OR B2B SaaS Products

DESCRIBE YOUR BA EXPERIENCE IN PRODUCT TERMS

FIND COMPANIES IN AN INDUSTRY YOU'RE FAMILIAR WITH

CREATE YOUR OWN PRODUCT

CONSIDER B2B ENTERPRISE PRODUCTS