

5 HABITS OF SUCCESSFUL PRODUCT OWNERS

Traits to emulate to maximize the value of your software and the focus of your development team.





Introduction

Technology projects are critical to the growth and competitiveness of many large organizations today. If you're in charge of working with development teams to build, release, and implement software the stakes can be high. You likely have many stakeholders to answer to and many eyes on your project, so you want the software your team creates to not only be usable, but to also be adopted in the market.

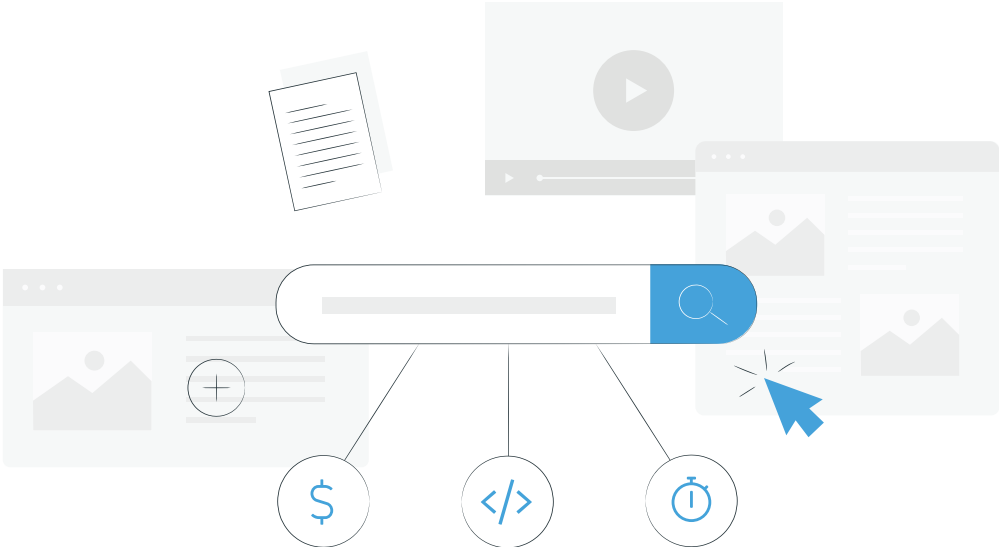
There are many different job titles that play the role of Product Owner, whether they are using the Scrum framework or if they are just the person who pushes software initiatives within an organization. In our years as software consultants, we've worked on hundreds of projects and have found that teams with a strong Product Owner continually see more value from their software and more focus on their teams. We've also noticed patterns among these successful Product Owners in the ways in which they approach their teams and their role.

Here are five traits anyone can emulate to become a more successful Product Owner and help ensure that the software you deliver meets its ultimate goal.

01

Know What Makes a Request Difficult

You don't need to be technical to be a strong Product Owner, but it does help to pick up a general sense of what is an easy coding request versus a difficult one from your development team. Having this knowledge is helpful when ordering the backlog of work to be done. It allows you to make informed decisions about which quick wins you want right away or when you'd like the team the focus on a bigger task. In addition, **being aware of the effort associated with various tasks will help you build a rapport with your development team**. You'll be able to speak to them with empathy about the complexities of work items if you have a deeper understanding of them.



02

Understand the Development Pipeline

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There is more than just writing code to producing software. Even if you're a non-technical Product Owner, it will give you valuable context to understand the full scope of what is needed to write, host, deploy, and test a piece of software. When you understand the process and moving pieces of your product then you can better understand if the development team raises concerns surrounding how a change or a new product will affect the complex software pipeline. It's also important to understand the dev team's "definition of done." That way you'll know, when they say something is done what level of quality and completeness they are referring to.

A great place to start to learn more about the development pipeline and the complexities of coding is with your development team. They will be able to give you an overview of the systems in place and what happens after the code is written that will get you on your way to understanding them better.

03

Reiterate Vision and Goals

As the business representative on the project, it's your job to make sure that the interests of the business and your users are being met by the software. Both the business and your development team will be looking to you for leadership. A great way to ensure that your solution is hitting the mark and that your team truly understands the goal is to be what Patrick Lencioni, organizational author and speaker, calls the "chief reminding officer."

Remind your team what the vision for the product is and what value it should bring to users at regular intervals.

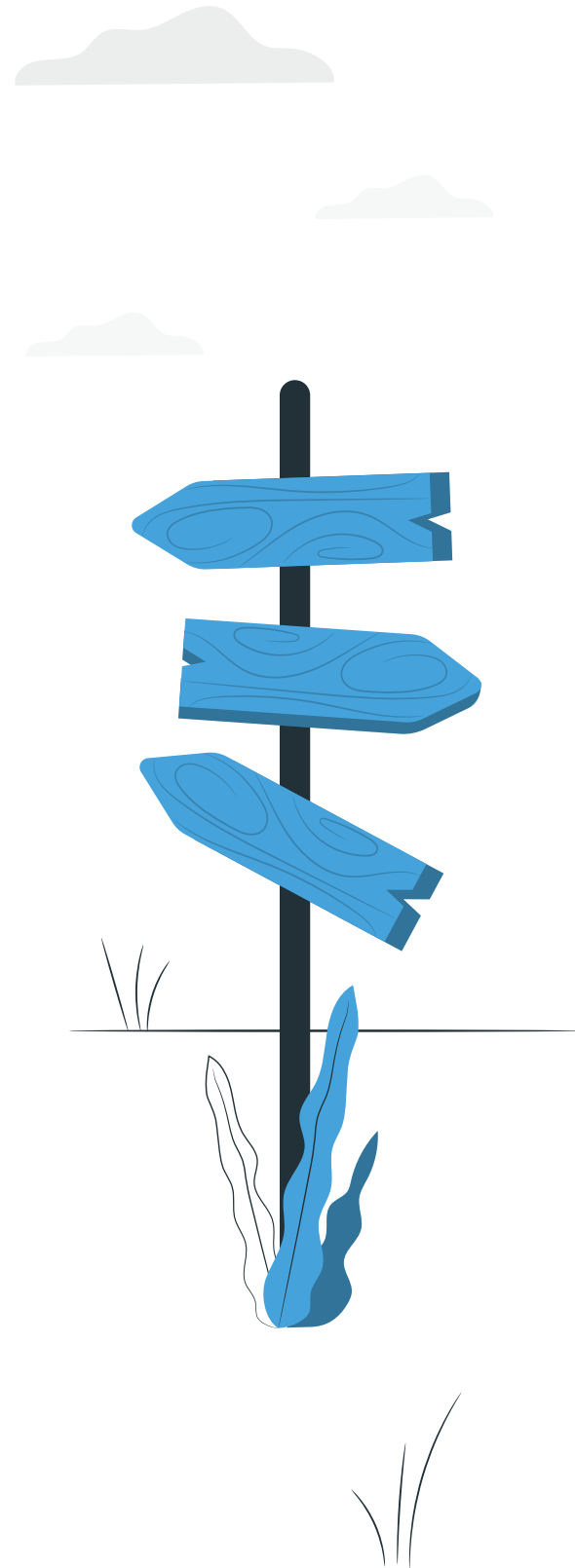
The more you talk about the goals, vision, and value the surer you can be that everyone is on the same page. Don't forget to validate the team when they are getting the vision and value right, too. Your dev team should always know what you're trying to accomplish, the value it's bringing to users, and what work they've done thus far that's hit the mark towards achieving those goals.

04

Be a Bridge, Not a Barrier

Often IT teams have no direct access to the users they are building solutions for. Working in a silo like this makes it very difficult for developers to know if they're drawing the right conclusions for users.

In this situation it can be tempting for Product Owners to act as a go-between for the dev team and the users, but that really isn't a good solution either. **If the business liaison plays telephone with the developers and the users, details and nuance always get lost in translation.** Instead, build a bridge between the users and the dev team. Set up times for them to meet, interact, ask questions, and share feedback. The development team will gather valuable insights from these interactions that they can use to make helpful recommendations for the software and continue to build with the users in mind. It's still the role of the Product Owner to prioritize the feedback, but the development team will be more invested and strategic about implementation if they get the feedback right from the source.



05

Focus on “Why” and Establish Value

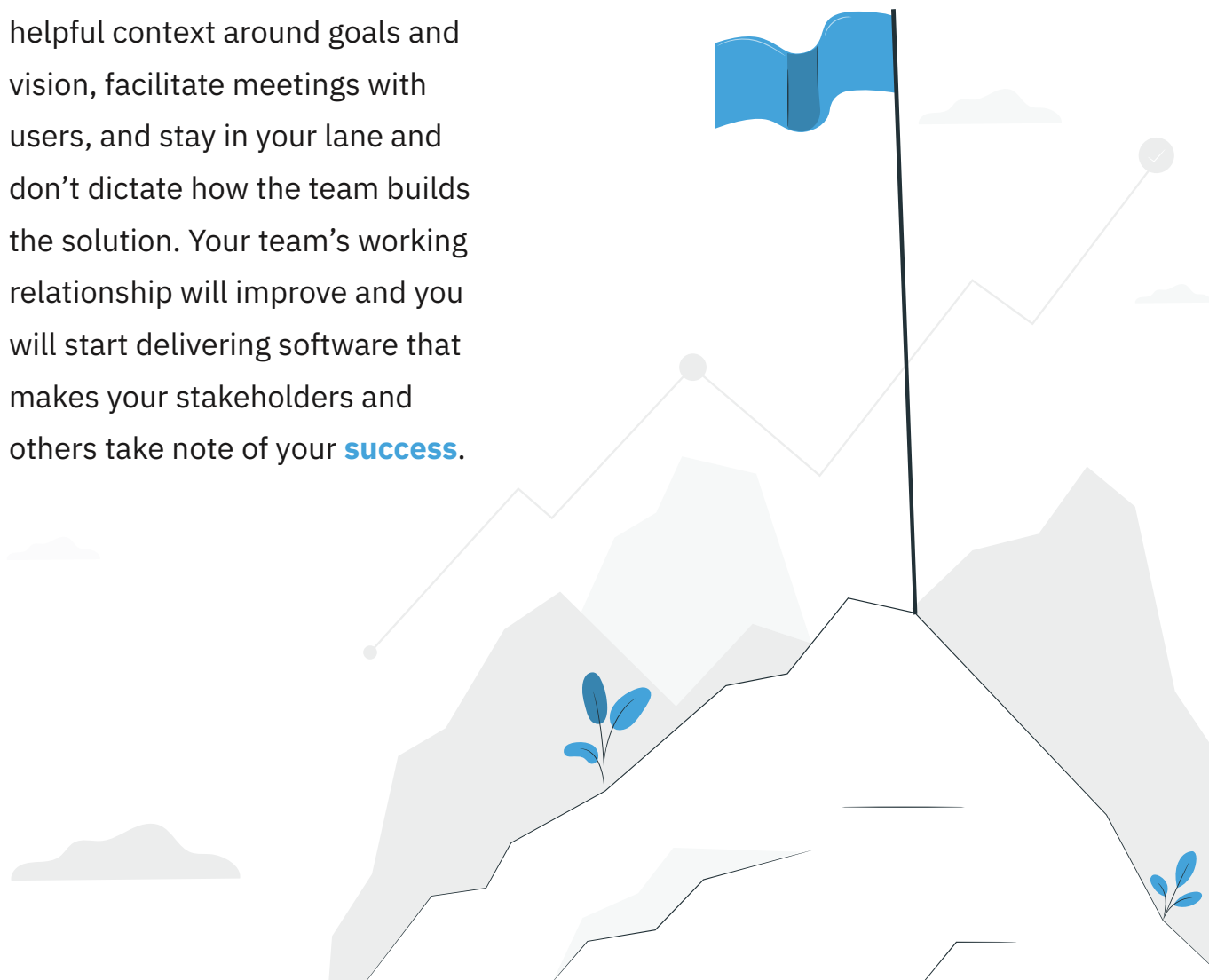
A strong product owner knows their role and gets out of the way of the development team. Instead of issuing orders to the development team, stay focused on the “why” and the value proposition of your software. Communicate the goals you’re trying to achieve and then let the team figure out the “how” on their own. Often, they can think of creative ways to bring the same amount of value in a less complex way, if they’re given the context needed to understand the business goals.

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Collaboration in this way will create a strong working relationship between you and your development team. They’ll know that you trust them to build a solid solution and you’ll be there every step of the way to answer their questions and keep their focus on the value the product is going to provide for users.

Wrapping It Up

It is possible to have a smooth process for producing software that gets adopted in the market. By being a strong, thoughtful leader on your development team you can start seeing results. Be the Product Owner who takes the time to understand the development process, communicate to your team with understanding, share helpful context around goals and vision, facilitate meetings with users, and stay in your lane and don't dictate how the team builds the solution. Your team's working relationship will improve and you will start delivering software that makes your stakeholders and others take note of your **success**.



WANT MORE GUIDANCE?

Aptera development teams have experience working with Product Owners and internal development teams to build custom software.

Reach out to learn more about how we can help.

Let's Talk