



Not another
Product Ops
talk!

Hi! My name's Antonia

In the last two years...

- 3 talks & 7 panels
- 5 articles
- 2 meet-ups & 1 breakfast
- 1 podcast
- 1 manifesto

...all on the topic of Product Operations



A decorative border of watercolor flowers in shades of red, orange, and yellow, with green leaves, framing the central text.

So... what is
Product
Ops?



How do you *still* not know this?
It's so simple!



My message isn't landing...
Maybe I'm really terrible at this!



I see... two years is not yet enough



I see... two years is not yet enough

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So... what is
Product
Ops?

Today's Agenda

01

What is
Product Ops?

02

Do I need
Product Ops?

03

How do I do
Product Ops?

The background of the slide is a soft, watercolor-style illustration of pink cherry blossoms. The flowers are scattered across the frame, with some in full bloom and others as buds. The colors range from light pink to a deeper magenta. The overall texture is painterly and delicate.

Product Ops as a discipline

VS

Product Ops work

01

What is Product Ops?



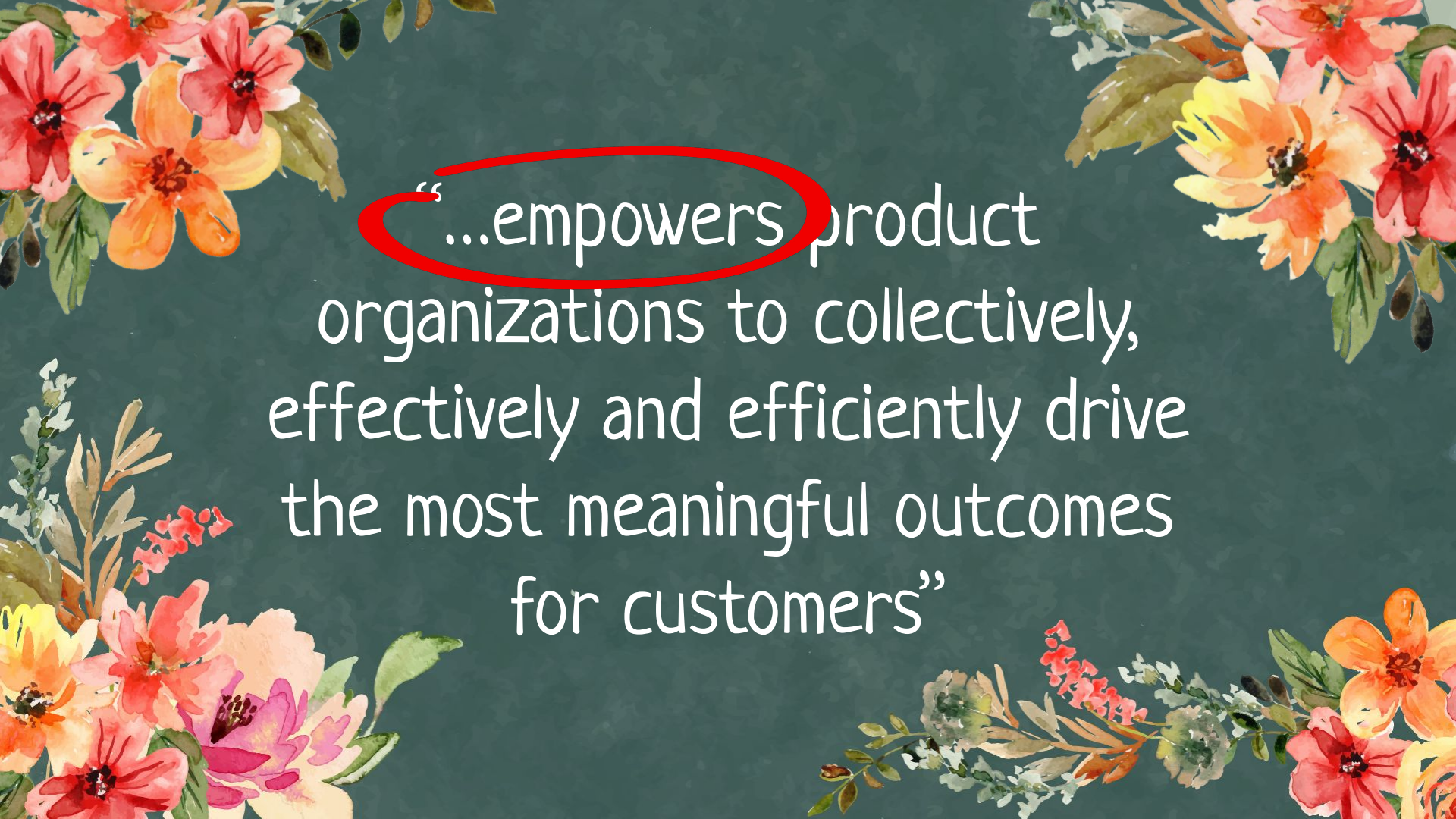
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“...empowers product
organizations to collectively,
effectively and efficiently drive
the most meaningful outcomes
for customers”

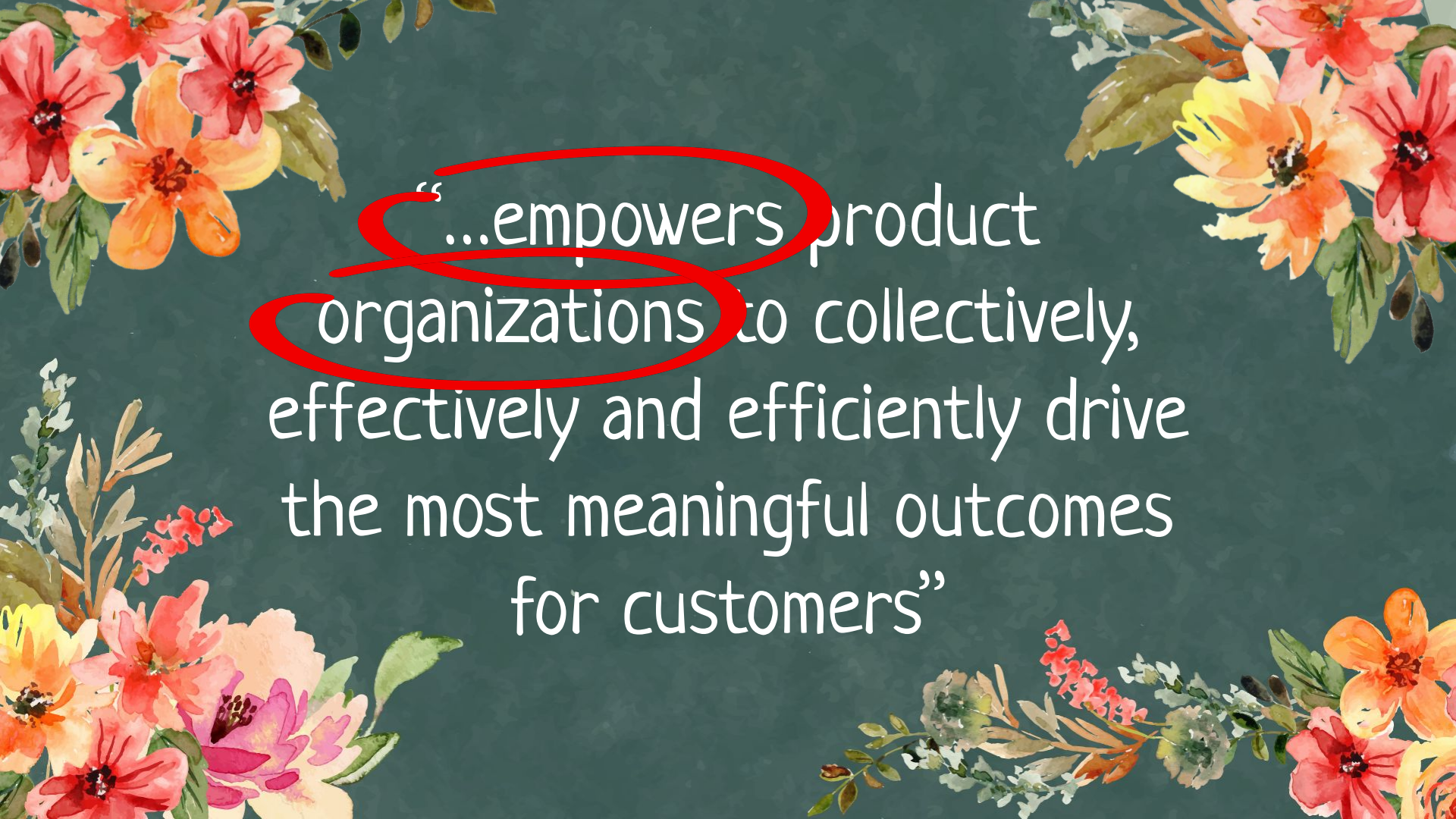


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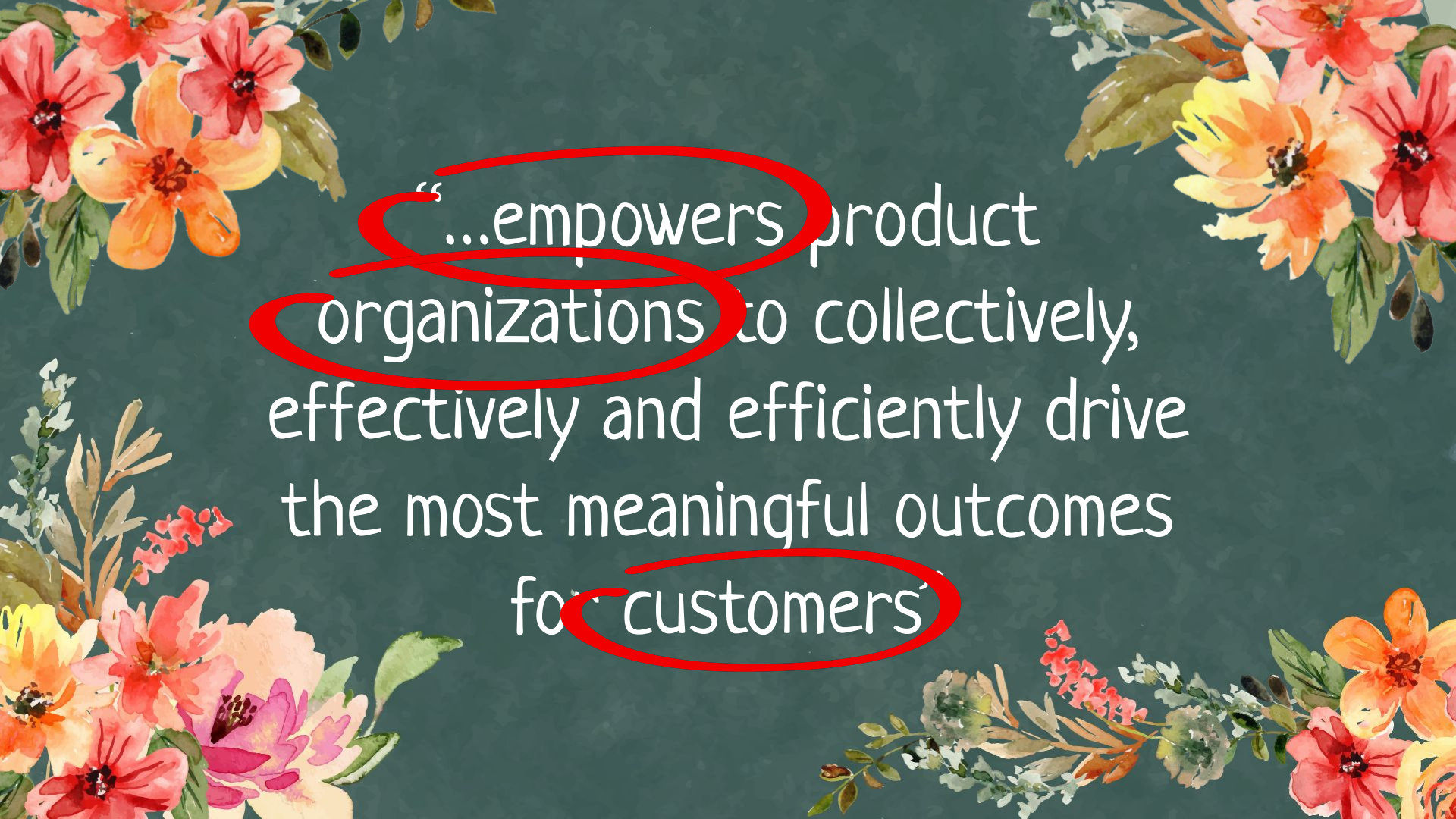
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“Empowers”

Product Operations Professionals
are not Team Assistants



Assistant vs Enabler

We are not the...

- Default note taker
- Team event organiser
- Newsletter writer
- Contact person for product

But we can...

- Guide you on how to take notes effectively
- Create a streamlined process for hosting events
- Create a template for product newsletters
- Devise a process for product inquiries

Product Leader vs Enabler

We do not...

- Define the strategy
- Set the OKRs
- Conduct performance reviews

But we can...

- Create a communication plan
- Facilitate OKR-setting workshops
- Ensure there is a defined grading & compensation system



We grease the wheels so that you can
embark on your journey smoothly

We do *not* pull the cart for you

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“Organizations”



Professional
development

Effective
communication

Onboarding



PM best
practices

Tool stack

Team coaching

Quarterly
planning

Data literacy

Cross-department
collaboration





Yes! These tasks have
traditionally fallen onto
product leaders

But that doesn't
necessarily mean it's
a good thing...





Professional
development

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Data literacy

Cross-department
collaboration





Professional
development

Board



Effective
communication

Vision

Onboarding

PM best
practices

Tool stack

Strategy

Team coaching

Quarterly
planning

Data literacy

Mission



Cross-department
collaboration





Professional
development

Data
informed



Effective
communication

Problem
discovery

Onboarding

PM best
practices

Tool stack

Delivery

Team coaching

Quarterly
planning

Data literacy

Solution
hypotheses



Cross-department
collaboration





Professional
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“Customers”

Our Customers should always be at
the centre of what we do – even in
Product Operations.



Product Operations as a discipline
creates repeatable systems for
meaningful product work...



...so that Product Managers can
deliver more value to our
customers, faster





Delivering Value

Discovery Tool Kit



Better understand user needs

Newsletter template



Silo busting

Hackathons



Promote innovation

Career paths



PM retention

PM education for non-PMs



Product-led transformation



What is Product Ops?

Greasing the wheels, not pushing
the cart

Operating System of a Product
Organisation

To better deliver value to our
customers

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“...empowers product
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02

Do I need Product Ops?



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It depends



Size



Stability



Success

Size

Not every product team needs
the same amount of support

Will your size change meaningfully
in the next 6 months?

Stability

Will you undergo an agile or
product-led transformation?

Are large-scale staffing changes
imminent?

Success

How important is product
management excellence to you?

Are you truly willing to transform
your entire organisation?

A dedicated full-time team member
isn't always necessary



Be mindful of the trade-offs



03

How do I do Product Ops?



Doing Product Ops

01

Assuming you know the problem

02

Assuming a new tool is the answer

03

Assuming everyone cares equally

Assuming you know the Problem

- One of the **most common mistakes** when doing Product Ops work
- Usually stems from **legacy processes**
- Usually **fixing a symptom** instead of the actual problem at hand

Concrete example

“The product newsletter was introduced at a time when commercial teams felt like they **didn't know what was going on** in Product, but nowadays hardly anyone reads it... that's if we don't forget to publish it in the first place 😬”

Do you have a newsletter issue?

Or do you have a silo issue?

Concrete example

“Our Jira workflow was created years ago when most teams were still using Kanban. Then an overzealous Head of Product arrived and built his own custom workflow and made us all switch. He left ages ago and **only a couple of teams still work that way**, but nobody really knows how to change the workflow without messing things up for everyone 😞”

Do you have a Jira issue?

Or do you have a ways of working issue?

Questions to ask yourself

- “Why was this process / tool / framework introduced **in the first place?**”
- “What is the **end goal?**”
- “Will **fixing this** get us to our end goal?”

Assuming a new tool is the answer

- The “**quick fix**”...
- ...that ends up **costing more** time, money, and nerves
- Usually a **band-aid** for the actual problem

Concrete example

“We have a hard time making sure everyone in the company knows what’s on the roadmap, and that the folks in sales don’t overpromise. There’s many great roadmapping tools out there, so surely **they can solve that problem for us**, right?”

Wrong.

The real cost of new tooling

What you think it is

- Identify problem
- Buy subscription to tool that solves problem
- ???
- Success

What it actually is

- Identify & validate problem
- Identify & prove / disprove possible solution hypotheses
- Select tool based on success criteria
- Purchase tool / subscription
- Learn about admin
- Set up tool & share licenses
- Educate people about tool
- Integrate / connect tool with existing tool stack
- Maintain tool & licenses

Questions to ask yourself

- “If I wasn’t allowed to purchase a new tool, **how else would I solve this?**”
- “What’s the **quickest** and **cheapest** way in which I can test that solution?”
- “If a tool does happen to tick all our boxes, **who does what?**”

It's an immense effort to introduce
new tooling successfully.

Is it really necessary?



Assuming everyone cares equally

- The **most common interpersonal issue** that arises in Product Ops work - especially the higher you go
- Colleagues who care too much can be **just as much of a hindrance** as colleagues who don't care enough
- Hard to navigate... because it's **hard to teach**

Not caring enough

“I literally don’t care what decision you make here, I just want this fixed. Do whatever you think is best, **I trust you.**”

vs

“Why are you bothering me with this? This literally **isn’t worth my time.** And no, I don’t have time to sync with you on how we can make this work”

Caring too much

“Hey, I love this kind of stuff, too! I actually tried solving this by doing [x], but it failed because [xyz]. Hold on, I still have some data on this somewhere - **let me share** it with you!”

vs

“Why are you interfering? I’ve **always taken care of this myself**, and if there’s an issue with it come to me and I’ll talk to my team about it. I really don’t need you changing everything all of a sudden.”

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Show up like a
human

Assuming everyone cares equally

Doesn't care enough

- Overworked
- Bad previous experiences with Product Ops people / work
- Has never experienced the value of good Product Ops firsthand
- Doesn't understand investment

Cares too much

- Overworked
- Has historically taken on a lot of the Product Ops work
- Has tried (and failed) to show the value of good Product Ops
- Feels like something is being taken away

Questions to ask yourself

- **Context:** “Can I learn more about why this person might be acting the way they’re acting?”
- **Reassurance:** “What worries do they have, and how can I address them?”
- **Priority:** “How important is Product Ops work to the organisation? What happens if this continues?”

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Be realistic



What is Product Ops?

Empowering, Organisation, Customers

Do I need Product Ops?

Size, Stability, Success

How do I do Product Ops?

Problems, Tools, Feelings





Connect with me

I write about Product Management
and Operations, product-led
transformation, and product culture



Read the Manifesto

Learn about the Principles,
Commitments, and Prerequisites
of Product Operations as a discipline