

# 2018

## Product Planning Report

Product planning insights from the world's leading companies



# What's **inside**

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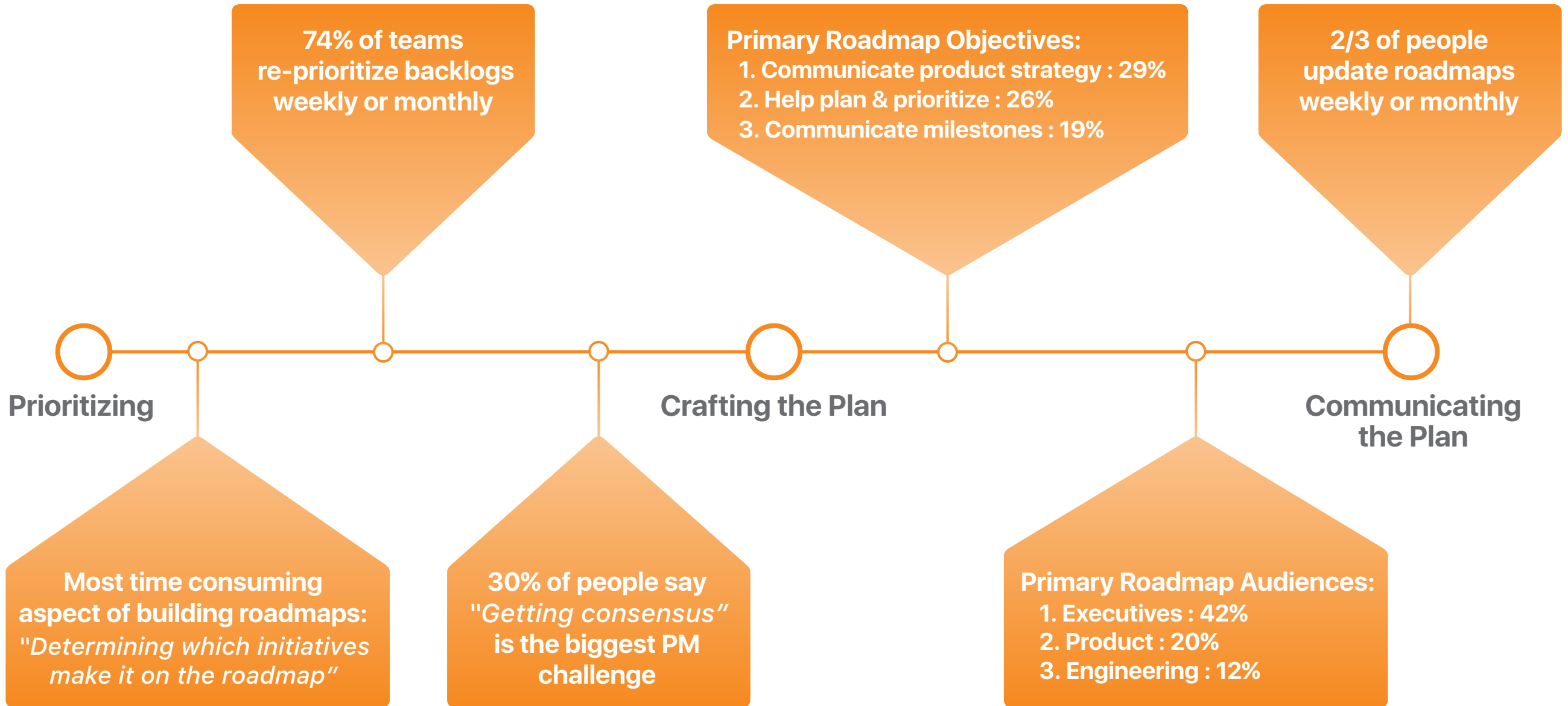


<b>1</b>	Report Highlights.....	3
<b>2</b>	Planning & Prioritizing .....	5
<b>3</b>	Crafting the Plan.....	10
<b>4</b>	Communicating the Plan .....	15
<b>5</b>	Conclusion.....	19
<b>6</b>	Report Methodology.....	23

1

# Report Highlights

# 1 Report Highlights





# 2

## Planning & Prioritizing



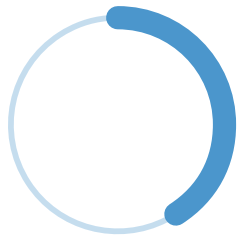
# 2 Planning & Prioritizing

Planning and prioritization is one of the most important stages in the product development process. While different groups take different approaches, the objective is always the same: determine what initiatives are highest priority and craft a high-level plan to achieve the goals related to those initiatives.

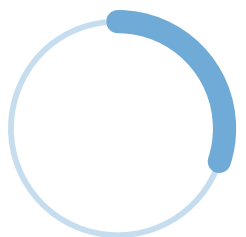
## Key Stats:



**64% of teams** plan their roadmaps out between 4-12 months



**41% of teams** re-prioritize items in their backlog on a weekly basis



**30% of respondents** reported that their top product management challenge is getting consensus on product direction



**Executives**  
**constantly changing**  
**their mind on priorities**  
**makes our roadmapping**  
**process a bit more like**  
**an offroad adventure.**



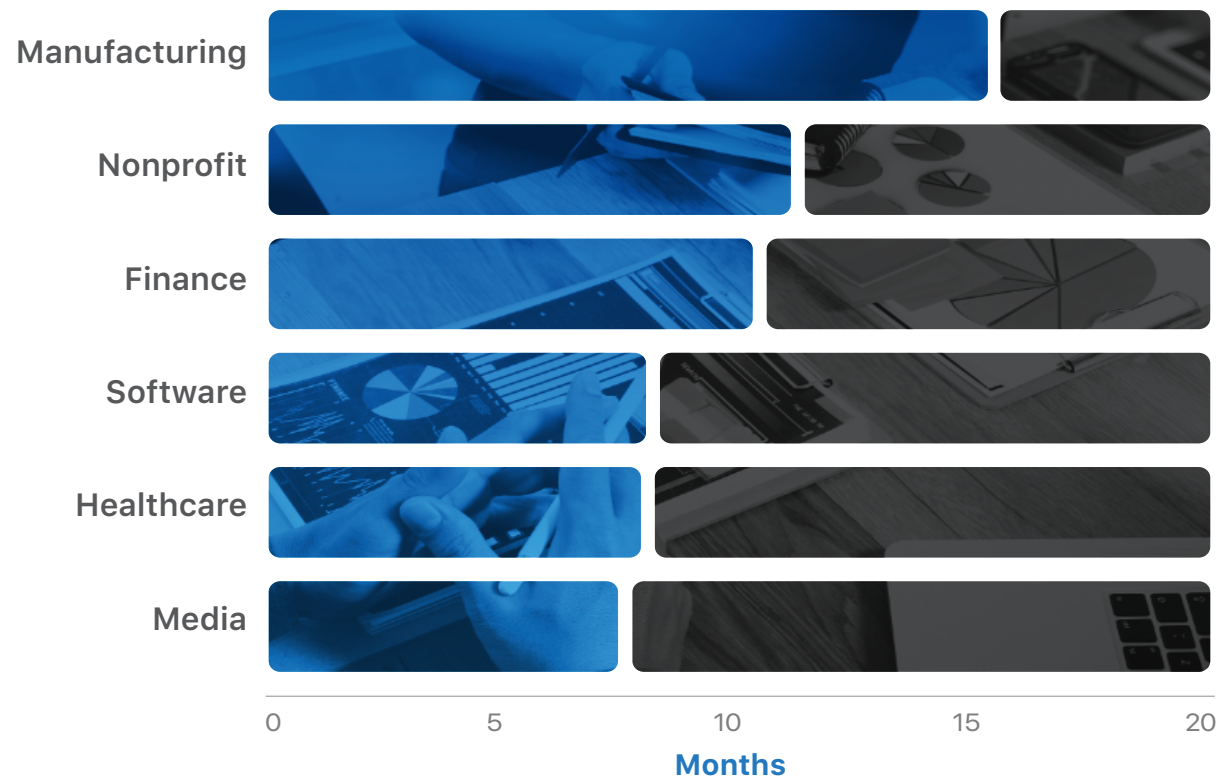
Product Manager at a medium-sized software company with 6-7 years of experience

## How far out do teams plan?

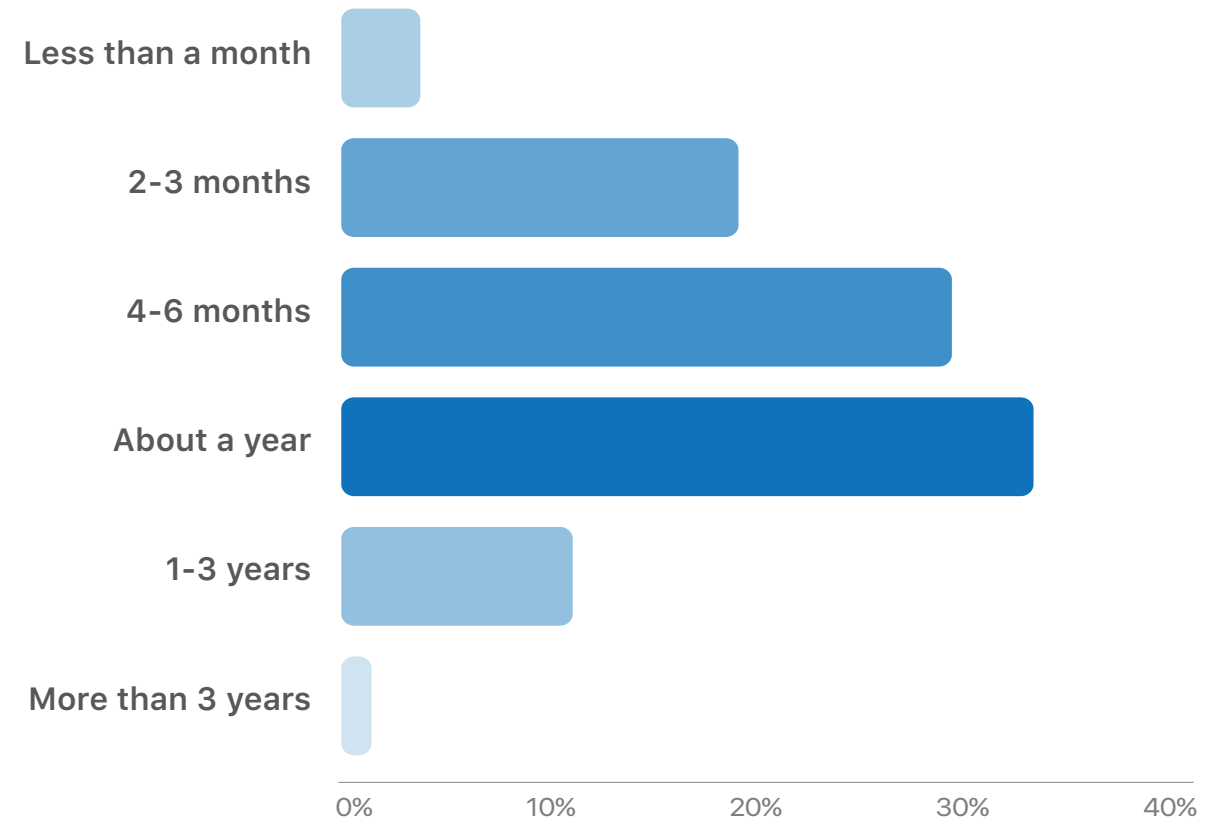
Product management is always a balance between the strategic and the tactical. Plan too far out and your roadmap might be irrelevant. Plan in short timeframes and you might end up with a short-sighted product strategy.

The sweet spot for how far out teams plan varies by industry. On average, the most common timeframe for product planning is one year, followed by 4-6 months and 2-3 months.

### Average Timeframes vs. Industry



## How far out do you plan your roadmaps?



*"While we plan out a 3-year strategy, agile development really only enables you to have an actionable roadmap 3-6 months out. The key is to bounce your current roadmap up against the 3 year plan to understand progress."*

Product Marketer at an enterprise software company with 2-5 years of experience

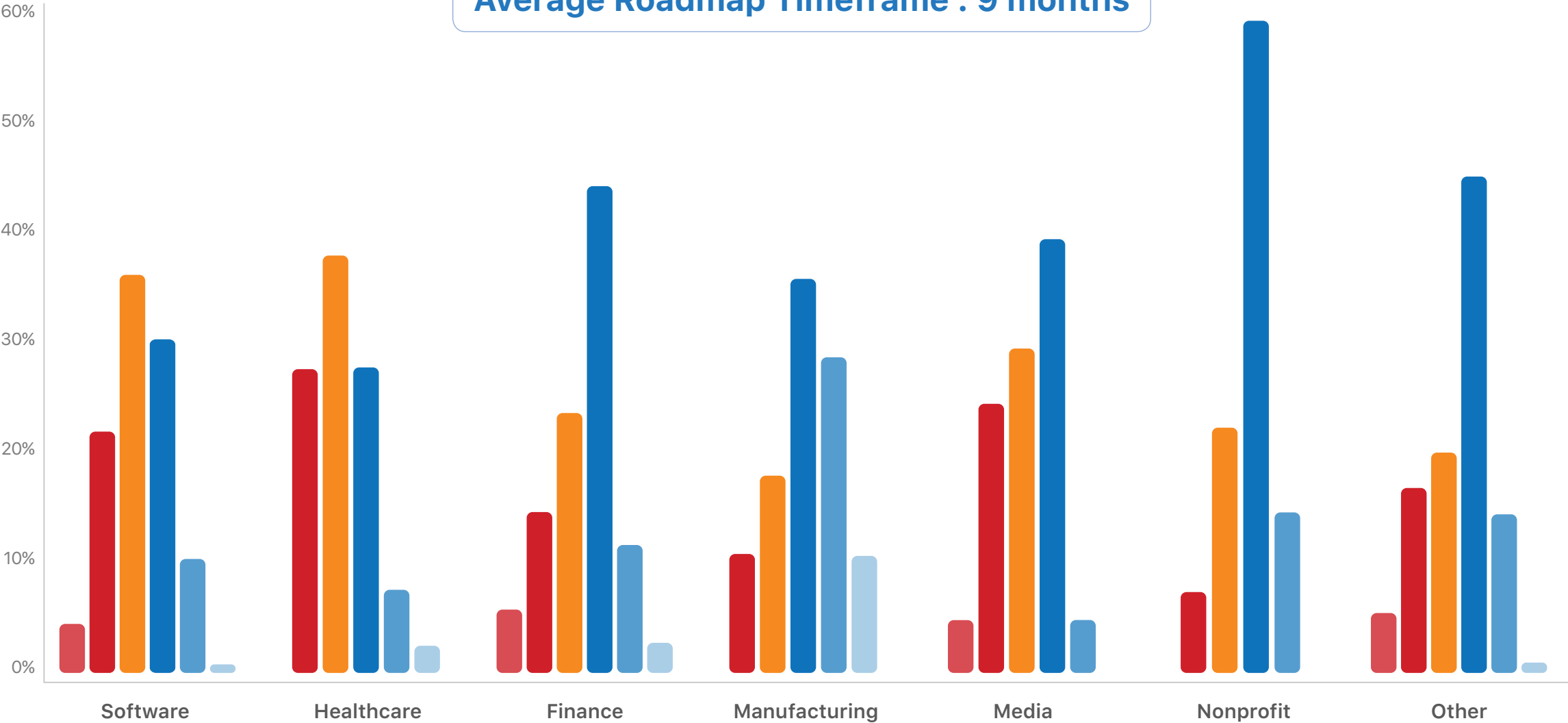
# Roadmap Timeframes by Industry

## How far out do you plan your roadmaps?

### Timeframe

- Less than a Month
- 2-3 Months
- 4-6 Months
- About a year
- 1-3 Years
- > 3 Years

Average Roadmap Timeframe : 9 months

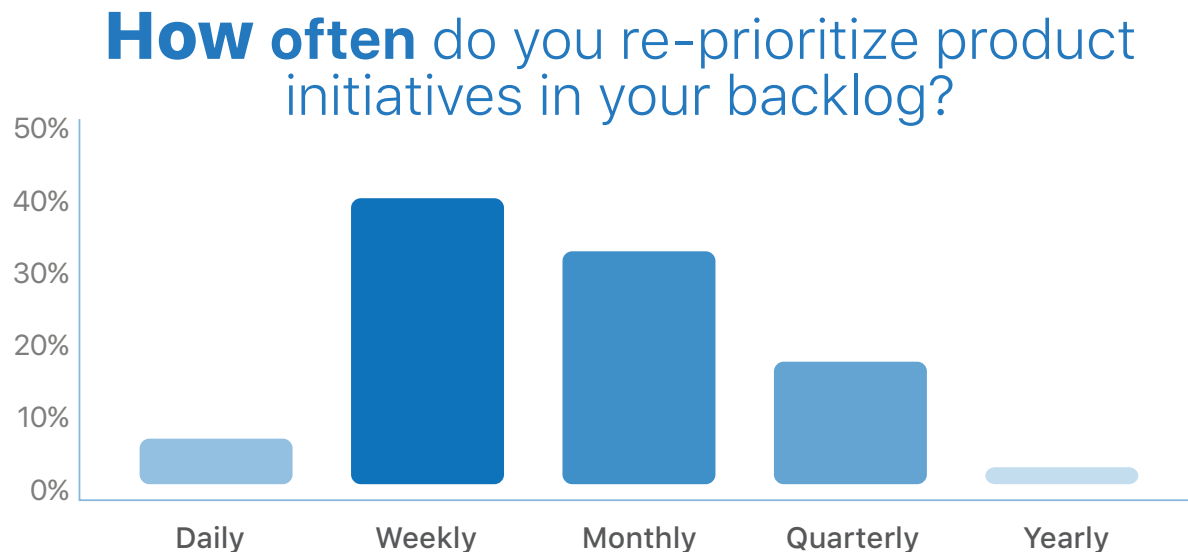




## Re-Prioritizing the Backlog

Prioritization is a continual process. As our survey responses show, teams are continually re-prioritizing the items in their backlog to ensure they are spending time on the right things.

Over 40% of respondents re-prioritize product initiatives in the backlog on a weekly basis, showing the importance of having a prioritization framework and an easy-to-use tool in place to make re-prioritizing as simple as possible.



*34% of respondents said that the most time-consuming aspect of building roadmaps is "determining which initiatives make it on the roadmap."*

“

**Product planning is very time consuming, and getting consensus on the backlog and new features is always very difficult.**

”

Product Manager at a software startup with 6-10 years of experience



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**Crafting the Plan**

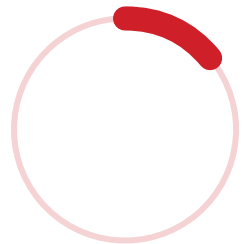
**Crafting the Plan**

# 3

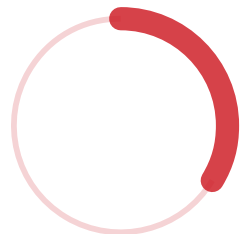
## Crafting the Plan

Building a roadmap is the process of translating your high-level ideas into a tangible, visual plan in order to communicate your strategy. Depending on the size of a company and the teams involved, a roadmap can take many forms.

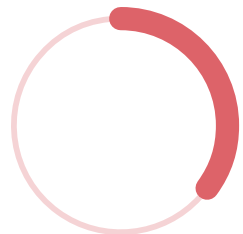
### Key Stats:



**14% increase** in the number of teams using dedicated roadmap software since 2017



**34% of respondents** said that the most time-consuming aspect of building roadmaps is "determining which initiatives make it on the roadmap"



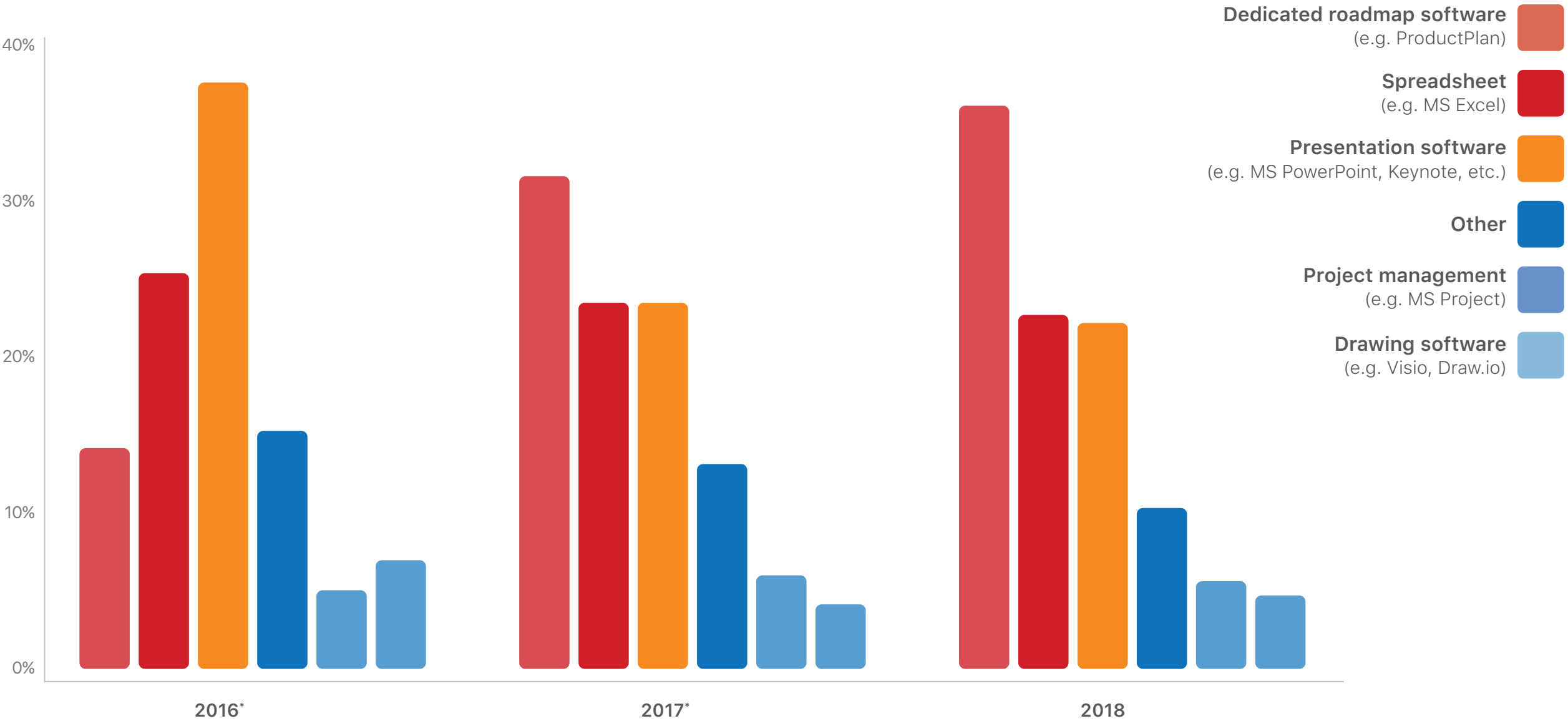
**35% of respondents** update their roadmap on a weekly basis



**By 2022, over 50% of product managers will rely on product roadmapping tools to improve planning and communication with IT and business stakeholders.**



# Roadmapping Tools of Choice



*The most popular tool among highly successful product planning teams is dedicated roadmap software, followed by presentation software.*

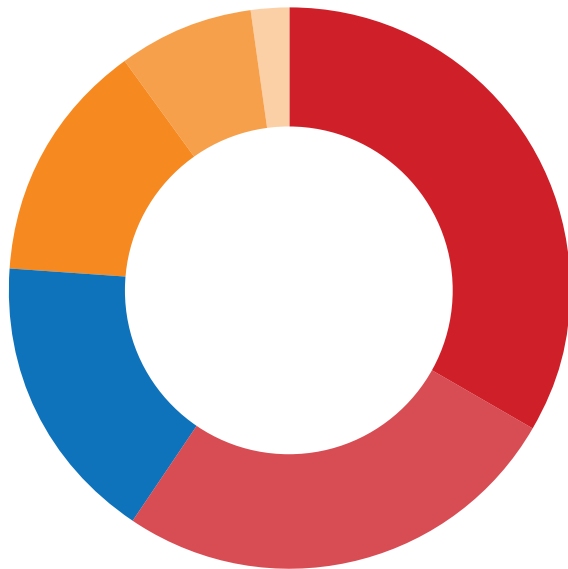
\*source: 2017 Product Planning Report



# How Product Managers Spend Their Time

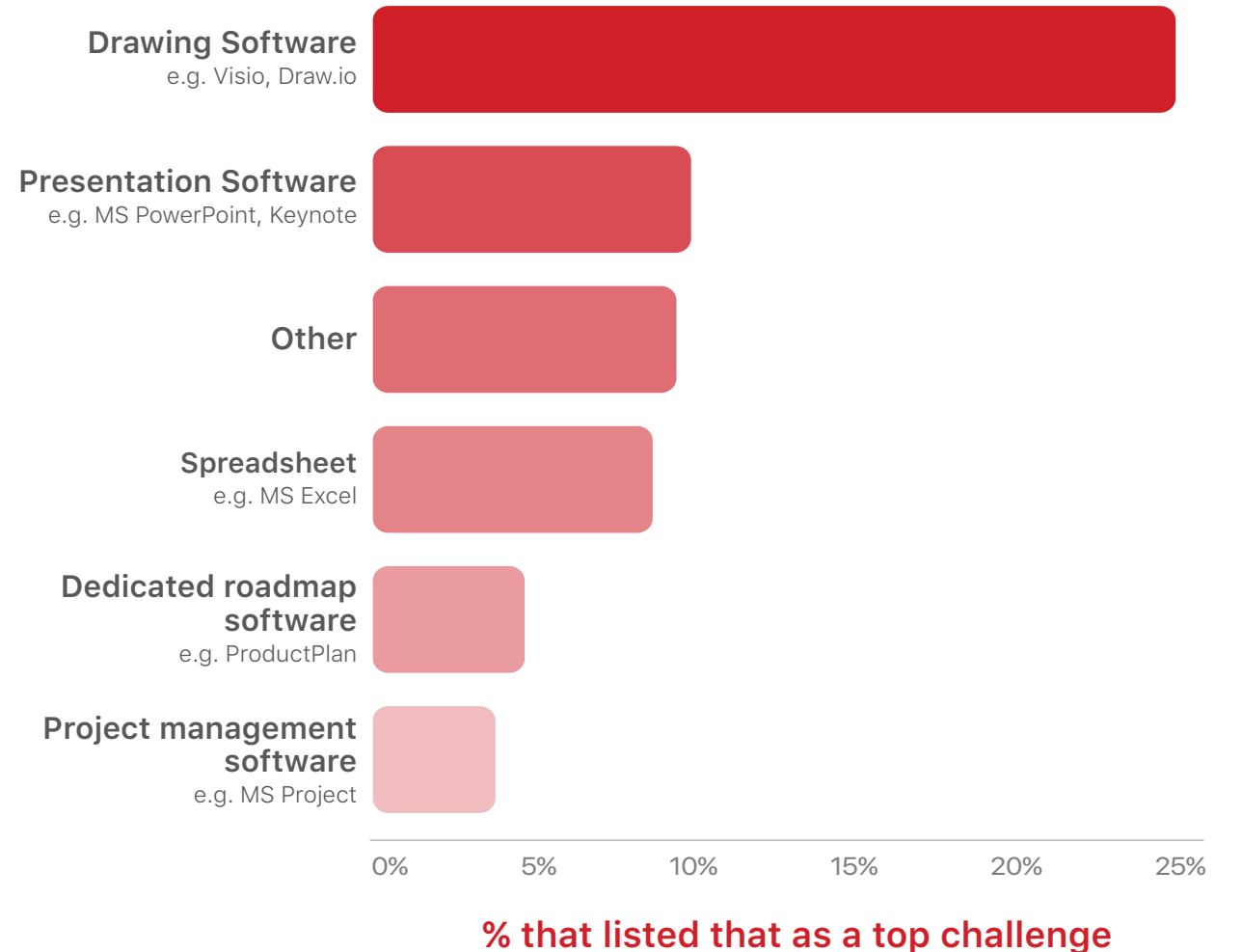
Time is always at a premium with product managers. When it comes to building roadmaps, the most time-consuming processes are related to prioritization and scoping.

## Most time-consuming aspects of building roadmaps



- 34% : Determining which initiatives make it on the roadmap
- 26% : Scoping and ordering initiatives
- 17% : Gathering and inputting information from other tools
- 14% : Building different roadmaps for different audiences
- 8% : Editing the visual components of a roadmap
- 2% : Other

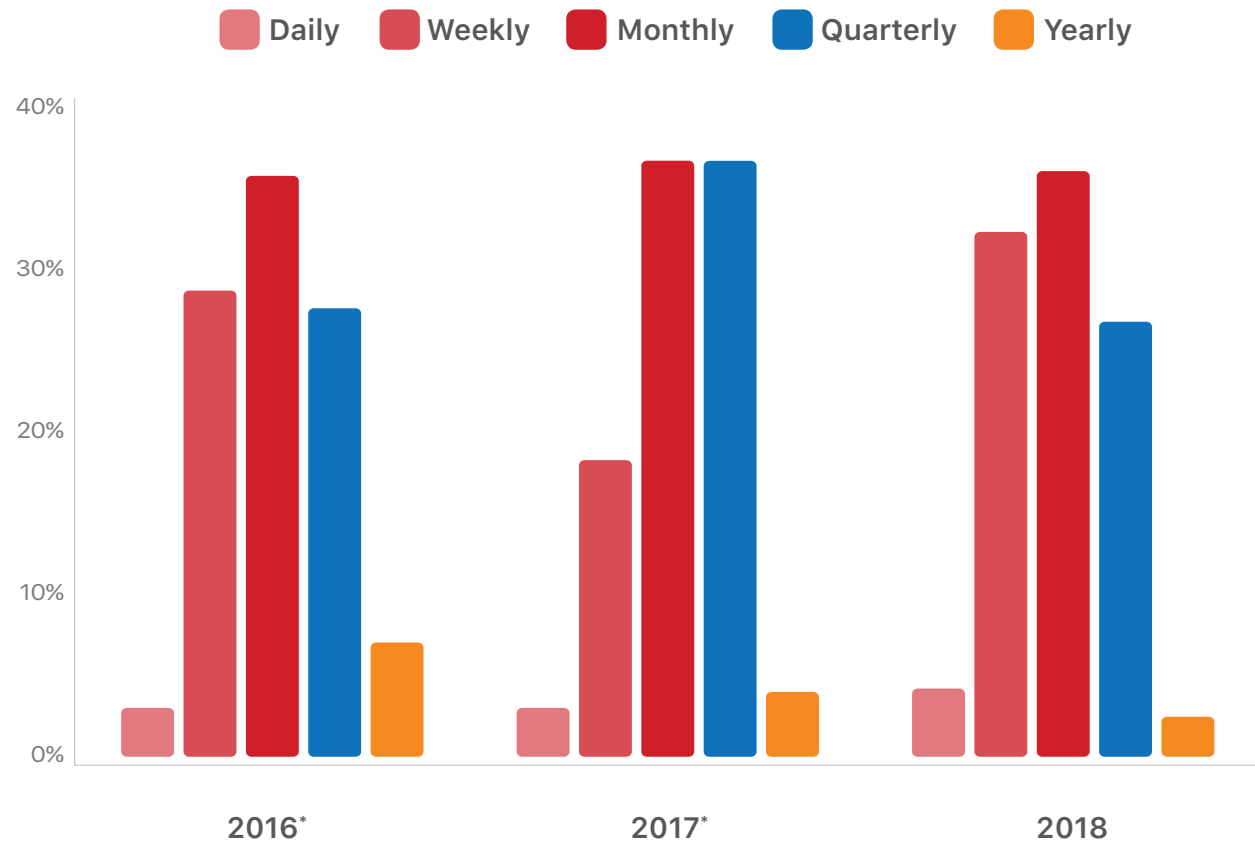
## Time spent editing visual roadmaps by tool



Teams that use drawing software to build roadmaps are 5x as likely to spend most of their time editing the visual components of a roadmap.

## How Often Do Teams Update Their Roadmaps?

Keeping the roadmap up-to-date is crucial to ensure alignment across fast moving organizations. Over the last three years, we've seen a 50% drop year-over-year of the number of teams that update their roadmaps yearly (from 10% to 5% to less than 3%).



The most popular update frequency for **highly successful** product planning teams is weekly (36%).

\*source: 2017 Product Planning Report

“

We pull together the core business stakeholders on a quarterly basis to reflect and review what has just concluded, review any change in their priorities and shape the next quarter of themes.

”

Product Manager at an enterprise automotive company with 6-10 years of experience

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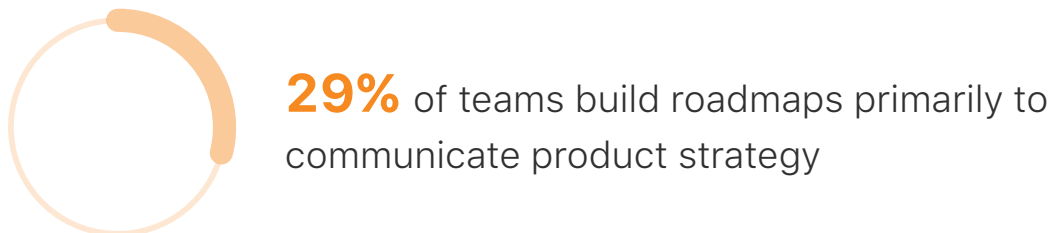
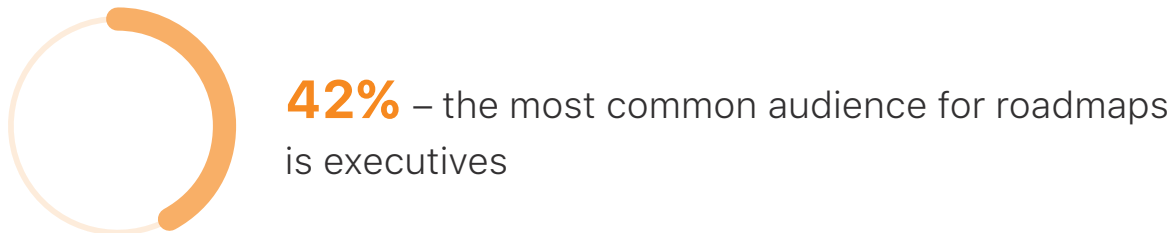
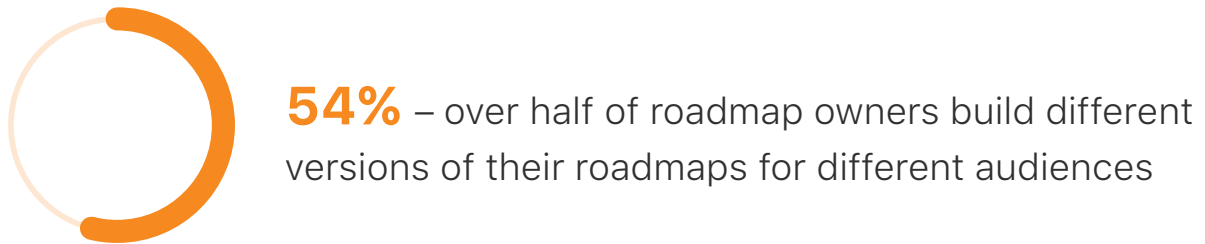
## Communicating the Plan



# 4 Communicating the Plan

Strategy is nothing without communication. Many of our respondents commented on the challenge of communicating to different audiences, the most common of which are executives (which require a high-level, strategic roadmap) and product or development teams (which usually need a more detailed roadmap).

## Key Stats:



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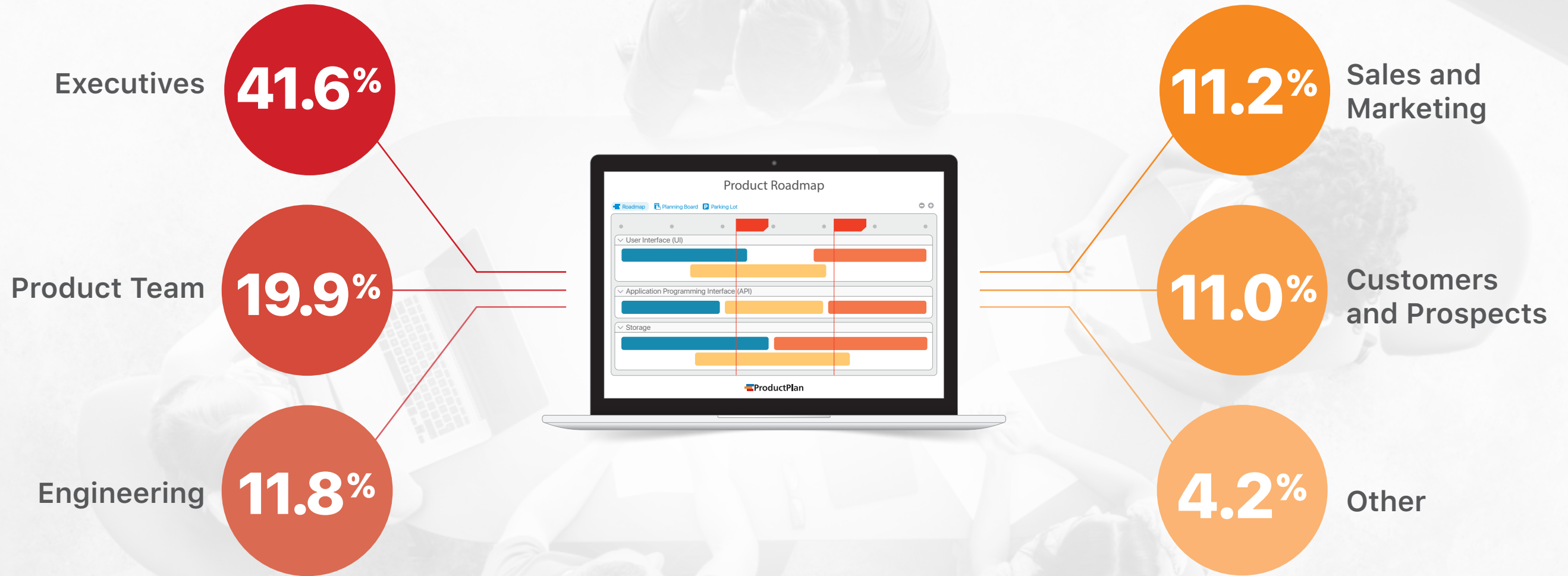
**Communicating product priorities vs business whims is super important. Coming up with use cases as to why we're doing what we're doing first helps stakeholders jump on board with the roadmap.**

”

Product Manager at a small software company with 2-5 years of experience



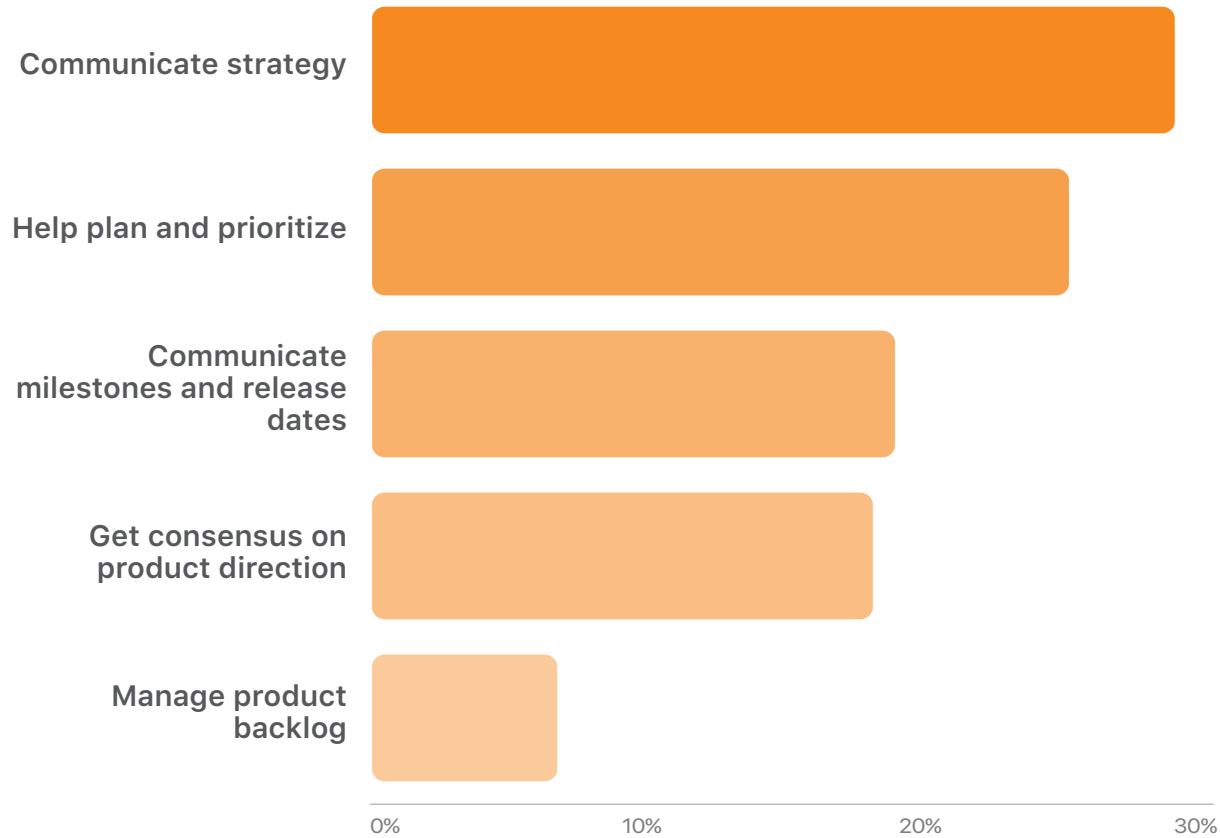
# Roadmap Audience



Who is the primary audience for your product roadmaps?

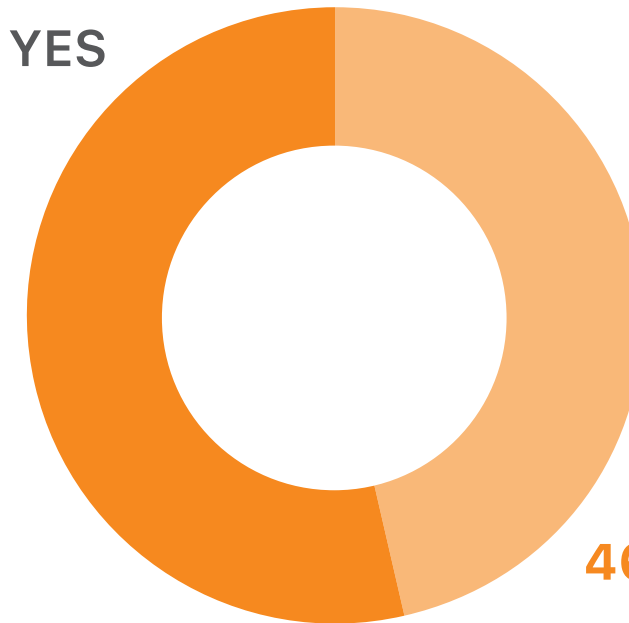
## What is the primary objective of your roadmaps?

Communicating product strategy is the most common goal of product roadmaps. 29% of teams say that is the primary objective of their roadmaps. This is followed closely by teams that use roadmaps to help plan and prioritize.



## Do you build different versions of your roadmap for different audiences?

53.5% : YES



46.5% : NO

More than half of teams build different versions of their roadmap for different audiences.

*"Our difficulty is often to combine a high level view for customers and executives and a detailed view for the product, development and customer teams."*

Product Marketer at an enterprise software company with 2-5 years of experience

5

Conclusion



# 5

## Conclusion

Having an up-to-date roadmap is becoming increasingly important to the entire product management process, and teams around the world are rapidly adopting tools to help make building and sharing roadmaps easier. According to Gartner, "By 2022, over 50% of product managers will rely on product roadmapping tools to improve planning and communication with IT and business stakeholders."

This trend of improved communication is especially true of B2B product managers. A recent SiruisDecisions study found that, of B2B product managers using tools designed for purposes other than product management, "only 5% are very satisfied with the tool they use for documenting and communicating product roadmaps."

Over the last three years, one data point in particular has remained the same: the majority of roadmaps are built to share with executives/management. While the most common objective of roadmaps is to communicate product strategy, an increasing number of companies are using their product roadmaps to drive discussions around planning and prioritization.

“

**The planning process is a joint decision making process amongst all stakeholders and is always aligned with customer needs and high level strategic goals.**

”

Project Manager at a medium-sized software company with 2-5 years of experience



Based on our survey, here is what a typical product planning process looks like (across all industries and company sizes):

# The Typical Product Planning Process

Product planning is owned by the product manager

Product strategy is planned 9 months out

Backlog items are re-prioritized weekly

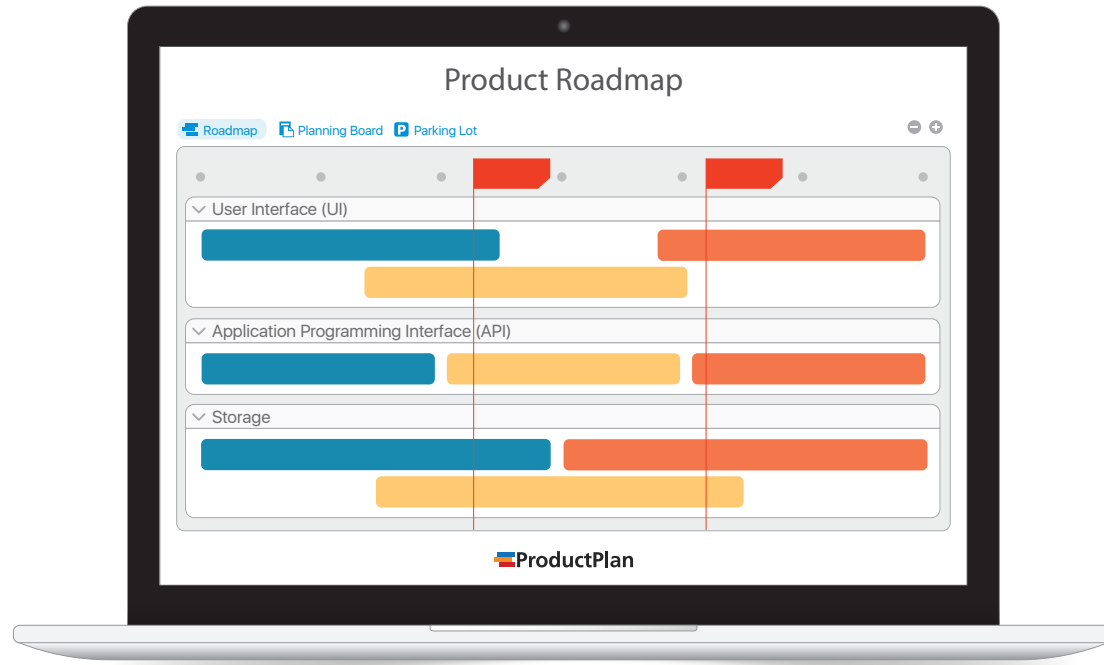
Roadmaps are built using roadmapping software

Product roadmaps are updated on a monthly basis

Main audience for roadmaps is executives

Different roadmaps are built for different audiences

Main objective of the product roadmap is to communicate product strategy



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ProductPlan is the easiest way to plan, visualize, and communicate your product strategy. We believe roadmaps are essential to create organizational alignment and ship successful products. Our intuitive features for building, managing, and sharing roadmaps help teams across the globe convey the big picture in one place.

Quickly plan  
and show your  
strategy to  
get alignment  
across  
your entire  
organization.

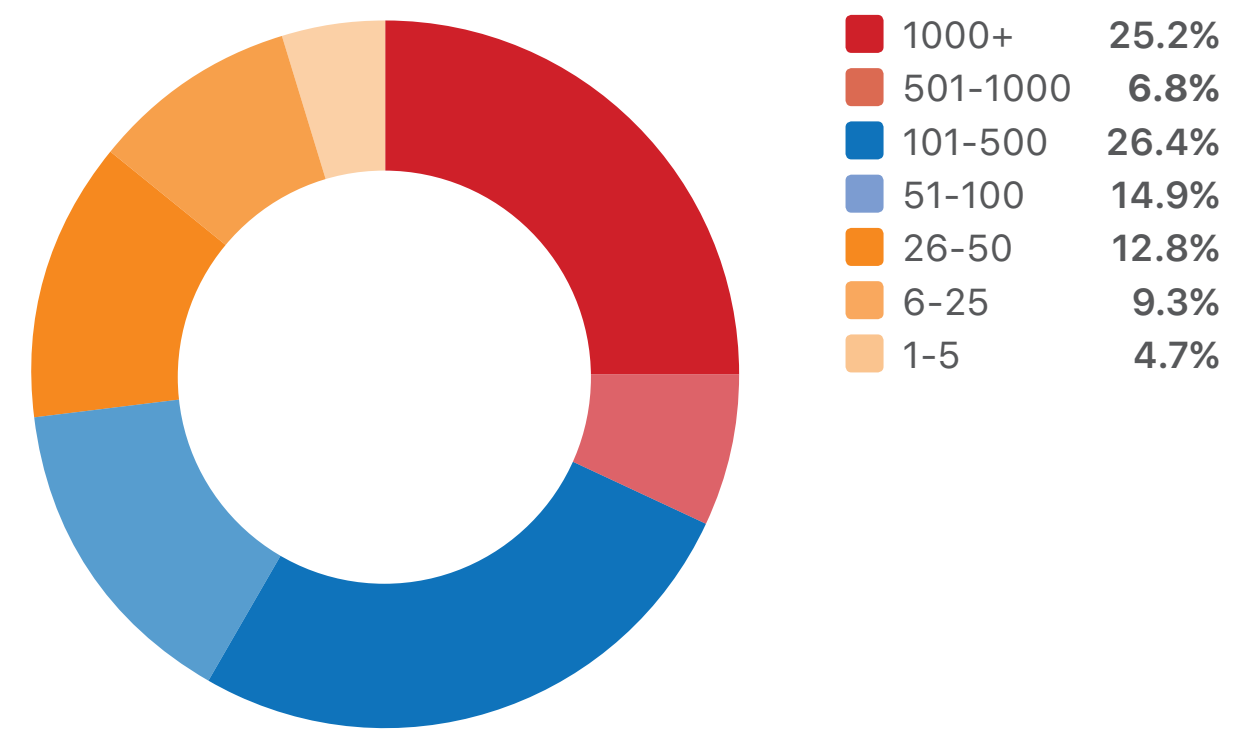
# 6 Report Methodology

The 2018 Product Planning Survey ran from November 16, 2017 to December 15, 2017. The survey was sent to ProductPlan users and shared across social media and other product management communities. We received over 500 responses. The top five industries represented in the survey include:

- Software
- Healthcare
- Finance
- Manufacturing
- Media and Entertainment

Sources:  
*Gartner's Market Guide for Product Roadmapping Tools, published 7 August, 2017, ID: G00327423*  
*SiriusDecisions SiriusView: Product Planning, Prioritization and Roadmapping 2017*  
*ProductPlan's 2017 Product Planning Report*

## Company Size



## Experience level of Respondents

