Speaking of Agile methodologies, a few roles are differentiated within the Agile team. Beginning from the Team Members, Scrum Masters (Team Leads) Stakeholders to the Product Owner. But there are also such VIPs as Project Managers and Product Managers. Who are those, and what do their jobs involve? Let me answer those questions in today's article.

Product manager vs product owner – different roles or just different role names?

I cannot count how many times I encountered the terms Product Manager and Product Owner used interchangeably. I would be a wealthy man if I got a penny every time it happened. The confusion is compounded by the third term, Project Manager. The problem is also that, in some cases, these roles are the same. But very often, they are not. Most of the time, these roles are merged into one, whereas they should focus on different aspects. That is why let us get on the same page before moving further.

Product owner – what does the role entail?

The product owner role is directly linked to Agile methodologies and is an irreplaceable part of Agile teams. In short, Product Owners maximize the value of the developed product and represent the stakeholders but also prioritize work, empower the team, and maintain Agile processes. Their goal is the delivery of the product. These general functions can take the form of several specific responsibilities, such as:

- driving product value
- maintaining effective communication between the development team and stakeholders
- presenting the product vision to the Agile team
- managing possible conflicts or escalations between stakeholders and/or development team members
- prioritizing product backlog items
- maintaining and reinforcing Scrum processes, values, and principles
- assisting stakeholders in understanding the value of Scrum

Is the client the product owner?

The product owner role is often associated with the client. They pay for the product, so technically, they owe it. However, considering the responsibilities of the product owner role and the significance of PO as a Scrum team member, it is worth asking a question: what is better for the product? A product owner role is demanding, where the PO must actively participate in the project. Clients tend to treat it as a part-time responsibility. It is also not uncommon for them to only wait for the delivery of new features by the team. Many developers find it less effective than when they have a full-time product owner within their Agile team.

Product manager – is it different from the product owner role?

The name of this role indicates the central part of the responsibilities, which is managing the project. However, it does not usually mean managing the Agile team and is not strictly connected with Agile processes. The Product Manager will set the specific vision of the product and the strategy to implement this vision. This person focuses on how to bring the product to the market. They also have a deep knowledge of the market and customers. Strategic and tactical activities are their direct focus. Product Managers can effortlessly switch between an internal as well as external focus. What else is their responsibility?

- building a roadmap with all strategic goals
- overseeing the adherence to the budget
- ensuring appropriate communication between the client and the developers
- communication of the product’s long-term plan and vision to executives, clients, and partners
- conducting business talks with the clients

Why is a product manager important?

A Product Manager’s role is to translate business objectives into software development technical specifications. They often have a bigger picture in mind, which is the whole purpose of building the software – to make it work well for the business. On one side, they ensure that the product meets business goals and users’ needs. On the other side, they work closely with the development team on

the technical specifics of the product. Their versatility is a much-needed factor in the software development process. No good product was developed without a Product Manager or someone performing the role's responsibilities.

Project manager vs product manager – the key difference

Project Manager is the third term often associated with two essential roles of Product Owner and Product Manager. Much as the PO and PM can be confused, Project Manager should not have gotten in the mix. It probably occurred because of the similarity of the words *product* and *project*. However, the product and the project are different. A project is a set of tasks performed to achieve a specific goal. A product is created as a response to the market's needs. Consequently, the role of a Project Manager will focus not on the product itself but on completing the project. This completion will consist of such tasks as:

- task assigning
- work coordination
- planning KPIs
- communication with teams

Product may consist of projects, but even then, the managers of those projects will oversee the project needs, not the product planning vision or coordination. Finally, it is worth noting that only some projects lead to the creation of the product. As a result, a project manager may not necessarily be connected to the software development process.

The product manager, project manager vs product owner struggle is on us

The Product Manager and the product owner perform their roles to achieve a common goal. This goal is to build products of high quality and significant value for customers and stakeholders. Because their aim is the same, it is often hard to draw a line between the two roles. Thankfully, Sailing Byte also has the same purpose – delivering an excellent product to our clients. You can leave all the divagations regarding the roles to us. We will manage your product development and respective projects to deliver the software explicitly tailored to your needs. We will discuss and

adjust the responsibilities of the product owner role based on your circumstances. Book a meeting today to discuss how we will use our comprehensive service to bring your great idea to life.