**pendo**

# How to prove the impact of your product ops team

A guide to measuring, communicating, and maximizing the value of product operations

# Contents

INTRODUCTION

# Why product operations is more essential than ever

The product development landscape has changed dramatically over the past decade. As organizations scale and products become increasingly complex, the traditional boundaries between product management, engineering, and go-to-market teams have started to blur.

This evolution has given rise to a critical function that many leading companies now consider indispensable: product operations.

## What is product operations?

**Product operations,** or product ops, serves as the strategic backbone that enables product teams to operate at their highest potential. At its core, product ops is a force multiplier that ensures alignment and effective execution across product management, engineering, customer-facing roles, and other key stakeholders throughout the entire product lifecycle.

This results in three key focus areas:

01    **Process and governance:** Product ops functions support key R&D processes, identify and implement automation opportunities, and facilitate effective workflows between the product team and its partners across the business.

02    **Data and insights:** Product ops functions aggregate and report on broader data signals across multiple data sources, provide data to leadership, and democratize usage data and cross-functional data enrichment.

03    **Tool administration:** Product ops functions own the product team's tool management, maintenance, and enablement.

In order to fully understand the significance of product ops, it's helpful to look at its origins and evolution.

The product operations function has shifted from a generalized operations function to a dedicated discipline within product teams. In the past, operations roles were more centralized, with a single operations team supporting multiple departments like sales, marketing, and product. But as organizations grew and products became more complex, a shift occurred towards embedding specialized operations teams within each department. This change allowed for deeper expertise, tailored processes, and more efficient cross-functional collaboration.

Today, product ops has become particularly vital as it bridges the gap between the teams building the product and the teams who support, market, and sell it.

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**With the increasing demand for rapid product innovation, data-driven decisions, and a seamless customer experience, product ops has become a critical function to maintain alignment, boost efficiency, and drive product—and business—success.**

## The value of product operations

Today, product operations drives value for organizations in three fundamental ways:

01    **Improved efficiency and speed:** Product ops functions streamline processes in order to fuel efficiency, for example by enabling rapid product discovery and better beta processes. More efficient development cycles lead to higher quality products, better cross-functional collaboration, and ultimately, revenue growth.

02    **Scalable growth:** Product ops provides the structural foundation necessary for scalable growth, ensuring product teams can innovate without sacrificing quality or velocity. They do this by establishing repeatable processes that can withstand the complexities of expansion and increasing a company's capacity to launch multiple products or features simultaneously.

03    **Data-informed decision making:** Product operations supplies product teams with actionable data and invaluable insights, enabling them to make more informed decisions. Additionally, product ops functions ensure crucial metrics are consistently tracked and acted upon, fostering a culture that promotes continuous improvement and alignment with business outcomes.

Now that we've set the stage with **what** product operations is and **why** it's valuable, the rest of this e-book will focus on the **how**. First, we shed light on the current state of product operations based on over two dozen interviews with real product ops pros. From there, we dig into a practical roadmap for proving the value of your product operations team.

**CHAPTER 1**

# The current state of product ops: Insights from the field

The following insights are drawn from interviews with more than two dozen product operations professionals. They work at companies ranging from 100 to 2,000 employees across healthcare, education, energy, human resources, and construction.

Some of these companies have large product ops teams, some have one or two people handling the function, and some have no dedicated product ops person or team. In the third case, we interviewed the person who performs product ops responsibilities even though they don't have the official title.

A few of the companies noted that their product ops teams were relatively new—having been established within the past few years—while some teams have been around for much longer, up to 11 years.

## Top priorities for product ops teams

We've identified a convergence of priorities among almost everyone we interviewed—which is encouraging as it indicates a shared understanding of the critical focus areas for product ops. **These priorities represent the foundational elements that product ops teams are prioritizing in order to drive success and alignment within their organizations.**
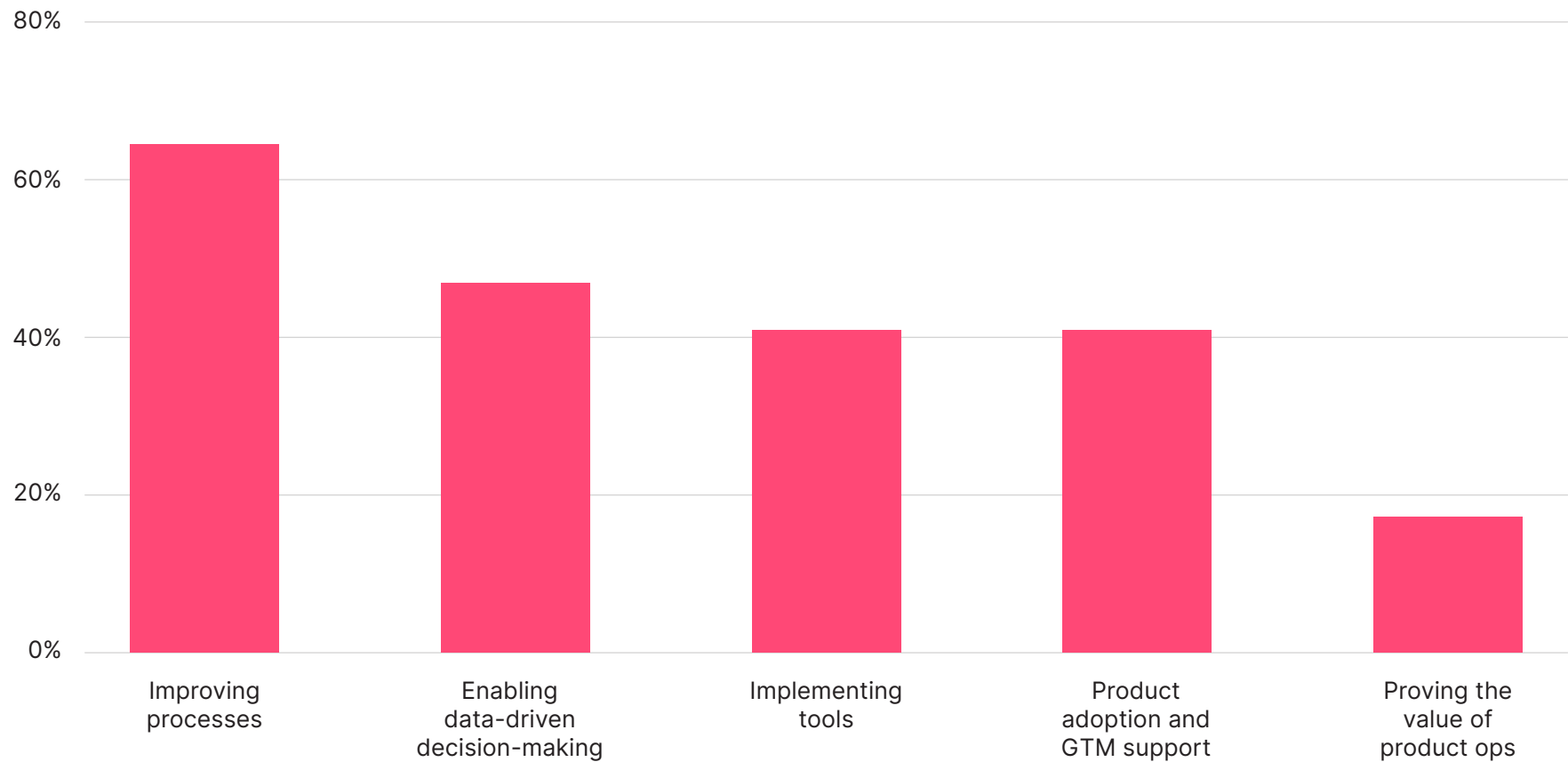
**Improving processes**
Many companies mentioned workflows and processes as their top priority, with a focus on standardizing and streamlining workflows to improve efficiency and reduce workload for product managers (PMs).

**Enabling data-driven decision-making**
Companies emphasized the need to gather, analyze, and leverage data to inform product strategy, measure success, and track progress. They expressed a desire to move away from gut-based decisions and become more data-informed.

**Implementing new tools**
Several companies highlighted the importance of selecting, managing, and integrating the right tools to support their product org. This included tools for user analytics, data analysis, process management, and communication.

**Managing GTM and product adoption**
A number of companies prioritized efforts to drive product adoption and support go-to-market activities. This included tracking adoption metrics, building and optimizing user onboarding, and collaborating with sales and marketing teams.

**Proving the value of product ops**
Some individuals—particularly those in smaller teams or newer roles—were focused on demonstrating the value of product ops to stakeholders and securing buy-in for initiatives. This often involved tracking metrics, showcasing successes, and advocating for the function's importance.

## From the field

One Senior Manager of Product Operations said that "moving away from gut decisions and being data informed" was one of their team's top priorities. Another said "enablement for PMs to get their data" was top of the list. And a third noted, "Our teams are saying they can't get to the data they need, but it's there and they have access. So how can we educate them better and elevate what the data team is doing?"

## Top challenges for product operations teams

In addition to priorities, we also wanted to learn about the challenges today's product ops pros are facing. We weren't surprised to see that "resource constraints" rose to the top of the list. "Proving the value of product ops" was also a top challenge—and we think these two findings are linked.

Ideally, proving the value of product ops should be a team-wise **priority.** However, if it's also a **challenge,** it can significantly drain your team's resources and motivation. This creates a negative feedback loop, ultimately amplifying the issue. We'll address this in more detail—including specific steps to take to prove the value of product ops—throughout the rest of this guide.
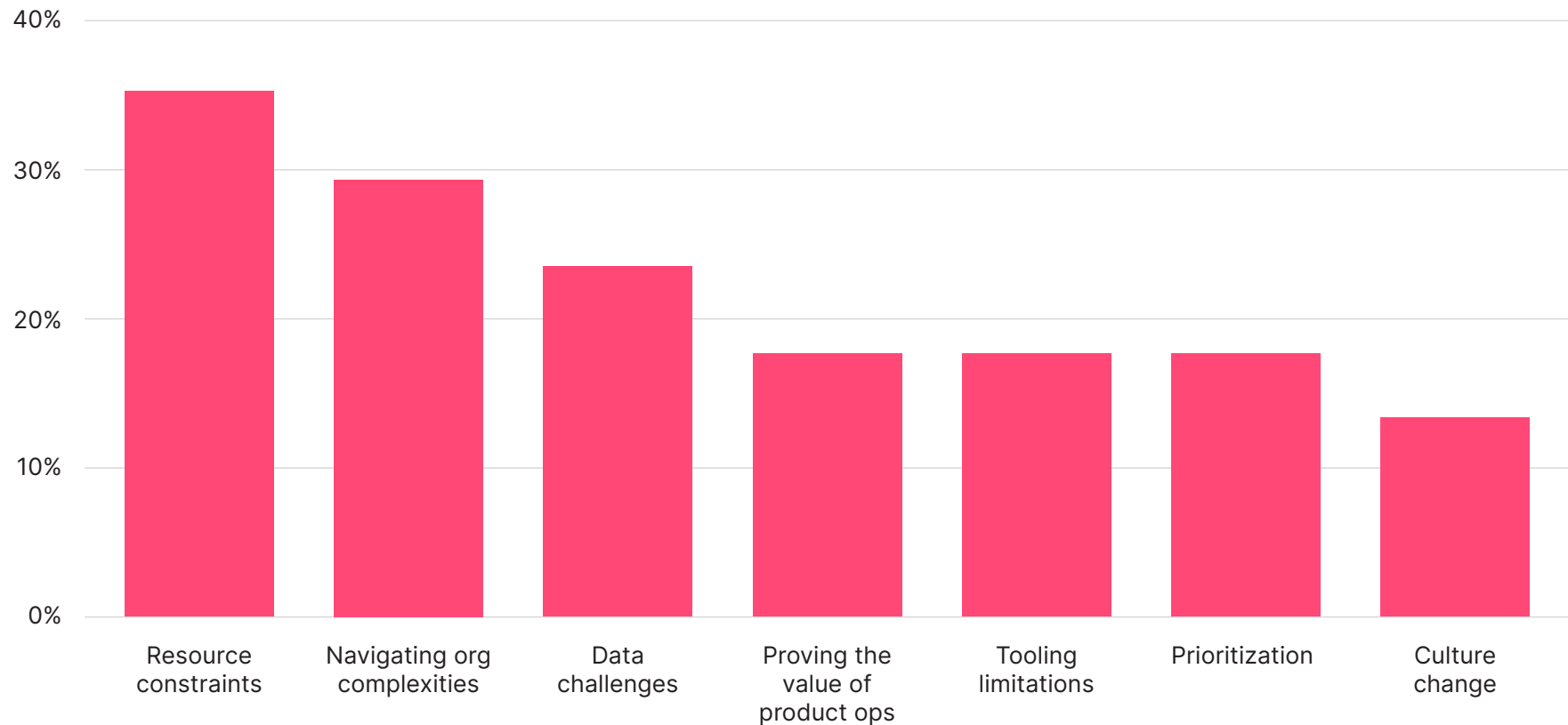
**Resource constraints**

This was a very common challenge across the board, with many teams expressing the need for more people, time, and budget to effectively carry out their responsibilities. Some individuals felt stretched thin and overwhelmed by the volume of work.

# From the field

One Director of Product Operations highlighted the market pressure to "do more with less." Another interviewee mentioned how recent layoffs in data analytics made it even more important for their team to execute efficiently.

**Navigating organizational complexities**

Teams faced challenges related to organizational structure, communication, and collaboration. This included working across multiple departments, managing stakeholders with competing priorities, and establishing clear lines of responsibility.

**Data challenges**

Several companies encountered challenges related to data—including accessing, cleaning, analyzing, and using data effectively. Some teams also lacked the necessary tools or expertise to leverage data insights.

**Proving the value of product ops**

Many people—especially those in smaller teams or newer roles—struggled to demonstrate the impact and importance of product ops to stakeholders. This made it difficult to secure buy-in for initiatives and resources.

**Tooling limitations**

Interviewees noted challenges around limitations with their existing tools, specifically in the areas of data integration, automation, and reporting. They expressed a desire for more robust and integrated solutions to support their work.

**Prioritization**

With limited resources and competing demands, many product ops pros found it difficult to prioritize their efforts effectively. This required strong advocacy skills and the ability to justify decisions to stakeholders.

**Culture change**

Shifting to a more data-driven, product-led culture proved difficult for some teams. Resistance often stemmed from unclear decision-making, legacy habits, and a lack of understanding about product ops. Without a clear operating model to support new ways of working, the cultural shift struggled to take hold.

## From the field

"Data is the problem." One company has a big focus on cleaning up their data and making it more usable, as well as starting to inspect what's happening and what data is being used. This ties into a lot of pains they've had around modernizing legacy data and software.

# How teams measure their success

The question of how these product ops pros measure success had the widest range of responses—from some quantitative metrics, to qualitative feedback and surveys, to "still figuring this out."

While many teams recognized the importance of using data to measure success, they often struggled with how to effectively decide on the right metrics, capture them all efficiently, and report on them consistently.

Let's take a look at how teams are measuring success today.

## Quantitative metrics
Many companies emphasized the use of quantifiable metrics to track progress and demonstrate impact. Here are the top three we heard:

01    **Adoption and usage metrics:** Several companies focused on measuring product adoption and usage metrics such as logins, feature usage, and engagement levels to assess how well their products are being received and utilized.

02    **Hitting launch timelines and targets:** Some measured success based on adherence to commitments and meeting launch timelines, suggesting a focus on execution and delivering on promises.

03    **Hours saved:** One company sought to measure success by tracking the number of "hours saved" as a result of their initiatives.

## Qualitative feedback
While quantitative metrics were important, many companies also recognized the value of qualitative feedback in assessing the effectiveness of their product ops efforts.

Teams used surveys and employee NPS (eNPS) to gather insights into user satisfaction, team morale, and the perceived impact of product ops initiatives. For example, they asked their colleagues questions like: "Can you get to the data you need?" and "Do you have the right toolset?"

Now that we have a sense of the current landscape, let's dig into how to prove the value of product ops—which hinges on having the right measures of success—no matter where you are in your journey.

## From the field

One Product Operations Specialist we spoke to mentioned that measuring success has been difficult, and they mostly rely on qualitative and anecdotal evidence like surveys and shoutouts from other teams.

**CHAPTER 2**

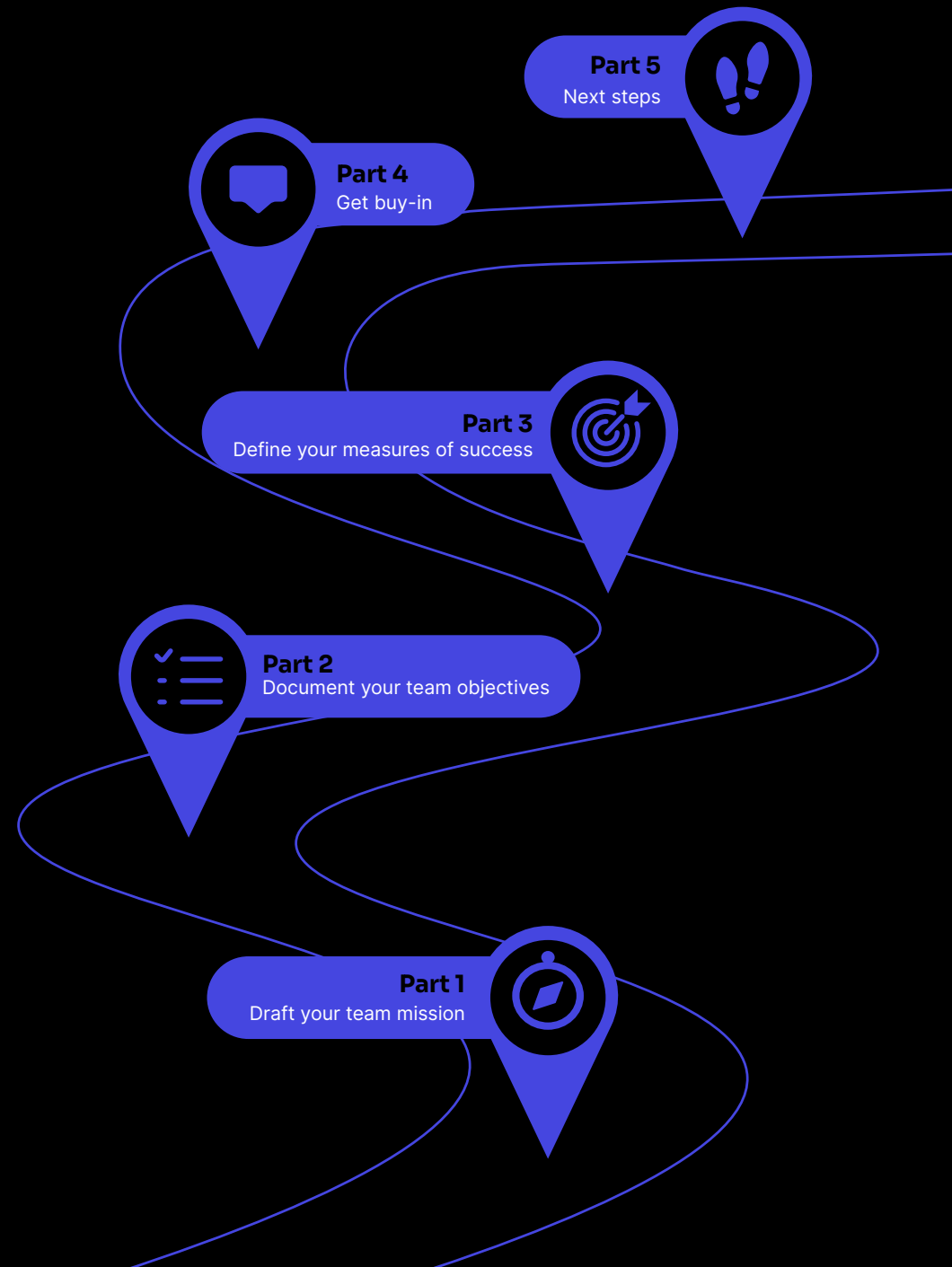# Roadmap: Proving the value of product ops

Proving the value of a product ops function is foundational to its success. And if it's not done effectively, it can lead to negative consequences like rapidly shifting priorities, wasted time, and lack of clarity. It's also critical to a wide range of teams and maturity levels, for example:

- Teams trapped in a cycle of creating and proving value

- Newly formed teams that are establishing the foundations of product operations

- Small and large teams seeking to justify additional investment

- Experienced teams looking to identify opportunities for increased efficiency

But how do you actually do this—and do it well? In this section, we'll walk through a simple, flexible approach for proving the value of product operations.

**PRO TIP**

If your company doesn't currently have an established product ops function, this approach is a great way to prove the value in order to get buy-in to set up your official role or team.

**Part 5**
Next steps

**Part 4**
Get buy-in

**Part 3**
Define your measures of success

**Part 2**
Document your team objectives

**Part 1**
Draft your team mission

# Part 1:
# Draft your team mission

The foundation of any successful product operations team begins with a clear and compelling mission. Think of your mission as the North Star that guides all decisions and activities. Your mission statement should address fundamental questions like:

- What specific problems will product operations solve?

- How will you measure success?

- What unique value will the team bring to the organization?

For example, your mission might be: "To accelerate product development and innovation by optimizing processes, democratizing data insights, and enabling seamless cross-functional collaboration."

At Pendo, our product ops team's mission is: "To empower product teams by streamlining processes, enhancing cross-functional collaboration, and ensuring data-driven decision-making. We enable faster, smarter, and more impactful product outcomes by building scalable systems, optimizing tools, and creating seamless feedback loops that align product strategy with customer needs and organizational goals."

To draft your own mission, you'll want to start by understanding your company's overarching vision, mission, and current goals. At every step of this process, you'll want to be in clear alignment with the direction your company is going, and that all starts with your mission.

Next, conduct discovery throughout your org to find out where the gaps are and where product ops can add value and make an impact on company goals. Talk to leaders across the company and those on the front lines with customers to understand how they work with the product team and where there are silos, bottlenecks, inconsistencies, or other opportunities. If you've been doing product ops for awhile, find out where you've had wins and where there's room for improvement.

After compiling learnings from these conversations, create a draft of your product ops mission—and remember that this mission can evolve over time.

## Part 2:
## Document your team objectives

Product operations teams often struggle to demonstrate their impact because there is so much work that *could* be done to achieve their mission, but nobody knows how it's moving the needle.

To get this right, the next step is documenting your specific objectives and measures of success—aka how you'll bring your mission to life.

Start by pulling your mission statement into a proposal doc for the upcoming quarter (or other time period). Draft two or three product ops team objectives for this time period that will move the needle on your company's current annual or quarterly goals.

You can do this using whatever framework (or none at all) that fits best within your organization. You might use OKRs, which are a popular goal-setting framework and can be an effective way to align your company and team goals. Or you might have three core "product ops pillars," each with one rotating goal each quarter. However you approach this, make sure you include:

- Objectives that are as focused on the end result as possible with clear ties to how they impact company goals

- Clear measures of success and timelines for each objective

- High-level milestones, so the path to achieving your goals is clear

- A "menu" of two or three additional objectives for discussion

- A prioritized list of your backlog to show what you're NOT working on

- Information on how, where, and when you'll be communicating updates and progress throughout the quarter (see the next section for more on this!)

## Part 3:
## Define your measures of success

What you use to measure the success of your product ops function will largely depend on your goals and objectives. At a high level, here are some key considerations to keep in mind:

**01    Value- or outcome-based**
You want your metrics to help you describe what success looks like—not just what you'll do or how you'll do it. This keeps your team focused on what's going to make an impact, which is difficult in operations because new projects and tasks will always pop up. This also allows you flexibility to adjust the activities needed to achieve the end result throughout the quarter, if necessary.

**02    Leading and lagging**
Ideally, you want to consider both leading and lagging indicators in your measures. Leading indicators might include the adoption rate of new processes or tools, while lagging indicators could encompass improved time-to-market for new features or increased product team satisfaction scores.

**03    Qualitative and quantitative**
You'll want a mixture of both qualitative and quantitative data to get the full picture and clear insights into your impact. Here's a quick overview of each:

- **Qualitative data:** This type of data focuses on gathering insights and opinions from relevant internal teams and stakeholders. It delves into the "why" behind behavior and preferences, uncovering pain points and motivations. Qualitative data can be collected through open-ended interviews and surveys.

- **Quantitative data:** This type of data focuses on numerical and measurable information, providing concrete metrics and statistics. It answers questions about "how many," "how often," and "how much." Quantitative data can be collected through analytics (e.g. product usage) and surveys with closed-ended questions.

**04**      **How you'll measure**

It's important to select measures of success that you can efficiently report on over time. If you're stuck between two options, consider the ease of gathering the metric each quarter as a tiebreaker between. (And if there's a clear winner but it's harder to gather, put a plan in place to improve how you gather that metric and add it to your objective for the quarter.)

## Measures of success examples

To help jumpstart your efforts, we wanted to walk through some examples of measures of success. Since every product ops team's goals will be different, we've included a wide variety—including both qualitative and qualitative—as well as measures related to process, go-to-market, and overall impact.

We also wanted to call out a key point here: There's a difference between what product ops ensures is measured (for the product team) versus what product ops measures to gauge its own success. While we primarily focus on the former, we've included a few examples of the latter as well. Finally, we also included a few measures we *don't* recommend, and why.

**EXAMPLES OF PROCESS OR AUTOMATION MEASURES**

Since most product ops teams will at some point focus on process improvement or automation for their company, it's crucial to measure the impact of those efforts. Here are some examples of how to quantify the success of these efforts:

- Time required to complete a workflow/process/task, collected via analytics on your internal tools

- Sentiment of people using the process, collected via polls in your internal tools, email surveys, or interviews

- Quality measure of the specific process, for example hours saved, dollars saved (as an estimate based on hours or other identifiable costs), or qualitative measures that ask how stakeholders perceive the process and its value

**EXAMPLES OF HOLISTIC MEASURES**

The following list includes some holistic measures that you should see improvement over time, but that won't always clearly tie to a quarter of work, or a specific project. We don't suggest choosing all of these metrics, but selecting two or three key metrics (based on your organization's goals) to update and review annually can give you additional insights on the potential impact of your team:

- Product team empowerment, measured by product team satisfaction with available tools and processes

- Product team culture, measured by product team sentiment on product values and process

- Velocity, measured by time-to-market improvements for new features and releases, collected via development cycle analytics

- Enhanced cross-functional collaboration, measured by stakeholder alignment scores and collected via periodic cross-team surveys

**EXAMPLES OF GTM AND LAUNCH MEASURES**

A critical aspect of many product ops teams involves ensuring cohesive go-to-market motions and monitoring the success of product launches. Here are some examples of how to measure the impact of your GTM efforts, as well as an example of what we do at Pendo:

- Sentiment of sales, post-sales, and other GTM teams related to whether they had the information they needed to sell, support, and train the relevant audiences about the new product or feature, collected via polls or surveys

- Clarity of release notes and documentation, measured by support ticket volume related to new features or updates

At Pendo, we've created an internal "**Whole product launch score**" which measures the sentiment of our GTM teams on whether they have the information they need. We ask the following questions for specific launches of various sizes over time:

- ✦ Did you receive the documentation, enablement, and awareness you needed to successfully support this feature post-launch?

- ✦ If yes, did you receive these materials at an appropriate time relative to the launch date?

- ✦ If no (or somewhat), what were you missing?

- ✦ When do you need the materials next time to have a more positive outcome?

## EXAMPLES OF GENERAL PRODUCT OPS MEASURES

For each of your quarterly objectives that don't fall under process or GTM/launch, you still have a variety of ways to measure the impact of your work. These may vary widely based on your objectives each quarter, but here are some examples:

- Internal adoption rates of tools for the product org, collected via analytics on your internal tools. If possible, use metrics that are value based, not simply "activity" in the tools. Did they take actions that indicate they achieved their goal using the tool? For example, after running a report did they download or save the report?

- Internal adoption rates of tools and resources for stakeholders accessing information from the product org (for example betas, commits, or launches), collected via analytics on your internal tools. If possible, combine this with another metric to show the value of these tools, for example *repeat questions are decreasing in Slack channels* or *sentiment around ease of information access is improving.*

- Sentiment of the product org related to each goal/objective, collected via polls in your internal tools, email surveys, or interviews.

- Sentiment of stakeholders related to each goal/objective, for example:

  - Clarity of decision making: Do stakeholders understand how and why product decisions are made?

  - Feedback loop effectiveness: Is stakeholder feedback incorporated into product planning and do stakeholders feel heard?

### PRO TIP

For projects where you're struggling to identify success measures that your project will directly impact, we recommend targeting a specific segment of customers or internal users to focus on, and compare the changes to the overall group. For example, if your team is working on improving churn data and insights, focus on a segment of at-risk customers as a first step, measure the impact, then compare that to overall churn.

**EXAMPLES OF PRODUCT TEAM MEASURES OF SUCCESS**

As we mentioned above, there's a key difference between what product ops ensures is measured for the product team and what product ops measures to gauge its own success.

One of the professionals we surveyed mentioned they were struggling to measure "PM efficacy." We think that PMs are as effective as their ability to hit their product goals. In other words, the PM is responsible for the success of the product. The job of product ops is to make sure the goals are clear, measurable, and attainable.

Here are a couple examples of what those success measures could look like:

- Expansion revenue from existing customers, measured by upsell and cross-sell revenue tied to new modules or features and collected via sales data tools

- Customer adoption rates of new features launched, collected via analytics on your product

At Pendo, we measure adoption of new features with three key metrics:

- Raw percentage of eligible customer accounts that have purchased or have the feature enabled (often this will be 100%)

- Of that percentage, how many accounts have ever used it?

- Value metric: We either look at the retention of the feature or the persistent valuable metric related to the launch

**PRO TIP**

Structuring your development lifecycle to consistently shape and report on these measures of success will help create accountability, reduce confusion, and drive meaningful conversations about how to proceed.

## MEASURES WE DON'T LOVE AND WHY

As a guiding rule, anything that would be difficult to define or collect, or anything that doesn't create clear accountability and action are not valuable measures to pursue. Here are some that we think are better left alone:

- **Rate of insight:** While it's an interesting idea, codifying and measuring what an "insight" is and where in the process it was obtained makes it too difficult to leverage.

- **Bug trends:** This is an engineering metric of quality, and is too far away from what the product team can meaningfully impact to be useful for product ops to measure or monitor.

- **Number of deals won with product team impact:** Assuming your organization is appropriately product led, all sales are impacted by your product team!

- **Instances of work items completed:** This type of measure can easily confuse motion for value. If the work doesn't map to an outcome, then you might end up decreasing efficiency.

If you remember one thing about metrics, let it be this: **Do not strive for perfection with your metrics in this first draft.** Frame it as a starting point for conversation so you can gather feedback on the overall priorities. The goal is to get quick feedback and iterate, not perfection! You don't want to be so tied to your plan that you don't hear the feedback that stakeholders provide.

**PRO TIP**

After you've drafted your objectives and measures of success, run them through an AI chat tool and ask: "*Do these measures reflect meaningful outcomes or just outputs? How directly do they tie back to the change or improvement I want to see as a result of this objective?*"

## Part 4:
## Get buy-in

Once you have your mission, objectives, and success criteria drafted, share it with key stakeholders and decision makers in order to get feedback, make changes, and finalize the plan to secure approval.

Seeing a clear path towards the tangible impact that product ops can have on your organization is key to getting buy-in for your team and staying aligned as you go.

At Pendo, a month ahead of each quarter we propose two to three OKRs for our team to focus our efforts. These OKR proposals first go through a few rounds of revisions with product team leadership. A week or two ahead of the new quarter, we share our proposal with stakeholders across a variety of teams for feedback and input including design and research, engineering, revenue, revenue enablement, and technical support. Then, as the quarter gets underway, we can confidently move forward with leadership and stakeholder buy-in.

## Part 5:
## Next steps

After you get approval, be sure to document your baseline metrics before implementing any changes, allowing you to demonstrate concrete improvements over time.

You'll also want to keep your stakeholders and leadership team informed of progress—and changes—along the way. Changes are inevitable and show that you're learning and adapting to new information, so just be sure to communicate about them early and often.

At Pendo, our company OKRs feed into our product ops team's OKRs. We set goals each quarter and these are communicated to the entire product team via twice annual "lightning talks" and to the senior product leadership team (SPLT) monthly.

As you head into the next quarter's planning cycle, take your previous plan and create a general, templatized version for you to use each quarter to streamline the process.

**Here's an example to get you started.**

CONCLUSION

# The journey to high-performing product ops starts now

Building a world-class product operations team is an iterative journey that requires patience, persistence, and strategic thinking. Start with a clear mission, objectives, and measures of success; get executive support; build a strong foundation of processes and metrics; and continuously adapt based on organizational needs and feedback.

Remember that the most successful product operations teams aren't built overnight—they evolve through careful planning, consistent execution, and a commitment to continuous improvement.

Looking for more product ops best practices? **Join the Pendo Connect Slack community** (and the #product-ops channel) to connect with—and learn from—product ops peers.

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