In this module, we will cover how to create a vision, strategy, and roadmap for your products, and we'll address the importance of communicating them well inside and outside your organization.

In order to create a great product, you need a clear product vision to guide the way. A vision is defined as the act of thinking about or planning the future with imagination or wisdom.

When it comes to a product vision, you need a little bit of both.

If you recall from previous modules, you've heard me say that the best products are the ones that are collaborative and feature various stakeholders throughout your organization.

Your product vision and goals need the same type of collaboration.

Before we dig deeper into product visions, I want to point out that your product vision is different from your company vision.

Company visions are often too broad to be good product visions. Company visions are also usually meant to be customer-facing marketing messages, while product visions are internal messages that align your team. Your product vision is also not your product strategy. Your vision should focus on where you want your product to be. Your product strategy will explain how you will get there.

Here's a popular product analogy that serves as great way to think about the vision vs. the strategy:

Think about when you build IKEA furniture. The outside of the box has a picture of your product — that's your product vision. When you open the box, there are step-by-step instructions inside of how to build it — that's your product strategy.

Your product vision fits in between your company vision and your product strategy. Think of it as three layers. Company vision helps guide your company, product vision helps guide your product, and product strategy is the step-by-step directions to build your product.

[Product board](#), a product management platform, shares 4 principles of a great product vision statement:

All product visions should:

Be customer-focused: Your customers are the whole reason for your product. If you don't reference them in your product vision, you need to rework it.

Be a bit of a stretch, but not unrealistic: Your vision needs to be attainable. If it's too much of a stretch, you'll have a hard time rallying your team around the vision. And don't say "be the best." Get to the root of what you mean when you say that you want to be "the best."

Show differentiation: Something in your vision should explain why your product is different from your competitors.

They should also look years down the road: In five years, you want people to say ___ about your product.

-pause-

Now that we've talked a bit about what makes a great product vision, let's get down to the nitty gritty. When creating this vision, think of it in two parts:

1. Defining key product information.
2. Phrasing the product vision in one inspiring sentence.

According to Roman Pichler's product vision board, which you will have the chance to fill out in one of the discussion modules, it's important to answer 4 key questions when thinking about your product vision:
    What's the target group?
    What are the customer needs?
    What is and will be the product and it's Unique Selling Proposition?
    What are the business goals?

Now, the phrasing, your product vision should be one inspiring sentence that defines the key product information. Let's say you owned a newsletter product that helps local newsrooms send out newsletters for their communities.

A way to phrase the vision statement could be:

"We believe in a world where local newsrooms can offer informative and truthful information to readers at minimal costs with excellent customer service."

Obviously, there's many ways to make a product vision. But you want to ensure that you're constantly coming back to this vision regularly, to ensure your company is heading in the right direction, and also to assess if the vision is valid or needs to be adjusted.

In this week's readings, you'll have the chance to learn more about creating a product vision and will have the chance to write your own product vision statement and fill out a product vision board.

Now, let's talk more about stakeholder buy-in.

Let's say for example that you're looking to overhaul and create a new CMS, or content management system for your organization.

Would it make sense to have the engineers be the only people that have a say in what it looks like? Of course not, because while they are crucial to the creation of the product, they are not the daily users.

Instead, it may be best to have representatives from the editorial side have a conversation with the technology and product teams on what the best vision for the new CMS should be.

For this project, it makes sense to have photojournalists, editors, writers and audience engagement editors weigh in on the system, since they all use the CMS, but in varying ways.

By having everyone come together, you can create a shared vision that is cross-departmental and can work together on shared OKRs, or objectives and key results.

Now, you're probably thinking about how to create that shared vision. It's probably true that each stakeholder has different needs and wants for a final product.

That's why it's vital to have stakeholders buy in. Stakeholders, also known as those collaborators from across the company, can either make or break product development.

So how do you ensure stakeholder buy-in? Here are three things to consider.

Motive.

What motivates the decisions of your stakeholders? Understanding this makes it a lot easier to ensure that stakeholders buy in. With the CMS example I mentioned before, you may have individuals or teams motivated by different things. While an easy editing process might be the number one motivator for an editor in a new CMS, the ease of access to a photo library or the ability to drag and drop photos may be the motivating factor for a photojournalist. A key to getting buy-in from all of these people when creating a new product is to establish the link between their goal and vision to your overarching product vision. And the best way to do that is by having a conversation. And while it's important to note that it may not be feasible to meet every need of your stakeholder, simply having the dialogue and understanding their motive is a great place to start.

The second thing to consider is making sure that stakeholders understand their contribution to the product.

Once you understand their motive, it's crucial to communicate it to your stakeholder. By being able to draw a direct line between their motivation and the product outcomes, you can increase

their buy-in. It's a lot easier to solidify buy-in if the stakeholders understand that their ideals and taken into consideration and make them feel like they have a stake in the product.

Lastly, consistency. It's not enough to simply gather ideas from stakeholders and set goals at the beginning of product planning. Throughout the development and iteration of a product, product managers should ensure that they reaffirm stakeholder goals and offer updates. Your stakeholders should know that they can always come to you with concerns or questions. You should also communicate to your stakeholders the value of their contributions. For example, if feedback from a photo editor about the CMS helped to create a certain feature, let them know. That lays the groundwork for future buy-in.

If you take one thing from this lesson, remember that stakeholder buy-in is earned.