

### Executive Summary

1. A solid definition of the product from the customer's perspective improves the product's chances of achieving its market goals.
2. The Definition phase is the most important linkage between the needs of customers and the designs and capabilities of products.

The Definition phase, the final phase of (linear) product planning, is the most important linkage between the needs of customers and the designs and capabilities of products. The details of product content, function, and design first become focused and articulated in the Product Requirements Document (PRD). The PRD is a business- and market-driven document that describes the characteristics of a product—both functional (the basic intent of the product) and nonfunctional (the characteristics, properties, or qualities that the product should or must exhibit)—and reflects business, market, or customer needs. It may be written by a business analyst, systems engineer, or a product manager.

Requirements can be elicited through highly structured interviews from customers or other experts, customer advisory boards and surveys, information gathering from the cross-functional team, conversations with industry analysts, reviewing competitive product features and attributes, potential customers or current customers or product users, brainstorming, architectural and product quality reviews, and storytelling (scenarios based on customer “personas”).

Prior to publication the PRD should be reviewed. Types of review include inspections (systematic, rigorous review to look for areas of ambiguity, inconsistency, and achievability), team reviews (developers and product managers look for clarity of intent or purpose and consistency in language), and walk-throughs (the product manager presents the essence of all the sections of the PRD to a group of peers or others, or sometimes customers, to ensure that the logic, intent, and desired outcomes are understood by all stakeholders).

Once “baselined,” the PRD should be examined for relevance as the product development process begins. This is important because market conditions change. In fact, both the Business Case and the PRD should be re-evaluated from time to time, especially with longer-duration product development projects. If the product definition isn't clear from the start, the product may not achieve its envisioned success.