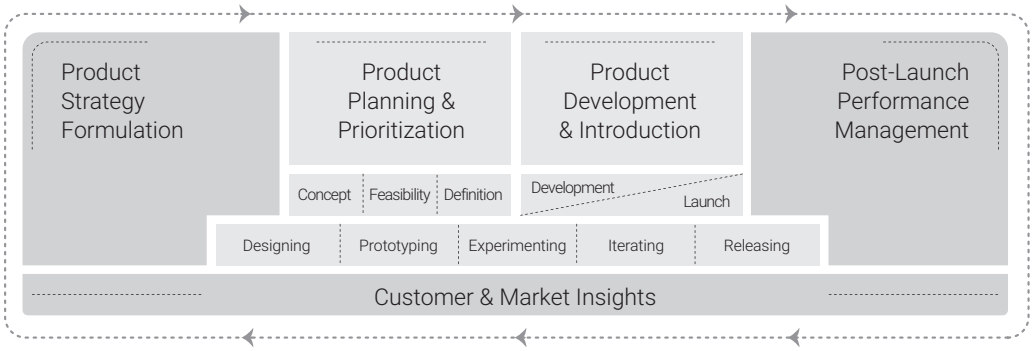
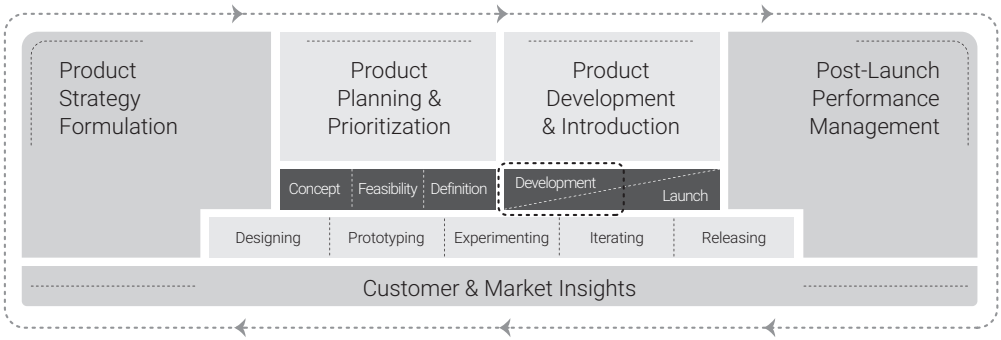
Product Manager's Desk Reference (3e)
Illustration Insights – Chapter 14 – Figure 14.1, 14.2

Execution and Oversight During Development

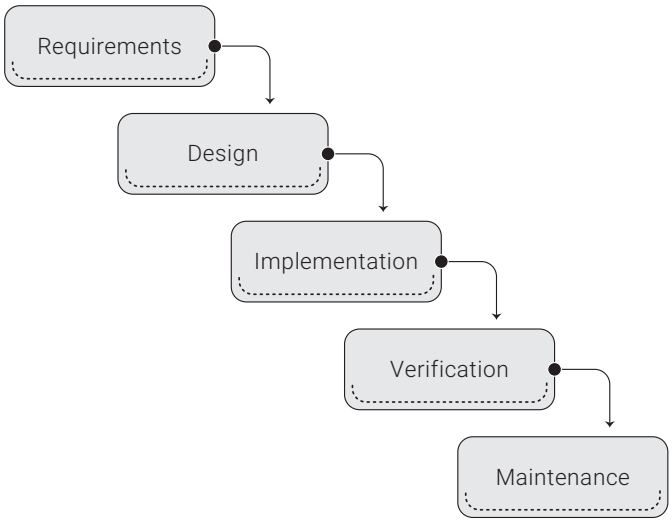
For reference, The Product Management Life Cycle Model is shown below to represent the product's life, from beginning to end.



For additional reference, Model is shown with the linear product development process highlighted.



The phase gate product planning and development process has been used for decades. As a process, it outlines the steps to be taken to plan, build, test, and launch a product. This linear method of development was first used in the industrial sectors and later adapted to the development environment for all product types, including software, systems, and services. Governed by checklists and documents, these steps would often lead to long-duration development projects. Sometimes those development projects were so long that by the time the product was completed, market and other conditions had changed and the product was no longer fit for market. In the realm of software development, the term *waterfall* development has been used and is depicted by the diagram below.



Execution and Oversight During Development

Partway through development in many projects, it's often discovered that some product features are more difficult to develop than originally thought. Other features may have crept in (scope creep) because of unanticipated changes. Sometimes key features are simply overlooked. Whatever the cause, additional work must be done by the same people, usually with no additional budget and no additional time. This undesirable state of affairs is a plague to product managers and their teams because it's distracting and unproductive.

Although developers feel they have what it takes to reprioritize, they usually don't have the market, strategy, or business perspective to select just the right adjustment to the features that are to be developed. This means that, as the product manager, you must be able to explain the business, market, or strategic basis for any given trade-off. There will always be trade-offs and other work reprioritizations that need to be considered within the context of cost, schedule, resource availability, and skills.

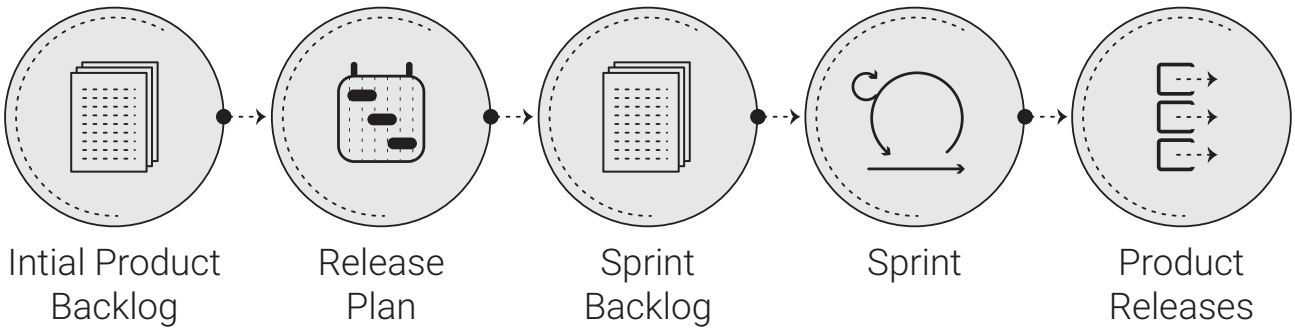
To reinforce the idea that decision-making and prioritization go hand in hand, so it goes that a decision matrix can help manage scope and assist the team in making needed tradeoffs. This is shown in the diagram below from the book.

CHANGE NUMBER	Reported Problem	Complexity to Fix 1: Low 3: Medium 5: High	Incremental Cost Impact 1: < $10k 3: < $50k 5: > $50k	Schedule Impact (In Weeks) 1: < 2wk 3: < 5wk 5: > 5wk	Competitive Impact 1: Low 3: Medium 5: High	Market Window Impact 1: Low 3: Medium 5: High	TOTAL SCORE
1	Screen readability obscured by person over 5'11"	1	2	3	1	3	**10**
2	Too much pressure required to push buttons	2	3	3	2	2	**12**
3	Touch screen accuracy problem	5	5	3	5	5	**23**
4	Currency counter inaccuracy	2	1	3	5	4	**15**
5	Machine is 10 lbs over the maximum 55 lb-limit	4	3	3	1	2	**13**
6	Customer database interface problem	3	4	3	3	3	**16**
7	Customers want more color options	1	2	5	1	1	**10**

Product Manager's Desk Reference (3e)
Illustration Insights – Chapter 14 – Figure 14.4

Execution and Oversight During Development

The figure below shows a diagram of a simple agile process with the initial product backlog shown on the left side of the diagram. All the features on the backlog cannot be developed at once, so a release plan is created to divide the backlog into min—releases. As these short two- or three-week development cycles are planned, the dev team is trying to get as much key functionality included so a few features can be completed and tested. During a sprint a product manager, designer, or someone designated on the team can see how things are looking, perhaps run a quick experiment, and assess progress toward the desired capability that's envisioned. While this is a simple diagram and flow, and the process used in any company may vary, use the space below to sketch out your company's development process. You can also try to assess what works well and what doesn't, so that methods can be designed to improve efficiency, productivity, and most importantly, to ensure that the product meets the needs of intended customers.



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