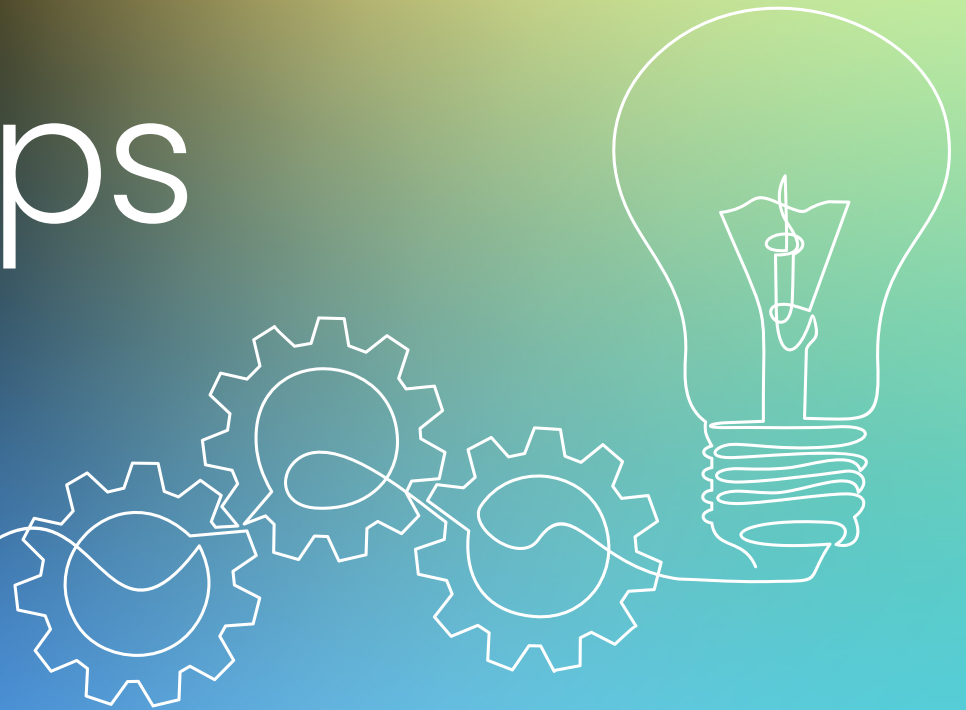


State of Product Ops *Report*

2025



Created by:



In partnership with:



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Introduction

Welcome to the fourth edition of the State of Product Ops report. After a one-year hiatus, we're back with another comprehensive look at the state of product operations, powered by insights from over 50 product ops practitioners – who are on the front lines of this evolving, and often misunderstood, business function.

So why have we decided to revisit the state of product operations? Well, it's simple.

Product ops is no longer an embryonic business function. It's now established and very much here to stay. Within scaled product organizations, it's the connective tissue across product, engineering, customer success, and leadership. And as organizations grow, product ops is the lens through which inefficiencies, misalignments, and blockers are identified and addressed.

With this in mind, we've changed tack in this year's report. Where previous editions have asked whether product ops is truly necessary, our 2025 research takes that as read. Instead, it focuses on the challenges and (many) opportunities faced by practitioners in the space – and asks what the function will look like over a five-year horizon.

Here's a taste of *what's inside:*

Three-quarters of dedicated product ops teams work in a centralized capacity – and almost half report directly to the Chief Product Officer

Only 20% of teams experienced headcount growth in the last year

While product ops plays a growing role in scaling organizations, **1 in 5** teams still lack any formal way to measure its effectiveness

Just 7% of practitioners are leveraging high levels of automation in their work

19% of centralized functions have established dedicated liaisons for cross-departmental collaboration

A lack of clarity around roles and responsibilities is the **no.1 challenge** faced by product ops teams

Almost half of product operations professionals say the function is evolving with AI and automation

About our sponsor

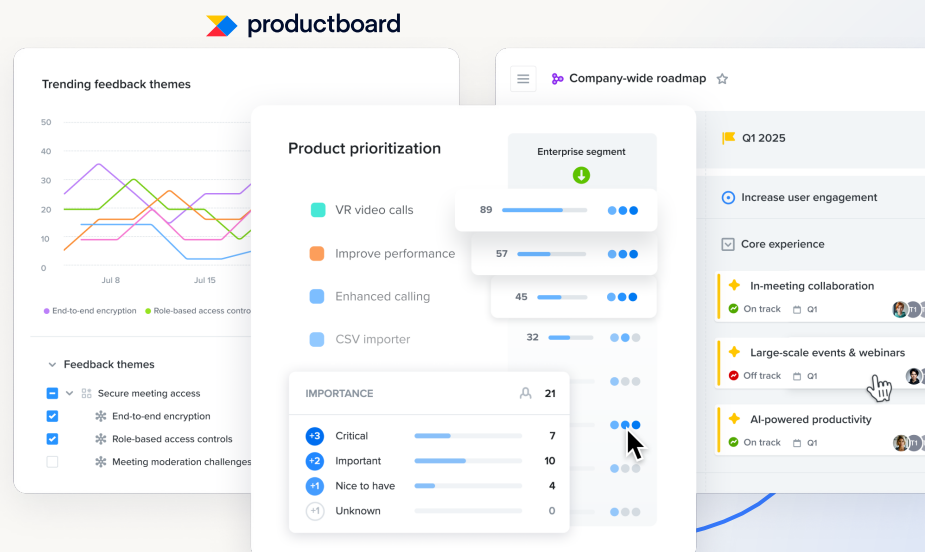
Productboard

Today's product teams are expected to deliver with speed, clarity, and alignment across an increasingly complex product landscape.

They need to balance customer needs, stakeholder input, and strategic goals—without getting bogged down in spreadsheets, disjointed tools, or inefficient processes. Productboard's product management platform is purpose-built to help teams prioritize what to build next, align everyone around the roadmap, and deliver products that truly matter. With AI-powered customer feedback analysis, interactive roadmaps for all your stakeholders, strategic prioritization, and progress & risk tracking, Productboard turns product ops into a strategic force multiplier.

The world's most forward-thinking companies—including Salesforce, Autodesk, VMware, One Medical, Zoom, and UiPath—rely on Productboard to bring clarity and confidence to their product decisions.

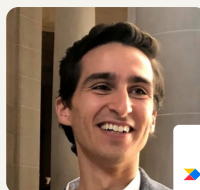
That's why Productboard is proud to sponsor Product-Led Alliance's State of Product Ops 2025 report. Together, we're uncovering what's driving the next wave of product excellence.



Foreword

Product operations has shifted from an emerging function to a core part of many product organizations. In the early days, the focus was on defining the role and demonstrating its necessity. Now, with a rise in dedicated product ops teams and many more organizations embracing the function, the challenge is no longer proving its value—it's fully embedding product ops into cross-functional decision-making. As this report will show, product ops is uniquely positioned to drive organizational efficiency, align teams, and enhance visibility into product performance. However, gaps remain, from automation still being underutilized to limited clarity in roles and responsibilities.

Looking ahead, the opportunity is clear. Product ops has the potential to go beyond process optimization and become the internal customer champion and a strategic driver of business outcomes. The path forward involves leveraging new technologies for workflow automation, deepening cross-functional alignment, enhancing customer feedback loops, and, most importantly, making sense of vast amounts of data with AI to ensure product decisions are tightly connected to customer needs and market demands. With the right leadership support and investment, product ops can continue to evolve into a function that not only streamlines execution but also shapes the product strategy itself.



Christian Marek,
VP of Product at Productboard



Meet our contributors



HeliosX

Graham Reed,

Head of Product Operations at HeliosX and host of the Product Ops Chronicles Podcast



Aerospike

Topher Fox,

Director of Product Operations at Aerospike



Clare Hawthorne,

Keynote Speaker, Advisor, and former Head of Engineering & Product Operations at Oscar Health



GitHub

Chris Butler,

Product Operations Manager at Github

Part 1

Who took part

For this year's report, we spoke to product ops professionals from a range of industries and locations. Our survey captured revealing insights from practitioners operating within a multitude of corporate environments – and with varied challenges and priorities.

Before jumping into the analysis, let's firstly take a look at where our respondents are located, and the industries they work in.

Who took part

Product Ops around the world

Over half of our respondents were located in the United States (59%), with a further 13% based in the United Kingdom.

This points to the US' continued dominance of the tech industry, and its role as the global leader in product innovation. As the home of major tech hubs, like Silicon Valley, New York, Boston, and Austin, the United States has been at the center of the rise of the product-led growth (PLG) model – and, consequently, has emerged as the cradle of the product ops function.

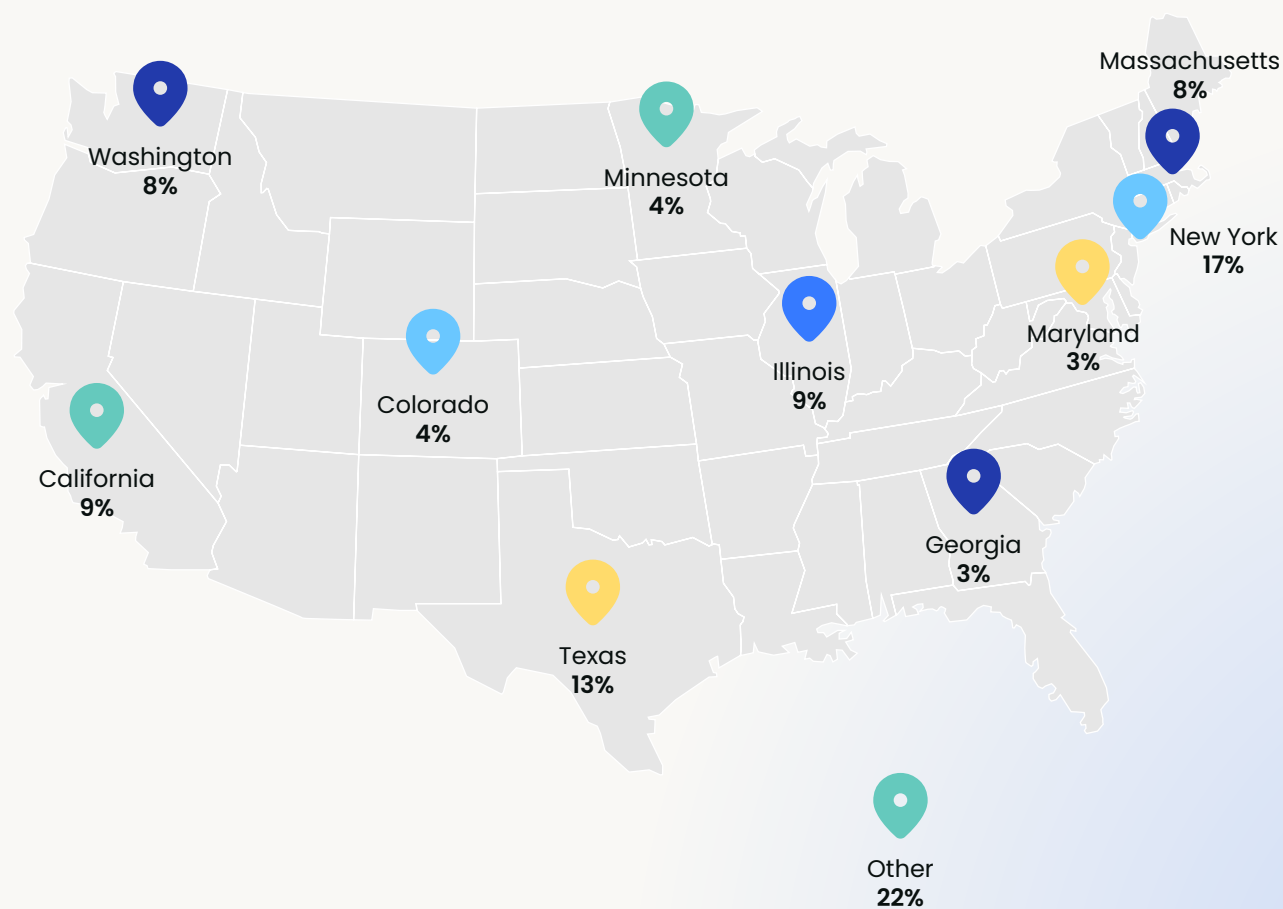
Similarly, the prominence of respondents from the UK is unsurprising. London's position as a global tech leader in the fintech, SaaS, and ecommerce industries has seen it mirror organizational trends established in the US. As a result, this has fueled a demand for product ops professionals to streamline processes, optimize data, and drive cross-functional collaboration.

Country		% of respondents
United States		59%
United Kingdom		13%
Netherlands		7%
France		4%
Germany		4%
Norway		3%
Belgium		2%
India		2%
Republic of Ireland		2%
Malaysia		1%
Other		3%

Who took part

Product Ops within the United States

Given the outsized influence of the American tech space on the product ops function, it's important to take a closer look at the geographical distribution of US-based practitioners.

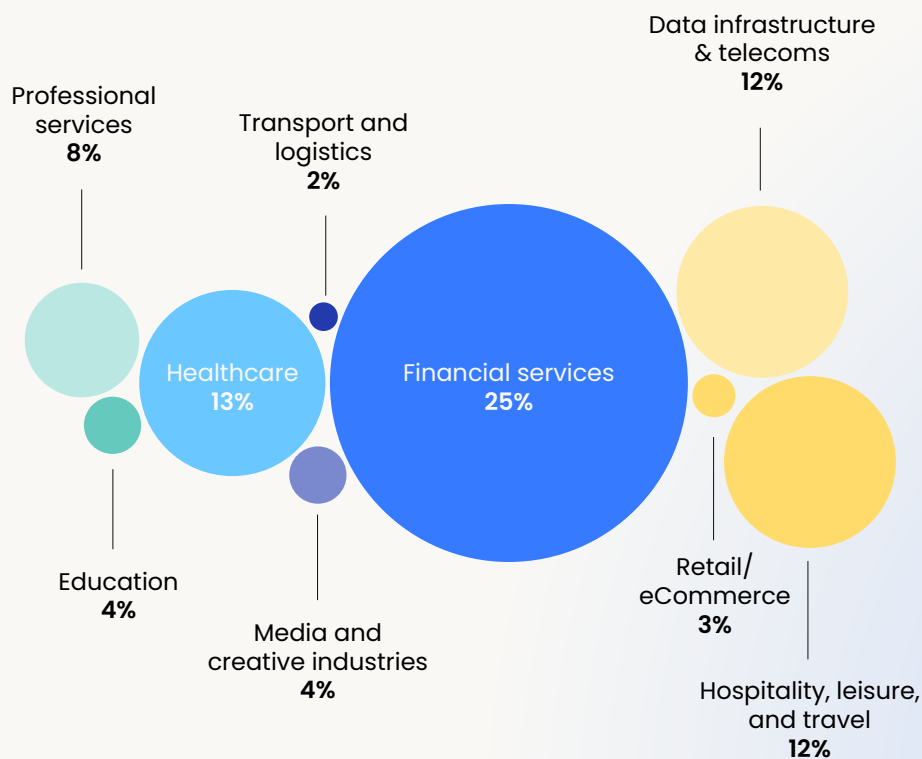


Who took part

Industry

The makeup of respondents by industry points to two revealing trends. The first is that product operations is most prevalent in complex, highly regulated, and data-driven industries, like financial services (comprising a quarter of respondents). These sectors rely heavily on compliance, risk management, and data-driven decision-making, placing a premium on streamlined operations and structured processes. The prominence of healthcare (at 13%) can be explained by a similar set of factors.

Equally revealing is the significant presence of hospitality, leisure, and travel (12%) and data infrastructure & telecoms (12%), highlighting the importance of product ops in industries that depend on large-scale digital platforms and customer experience optimization.



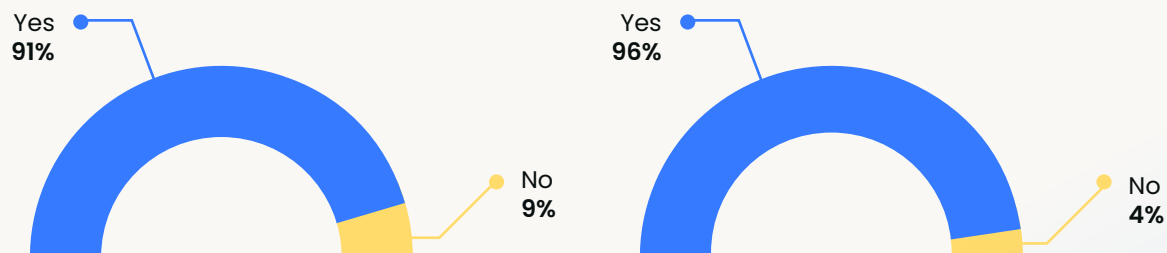
Part 2

The structure of product ops teams

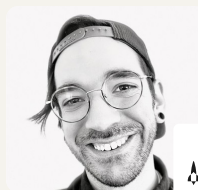
The structure of product ops teams

Does your organization have an established product ops function?

We began by exploring the extent to which companies have established and maintained product ops functions (broadly defined). The goal was to understand whether there'd been an increase or decline in the prominence of operations functions since the last time we surveyed practitioners in 2023.



“A dedicated product operations function (in a business of any size and maturity) allows product managers and leaders to reduce their cognitive load around how product teams function. Without a product operations function, all of your product managers and leaders now have an additional product that they take care of: the product operating model of that organization.”



Topher Fox,
Director of Product Operations at Aerospike



The structure of product ops teams

“This is a classic growing pain for hybrid or enabling functions. Product ops sits at the intersection of strategy, execution, and coordination, which means it often overlaps with other functions—or inherits their gaps. One common anti-pattern is when product ops over-indexes on coordination, which can start to blur the lines with project or program management. The distinction lies in intention: coordination is often about risk reduction, while collaboration is about driving innovation. Product ops thrives when it emphasizes collaborative systems that support innovation, not just execution.

The key to avoiding confusion is proactive communication and strong relationships. If you're doing good work but no one knows where you fit, the problem isn't just your scope—it's your story. Make the value legible, and the role will follow.”



Clare Hawthorne,
Product Operations and Engineering Leader

The structure of product ops teams



Productboard Perspective:

The momentum behind product operations continues—and for good reason. As Claire notes, it sits at the intersection of strategy, execution, and coordination, making the function essential for building excellent products. At Productboard, we believe product excellence comes down to three things:

- Deep user insight: Teams understand what users truly need—and why.
- Clear product strategy: Everyone is aligned on what matters most.
- A coherent roadmap: The organization is united around a shared product vision.

Product ops helps make this possible by scaling insights, aligning teams, and keeping roadmaps connected to strategy. In a world of growing complexity, product ops is the steady force that keeps teams focused, fast, and customer-driven.

Now that the function has reached a steady establishment phase, we expect to see a rapid expansion.

The structure of product ops teams

Product ops team structures

Next, we asked respondents to outline how their product ops function is currently structured, providing four clear categories as options: (1) Dedicated product ops teams, (2) dedicated individuals, (3) product ops as a shared responsibility, and (4) no product ops function.

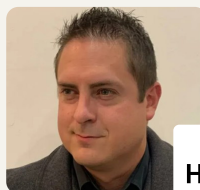
Current structure	Global average	United States average
Dedicated ops team	47%	52%
A single individual	45%	44%
No ops function	4%	0%
Product ops as a shared responsibility across multiple roles	4%	4%

That over half of US organizations surveyed have established dedicated ops teams (comprising multiple members) suggests that American companies are, at least to some extent, ahead of their global counterparts in formalizing and scaling the function.

This aligns with broader industry trends, as US-based companies (particularly in the tech and SaaS spaces) have been early adopters of product ops, often integrating the function into their growth strategies as they scale.

The structure of product ops teams

“Businesses do not need product ops people, but they do need to focus their time and energy on product ops – though often this translates into dedicated people or portions of other staff’s time. Establishing that formal function creates an office for problem solving internally, driving all communications and collaboration standards, data usage, improvement, efficiency, and all the other core tenants of product ops.”



Graham Reed,

Head of Product Operations at HeliosX Group

HeliosX

The structure of product ops teams

Product ops function structures by industry

Industry	% of companies with a dedicated product ops team (comprising multiple members)	% of companies with a dedicated product ops individual	% of companies with product ops as a shared responsibility
Financial Services	44%	44%	12%
Healthcare	80%	20%	0%
Hospitality, Leisure, and Travel	46%	46%	4%
Data, infrastructure, telecoms	50%	50%	0%
Professional Services	80%	20%	0%

The structure of product ops teams

How do dedicated product ops functions operate?

Given the prominence of formal ops teams comprising multiple members (particularly in industries like healthcare and professional services) we wanted to pay closer attention to how these teams operate in practice.

To do this, we asked respondents to outline whether their function was centralized (i.e. working across all product teams), or decentralized (i.e. embedded within specific product teams).

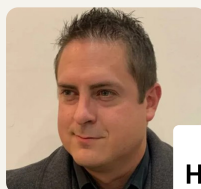
Operating arrangement	Dedicated teams	Dedicated individuals
Centralized	76%	85%
Decentralized	0%	5%
Hybrid	24%	0%
No formal arrangement	0%	9%

For both individuals and teams, centralization is the dominant operating model, reflecting a desire for consistency, visibility, and efficiency at scale – particularly in regulated or operationally intensive environments. Intriguingly, hybrid models appear to be emerging in more established organizations (with larger product ops functions).

The structure of product ops teams

Although centralization is by far the most prominent model, it has its drawbacks as well as its advantages. Graham Reed and Clare Hawthorne explain:

“This central way of working provides a holistic view to standardise and drive interoperability for all teams, and think more about how businesses see the product division – as one, not a set of teams. Silos are far easier to break down from the outside and best practises can be shared easily.”



HeliosX

Graham Reed,

Head of Product Operations at HeliosX Group

“Centralization comes with a risk: to be effective, Product Ops must actively seek feedback from their users and stakeholders – just like any good product function would. Embedded teams naturally stay closer to their users, making feedback loops easier. In a centralized model, it’s critical to take extra steps to avoid building in an ivory tower.”

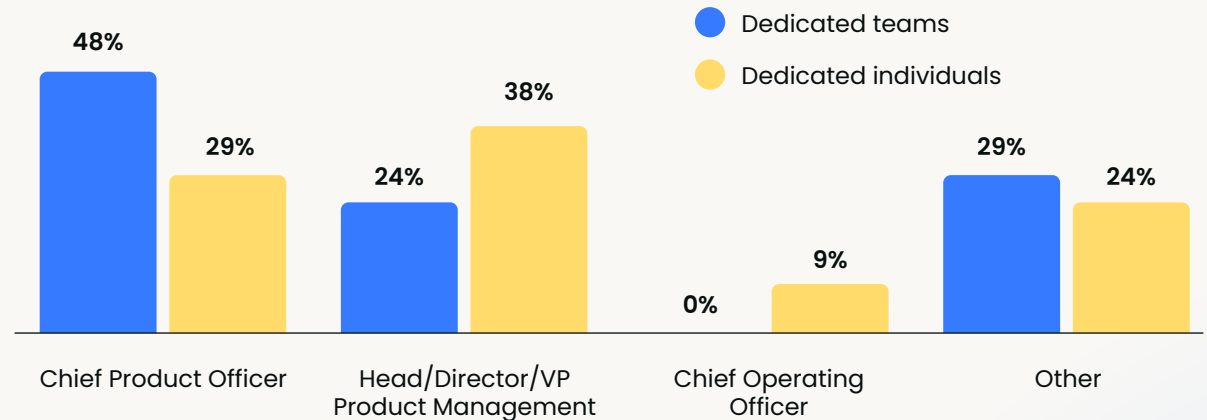


Clare Hawthorne,

Product Operations and Engineering Leader

The structure of product ops teams

Product ops reporting lines



Encouragingly, almost half of product ops teams report into the most senior product leader — often the Chief Product Officer (CPO) or the Head, VP, or Director of Product — signaling growing recognition of the function as a strategic enabler closely aligned with top-level priorities. Titles may vary depending on company size and structure, but the trend is clear: Product Ops is increasingly embedded within the highest levels of product leadership.

Even in leaner organizations with just a single product ops individual, a cumulative 67% report directly to product leadership. This suggests that, regardless of scale, companies see value in tightly integrating product ops with the core product decision-making function.

However, what's particularly striking in the data is the high percentage of product ops functions reporting into roles outside of product. These include roles like Chief Technology Officer, VP of Engineering, and Head of Infrastructure. This ambiguity suggests that product ops either still lacks a consistent "home" in some organizations, or is seen as a highly cross-functional role that touches a range of departments outside of product.

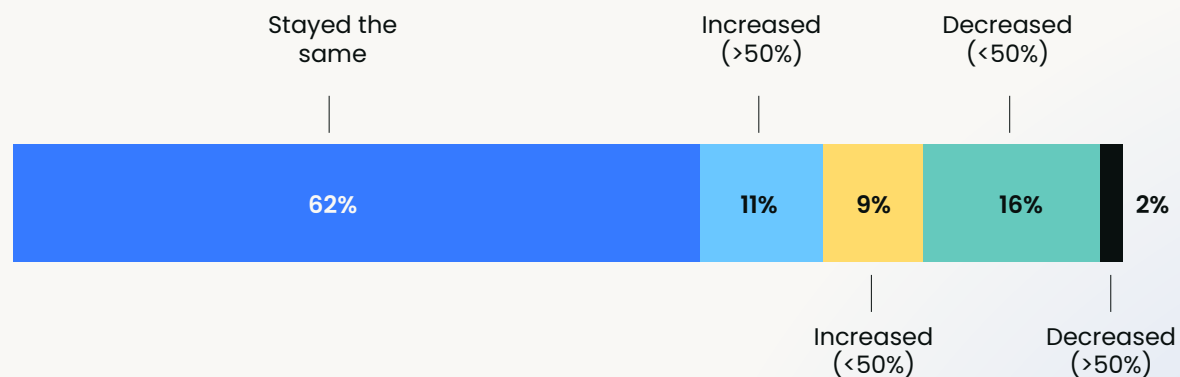
The structure of product ops teams

The growth of product ops teams

Product operations teams have remained relatively stable over the past year, with 62% of respondents reporting no change in team size.

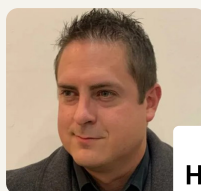
Growth is still occurring, however. A fifth of organizations reported an increase in product ops headcount, with 11% seeing growth of over 50%.

A further 19% of organizations have experienced a decline in headcount. However, only 2% of businesses surveyed reported a substantial (+50%) reduction in team size.



The structure of product ops teams

“Headcounts have dropped in tech, and where Product Ops has survived, it is being tasked with enabling teams to do more with less, and so themselves they are asked to do more without investment. The concern will be if businesses begin rapid growth again (which we have slowly started to see in the past 6 months), that Product Ops does not scale with it, and due to the sheer volume of work, the apparent effectiveness of Product Ops drops.”



HeliosX

Graham Reed,

Head of Product Operations at HeliosX Group

“Many organizations still see product ops as a “nice-to-have” rather than a core function, especially during tighter economic cycles. When resources are constrained, roles that sit between functions often get deprioritized—ironically, just when clarity and coordination are needed most. I also think many companies haven’t yet figured out how to measure or communicate the ROI of product ops, which makes it an easy target during headcount reviews.”



GitHub

Chris Butler,

Product Operations Manager at Github

The structure of product ops teams

Function growth by industry

When we look at function growth by industry, we can see significant variations.

Respondents from data infrastructure & telecoms and professional services firms reported the strongest growth, likely reflecting the increasing reliance on data-driven decision-making and operational efficiency in these industries.

Financial services and healthcare, on the other hand, present a more mixed picture, with both expansion and contraction occurring over the last 12 months. In finance, a third of organizations reduced their headcount, perhaps due to economic pressures or restructuring, while healthcare saw both 20% growth and 40% reductions, indicating uneven investment.

	Financial services	Healthcare	Hospitality, Leisure, travel	Data, infrastructure, telecoms	Professional services
Stayed the same	55%	40%	80%	50%	60%
Increased	12%	20%	0%	50%	40%
Decreased	33%	40%	20%	0%	0%



Part 3

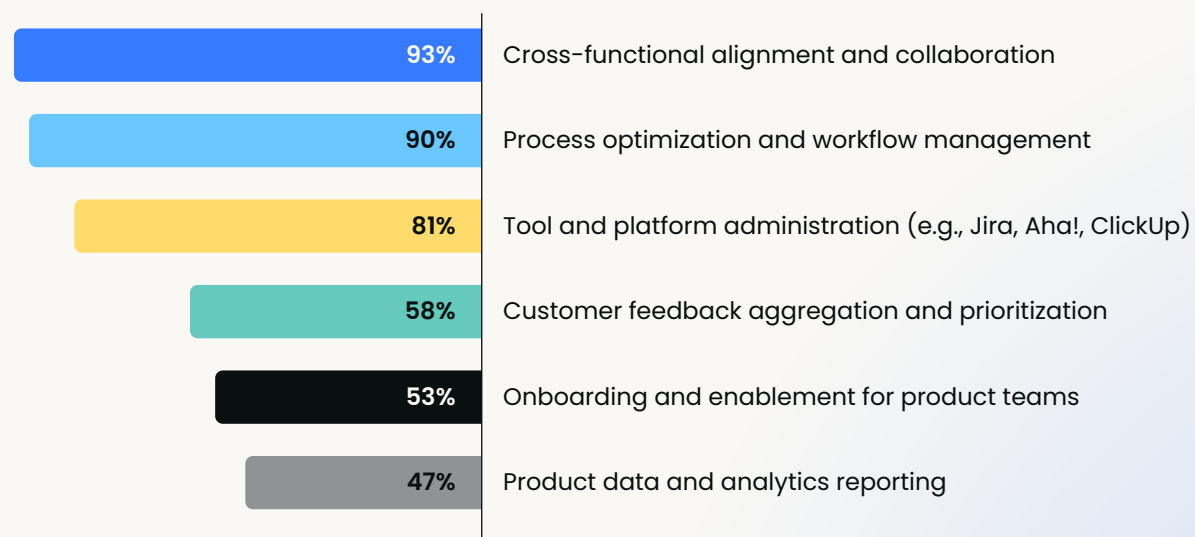
Responsibilities

Responsibilities

What are the primary responsibilities of product ops functions?

To gain a richer understanding of the nature of product operations in 2025, we provided respondents with a number of responsibilities typically associated with the role, and asked them to select those they considered to be a primary responsibility of their function. Respondents were able to select multiple options.

% of respondents who consider it be to a core responsibility of their product ops function



The responses point to a clear consensus on several responsibilities, and a divergence of opinion on others.

Unsurprisingly, cross-functional alignment and process optimization achieved near-unanimity as core responsibilities of product ops. This aligns neatly with the function's foundational mandate of ensuring product teams operate efficiently, collaborate effectively, and work to reduce friction in workflows.

Responsibilities

Similarly, 81% view tool and platform administration as a core responsibility, reinforcing the idea that product ops plays a vital role in managing the infrastructure that supports seamless product development.

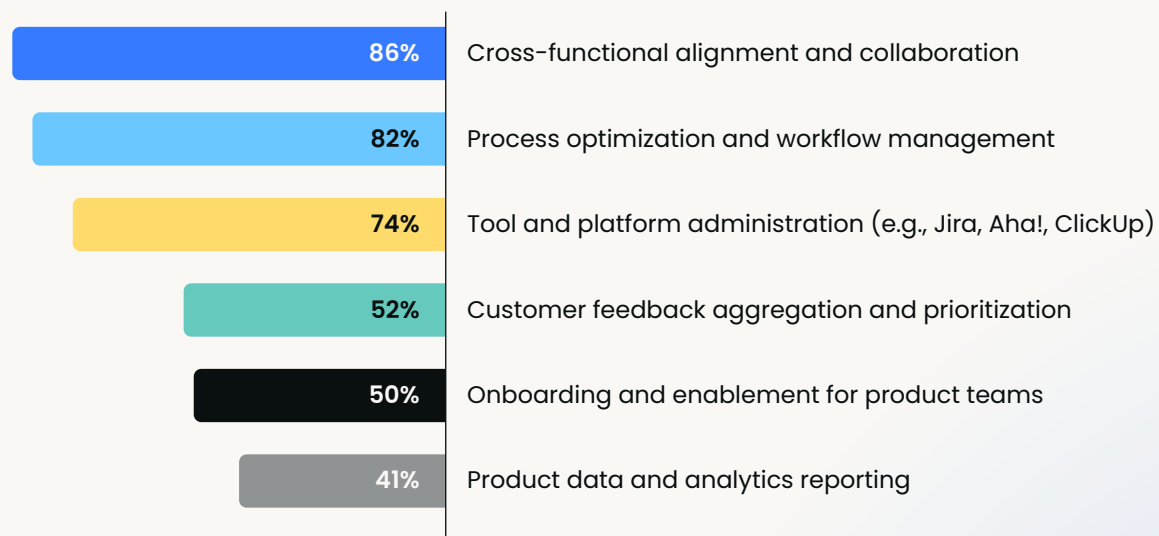
However, the data also suggests that the link between product ops and other responsibilities is less clear. Customer feedback aggregation (58%) and onboarding/enablement for product teams (53%) have mixed adoption, likely depending on company structure and size.

Even more strikingly, less than half (47%) consider product data and analytics reporting a core function of Product Ops, despite the function's emphasis on data-driven decision-making. This likely indicates that in many organizations – particularly large ones – data responsibilities are owned by dedicated analytics teams rather than Product Ops.

Responsibilities

What are the key focuses for solo product ops functions?

% of solo product ops practitioners who consider it to be a core responsibility



When isolating solo product ops practitioners, we see very little change in the overall trends. Among both team and solo functions, there's a strong consensus that cross-functional alignment (86%) and process optimization (82%) are core responsibilities.

Interestingly, the drop in ownership of responsibilities like customer feedback aggregation (52%), onboarding (50%), and especially product data and analytics reporting (41%) suggests that solo practitioners often have to prioritize high-impact, cross-team initiatives and may delegate or deprioritize responsibilities that require deep specialization or significant time investment.

What other responsibilities are product ops functions taking on?

"Quarterly planning, MBR & QBR reporting"

"IT Governance, PMO, Budget & Vendor Management"

"Product documentation, release management"

"GTM, Project Management, and Program Management"

"Pricing policy"

"User Research"

"CapEx, Governance & IT Internal Controls, Hackathons"

"Product Strategy. Leading the Product and Product Design Teams"

"Documentation and internal communications"

"Devops and release planning"

"Roadmap planning & Annual Planning alignment"

"Roadmap planning & Annual Planning alignment"

Responsibilities

What does this tell us about the evolution of product ops?

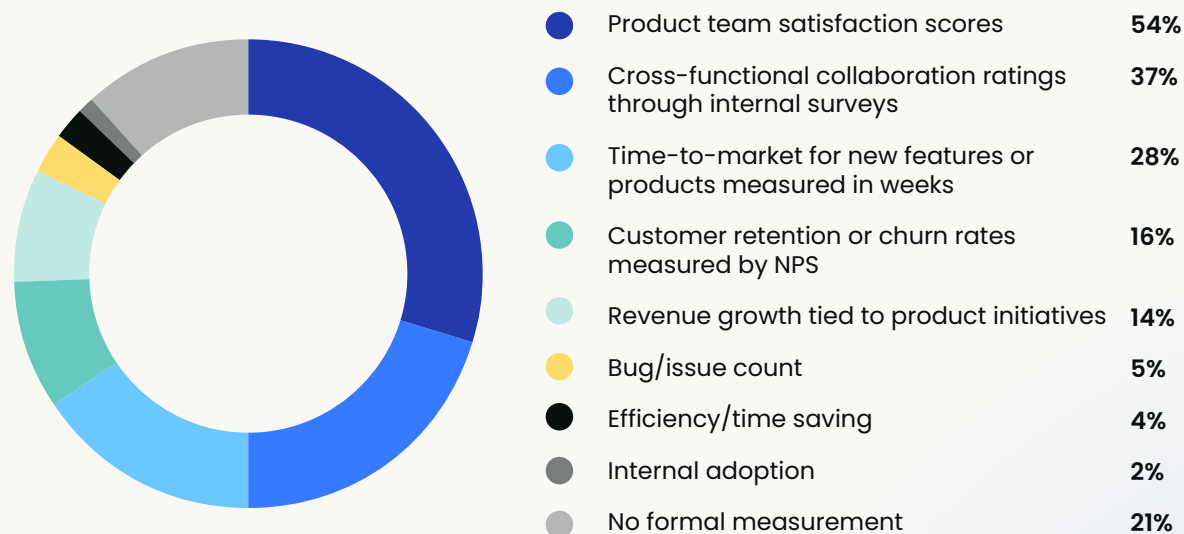
When asked to identify additional responsibilities that are central to the product operations function, several respondents highlight a broader strategic scope for Product Ops than what's typically considered "core."

For example, mentions of product strategy, roadmap planning, and annual planning alignment suggest that in some organizations, product operations professionals are stepping into strategic leadership roles — supporting (or even guiding) product direction, rather than purely enabling delivery. This points to a maturing function, particularly in environments where product ops is closely embedded with senior product leadership.

Similarly, a notable cluster of responsibilities revolves around governance, planning rhythms, and reporting — with references to CapEx, IT governance, PMO, QBR/MBR reporting, and planning cadences. These responses show how product ops often takes on the orchestration of key business processes, acting as the connective tissue between product teams and wider org planning cycles. This operational backbone of the function is especially important in larger, or more regulated, companies.

Responsibilities

How is product ops measured?



Measuring the impact of product operations remains a challenge for many teams. In fact, one in five respondents say they have no formal method in place for evaluating the function's success. That said, progress is underway—the number of companies without a formal measurement approach has dropped by half since we last asked this question in 2023.

Among those that do track product ops efficacy, the focus tends to be on qualitative, team-centric metrics. More than half (54%) use product team satisfaction scores, while 37% rely on ratings of cross-functional collaboration. These signals point to a broader trend: product ops is still largely viewed as an enablement function, with success measured by how effectively it supports internal teams, drives alignment, and boosts morale and efficiency.

Responsibilities

Measuring the impact of product operations remains a challenge for many teams. In fact, one in five respondents say they have no formal method in place for evaluating the function's success. That said, progress is underway—the number of companies without a formal measurement approach has dropped by half since we last asked this question in 2023.

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Another notable finding is that 16% of product ops functions are measured on customer retention/churn rates – this is up from just 7% in 2023. One possible factor driving this is the tightening economic landscape many organizations have faced over the past two years. With a stronger focus on efficiency, retention, and sustainable growth, customer-centric metrics like churn and Net Promoter Score (NPS) have become more critical across all functions, including product ops. Across businesses, teams are being asked to connect their work more directly to business resilience and recurring revenue, especially in SaaS and subscription-based models.

“Product Operations should primarily focus on improving key operating model metrics. This can differ from organization to organization, so I recommend mapping out the PDLC and indicating key moments in the journey that can/should be measured. Some fundamental measurements are: Time to Problem Discovered, Time to Solution Discovered, and Value of Feedback.”



Aerospike

Topher Fox,
Director of Product Operations at Aerospike

Responsibilities

“When it comes to measuring product ops, start simple. Are product teams making better, faster decisions? Are they spending more time on customer problems and less time wrestling with process or tools? As you mature, layer in metrics that show the health of your operating system—things like data adoption, consistency in rituals, and alignment across roadmaps. One overlooked but critical metric: retention of product talent. High retention is a signal that the systems, support, and clarity provided by product ops are making the product org a place where people can thrive.”



Chris Butler,

Product Operations Manager at Github

Responsibilities

The prevalence of automation in product ops

In an effort to understand how product ops practitioners function day-to-day, we asked respondents to share the extent to which their operations workflows are automated.

Level of automation	All respondents	Dedicated product ops function	No formal product ops function
Very little automation	30%	29%	50%
Some automation	32%	36%	0%
Moderate automation	31%	31%	20%
High levels of automation	7%	5%	30%

Among all respondents, the majority fall into the low to moderate automation range (64%), suggesting while automation is becoming a part of the product ops toolkit, its potential is still far from being fully realized across the board.

But what really stands out is the contrast between organizations that have dedicated function and those that have no formal product ops function. Among the latter, half of respondents employ very little automation, likely pointing to the presence of operational processes that are more ad hoc, manual, or distributed across roles with little coordination. And yet, a surprising 30% of respondents in the same group report high levels of automation.

This could reflect situations where automation has been built into the tech stack itself (e.g., CI/CD pipelines, integrated analytics dashboards), where it's owned by engineering, DevOps, or IT (rather than by a formal product ops team).

Overall, the data suggests that while automation is growing in importance for product ops, the reality is that most organizations still operate with limited levels of automation. And, crucially, the presence of a formal, permanent team doesn't always equate to high automation maturity.

Responsibilities



Productboard Perspective:

Automation in Product Ops often feels aspirational—something teams deeply desire but find challenging to fully implement. The current reality reflects this tension, with most organizations still operating at low to moderate automation maturity. Interestingly, achieving meaningful automation isn't solely dependent on having a dedicated Product Ops function; even teams without formal structures have found success through cross-functional collaboration.

As AI-driven workflows gain traction, we expect more teams, regardless of their formal Product Ops setup, to leverage automation for greater efficiency and strategic impact.

Part 4

Collaboration and Effectiveness

Collaboration and Effectiveness

Cross-departmental collaboration

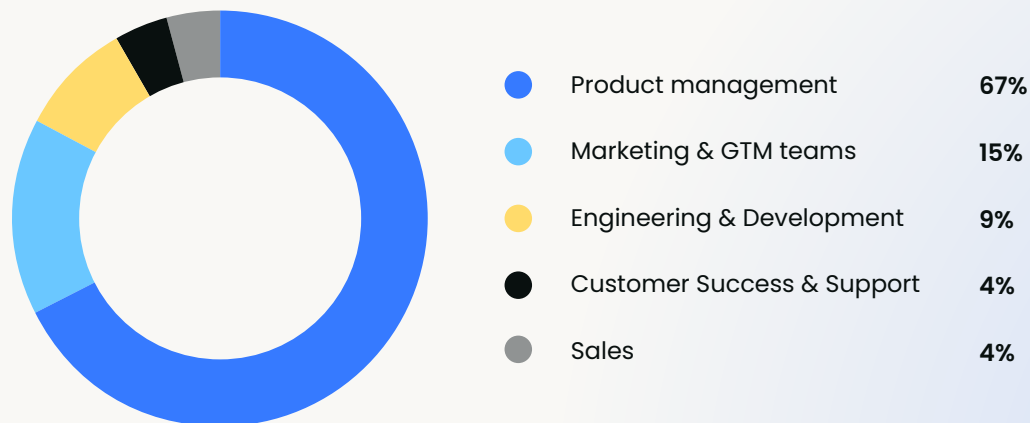
Which departments does product ops prioritize for collaboration?

When asked to outline the departments that are prioritized for collaboration, two-thirds of respondents pointed to product management as their primary partner.

That PM is largely prioritized for collaboration by product ops practitioners isn't surprising. What is surprising, though, is the fact a third of respondents didn't identify PM as the department with which they collaborate the most.

One possible explanation is that in some organizations, product ops may have evolved from, or be embedded within, broader operational or program management functions, leading them to naturally work more directly with marketing, engineering, or GTM teams.

It could also reflect role ambiguity, a challenge we've seen repeatedly across throughout this study — where the responsibilities of product ops functions are still fluid, and collaboration patterns depend heavily on company maturity, structure, and leadership support.



Collaboration and Effectiveness

How does product ops collaborate with other departments?

Type of collaboration	All respondents	Centralized product ops teams
Ad hoc collaboration	37%	33%
Shared platforms or tools	31%	24%
Regular cross-departmental meetings	22%	24%
Dedicated product ops liaisons	9%	19%
Minimal collaboration	2%	0%

Even for centralized product ops teams, ad hoc collaboration is the most common mode, indicating that many product ops professionals are still working in a reactive or informal capacity when dealing with other departments.

Where centralized functions really stand out is in the use of dedicated liaisons, with **19%** reporting the use of this structured model of collaboration (compared to just **9%** overall).

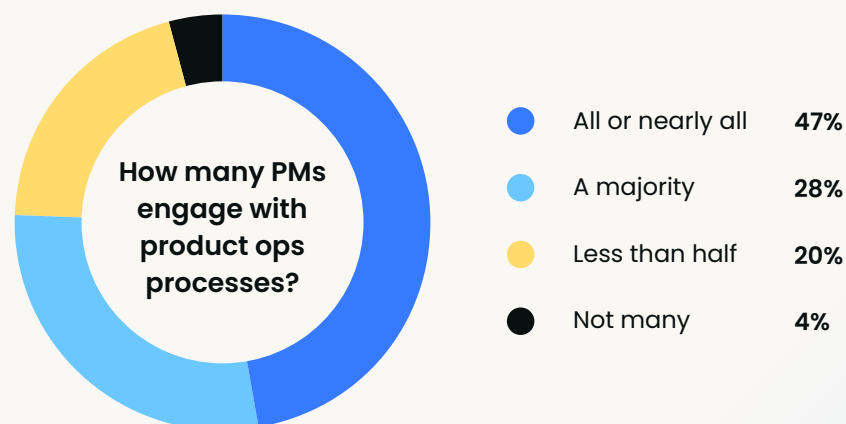
We can infer from this that as product ops matures into a more formal, standalone function, there's a stronger push toward greater clarity, ownership, and consistent communication channels, often via individuals tasked with managing specific cross-departmental relationships.

Most importantly, though, is the finding that minimal collaboration is rare across the board – and non-existent in organizations with an established, centralized ops function. This reinforces the idea that product ops is inherently cross-functional, and its value is most evident when working across boundaries to unify processes, data, and goals.

Collaboration and Effectiveness

Product manager engagement

With product management being the key collaboration partner for product ops functions, we asked respondents to outline the extent to which product managers within their organizations actively engage with product ops processes and resources.



When looking at product manager engagement levels, the data is encouraging, with over three-quarters of respondents reporting that a majority of PMs engage with product ops resources and processes. One conclusion we can take from this is that product ops is generally seen as a valuable and well-integrated partner in the product development process, with PMs regularly relying on its frameworks, tools, and support.

The picture isn't entirely positive, however. A fifth of respondents reported that fewer than half of PMs actively engage with product ops processes, pointing to gaps in visibility, adoption, or alignment.

Collaboration and Effectiveness

“Engage with the PMs, take the initiative. Find out what they need, empathise but also understand what the business needs and is asking of them. Small changes to things that irk them will make a big difference to them, and will begin to build trust between you. This is a relationship that needs to build and blossom. Ensure they know WHY you are building x process, and what the value to them is.”



HeliosX

Graham Reed,

Head of Product Operations at HeliosX Group

“Identify your champions: test early and often with them -- in fact, treat them as design partners in some cases. In other words, make it relevant to PMs and they will be invested.”



Aerospike

Topher Fox,

Director of Product Operations at Aerospike

Collaboration and Effectiveness

“If PMs aren’t engaging, it usually means the product ops work doesn’t feel immediately useful—or it’s too abstract. My advice: meet them where they are. Focus on quick wins that remove pain from their day-to-day, and invite them into the process of co-creating solutions. Turn these wins into systemic change. Product ops shouldn’t feel like an internal compliance function; it should feel like a force multiplier. When you make that shift, engagement follows.”

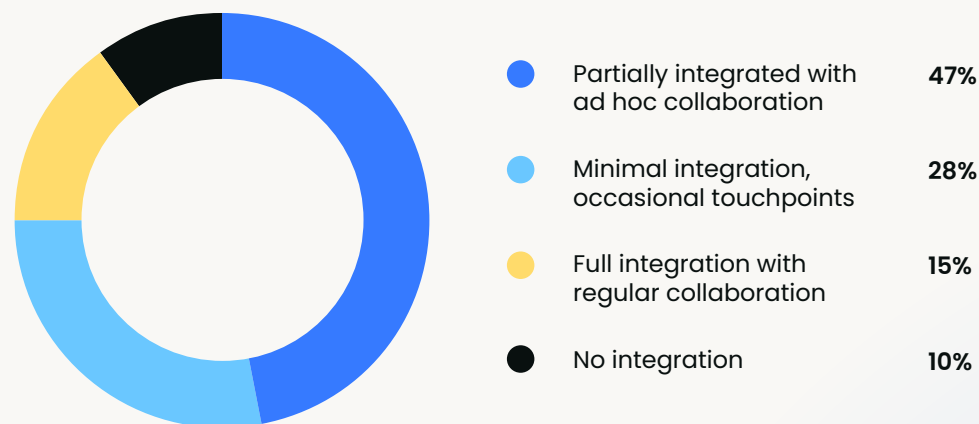


Chris Butler,
Product Operations Manager at Github

Collaboration and Effectiveness

Product ops and customer-facing teams

Next, we turned to the nature of collaboration between product ops and more customer-facing business functions (specifically sales and customer success).



The data reinforces a recurring theme we've seen throughout the report, namely that while product ops is maturing as a function, its broader impact outside the immediate realms of product and engineering is still in development.

That 47% of respondents describe their collaboration as "partially integrated with ad hoc collaboration" suggests that many product ops teams are involved with customer-facing teams, but not consistently or strategically.

This aligns with earlier data showing that while Product Ops is having a growing internal impact (especially in cross-functional collaboration, GTM support, and process optimization), its role in bridging external-facing functions is less well-defined. These relationships exist, sure. But they're often reactive rather than embedded in structured workflows or shared outcomes.

Collaboration and Effectiveness

We asked Topher Fox to outline what poorly defined collaboration with external-facing teams means for the function:

“Product Operations should work with the ideal consumers of a product management’s output, which includes Sales and CS. This is absolutely an opportunity for improvement for Product Operations teams. Sales and CS rely on product teams delivering value to the market to help make customers successful and for deals to close – if Product Operations isn’t shepherding that, there is a problem.”



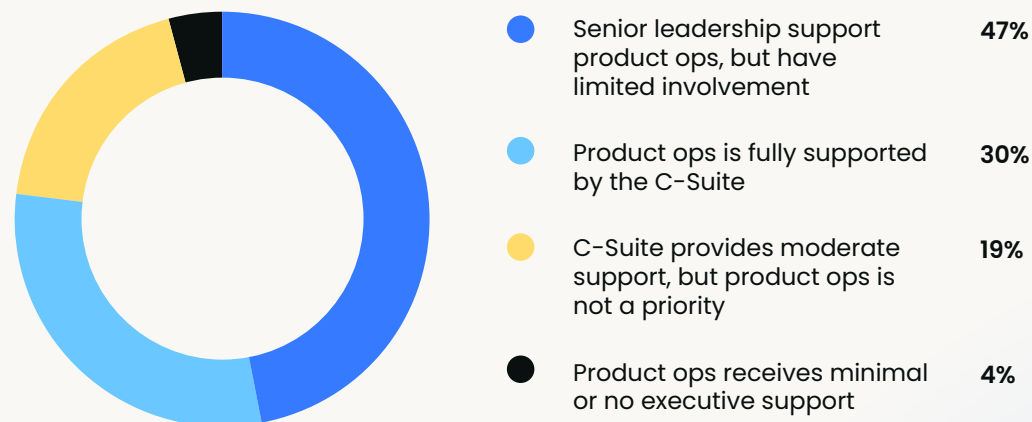
 Aerospike

Topher Fox,

Director of Product Operations at Aerospike

Collaboration and Effectiveness

Executive sponsorship



While product ops generally receives significant leadership backing, there remains a broad spectrum in how the function is supported by key stakeholders. A plurality of respondents report receiving support from senior leadership, but only to a limited extent. This would suggest that while the function is seen as valuable, it can often operate only at arm's length from the executive agenda.

That said, close to a third of practitioners reported full C-suite sponsorship, pointing to a growing recognition of product ops as a key strategic partner.

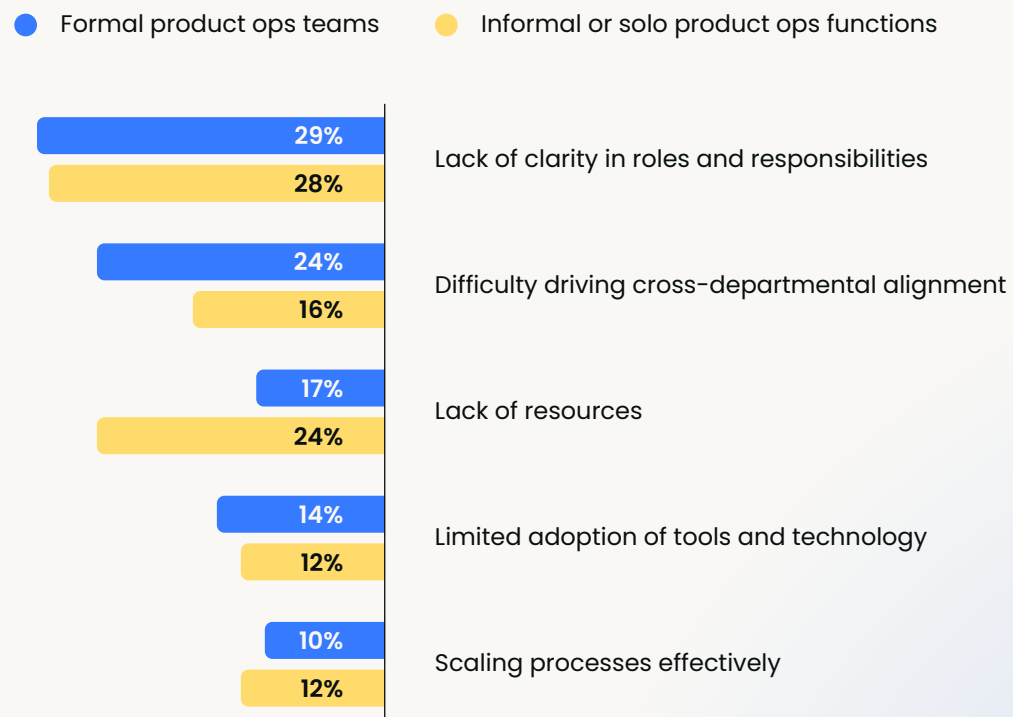


Part 5

Challenges

Challenges

Strategic and structural challenges in product operations



Perhaps unsurprisingly, a lack of clarity around roles and responsibilities stands out as the primary challenge for product ops practitioners. This type of role ambiguity appears to be something of a universal growing pain for the function, and a consequence of the fact that product operations remains an emerging and evolving field.

Confusion around ownership, boundaries with product management, and overlap with other operational and support roles are common complaints among product ops professionals.

Challenges

“This is a classic growing pain for hybrid or enabling functions. Product ops sits at the intersection of strategy, execution, and coordination, which means it often overlaps with other functions—or inherits their gaps. One common anti-pattern is when product ops over-indexes on coordination, which can start to blur the lines with project or program management. The distinction lies in intention: coordination is often about risk reduction, while collaboration is about driving innovation. Product ops thrives when it emphasizes collaborative systems that support innovation, not just execution.

The key to avoiding confusion is proactive communication and strong relationships. If you're doing good work but no one knows where you fit, the problem isn't just your scope—it's your story. Make the value legible, and the role will follow.”



Chris Butler,
Product Operations Manager at Github

“The lack of clarity in Product Ops roles is persistent because the function is highly context-dependent. The needs of a growth-stage SaaS company, a mature service-based business, or an enterprise operating at scale can vary widely.”



Clare Hawthorne,
Product Operations and Engineering Leader

Challenges

Interestingly, cross-functional alignment appears to be a more pressing challenge among dedicated product ops functions. On closer inspection, this is unsurprising. In environments that lack a formal function, product ops responsibilities are typically carried out by individuals already embedded within product, engineering, or other related departments. Such arrangements naturally reduce friction and foster great alignment. Conversely, standalone product ops functions are more likely to encounter resistance and siloed working practices.

But the limitations of informal arrangements are apparent when it comes to resourcing. Informal product ops functions can often be understaffed (or found functioning as a side-of-desk responsibility), without the headcount, budget, or executive backing that dedicated teams may receive.

Challenges

Daily challenges in product ops



When looking at day-to-day challenges in product operations, we can really begin to see the differences between formal teams and informal/solo functions.

For informal functions, volume of ad hoc requests (32%) stands out as the most significant daily challenge, likely due to the fact that such teams and individuals are often performing product ops duties on top of another role. In the absence of clear boundaries (a perennial problem in product ops) and a centralized structure, workloads can be consumed by repetitive tasks.

Challenges

Informal functions also report higher struggles with constantly shifting priorities (20%) and a lack of standardized processes (24%), further underscoring the challenges of operating without dedicated ownership or a defined framework.

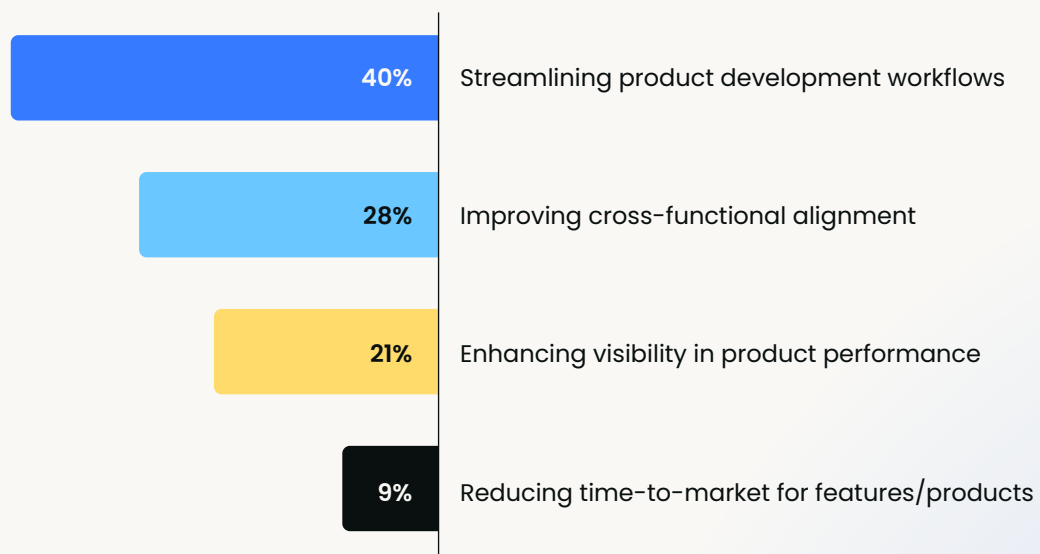
Dedicated teams, on the other hand, face a very different set of daily headaches - most notably the issue of siloed tools and data sources (24%), pointing to the inherent complexity of integrating systems across disjointed departments.

Similarly, while dedicated practitioners face fewer ad hoc interruptions, they do report higher levels of frustration around a lack of stakeholder buy-in (20%) and process inconsistency (19%), indicating that even with formal structure, product ops still has to work hard to embed its influence and drive adoption across teams.

Challenges

Resolving product ops pain points

In order to understand the progress product ops teams are making in resolving challenges and issues, we asked respondents to outline the most significant pain point they had resolved within the last year.



Part 6

The future of product operations

The future of product operations

The evolution of product operations

The evolution of product operations over a one-year horizon



The evolution of product operations over a three-year horizon



The future of product operations

“I agree that automation and AI will become more and more a tool for Product Ops to implement at various stages of the mapped workflow of product management, technology development and business operations. The evolution will be focused around how each section of that workflow can be reduced, automated or handed over to AI, and how that section can connect to another and another. BUT, those ways of working need to be established first, before we know what can, and cannot, be automated. This is the evolution of Product Ops, and not any form of demise.”



Graham Reed,
Head of Product Operations at HeliosX Group

HeliosX

“Work models are changing quickly and dramatically, and they’re here to solve for the many, many optimizations Product Operations deals with every day. Agentic workflows will change the way we execute key activities in Product Management, Design, and Research -- Product Operations needs to be ahead of the curve and ready to optimize.”



Topher Fox,
Director of Product Operations at Aerospike

Aerospike

Opportunities for product ops teams

To gain a deeper insight into how practitioners see the product ops function evolving, we asked respondents to share what they thought were the biggest opportunities in 2025. Respondents were asked to identify the leading opportunity for internal impact as well as the most significant opportunity for external (i.e. customer-facing) impact.



●	Enhancing cross-functional collaboration	19%
●	Supporting better go-to-market execution	17%
●	Optimizing product development processes	15%
●	Improving data accessibility and insights scaling operational frameworks	13%
●	Leveraging AI and automation	13%
●	Increasing strategic influence within leadership	10%
●	Driving customer-centricity	9%



●	Enhancing customer feedback loops	28%
●	Increasing transparency around the product roadmap	19%
●	Ensuring product updates align with customer needs	17%
●	Improving product onboarding and adoption	13%
●	Reducing time-to-market for new features	11%
●	Bridging the gap between sales and product	9%
●	Optimizing self-service resources	2%



The future of product operations

Where can product ops add value?

Starting on the internal side, it's clear that the top opportunity is enhancing cross-functional collaboration – a mandate that aligns closely with the function's core role as a connector, or bridge, between product, engineering, marketing, and customer-facing teams. Close behind are opportunities to better support go-to-market (GTM) execution (17%) and optimize product development processes (15%). Both objectives point to the function's expanding influence on speed, alignment, and operational efficiency.

Importantly, opportunities like leveraging AI and automation (13%) and improving data accessibility (13%) also rank strongly, reflecting growing interest in using technology to scale decision-making and reduce manual overhead. In an era of corporate belt-tightening, and drives toward greater efficiency, it's no surprise that practitioners are looking to leverage new technologies to yield greater automation and decision-making clarity.

Turning to the external, or customer-facing, influence of product ops, the clear opportunity appears to be enhancing customer feedback loops (28%). Other notable areas include increasing transparency around the roadmap (19%) and ensuring that updates align with customer needs (17%). Both aspirations speak to the function's role in improving communication and closing the loop between product teams and customers.

Taken together, the findings suggest that product ops professionals generally see themselves as critical enablers of internal alignment and process efficiency, while also playing a growing (though still somewhat secondary) role in improving customer-facing outcomes, especially around feedback and transparency.

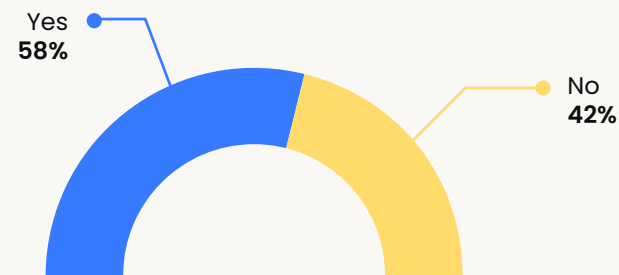
Part 7

Tools and technologies in product ops

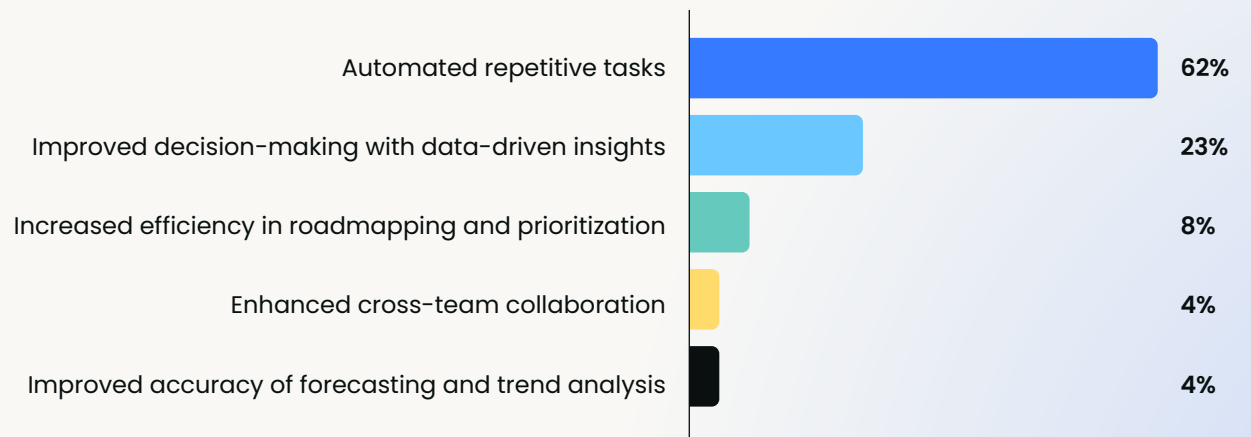
Tools and technologies in product ops

AI in product operations

Has the introduction of artificial intelligence tools positively impacted your product operations team?



How has AI impacted your team?



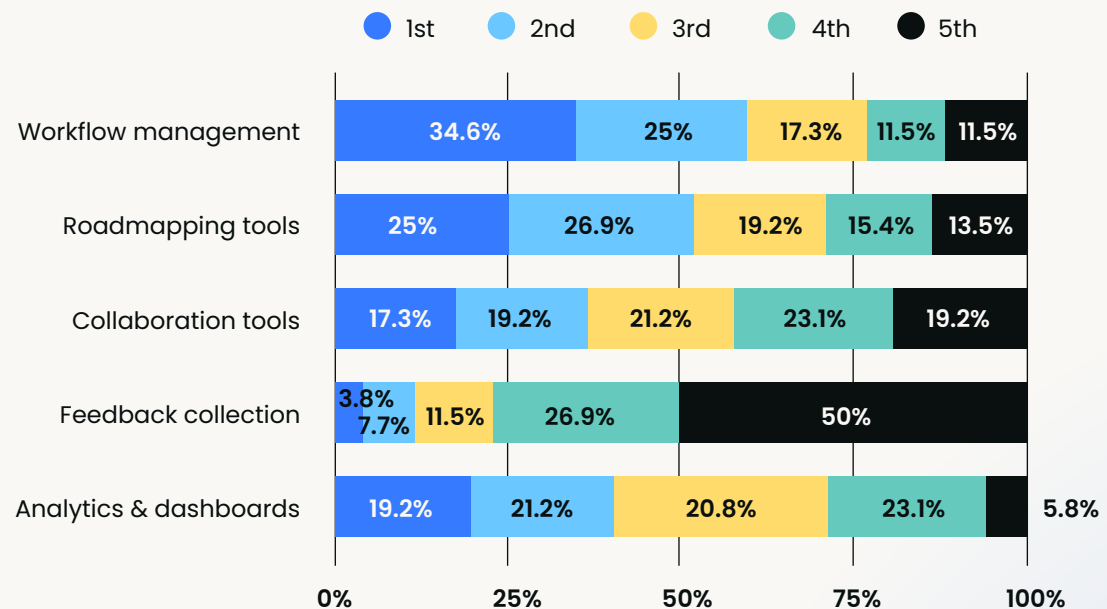
Tools and technologies in product ops

Given the heavy operational burden on product ops teams, it's little surprise that AI tools are being leveraged primarily to streamline manual, time-consuming processes. Such processes typically include updating dashboards, compiling reports, managing workflows, or maintaining tools – tasks that are all prime candidates for automation.

Beyond process automation, the adoption of AI for more strategic or collaborative functions remains relatively low – at least for now. Only 23% report improved decision-making via data-driven insights, suggesting that while AI has the potential to enhance strategic planning, its use in analytics and insight generation is still emerging in many orgs.

Tools and technologies in product ops

What are the most valuable tools for product ops teams?



Workflow management tools (like Jira, Asana, Trello) emerge as the most consistently essential, with nearly 60% of respondents placing them in their top two ranks, and over a third (34.6%) ranking them as their most important tool. This isn't surprising. Workflow tools are, after all, the operational backbone of product teams, helping manage day-to-day delivery, team coordination, and execution tracking.

Roadmapping tools (e.g., Productboard, Aha!) are also highly valued among product ops practitioners, with over 50% of respondents ranking them in their top two slots. This suggests that product ops is playing a strategic role in driving visibility and alignment around product planning, not just operations.

Tools and technologies in product ops

Conversely, feedback collection tools are generally seen as lower priority. Half of respondents ranked them last, and only 4% gave them top billing. This may be because feedback aggregation is often owned by other teams (like UX, product marketing, or customer success), or because it's seen as a later-stage maturity function within product ops. It's valuable, but perhaps not core to day-to-day operations for many teams.

While this survey categorizes tooling based on specific Product Ops functions, the growing shift toward comprehensive product management platforms—capable of unifying multiple capabilities into a single, holistic workflow—positions Product Ops as a powerful force multiplier for organizations across industries.



Productboard Perspective:

As we saw earlier in the survey, 58% of respondents view Customer Feedback & Prioritization as core to Product Ops, but many fewer reported feedback collection tools as the most valuable to their team.

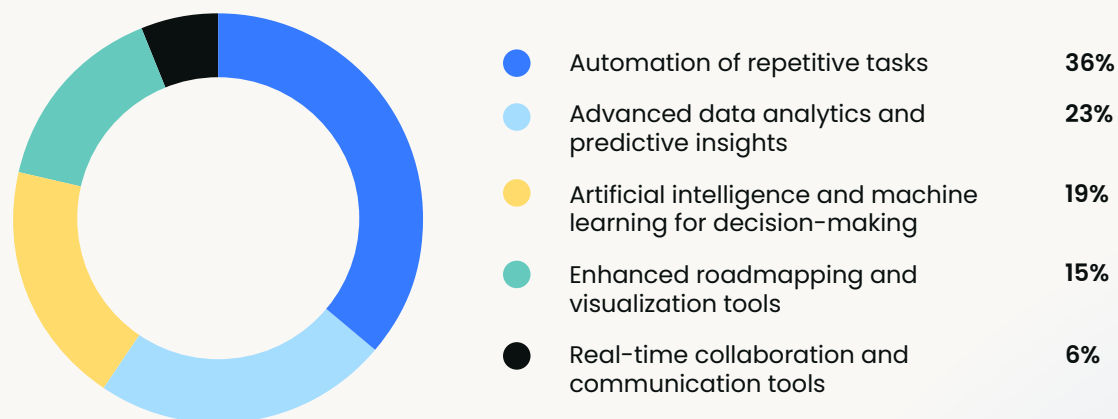
This may reflect a historical gap: teams recognize the importance of seeing what matters most to customers and using it to inform product decision-making, but until now this has required time-intensive manual categorization and analysis.

That's finally changing with recent advances in AI categorization of customer feedback. What was once infeasible is now becoming achievable and we predict we'll see a shift in tooling priorities toward AI voice of customer solutions soon."

Tools and technologies in product ops

Emerging technologies in product ops

What emerging trends or technologies are you most excited about in product operations?



When asked about emerging technologies and trends, respondents unsurprisingly highlighted automation as a key priority. Something we've observed consistently in the data is a desire for product ops teams to reduce manual effort and elevate strategic impact – and practitioners are clearly looking to new technologies as a way to help them achieve this.

Similarly, the interest in data analytics solutions and AI/machine learning tools points to a strong appetite among product ops professionals for smarter, more proactive tooling that can help teams move from reactive support to strategic enablement. As tooling matures and AI becomes more accessible, there's clear interest in using it to surface opportunities, forecast impact, and guide prioritization at a much deeper level.



Part 8

Conclusion

Conclusion

Over the last two years, product operations has stepped away from the fringes and into the center of product-led organizations.

No longer an emerging, or poorly-defined, specialty fighting to prove its value, product ops is evolving into the “connective tissue” that binds product teams with broader organizational objectives and customer needs.

The data shows that 96% of surveyed product-led organizations now have some form of product ops in place, with nearly half running dedicated, centralized teams that increasingly report directly to senior product leadership.

This widespread adoption signals a recognition that, as product development becomes ever more complex, the need for specialized operational support has become non-negotiable. The predominant centralized model further underscores how organizations value consistency, visibility, and efficiency at scale.

But growth hasn't come without friction. Despite greater formalization, product ops still faces identity challenges. The top issue? Role clarity. Whether due to overlaps with project management, lack of standardization, or inconsistent tooling, many practitioners still report confusion about where product ops starts and ends.

This ambiguity is especially pronounced in solo or informal setups, where practitioners often juggle wide-ranging responsibilities with limited resources or executive backing.

And yet, against this backdrop of growing pains, the function's influence is expanding. Product ops has become the glue holding product organizations together — connecting product managers, engineers, go-to-market teams, and customer success with a shared rhythm. Practitioners aren't just streamlining processes. Instead, they're shaping strategic direction, stewarding data-informed culture, and increasingly championing customer-centricity.

Conclusion

Notably, the adoption of automation and AI (while still in its early stages) is emerging as a defining theme. Although only 7% report high levels of automation today, nearly half of respondents see AI-driven workflows as central to product ops' three-year future. Teams are hungry for tools that do more than just automate dashboards. They want technologies that enable insight, prediction, and scalable collaboration.

Still, the reality of 2025 is a function split between aspiration and execution. Most teams operate with low to moderate automation maturity. Customer feedback loops and external impact remain inconsistent. And while executive support is growing (30% report full C-suite sponsorship) many practitioners still operate at arm's length from business strategy.

Yet, there's reason for optimism. The pain points of today are pointing directly at the opportunities of tomorrow. The same gaps in feedback, tooling, and collaboration are fueling a renewed focus on clarity, cohesion, and value demonstration.

So, where does product ops go from here?

In short, it goes forward, with intentionality. With a commitment to not just supporting product teams, but empowering them. With a mindset that sees automation as an enabler, not a threat. And with a bold vision that product operations is not a support role, but a strategic engine for customer value and business growth.

The question is no longer "Is product ops necessary?" but rather, "How far can we take it?"

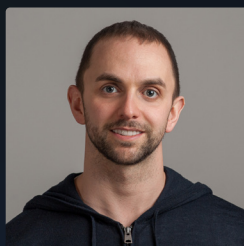
Our *Producers*



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As Head of Content at The Alliance, James combines his technical expertise with a passion for data-driven insights. Specializing in SEO optimization, survey analytics, and digital strategy, he thrives on transforming complex data into actionable solutions.

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Richard King
Founder of Product-Led Alliance

Rich is the Founder of Product-Led Alliance. He's responsible for what happens next with the community, so if you'd like to have your say, don't hesitate to get in touch - Rich is always open to invaluable feedback and ideas.

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Jon Sayer
Senior Graphic Designer at The Alliance

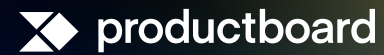
Jon is our talented Graphic Designer who specializes in fulfilling all our design needs. He's in charge of creating the layout and incorporating visual elements in this report and is always eager to hear your thoughts on his designs!

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