

6 Product Pitfalls to Avoid and What to Do Instead



1.No Vision, No Direction

The Pitfall: Without a clear and compelling vision, teams flounder, lacking focus and purpose. Often, teams don't even know who their Product Manager or Product Owner is, who is prioritising the work, or who the stakeholders are. Poor leadership at this stage is a red flag, you can only guess where things are heading.

The Fix: Stop work immediately until roles, responsibilities, and accountability are clear. Align stakeholders, anchor the product to an inspiring vision, and ensure it's shared by everyone from leadership to teams.



2. The “Why” Is Missing

The Pitfall: If teams don't know the “why”, how can they stay motivated or deliver value? You may find this surprising but I have even come across Product Managers/Owners (or the title your organisation uses) who don't know why they're starting an initiative, building a feature or pursuing a project.

The Fix: Make the “why” a cornerstone of product planning. Invite teams to challenge assumptions and dig into the root reasons behind each decision. Tie the work back to user needs, market trends, and business goals to ensure clarity and alignment.



3. Stuck in Slow-Mo

The Pitfall: Teams fail to experiment, test ideas, or inspect and adapt their approach. MVPs balloon into full-fledged projects, reviews are poorly attended, and collaboration dwindles turning sprints into a routine rather than a feedback-driven process.

The Fix: Build a culture of active learning and iteration. Focus reviews on collaboration and outcomes, not status updates. Engage stakeholders early and often. Treat every opportunity to reflect, learn, and improve. Reassess whether your backlog truly supports incremental delivery or just replicates a waterfall approach.



4. Not Being Data Informed or Aligned to Strategy

The Pitfall: Teams ignore key metrics and market trends, failing to monitor and act on them. Roadmaps become static documents, and teams work in silos with little collaboration or transparency creating a disconnect between strategy and delivery.

The Fix: Continuously refine your roadmap using trends, feedback, and performance data. Foster collaboration by breaking silos and aligning teams to a shared strategic vision. Actively use data to inform decisions, ensuring it informs both tactical adjustments and long-term goals.



5. The Customer? Who?

The Pitfall: Teams often lose sight of who their customers really are. Failing to engage with customers, revisit feedback, or adapt to changes in consumer behaviour can result in misalignment. Worse, some teams don't realise that "customers" can include internal stakeholders, like the team next door, not just external end-users.

The Fix: Deepen your understanding of both internal and external customers. Regularly gather, analyse, and act on feedback, using insights to refine your approach. Establish consistent touchpoints and share these insights with your team to keep customers at the forefront.



6. Stop Right Now, Thank You Very Much

The Pitfall: Teams continue pushing forward with initiatives that are clearly not working, wasting time and money on something that no one will use or that's no longer viable.

The Fix: Be brave enough to recognise when something's not working and make the tough call to stop. Regularly evaluate the viability and value of what you're building. Focus on delivering what's truly needed whether that's a pivot, a smaller-scale release, or even discontinuing a feature or product entirely. Stopping early can save both time and your budget will thank you



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