



E-BOOK

GETTING TO MILESTONES IN A VIRTUAL WORLD

A Practical Guide for Product Work

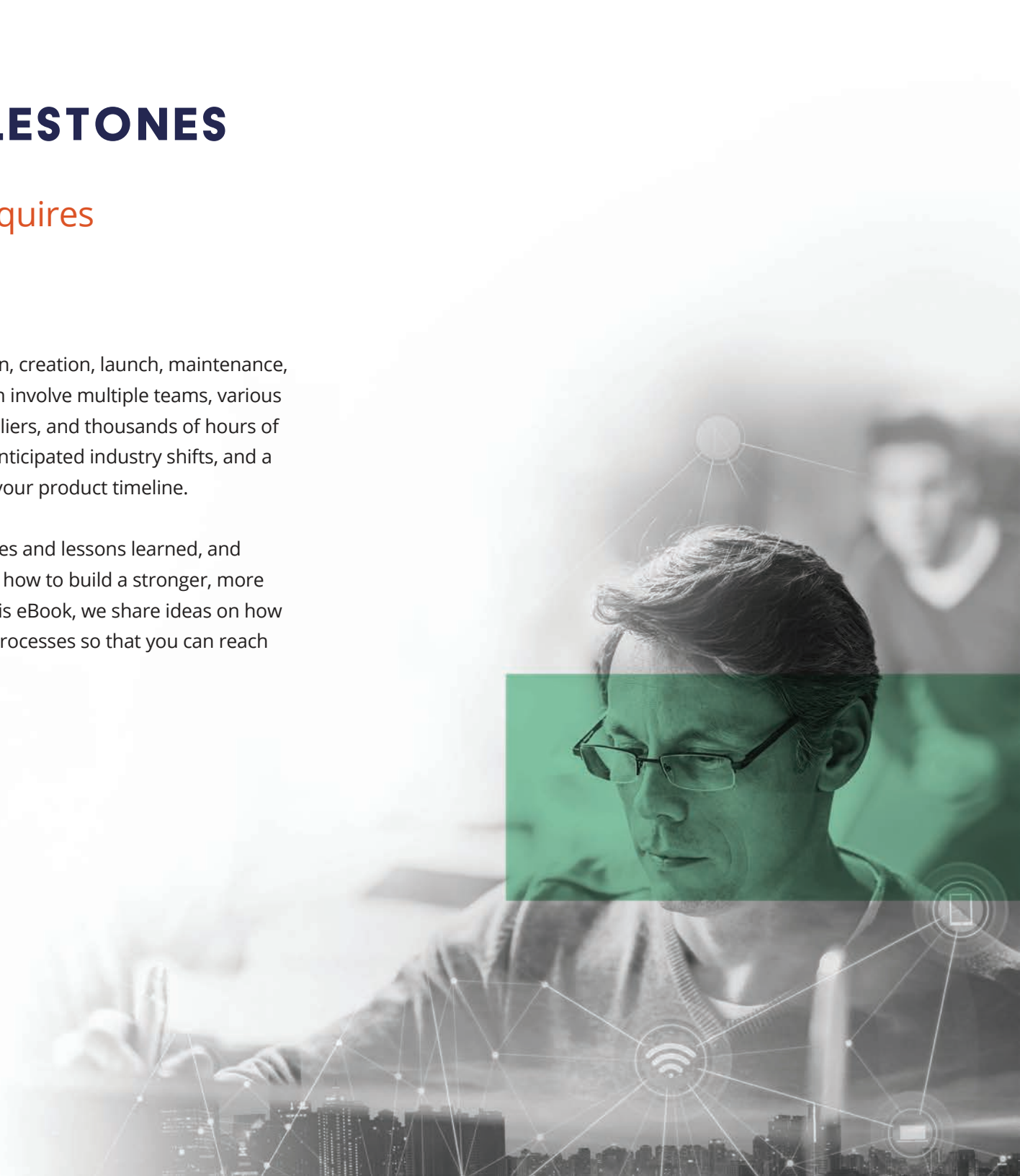


GETTING TO MILESTONES

Product Development Requires Extensive Collaboration

From idea generation to sunsetting, the design, creation, launch, maintenance, and planned obsolescence of one product can involve multiple teams, various stakeholders, a network of partners and suppliers, and thousands of hours of work. Economic and political disruptions, unanticipated industry shifts, and a move to remote work can all pose threats to your product timeline.

Drawing from case studies, customer successes and lessons learned, and expertise within Arena, we have resources on how to build a stronger, more flexible, and more resilient organization. In this eBook, we share ideas on how to effectively manage product development processes so that you can reach your milestones.



GOOD PRODUCT DECISION PRACTICES

Examine your information sharing practices.

Take a step back and think about the ways in which you, your team, and your company share information both inside and outside of your organization. Mapping out your product development information flows—from requirements gathering to auditing—will enable you to examine your practices. Ask yourself: What's information? What's **actionable** information? What's noise?



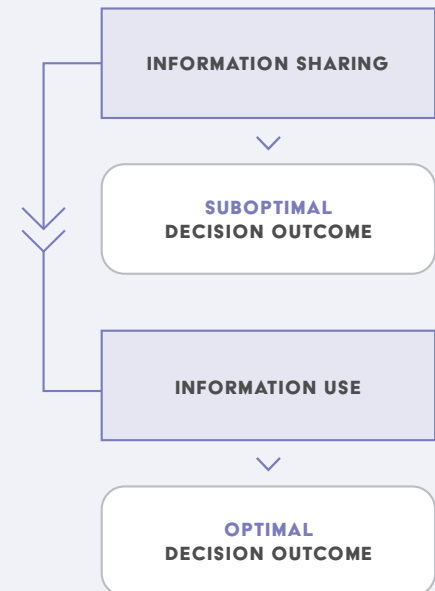
A TOOLKIT FOR TEAMS

Managing Organizational Communication
from Society for Human Resource Management



INFORMATION USE

Information sharing that leads to interaction with the information leads to better decisions.



GOOD PRODUCT DECISION PRACTICES

Know who needs to be in the loop when.

Another part of the equation in effective information sharing is considering who needs to know what, when. Oversharing can be as ineffective as undersharing, and it's really information use that determines success. If your team is distributed, you will need to over-communicate, but that doesn't mean Zoom meetings and Slack messages all day every day.

Think about how different channels are best suited to different kinds of information sharing and make sure you use them to close loops and address specific gaps with intent.

"I have this blue award ribbon hanging on my bulletin board at home. It was one of the first printed with the catchphrase *'I just survived another meeting that should have been an email.'* I feel like I've won that blue ribbon ten thousand times."

– Ben Locwin, SVP of Quality at Lumicell

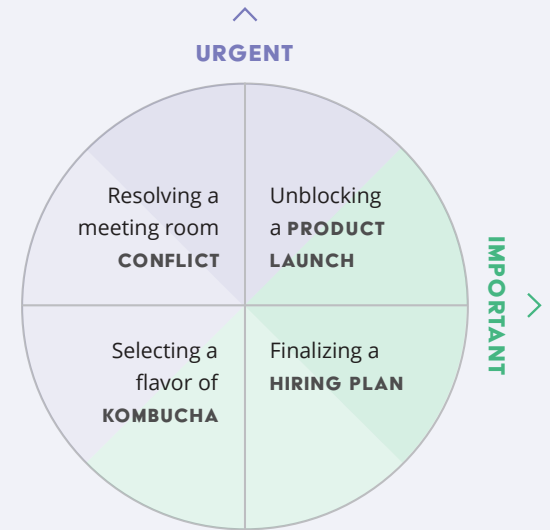


BETTER PRODUCT DECISION PRACTICES

Foster a shared understanding
to drive decision-making.

Sometimes individuals and teams can get lost in the weeds when working on specific tasks. But, by fostering a shared understanding, you can create a culture in which teams are aligned when it comes to your organization's identity and purpose. There are practical ways to do this.

For example, during customer interviews, invite a member of the engineering team to sit in so they can hear feedback directly from the customer, or be explicit about how you will make a decision when there are disagreements.



A PROVOCATIVE PODCAST

Gokul Rajaram on How to Defang Difficult Decisions, sharing about his time at Square, an Arena Customer

BETTER PRODUCT DECISION PRACTICES

Champion the one-page PRD.

Creating a one-page dashboard (or roadmap) for your product requirements documents helps to remind everyone of the big picture. This kind of artifact can serve as an important point of reference—a touchstone—so that everyone can remember who the customer is and the motivation for their work.

“To get to good decisions the first time, you need participatory buy-in from the beginning. Bring all stakeholders in and get input. There is danger in rushing ahead to develop a solution or reach a decision without everyone’s involvement.”

– Tony Bairos, Director of Global Documentation & Training Compliance at Insulet



BEST PRODUCT DECISION PRACTICES

Evolve your change control board.

It's essential to have a change control board (CCB)—a group of subject matter experts who make decisions about the direction of your product and what will and, more importantly, will not be addressed in any given iteration. But relying on the same people and processes without evolving will make you more vulnerable to changes in leadership (e.g., M&As), drastic shifts in your supply chain, and unexpected competition.

By incrementally evolving your CCB, you broaden who can participate and diversify the expertise present. For example, consider how you might take your CCB virtual so that you have more voices in the room or use design thinking practices to get a new perspective on processes.



CHALLENGE READ

[Atlassian's Agile Coach](#), a deep dive into all things agile development

BEST PRODUCT DECISION PRACTICES

Document your entire product lifecycle in one (digital) place.

Finally, document every decision—and why it was made—in one place that is accessible to each relevant stakeholder regardless of where they work. Doing this will ensure not only that you have a plan to follow moving forward but that stakeholders are accountable for implementing and managing changes on time.

“Build your processes and the use of your systems to include everyone needed. When people onboard, identify what they are involved in, get them in the processes, and train them. When people leave, identify who replaces them in process participation and make the changes.”

– Cindy Lalowski, Senior Quality Systems Manager at AEye



BUILDING THE SOLID FOUNDATION FOR CHANGE

In summary, consistently hitting your milestones requires you to make informed, intentional decisions from information management to organizational norms and practices. Adopting a systems-thinking approach can help your organization to be stronger, more resilient, and more flexible—no matter what kinds of challenges arise.



LISTEN TO ARENA CUSTOMERS

Industry Experts Talk Virtual Change Control Practices

¹Xiao, Y., Zhang, H., & Basadur, T. M. (2016). Does information sharing always improve team decision making? An examination of the hidden profile condition in new product development. *Journal of Business Research*, 69(2), 587-595.



HELPING INNOVATIVE COMPANIES CHANGE THE WORLD

At Arena, we help you design, produce, and deliver complex products to market by connecting your product record, quality processes, and supply chain partners. This helps you create innovative, safe products to change the world.

For more on Arena and to discover a wealth of resources and best practices, visit [ArenaSolutions.com](https://www.arenasolutions.com).

“When it comes to PLM solutions, Arena is better than any system I have used in the past. The value Arena provides compared to other commercial systems is remarkable. And because it is cloud-based, we have a system that can scale as our needs change and our business grows. We know that Arena PLM can take us through the next two generations of our evolution.”

– Mark Hanna, Vice President of Operations, FreeWire Technologies



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