Pulse survey 2022

The Feedback Route to Effective Roadmaps

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What's inside?

Introduction

A roadmap communicates the reason behind the activities of the organization, mainly the products or solutions that the organization offers. It is high-level visual summary that displays the vision and direction of the product over time, and provides clear view on how to reach there. The roadmap conveys strategic directions the product or solution can take, and it ties back to the strategy for the company. Some important objectives of roadmaps are:

↗ Explain the vision and strategy to a larger audience

↗ Provide guidance for strategic executions

↗ Get internal stakeholders on board

↗ Facilitate planning of scenarios and enable discussion
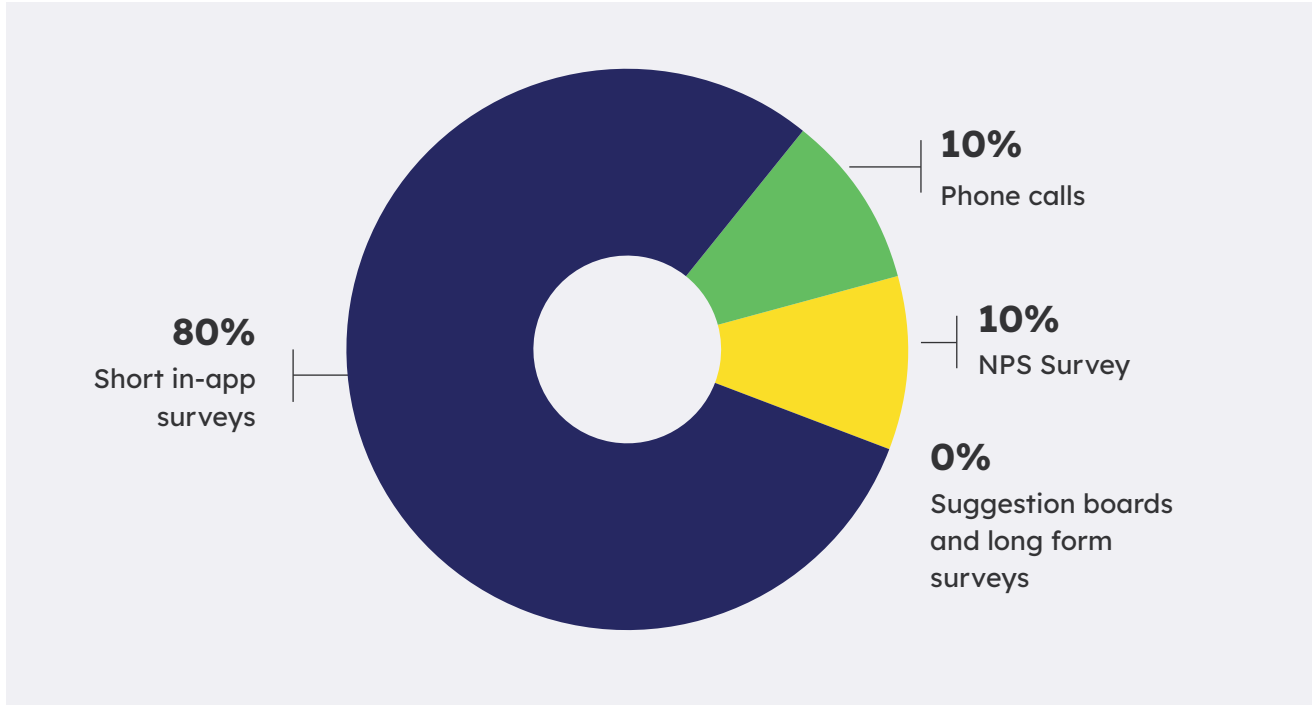
↗ Establish benchmarks for product development status

Specific resource requirements like employee-hours, interdepartmental dependencies etc. are typically reserved for the execution of the roadmap. This information is typically accessed from the company's project management solution, but roadmaps thus generated aren't limited to products: Not just technology teams, but marketing, sales, testing and other teams can also benefit from having a communication roadmap to support their plan. These individual roadmaps created for various situations help in creating an effective overall roadmap. In a typical organization, these roadmaps can be used to provide a complete view of the strategic plan, in conjunction with the product roadmap.

Once the product vision is set and initiatives are prioritised, the process of building the roadmap starts. The feedback process is an integral part of the process: Understanding the importance and correct ways to collect feedback is essential before the organization sets out to create the roadmap.

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Benefits of Remote Working Environments

In order to understand the process, Amoeboids conducted a survey of 300 HR managers across organizations. Hundreds of managers shared their perspectives, and challenges they face during the feedback process. Collecting customer feedback is essential to improving any product or service, but customers rarely provide feedback unless they are asked to provide it. So how to overcome this hurdle?

Out of the 126 respondents to this question, long-form based survey is seldom used. 80% of respondents used short-in app surveys to gauge reactions, with 10% opting for phone call based surveys and another 10% relying on NPS surveys. Usage of message boards isn't popular either.

80%
Short in-app surveys

10%
Phone calls

10%
NPS Survey

0%
Suggestion boards and long form surveys

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The preference for short in-app surveys is usually because if the limited amount of time they take to complete. As product or solution releases get more frequent over time, quick feedbacks tend to work well in those shorter cycles.

But for larger releases that involve significant changes, it is important to collect detailed feedback. This can be done by identifying the power users and scheduling a one-on-one session. Not only this will provide a good chance to showcase the new features and how they can make a difference to users, but will also give an opportunity to see the product in use (and collect indirect feedback).

The feedback that is collected via various means, needs to be arranged in an organized way so that teams can go through them together and take a decision on how to address them. Small organizations use spreadsheets or documents to maintain this list, but some issues can spring up. Spreadsheets that have the collection of feedbacks might not be communicating a vision at all, and presentations can prove difficult to update and share at every new feedback addition.

Building The Roadmap

Properly constructed customer satisfaction surveys and questionnaires provide the insights that are the foundation for benchmarking customer happiness, and aid in construction of a robust roadmap. Depending on the customer metrics intended to be used, the type of survey questions can be determined. Once the questions are set, the ask is to identify the right cadence to ask them.

The opinions vary in this regard, with around 5% asking their customers to complete the survey every time, and a whopping 50% surveying their customers only once a year. Quarterly surveys don't get much traction either in the survey group, with only 15% option for it. The second-highest frequency is that of a month, followed by 30% of the organizations.

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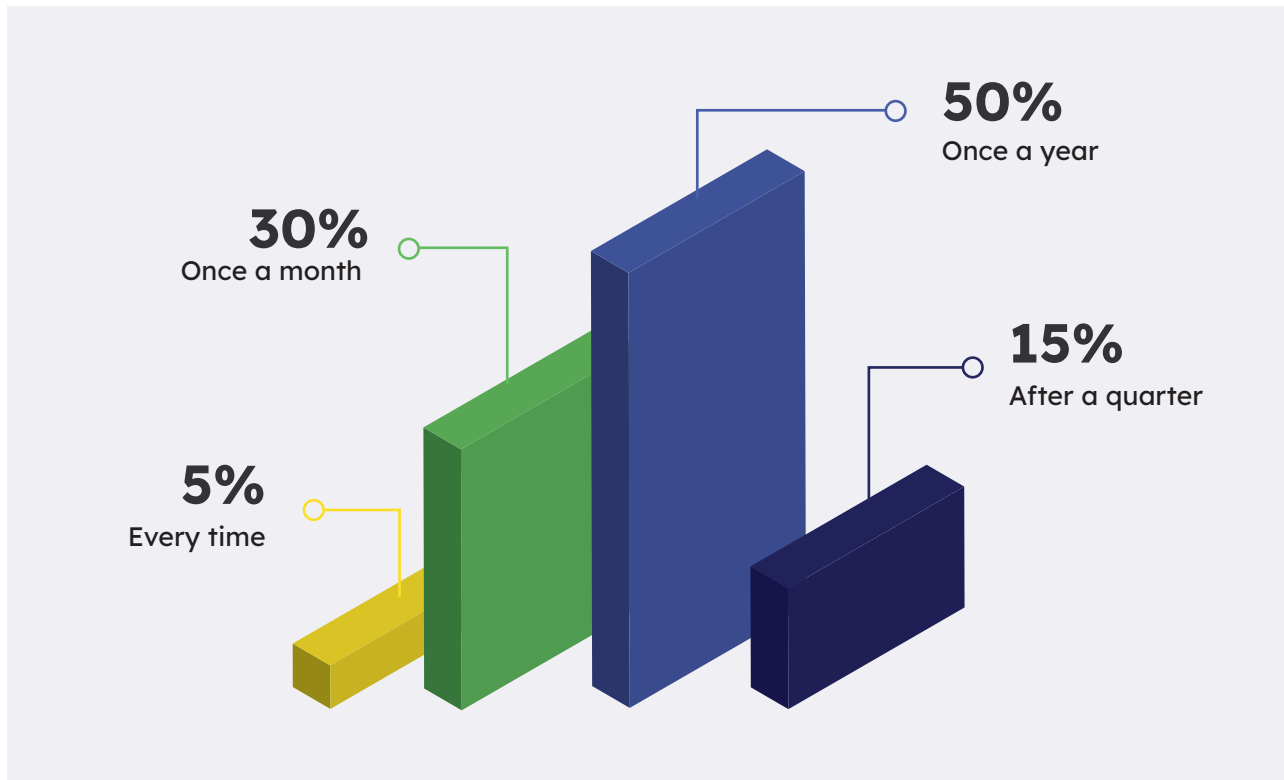
Feedback shaping the roadmap

Customer feedback is needed to inform the product decisions to users (along with internal stakeholders), and they and help to establish a fool proof product strategy. The more insight provided by customers and prospects, the more accurate the decisions can be as they are taken based on concrete information. But there are other opportunities that get unveiled by accurate feedback, and organizations need to understand how customer feedback can help them shape the product roadmap.

Nearly half – 47% - use the feedback process to identify opportunities that can be addressed in the roadmap. This approach also allows for reprioritization of features in the roadmap – if customers are looking for a particular sub-solution, development team can move it forward in the

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timeline. 18% use the feedback process to aid in the development of product vision and strategy, thereby using the market sentiment to move the product forward. 33% use the feedback received to make changes to their service delivery process, while only 2% address feedback through marketing messages.

47%
Identify
opportunities

18%
Develop
product
vision &
strategy

2%
Marketing
activities

33%
Improve
service
delivery
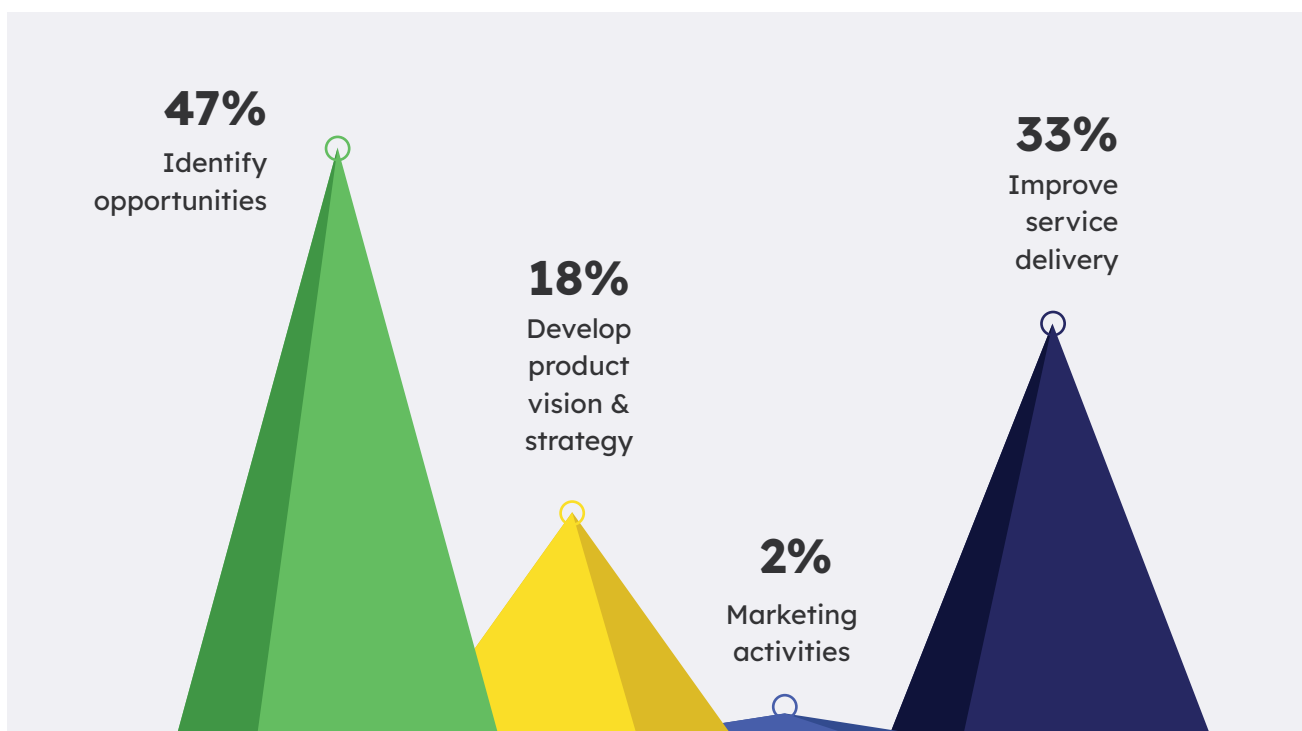
Zero in on the right Roadmap Tool

The Sirius Decisions Field Guide to Product Planning, Prioritization and Roadmapping Applications suggests that only 13% of managers indicate the highest levels of satisfaction with the tool they are currently using for documentation and communication purposes. Even after reducing the criterion a bit, the numbers don't improve: only 15% managers are very satisfied with the tool they use to manage product requirements.

When seen with the lens of organizations trying to introduce tools, the numbers seem to be really low. There might be a wide variety of reasons: The tool adopted might be new and has a steep learning curve, leadership group may not have involved the rest of the organization into the decision-making process, and many more.

Also, acting on customer feedback right away isn't easy. There is a chance of the request being duplicated, tickets raised for different outcomes of the same issue and so on. Chances of developers not having enough data on the features to be developed is pretty common, too.

All of this can be avoided with a dedicated tool like Roadmap portal. It gives customers a secure platform to register their requests. These requests need not be in a rigid structure – Roadmap portal supports many forms of feedback the customers prefer. It also allows them to have a look at public requests, vote on the issues that they feel are important, and if they can't find the issue they're looking for – they can create one (or more) of their own. These requests can either be made public, or they can be kept private so that only the development team can see the feedback or feature request. With this, the development team gets to see a collated list of customer feedback and requests, minus the duplication and disorganization. The focus will now be solely on creating value, instead of wading through mountains of comments and requests that can take hours to decipher.

How Often to Update the Roadmap

A product roadmap is a high-level strategic document reflecting the product vision for a long term, but it need not be set in stone. If the organization needs to adjust the direction it is taking, then it should be able

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to update the roadmap frequently. This ability is essential in an agile world because the organization has no way of predicting what will happen in the coming years.

The organization needs to rapidly adjust to changes in the market, requirements of its customers, needs of internal and external stakeholders – and a lot more, and this can be achieved by following a reliable feedback mechanism. Not only will the organization understand the need of its customers, but also gauge the behaviour in the future – based on the feedback and feature requests received. Thus, it is the frequency and the importance of the feedbacks that dictate the course of roadmap updates to an extent.

Also, the frequency of updating the roadmap depends on the timeframe of the roadmap. For long-term roadmaps that are planned for 12 months or more, the changes may not be as many as short term roadmaps that are created to execute detailed features.

The Bottom Line

The right feedback is the first step in creating a successful product roadmap. Using product roadmap software that also allows for collection of feedback and feature requests clearly helps all stakeholders – internal ones can focus on the list of priority items, while the external stakeholders can check if the feature request or feedback they want to add has already been submitted or not. Lack of knowledge about roadmap software often pushes managers to use ad-hoc solutions like spreadsheets, word documents, or any other note-taking tool, and they suffer in the long run. Using add-on solutions like Roadmap portal that can integrate with Jira can eliminate the learning curve altogether and enable proper tracking of data and feedback from the start.

About Amoeboids

We work to make workplaces better

We at Amoeboids want to build a future in which we'd love to work in. We take immense pride in building products that enrich workplace culture, build focus across any department of the organization