

# How to create a balanced feature roadmap

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The long-term sustainability of a product depends on more than developing features. Priorities are placed on selection criteria that support the development of products, like product quality, project constraints such as – time and cost, and even the development of intellectual capital (IC). A greater focus on any one criterion detracts focus and takes priority from another, but as each criterion delivers a different type of value, the product management team has trouble comparing and balancing these criteria.

One method to help determine and maintain the balance between key priorities in the innovation process is called the Multiple Perspectives method. Practice shows that it's possible to compare roadmap characteristics such as features, quality, time, cost and intellectual capital in a comprehensive way. This has also been found to shift the team's perspective from a shorter-term product perspective to a longer-term organization perspective beneficial to the business.

Most of the heavy lifting needed in the development of this method was provided by Sebastian Barney and Claes Wohlin of the Blekinge Institute of Technology and Aybke Aurum from the School of Information System Technology and management, University of New south Wales, Australia. Commercial validation originated from Ericsson, and has since been used by many product management teams.

To balance your product investments using product roadmaps, there are five basic investment types used as selection criteria to rank and choose between potential product roadmaps. The first step to this method is to create multiple product feature roadmaps that all satisfy minimal business constraints.

The second step is to identify metrics you'll use to quantify estimates for these selection criteria. It's important to point out that the value for these criteria aren't actual estimates. Product features don't have a concept of the technical approach which would be required for actual estimates. Instead, each feature is given an estimation of impact to the overall roadmap perspective. The question might be, "How much impact will feature X have on the overall cost of

the roadmap in a given time period?". The criteria which must be assessed are the following:

1. Cost
2. Time
3. Quality: Product Properties such as security, scalability, etc.
4. Product Features
5. Intellectual capital such as human, structural, and relationship capital

These five criteria represent different perspectives. Features and quality present the perceived value or product perspective. Intellectual capital provides an organizational perspective, while time and cost provide a project perspective.

The third step is to weight the five criteria based on the goals and guidelines of the roadmap or product charter.

The fourth step is to evaluate the different roadmaps, and select the roadmap that presents the most balanced perspective.

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