280Group

Optimizing Product Management™

Case**Study**

FROM STARTUP TO SCALE.
BUILDING A COMPANY ON
PRODUCT MANAGEMENT
KNOWLEDGE AND PROCESSES.

collibra®

How a small startup sought Product Management
expertise early on in their company's history and
then came back as they built their team.

the**Challenge**

Collibra started as a university spinoff and grew into a 30 person company. The co-founders launched the first product and as they approached work on the follow-on product, they wanted a method in place so they developed the right product. They had operational challenges, were uncertain as to what to prioritize next and were unsure how to look at the business over a longer time horizon. Product Management thinking looked like it would bring them the right perspective.

In a later engagement, the company had grown to 150 people. The co-founders had a small team of technically focused Product Managers and no head of Product Management. Product Management and product development were struggling to agree on the details of a large project. Each of the Product Managers defined their responsibilities and the scope of their role differently. Growth had outstripped their ability to bring in people quickly enough and train them to the right standard.

the**Solution**

To solve their original challenge the two co-founders attended the three-day public Optimal Product Management and Product Marketing course. The class used a seven-phase process to organize what prod-

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> *"To this day, the Product Management organization still follows the same 280 Group framework we put in place many years ago. We've added processes on top of it, but the foundations are the same."*
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> **Stijn (Stan) Christiaens**
> **Co-founder & CTO, Collibra**

uct and marketing work takes place at any given time. The strategic module offered a way to analyze the longer-term forces affecting their industry and the co-founders used the road mapping techniques to wrap up all their thinking in one place. At the end of the class day, they used the information learned to map out the next steps for their company.

As they grew, the solution to the next challenge Collibra faced was more complicated. Collibra brought in a senior 280 Group consultant and trainer who worked with the team over a few months. His goal was to increase the professionalism and ensure Product Management best practices were learned and put into practice. He followed a step-by-step engagement to get the best results:

1 He provided management guidance to the Product Managers so they would focus on the right product work. He reinforced doing the right work at the right time using the 280 Group Optimal Product Process.

2 The consultant then helped transition in a new Director of Product Management.

3 Finally, the consultant trained the entire group in a customized version of the Optimal Product Management and Product Marketing course incorporating elements of the Agile for Product Managers and Product Owners course.

the**Results**

The co-founders came back and defined the next evolution of their product, systematically worked through the organizational structure and interdependencies. They adopted the 280 Group Optimal Product Process to guide product development efforts driven by Product Managers. The company grew dramatically—experiencing several years of triple digit growth.

Based on recommendations from 280 Group's consultant, the Product Managers were able to create a shared vision for the new project, defined a series of realistic MVPs along the way and had agreement on realistic time frames to accomplish the work. This shared vision re-energized both Product Management and product development.

the**Conclusion**

The Optimal Product Process framework is still followed at Collibra. It's so deeply embedded into the company that the folders used to plan products are named after 280 Group phases. The company has continued to experience triple digit growth and looks on track to have the same kind of growth path this year—a full 6 years running. And with more Product Managers, more UX, more engineers, there may be a chance to work with Collibra as they take the company to the next stage of growth.