

One Knight in Product - E173 - Antonia Landi

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SPEAKERS

Antonia Landi, Jason Knight



Jason Knight 00:00

Okay, after a somewhat unscheduled hiatus, I'm back. And I'll never leave you again, had a couple of weeks of scheduling difficulties, to be honest, a little bit of burnout. But I'm back. I'm here, I'm in your ears, and tonight we're talking all about manifestos. No, no, not that one. But before we get started, I'm going to advertise myself. As you probably know, I'm out freelancing these days as a B2B product management consultant, and coach, I want to help your company, your team and your well you get better at product management. So if you want to chat to me about what I can do for you, why not head over to <https://www.oneknightinconsulting.com> to find out more about my services, and book a discovery chat. Go on, you know, it makes sense. So make sure you check out the show notes for more details. Anyway, back to manifestos. Tonight. We're talking about product operations. Now we've all been here before, but everything's changed. Is there a universal definition of product ops these days? How many companies are doing it right? And meeting those prerequisites to do so? If you want to find out whether a manifesto is going to help us answer all of these questions and more, stick with us on One Knight in Product.



Jason Knight 01:14

So my guest tonight is Antonia Landi. Antonia is a cat loving product operations leader, consultant and coach who says she hates being called a process person. Antonia started out life and QA for Rockstar Games, is apparently in the credits for at least two titles, and spent a short time working in a circus, which obviously given a great preparation for all that client juggling and is helping to keep her balance on a tightrope of company transformation. He's also the co author of the product operations manifesto. And if I've got any experience of manifestos, I'm sure everyone will instantly agree with it. And we definitely won't still be all arguing about it in 10 years time. Hi Antonia, how are you tonight?



Antonia Landi 01:48

I am very well, especially after that. Fantastic. Thank you so much for having me.



Jason Knight 01:52

No problem. I do have to ask though. What are the two games that you're in the credits for?



Antonia Landi 01:59

It's GTA V, and Red Dead Redemption two, even though I technically never actually worked on RDR2.



Jason Knight 02:06

So are you in the credits because you QAed it? Are you kind of an extra in some of the scenes or something like that as well?



Antonia Landi 02:13

I was a QA for GTA Online, for I think just over a year. And RDR literally happened while I was in the same building. So....



Jason Knight 02:22

Well, you got to take credit for what you can.



Antonia Landi 02:25

Absolutely.



Jason Knight 02:26

Right. So first things first, you are a freelance product operations consultant and coach. So you live in the freelance dream just like me, but what are you specifically working on at the moment? And what types of companies are you working on it for?



Antonia Landi 02:39

So actually, right now, a lot of what I'm focusing on is education around product ops, because even as you know, I was speaking to companies that were cautiously optimistic or very interested or realised they needed someone to help them with something, but maybe didn't know what that something looked like, it became quite clear that there is still quite a mystery around product operations, even though it might feel like we've been talking about it for years

by now. And it's on every podcast and every single article and every conference. Nevertheless, what that concretely can look like and how it can concretely benefit companies is still not widely known. So most of what I'm doing at the moment, is actually speaking,



Jason Knight 03:29

But you're speaking obviously to idiots like me, but are you speaking also to specific companies and trying to go into those companies and persuade them a that this should be a thing and be that if it is a thing that they should be good at it? Are you mainly trying to focus at the kind of, I guess, top of the funnel at the moment, and just trying to do some community advocacy and some sort of category building type stuff?



Antonia Landi 03:49

A little bit of both? I try not to force either very much. But yeah, so I do, obviously speak to companies to interested, you know, CPOs heads of product, etc, etc. And the companies that usually get in touch with me, or either scale ups that sort of, you know, horrendous painful growing up phase, or there are very large companies and with very large companies, the interesting thing there is that they usually come to me with a very defined problem, right? It's not necessarily a help, we need product ops, we don't know how to do it, it's help. We don't know how to close the feedback loop, or help we have a massive problem with silos, for example.



Jason Knight 04:38

Right? But does that then mean that you in some cases have to kind of unpick problems that they've created for themselves? Because of course, if they're coming to you with the typical kind of problems based solutions based stuff, right, like if they're coming to you, thinking that they've already worked out and they just need somebody to help them do it, right. They might not be working from a good foundation, right?



Antonia Landi 04:58

Yeah, absolutely. I think My first step is always problem definition, right? And even if there's been a lot of pre work, the fact that I come in with fresh eyes, also helps really untangle all the different messes, right? Because even if something is, or can look very clearly defined, right, internally, as an external person, I do kind of have that bird's eye view, where I go, Well, why are we conflating these two problems? Or why are we making this part of this particular project?



Jason Knight 05:29

No, absolutely. And again, obviously, always going to stand up for people going and doing that kind of thing, given what I'm doing as well. But you've had two full time jobs in your career, you started out as we discussed at Rockstar and QA, right? You worked in QA, at least one other

company as well, you went into project management and you did some scrum stuff, moved into product management, have you gone into product ops as well? So a variety of different types of job, but still fundamentally jobs. So what was it that made you decide to give up having a job and decided to go out and sort of do some of that education stuff, but also, you know, freelancing and consulting? Like, because that's a bit of a shift, right?

A

Antonia Landi 06:06

Yeah, absolutely. I mean, it's been a huge, massive shift. And even though, I spent months investigating, and preparing and figuring out how to do it, I still felt underprepared. When it actually came time to do the thing, you know, but I don't know, I've been in product ops, sort of officially for two and a half, three years now. And during that time, I, I genuinely love this profession, I genuinely think there is so much potential in it. And at some point, I just thought to myself, What if I could help many companies, instead of just one company? You know, what if I could help improve the lives of many PMs instead of just the PMs at whatever company that currently employs me? And I think ultimately, that was my driver.



Jason Knight 06:59

Yeah, I think that really resonates with me as well, this idea. And you know, we obviously both active doing content stuff, and right, all of that type things, as well as just that idea that you can have a magnifying impact. Exactly. Which is really attractive to me, and sounds like to you as well. So obviously, completely aligned there. But do you think that having worked in all those different types of jobs, and obviously all the different types of companies that you've worked out as well, that that's been like a competitive advantage for you to be a freelancer, that you've kind of got more of a wider view, and maybe some intersections with other things that maybe other people doing this sort of stuff don't have?

A

Antonia Landi 07:34

Yeah, absolutely. I think so. I've seen and been a few different roles on a product team, right. So I felt that pain as a QA person, when my pm was saying, well, this isn't important, or we're not going to fix this. Or even... Oh, you're the bottleneck, right? We need to release but you keep harping on about needing to test the damn app. Yep. And then at the flip side, I've been that pm that had to say, We can do this right now, this isn't, you know, from a business perspective, important enough for us to spend time on. So I feel like I've seen a few different aspects of the product development lifecycle. And yeah, it definitely felt like a competitive advantage, I think I'm also able to talk to many different people in a way that resonates with them. And that's something that's really powerful, especially in a position like product ops, where somebody I will have to ask, sometimes I will have to ask people to change the way they do something.



Jason Knight 08:40

People hate that sort of thing. But did you yourself, like you said that you were in product ops for three years, give or take? Was that like a very intentional move that you decided to go into? And like applied for that job or transferred into that job? Or was that just sort of happenstance

and like applied for that job or transferred into that job? Or was that just sort of happenstance and you just effectively fell into it as many product people do? And then you kind of made it your own afterwards?

A

Antonia Landi 09:04

Right? So the way I got into product ops was literally because the LinkedIn algorithm showed me a job called product ops.



Jason Knight 09:14

Oh, thank you LinkedIn.

A

Antonia Landi 09:16

That's literally... I saw it, I did not know what product ops was at the time was the first time I'd ever seen that term. I read the description, and I was like, Well, hold on a minute. I already do all of these things. Right. And these are all the things that I'm really passionate about. So that's yeah, I mean, from there on, obviously, I applied I got the job and then I really feel like I grew into this profession, but it was definitely not deliberate.



Jason Knight 09:46

Sounds like everyone's journey into product management and most people's journey into product management as well. You hear story after story of people that just kind of, I mean, for me as well, like I just realised that I was doing some of that stuff already. So why not embrace it? Right, right, exactly. But let's go deep into product operations. So again, you're consulting in it, freelancing, advising, doing content about it. You've co authored a manifesto about it, which we'll talk about in a minute. But I've spoken on the podcast before to other product ops pros, like Melissa Perry is obviously very passionate about it at the moment, Christine Itwaru from Pendo was product ops at the time not anymore. But yeah, they have some strong opinions about both the benefits of it and what it is. And that's brilliant. But I think also, there's a fair few definitions that are out there, like there doesn't, doesn't need to be like a I mean, we've touched on this just now like the things that maybe people think that it is, and maybe the mistakes that they make, try to implement it. There's not like one unified ISO definition of product operations, or there isn't yet maybe your manifesto will deliver that. But if you were to elevate a pitch me on product operations, and how would you, Antonia, do that for me?

A

Antonia Landi 10:54

It's an excellent question. I think one that is so super valid, because even though I think in principle, we actually all agree what product Ops is the confusion arises because it looks so different at almost every single company. And while I was building my website, this is something that I really had to stop and think about, well, okay, what, what am I actually selling? So to speak here, right? What is it? What's the USP of doing product ops? And in a nutshell, to

me, I started defining it as achieving product excellence on an organisational level. I think, ultimately, that's what we're trying to achieve. And then whether that's supporting data analysis, or whether that is implementing an OKR process, or having an internal community of practice, right, like, what are the blockers to ultimately becoming more product lead? Are, are the reasons why product ops looks so different than every company. But I think ultimately speaking, it's there to foster excellence in product management.



Jason Knight 12:10

But some people might sit there and say, well, that's the product management team's job, they should be doing that, or that's a cross functional effort that everyone should be doing as a kind of a combined collaborative effort. So yeah, why do we need a team to do that?



Antonia Landi 12:24

Honestly, you don't necessarily need the team to do that. Right? It really depends on I know, I'm putting myself out of a job here. But it depends on on how many of these things become critical enough that they're no longer sustainable to just do on the side? Yep. Right. Like, I tried to think of it as well, how much pain is currently exists in your organisation? And how much pain are you willing to tolerate? Right? Traditionally, like these tasks have always existed? And they're usually been taken care of by product leaders. Now, is there a trend and kind of worrying problem around product leaders? spending too much time on administrative tasks and not enough time on strategy? And mission and vision? I feel like there is right, and it's, it's really the question is, at what point? Do you merge all of these tasks into one person or one team? And I think that's the bigger question, rather than Well, why do we need product ops as like, at what point do we need it?



Jason Knight 13:38

But that's a really interesting point, though, because that then implies and I'm sure that this depends as well, but that there's some kind of point where that does become necessary. Now, you've just talked about some of the symptoms, but is there like a generic formula or some kind of signal that you can sort of look at and say, Yeah, this is the time like, we've, we've started to see these things. And now we need to do it, or does it vary so widely between companies that there's not like a generic thing that you could say?



Antonia Landi 14:06

Yeah, I mean, people usually ask me for a ratio of PMs to product ops, right?



Jason Knight 14:12

We just did some kind of like prioritisation matrix type thing, just, you know, something divided by something you've done.

A

Antonia Landi 14:17

Exactly. Or like, you know, at what point and then the company grows, like, what size company would benefit from it? And, again, it varies so wildly some companies will ever need an internal product ops person that's full time. I think this is the least scientific way I could describe this possible. But, you know, when you meet a team, or you meet a product leader, and they're just frazzled,



Jason Knight 14:46

That's all of them! Every single one!

A

Antonia Landi 14:49

And it's like they, they would need twice the amount of time to get everything done that they need done. And especially with product leadership, you can tell Are they? No, they're not spending their time on the things that are the most meaningful. But it's almost like they're trapped. It almost feels like they can do it any other way. Right? And I feel like that it's that sort of desperation where I can very clearly see he's like, Okay, you let me help you.



Jason Knight 15:19

But you talked about the full time thing there as well, like, is there? Is there like a market out there? Or like maybe a need for sort of fractional product operations as well? Or do you think that they always need to have someone on the ground level doing that stuff?

A

Antonia Landi 15:32

Yeah, I think that's really interesting. And that's actually a question that I'm hoping I can answer with my own consulting work, because I have spoken to a couple of CPOs that said, Well, I actually love product ops, I just don't think we need it all the time. And there are definitely waves, right of work, where it feels like when you come in the first time, or you're trying to set it up the first time round, it's going to be very intense. And you really, you're gonna have a lot of work on your hands. But then, at some point, especially if you're doing it, you know, successfully, the idea is that you might be less needed overtime. Now, does that speak against having a full time team? I don't think so. Because you can always raise the bar in terms of excellence, right? I had exactly these conversations when I was in QA. And people were saying, well, you should be happy that I'm producing bugs, because otherwise you would be out of a job. And it's like, well, no, we would just have different standards when it comes to quality, right?



Jason Knight 16:38

Oh, yeah. But just to clarify, given that you have worked in project management, as part of your career history, and this whole kind of debate about process people are not particularly

your career history, and this whole kind of debate about process people are not particularly happy about but I just want to clarify that. Product Ops is not just the revenge of project managers that are desperately trying to get back into the game after the Agile Manifesto tried to kick them out?

A

Antonia Landi 17:00

Well, you know, I mean, some of them might be, I'm really never sure. But I mean, the thing of product Ops is, it's very similar to Agile coaching, right? In some parts. So some people are like, Oh, this is just rebranded agile coaching. It's like a new buzzword for agile coaching or like you said, Oh, it's just project or programme management with a fancy new title. I think there are absolutely overlaps with those functions, right product ops, you will be doing some programme management, sometimes, there is definitely a decent chunk of project management involved in getting initiatives across but reducing us to process people I think is doing us a disservice. However, I understand why that happened, right? Because I was I gave a talk at product tank here in Berlin two days ago. And I actually mentioned this, right? I think, talking about process is the easiest way to describe what product ops can do for a company, right? So it's a very easy way to sort of showcase our abilities be like, hey, you know that, okay, our process you hate, we can make it work for you, right? So it makes sense that people saying, well, alright, so you're just pushing processes, like wherever you can. However, that's not the entire story of product ops.



Jason Knight 18:27

Yeah, I don't like the word process because it has negative connotations. I like to maybe use the words like vigour or There you go, just, we're just being more vigorous, but you know, maybe that has its own implications as well. connotations. Yeah.

A

Antonia Landi 18:41

See, I feel like I want to reclaim the word process. Even when I was doing QA, like, I would join startups that had no QA I was the first one and I would do I would implement these processes for QA. And the people always go hate process. Oh, I'd like don't even come at me with process. And it's like, it's not inherently dirty word. And I really want to reclaim it because it's can be so positive. Right? It can make your life so delightful.



Jason Knight 19:11

Yep, I think for me, it's all about just enough process and never, never having serving the process be the goal, but always having a process serve you. But I guess obviously, sounds like you agree, but I'm sure there'd be some people out there project managers out there programme and like crushing their cups with frustration, because the process is everything. But you know, we'll get to them in the end. But you went one step further than many people with this stuff and actually came out then with the pilot operations manifesto, which you mentioned earlier, which is something that you co authored, obviously has conceptual similarities with at

least one other famous manifesto, which very often seems to be misquoted or misused as well or misunderstood. All right. So before we talk about what's in it, what was the primary reason that you decided to put or help put this manifesto together?

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Antonia Landi 20:00

I just wanted one to exist. But no, it's, I've been in product ops communities, and I've been active in those communities for years now. And I do a lot of panels and conference talks. And yet, every single time the question revolves around what is product ops. And I feel it's super important that we define that. But there's also such a desire for my colleagues and product ops to move the discussion further, to go one step further and go, Okay, we've talked about what product Ops is for a number of years. Now, let's talk about how we do it well, or let's talk about how we set boundaries, or which functions and roles are partners to us. You know, there was just, I felt like, and not only for myself, for some of my community members as well, there was just such a desire to be able to move on, you know, from that very first conversation. And I felt like a manifesto, it was a good way to describe to other product ops folk but also to people who don't know anything about product ops. What it is.



Jason Knight 21:14

Well, that's an interesting question, though, because I was going to ask, like, who the manifesto is actually aimed at? Because, yeah, you could sit there and say, Well, this is just for product ops people themselves to kind of write to self actualize, and kind of stand up for themselves and their craft, or it could be aimed at product leaders who maybe think that they want it, but they don't really know what it is. And it's a way to kind of help to align with them. Or it could be something that you go and wave at the CEO of an organisation that's struggling to change. And in some way, it's going to be used as a discussion tool to try and help them work out what they need to do. So is it aimed at all of those people? Or do you think that it's got a sweet spot with a certain team?

A

Antonia Landi 21:49

I think the first two definitely, I think the response from other product ops managers has been so overwhelmingly positive that it really felt like, you know, they did, they didn't need something to be there, they did a group of people to sort of stand up for them, right. But at the same time, we are maybe breaking with the tradition of manifesto, we actually have a section called prerequisites. And it was super important for me that we had that in the manifesto, because even though I've seen companies start product ops teams with the best of intentions, they then don't give them what they need to be successful. And that has been just heartbreaking to see.



Jason Knight 22:33

Yeah, well, we'll talk about some of those prerequisites in a minute. But I do have to ask, there were a few of you co authoring this, right? I believe, as well as obviously the people that don't go on and sign it. But obviously, you've talked before about how there's so many differences

between different implementations or opinions or views on it. Yeah. Was it quite hard to find something that you could all agree on? Or was there quite a lot of tension and kind of argument around? What actually goes in there? And what those prerequisites or principles or whatnot should be? Or did you find it quite easy to come to an agreement.

A

Antonia Landi 23:05

So to give you a rough idea, the manifesto was created in two weeks.



Jason Knight 23:11

So it sounds pretty easy.

A

Antonia Landi 23:13

But that was very deliberate on my part, because I didn't want us to get held up by shedding. I didn't want us to start saying, Yeah, well, but that my company that looks slightly different, or I'm not sure I would, you know, like word smithing to the extent where it becomes just unnecessary. We had some tough moments. I think. I you know, I think we definitely had to have some frank discussions also around the audience, like you said, like, Who is this actually for? What are we trying to achieve here? But it was really delightful to see that, broadly speaking, we already agree, you know, we might use different words, but the principles behind it, we were already on the same page, we just needed to create that page.



Jason Knight 24:02

So you can name names in the director's cut of this episode, if you want, if you want to sort of call out who but the difficult people? Yeah, no,

A

Antonia Landi 24:10

I think all of us were at some point!



Jason Knight 24:14

So we just mentioned or you just mentioned as a bunch of principles in there, there's commitments and as prerequisites within document, and we're obviously not going to have a chance to go through every single one of those. Sure. And of course, people can go and read it themselves, if they want after this, maybe sign it or whatnot. But I do want to call out a few highlights. And I want to start kind of counter intuitively at the end, okay with the prerequisites that we just talked about. Sure. So those prerequisites are and I'm gonna read them out and mansplain them to you, even though you've heard them, please do. And understanding the product operations is a strategic discipline, the mandate to affect meaningful change an equal seat at the table, and a strong cross disciplinary support network. So I do have to ask, based on

your experience and the people that you've worked with and the people in the community that you're talking about this stuff, how many companies that are trying to do this stuff actually meet all of those prerequisites? And I guess, by extension, do they need to have all of them to start?

A

Antonia Landi 25:10

Oh, what a question. I think actually, very few companies get that right and especially get it right the first time. And I think that's also totally fine. But having these prerequisites sort of written down, now gives us a jumping off point, it gives us something that we can refer to when we maybe have to have tough discussions. Right? Yeah, whether you need all of them. I think some are more important than others, I think, especially the sort of mandate to affect meaningful change. I've personally and also from, like, hearing other product ops folks speak about this. To me, that is the biggest blocker without that mandate, we literally can't do our job, right? Because, yep, product ops, to me is change management. To a large extent, it's evolving how we work as a product organisation. And if we don't have the ability to really meaningfully affect that change, there's nothing for us to do, we then really just do become process people.



Jason Knight 26:20

Don't tell Marty! But do you find that whole take quite interesting? And obviously very familiar as well, because you could, and probably, I would argue that those four prerequisites are the same things that product managers, and product leaders are always complaining about not having in their organisations just in general. So like, you have exactly the same blockers not just for product operations, which I'm obviously saying, and agreeing that you do have, but also just for the entire product organisation. So do you think that these prerequisites that you've called out whilst very valid for product ops are just kind of prerequisites to being a good product company or having a good product culture and product team within your organisation? Or do you feel that there's kind of additional depth in there and additional call outs, specifically for product ops?

A

Antonia Landi 27:05

Yeah, you know, what, I never actually thought about how this could be applied to product management in general. But neither you mentioned it, I think you're absolutely right. And I think I mean, I've also felt this right, the first few conversations I had around why product ops isn't working, why it keeps failing at such and such company. It sounded so familiar to me, you know, like I started from a phone or in a feature factory, and I had exactly the same complaints. Yep. So I do actually think they are much more broadly applicable than we maybe first imagined.



Jason Knight 27:40

You might be on to something, let's catch on. But let's touch on commitments. So one of the commitments is about finding the most suitable tool or framework and not just forcing people to use one for the sake of it right now. I agree with that. But of course, product ops, in theory

to use one for the sake of it right now. I agree with that. But of course, product ops, in theory could be seen as the people that can enforce these tools, frameworks, or whatever else in the name of consistency and scalability and all of that stuff. So do you feel that it's more of a mindset shift? Or do product ops properly in quotes, rather than a technical shift? Or do you think that there are still certain tools or frameworks that are kind of necessary, at least as a jumping off point to start along the path?

A

Antonia Landi 28:19

Yeah, so sometimes I get asked you what are your top three tools for product ops? And I really dislike that.



Jason Knight 28:27

That question sounds like a Twitter thread in the making.

A

Antonia Landi 28:30

Because my answer is always whatever tools you need to communicate with people, like literally everything else is optional. And I think, again, like with this already been labelled as process people, like we need to be so careful that we don't make that prophecy come through. And that it's actually I like to call it lean Ops nowadays, because it's, you know, it sounds like a fancy thing.



Jason Knight 28:58

That's the book title!

A

Antonia Landi 29:00

Don't tell anyone! But it's really just applying good product management practices, to our own organisations like that, to me was product is what product ops really is about. So it's absolutely the same steps, right? Like, validate your problem space, like what problem are you actually having? What are you actually trying to solve? And then in which ways might you solve that? And how can you test that theories and like, way later on, you might discover there is a tool that you know, fulfils all those criteria, or there is a framework that can slot into your organisation perfectly. But it's, you know, this reluctance to even just take apart frameworks, right? Like, we look at them as this oh, this is a fully formed product, and I just need to apply at wholesale, right like this book told me how to do it. I'm gonna do exactly what's in this book. And then, if it goes wrong, I'm not accountable to I think and it's to me product Ops is best when we really look at the hard problems, and then pick and mix, right? And try to understand what's the best way to solve this unique problem in this unique company?



Jason Knight 30:14

Yeah, I've seen put our tops described as applying product management principles to product management, which I think is interesting. You've just touched it yourself, but for the whole company, as well. But yeah, just the idea that you should always be testing and learning and iterating and absolutely throwing away what doesn't work and keeping What does and all that stuff, which I'm definitely strongly in favour of. But another commitment in the list is to call out when product operations is being misused as a bandaid for organisational dysfunction. Now, we could probably do a whole podcast series on organisational dysfunction, and probably get lots of listeners and lots of tasty conversations. But what are some examples that you've seen of product operations be used as a band aid for dysfunction?

A

Antonia Landi 30:58

Yeah, I actually love that that sort of made the final cut and is in the manifesto. Now, first of all...



Jason Knight 31:05

Oh, spicy!

A

Antonia Landi 31:06

It's definitely spicy. But that's kind of my style. So I, yeah, like product ops, you know, you can come in, and especially if this is your first product ops role, you're kind of happy, go lucky, you know, just happy to be there and do whatever needs done. And then two months down the line, you realise you're the team Assistant, you're the one that's always taking notes, you're the one that is always creating Confluence pages, because nobody else cares, right? Like, it's, it's, once you are to sort of the, the garbage bucket for all of the things that nobody else wants to do, that's when you need to stop. But I think I mean, organisational dysfunction can go so many different ways, right? Like, we can talk about silos. And you can try to genuinely break down those barriers and have teams understand each other and work together across disciplines. Or you can have a product ops manager running around updating 14 different types of people, because they all need a slightly different version, you know, of the communication at hand. So it's, it's tough, I, especially with product ops, because it is sort of we are kind of marketing it as is the solution to all your problems. And when people say, Okay, well, there's a problem. I don't want to talk with sales, because I think they're stupid, you might just throw a product ops person at it.



Jason Knight 32:40

Yeah. So what we're saying is, don't try to use product ops to cover for people not wanting to talk to each other and just using product ops people as kind of message passes, which again, is something that product managers in some organisations have seen exactly the same. So absolutely. It's just like, I guess, if you're going to apply product management to product management, as we kind of talked about earlier, then it kind of makes sense that they have all exactly the same problems. So hopefully, we can persuade people that they should not do some of those things. So if we look at the principles, there are four principles. And again, I want

to mansplain these as well, there's flexibility over uniformity, open collaboration, over functional separation, short iteration cycles, over long term plans, and depth of impact over breath. Now, that starts to sound very similar conceptually, and indeed, philosophically to some of the stuff, for example, from the Agile Manifesto. And then there's that whole kind of, you know, things on the left versus things on the right. And these are more important than those, you know, all that good stuff. So, almost a lot of sense. But I'm going to make it difficult for you now. And I'm going to ask you, if you had to pick one of those principles as the core principle of product operations and helping to make it successful. Or if you like, creating a meta principle that encapsulates everything. What is that principle?

A

Antonia Landi 33:55

I think the most important one for me is really the flexibility over a uniformity one, because I think a lot of the modern problems we have in product management stemmed from not being able to do that. Not maybe allowing ourselves to do that, because we feel like, you know, if somebody else that is much smarter than us has done the pre work. Surely I don't have anything else to add to it. Or if it's because our organisations aren't built to be I mean, this is this is agility, right? This is being agile. I am a huge fan of the Agile Manifesto to this day. I go, like I literally go to the website every so often to just refresh my memory because it speaks to me so much. And I think it's so applicable in everything we do, right? We software development is inherently risky. We don't know what's going to happen. We don't even know how our customers are going to react to the thing we built right and we've built so many structures is to try and understand that ahead of the fact to try and explain why something is happening the way it's happening. But ultimately, the more agile and flexible we are, the more easily we can respond to these unexpected changes. And I think product Ops is no different.



Jason Knight 35:20

Oh, there you go. So, food for thought there. But what's next for you? Are you going to be out now? I mean, you've talked about wanting to educate and inform. So you continue tub thumping. The manifesto, we talked about maybe there's a could be a book called whatever we call it like lean operations, or whatever we call it. Is that like your next few months? Are you also going to be doubling down on some good old fashioned consulting and changing a few companies themselves for the better?

A

Antonia Landi 35:45

Yeah, I mean, let's see right now, I think I'm mainly focused. I've got quite a busy you conferencing somewhere coming up? Oh, there you go. Yeah, I'm really not limiting myself at the moment to what I want or will be doing, you know, like a cannon in the spirit of agility. I think even product ops as a discipline right now. It's a it's a huge experiment. We're running. And I mean, let's be honest, I don't know what the future of product ops looks like. So to tie, you know, my my own, let's say a yearly plans to that even.



Jason Knight 36:22

Yeah, yeah. I guess it's like me asking for a 12 month roadmap or something. Down on that

Yeah, yeah, I guess it's like me asking for a 12 month roadmap or something. Down on that, though, I'm gonna pin you down on that, sir. Because, obviously, it's impossible to predict the future. But if you had to, I don't know, basically guesstimate what you think product Ops is gonna look like in 12 months time, based on current trends, what you're seeing, maybe assuming that the manifesto is gonna help a bit as well. Where do you think it is going?

A

Antonia Landi 36:48

Excellent question. Honestly, I don't expect it'll be much different in 12 months, I'm hoping that at least one book will be released in that time.



Jason Knight 36:59

Well, when you say hoping you're writing it right?

A

Antonia Landi 37:01

I'm talking about Melissa Perri and Denise Till's, I think it's a very interesting proposition. But I've never publicly said, Okay, I'm gonna write a product of this book. Now. Let's see what happens, right?



Jason Knight 37:14

This was the point where it all kick started. But I'm also going to pin you down and ask you to give one piece of advice to a company that maybe doesn't have any product operations at the moment, maybe they're starting to feel the strain and the stresses that you mentioned earlier around, like maybe the product leader is doing all these different things, and they can't do they feel like they're thinking, what is the first thing that they should do? If they want to start down that product operations part apart from hire you, of course,

A

Antonia Landi 37:45

Honestly, I think that the top thing anyone in that position can do is be in product ops spaces. Go to a meetup, where you might find some product ops folk reach out to somebody on LinkedIn, speak to a person that has already felt that pain, because I think it's very hard to describe the intricacies of starting this discipline from scratch. And even though, you know, you can read a lot of things online nowadays about product ops, but really having a face to face conversation or virtual conversation with somebody who's been there and who's had to go through that, hey, I was hired for a reason. But nobody's listening to me. I can't do anything. You know, that's invaluable experience.



Jason Knight 38:38

Like some kind of consultant, I guess we'd call...



Antonia Landi 38:40

Oh interesting! I'd never thought about it that way!



Jason Knight 38:45

Well, definitely great advice. I always recommend people talk to people. I'm a big fan of community engagement. And, you know, just trying to find out and mentorship as well, you know, trying to find out from people, as you say that I've been there before, maybe you can give you a little bit of advice as to you know, what's right and what's wrong, right. But where can people find you after this, if they want to chat more about product operations, maybe find out where to sign a manifesto or see if they can get you to regale them with circus stories.



Antonia Landi 39:12

So I'm most active on LinkedIn. So I think if you really want to hear me ramble about everything, and product management related, that's the best way. And I'm I mean, especially for those listening, if you are in Berlin, I am very open and flexible with my time super happy to be at meetups, grab a coffee with literally almost anyone that asks. So yeah, I've got I mean, product ops manifesto, you can literally Google it. It should appear. There's obviously a lovely link to it on my LinkedIn as well. I'm sure you'll find it.



Jason Knight 39:48

Yeah, I'll make sure to link that all into the show notes. And I'm also very curious maybe also for the Director's Cut. Why it's only almost anybody and very curious as to the people that you wouldn't go for coffee with so we'll talk about after we...



Antonia Landi 40:01

Absolutely!



Jason Knight 40:01

..after we turn the recording off, but yeah, I'll make sure to link that all into the show notes. And hopefully you'll get a few people heading in your direction with their signing pens and looking for more info. Well, that's obviously been a fabulous chat. So obviously really happy we could spend some time talking about manifestos and how people get good at product ops. Obviously we'll stay in touch but as for now, thanks for spending the time.



Antonia Landi 40:23

Thank you so much for having me.



Jason Knight 40:26

As always, thanks for listening. I hope you found the episode inspiring and insightful. If you did again, I can only encourage you to hop over to <https://www.oneknightinproduct.com>, check out some of my other fantastic guests sign up to to the mailing list, subscribe on your favourite podcast app and make sure you share your friends so you and they can never miss another episode again. I'll be back soon with another inspiring guest but as for now, thanks and good night.