A Function Paper from GRAIL

What does an AI-augmented product organisation look like?

Product organisation

Where a product function is heading in the next two to three years, and what GRAIL believes it takes to get there first.

“Evidence stays live. Judgment stays with the person.”

01	How much of your product truth disappears after each launch?
02	Whose customer signal are you still not hearing?
03	Which roadmap bets would you fund if your own money?

WHAT DOES AN AI-AUGMENTED PRODUCT ORGANISATION LOOK LIKE?

Where a product function is heading in the next two to three years, and what GRAIL believes it takes to get there first.

Product teams are surrounded by evidence but still make decisions from periodic summaries, partial memories and whoever argues best. **The change that matters is that customer evidence, product behaviour and commercial context become a continuous operating layer around every product decision.** The roadmap stops being a presentation of intentions. It becomes a living record of bets, evidence and choices.

THE PRODUCT FUNCTION'S 2028 RHYTHM

01

LISTEN

Approved interviews, support conversations, reviews and sales calls are processed.

›

02

INTERPRET

Relevant research, usage, commercial exposure and support history come together.

›

03

DECIDE

Product managers investigate contradictions and choose customers to call.

›

04

DELIVER

Draft specifications, internal notes and feedback tags are proposed.

›

05

LEARN

Decisions record assumptions and the evidence that would reverse them.

Evidence stays live. Judgment stays with the person.

GRAIL's view, from building AI-augmented work inside organisations. A position, not a survey.

THE FUNCTION TODAY

Evidence arrives faster than decisions can *absorb it*.

A mid-market product function usually contains 3 to 30 core product staff in companies with 100 to 2,000 employees, an estimate consistent with the team-size bands in ProductPlan's 2025 survey and current software-team ratios. The smallest version is a Head of Product with one or two product managers. Larger versions add product directors, portfolio or category managers, product operations, researchers, designers, product analysts and pricing responsibility. Engineering, industrial design, testing and technical lifecycle management may sit beneath a wider product umbrella without belonging to product management itself.

Product sits between market demand and the resources used to develop products. It drives revenue through new offers, adoption, retention, pricing and portfolio mix. It shapes development choices, product complexity, support demand and decisions to stop weak products.

Eight processes

01	Discovery and customer research	05	Pricing and packaging
02	Market and competitor intelligence	06	Launch, documentation and enablement
03	Roadmap and prioritisation	07	Product analytics and feedback loops
04	Requirements and product specifications	08	Portfolio management

Where the information lives is the problem. Jira, Azure DevOps or Linear. Productboard, Aha!, spreadsheets and presentation roadmaps. Amplitude, Mixpanel or web analytics. CRM, support tickets, call recordings, ERP, PLM, Confluence, SharePoint and the memories of salespeople, researchers and senior product managers. Each system contains part of the answer. Few decisions receive the whole answer in time.

> The roadmap often reflects which leaders negotiated most effectively because the evidence could not be assembled at decision speed.

Product teams already track revenue, margin, adoption, activation, retention, churn, satisfaction, time to market, experiment velocity and portfolio return. The constraint is not a lack of signals. It is the work required to connect signals to a decision while the decision is still open.

WHAT CHANGES STRUCTURALLY

The roadmap becomes a living *decision record*.

The function changes at its centre in two ways.

Customer and market evidence becomes continuous rather than episodic. Approved interviews, tickets, sales calls, reviews and behavioural events become a product memory that can be searched, compared and refreshed. Every important finding carries its source, segment, product, date and validity. Each roadmap bet can show the customer evidence, product behaviour, commercial value, delivery demand and assumptions beneath it. The team sees contradictions and gaps instead of hiding them inside a score.

Artifact production stops setting the product cadence. Briefs, product requirements, release notes, comparisons and portfolio packs can be prepared within the flow of work. Product managers become accountable editors of evidence and choices rather than producers of documents. Their scarce contribution moves toward problem selection, study design, causal reasoning, positioning, tradeoffs and customer commitments.

> The function moves from a quarterly reconstruction of customer needs and product performance to a weekly view of what changed, why it matters and which decision now deserves attention.

> WHERE IT IS WEAKEST More evidence does not remove strategic judgment. Weak coverage can make the loudest customers look representative. Poor metric definitions can turn correlation into a confident story. Faster analysis makes a weak assumption travel faster unless a person tests the source, the segment and the claim.

THE 2028 OPERATING PICTURE

A day, a week, a *month*.

A product function that invests heavily still employs product managers, researchers and analysts in 2028. Its shape changes. Product operations moves from calendar and template administration toward taxonomy, permissions, workflow evaluation and product-memory quality. Analysts spend less time answering recurring requests and more time on causal analysis. Researchers conduct more studies and test whether synthesis suppresses minority views. Product managers spend more of the week with customers. Product leadership concentrates on product thesis, pricing and portfolio choices.

The day

MORNING

Discovery workflows process approved interviews, support conversations, reviews and sales calls. Each product manager receives a short brief covering new needs, contradictory evidence, unusual customer behaviour and competitor moves. Sources are attached. The product manager decides what deserves investigation and which customers to call.

DURING

A live workspace brings together the relevant research, usage, commercial exposure, support history and earlier decisions. It prepares an interview guide, an analysis path or a first specification from approved material. The product manager checks coverage, challenges the interpretation and supplies context the systems do not hold.

AFTER

Approved conversations become cited findings. Decisions record the alternatives considered, the assumptions accepted and the evidence that would reverse them. Draft specifications, internal notes and feedback tags are proposed in the systems that own them. The responsible person approves consequential changes.

THE WEEK Each week, product squads examine active bets through one shared view. It combines qualitative feedback, cohort behaviour, commercial exposure, experiment results and delivery status. Competitor changes are interpreted beside actual win-loss evidence. The meeting starts with contradictions, weak assumptions, unusual movement and choices that need intervention, not a tour through every status line.

THE MONTH Product leadership reviews the portfolio. The pack shows where usage, margin, retention, support burden and strategic fit are improving or deteriorating. Pricing scenarios and packaging hypotheses are ready for discussion. Leaders decide which experiments to run, which commitments to defer, and which products to invest in, hold, harvest or stop.

Continuous discovery, traceable choices and current portfolio evidence used to be separate ambitions. They become one operating rhythm, with the product manager accountable for what the evidence means.

PROCESS BY PROCESS

What runs, and what stays with the *person*.

PROCESS	WHAT THE AGENT DOES	WHAT STAYS WITH THE PERSON
Discovery and customer research	Prepares interview guides from existing evidence, transcribes approved sessions, proposes themes and links each finding to source material	Researchers control sampling and interpretation; product managers conduct important conversations and investigate outliers
Market and competitor intelligence	Monitors approved public sources and internal win-loss material, explains what changed and produces a cited brief	Product leadership judges strategic significance and decides whether the change matters
Roadmap and prioritisation	Assembles alternative rankings, missing evidence, dependencies, strategic fit and rejected assumptions	The product manager owns the recommendation; product leadership owns capital allocation
Requirements and product specifications	Drafts problem statements, product requirements, stories, edge cases and open questions from approved discovery material	Product, design, legal and engineering review the scope, tradeoffs and readiness of the result
Pricing and packaging	Prepares segment economics, competitor comparisons, packaging alternatives, interview guides and experiment designs	Product, finance and commercial leaders approve the hypothesis, guardrails and any change
Launch, documentation and enablement	Produces audience-specific drafts from the approved specification and decision record, then checks them against release status	Owners approve positioning, claims, readiness, publication and customer commitments
Product analytics and feedback loops	Answers governed questions, creates analyses, flags anomalies and proposes explanations with underlying data	Analysts validate taxonomy, causal claims and experiment design; product managers decide what action follows
Portfolio management	Maintains invest, hold, harvest and stop scenarios, and exposes changed assumptions, cannibalisation and unsupported investment	Executives decide where resources move and which products continue

Read the right-hand column twice. It contains study design, interpretation, causal reasoning, tradeoffs, positioning and commitment. The left-hand column exists to bring better evidence to those judgments, not to replace them.

DATA AND CONNECTIONS

Four stages, and the product stack *today*.

GRAIL's Access Ladder has four stages. Each earns the next.

01 **Documents only**
Research, specifications, decisions, policies and launch material form the first product memory. Product managers inspect sources and taxonomy.

02 **Read access**
Roadmap decisions and analytics compare plans with behavior. CRM, support and conversations deepen discovery. Outputs require evaluation.

03 **Read and act with approval**
The agent proposes updates with sources and affected records. Prices, roadmap commitments, specifications, external claims and experiments with identifiable people require named approval.

04 **Bounded autonomous action**
Summaries, tags, status updates and monitoring run within limits. The workflow flags anomalies but cannot allocate capital, set prices or commit the roadmap.

The product stack position, as of September 2026

Jira and Confluence	Atlassian's hosted Rovo MCP server is generally available. It can search, update Confluence, and create or link Jira work under permissions and audit logs.
Linear	Hosted read-write and read-only MCP endpoints support issues, projects, comments and monitoring.
Productboard	Its hosted MCP server remains beta. It supports Spark specifications, comments and status. Wider flows use REST API v2.
Amplitude	Its hosted MCP server works with charts, experiments, cohorts, flags, metrics and taxonomy. It has an EU endpoint and project controls. Events use an SDK or ingestion API.
Mixpanel	Its April 2026 MCP announcement described a beta. The June 2026 Headless SDK supports scheduled workflows. Interactive analysis and unattended monitoring use different surfaces.
Customer systems	HubSpot became generally available through remote MCP in April 2026 with selected writes. Upsales has a read-only connector in version one. Intercom is limited to US-hosted workspaces. Zendesk uses its API. Others require validation.
Microsoft 365	SharePoint and OneDrive connect through Microsoft Graph. External MCP connectors feed Microsoft 365 Copilot, but create no general hosted SharePoint endpoint.

GRAIL'S THESIS

Six things we believe, from building *this*.

Product functions do not need another layer of generated documents. They need a better relationship between evidence and choice. Six beliefs shape how we build that relationship.

01 The product memory matters more than the first draft.

A fast specification is useful, but it is not the structural change. The real asset is an evidence base that preserves source, segment, product, date, validity and decision history so the next choice starts from what the company already knows.

02 Continuous discovery is a coverage problem before it is a synthesis problem.

Combining interviews, tickets, sales calls, reviews and behaviour can reveal patterns no single channel holds. It can also turn a noisy sample into a confident answer. The team must know who is missing, which segment is speaking and whether observed behaviour supports the stated need.

03 The roadmap is a capital-allocation record, not a list of promises.

Each bet should carry its evidence, commercial exposure, delivery demand and stopping assumptions. That makes political requests easier to examine and weak investments easier to interrupt. The value is not prettier prioritisation. It is a more explicit choice.

04 Documents should follow decisions, not become substitutes for them.

Product requirements, release notes and portfolio packs can be prepared from approved evidence and kept current across systems. Product managers should spend the capacity that releases on customers, hypotheses, tradeoffs and commitments. A fuller document does not rescue a poorly chosen problem.

05 Augment the interpretation. Keep the accountability human.

Agents can retrieve evidence, compare histories, expose contradictions and prepare alternatives. People retain study design, causal reasoning, strategic significance, pricing judgment and portfolio choice. Approval must mean inspecting the evidence and accepting the decision, not clicking through a queue.

06 Connect customer evidence before delivery activity defines the truth.

A delivery system is attractive because its fields are structured and its connection is straightforward. Connected first, it can make briefs optimise activity rather than product outcomes. The chain should run from customer evidence to behaviour, decision and delivery, with each link traceable.

These six beliefs do not favour a particular product tool. They concern how a company learns, chooses and commits. Every connected system inherits them.

WHAT IT ASKS OF PEOPLE

Roles, rhythm, and where it *fails*.

Product managers move from document ownership toward evidence quality, hypothesis design and decisions. They learn to inspect sources, test segment coverage, challenge causal claims, write clear choices and recognise which actions need approval. Their contribution moves toward problem selection, study design, causal reasoning, positioning, tradeoffs and customer commitments.

Product operations owns taxonomy, permissions, evaluation sets and the quality of the shared product memory. Researchers own sampling, consent and interpretation. Analysts own metric definitions, causal standards and experiment validity. Product leaders define decision rights, protect room for customer contact and keep delivery signals from becoming a proxy for individual performance.

The team needs research design, data literacy, experiment design, source verification, careful handling of customer material and clear decision writing. Prompt familiarity is not enough. People must understand where a synthesis came from, what it excluded and what evidence would change their mind.

The rhythm

START	3 TO 6 MONTHS	6 TO 12 MONTHS	12 TO 24 MONTHS
Curated documents establish the first product memory and working rhythm	A stable weekly rhythm develops around approved evidence	Governed read access connects roadmap, analytics and customer systems	Approved writes and bounded internal actions keep product records current

The sequence begins with a useful decision and earns wider access through source quality, evaluation and adoption. Connection depth follows trust. It does not lead it.

> **WHERE IT FAILS** Source coverage is ignored. Loud customers dominate. Themes lose segment context. Sentiment is confused with need. Correlations become causal claims. Stale assumptions remain in product memory. Review work is added without removing the old reporting ritual. Jira is connected before customer evidence, so delivery activity becomes the answer to every question.

The product function changes when the people who make choices also shape the memory, approval boundaries and working rhythm around those choices. The tool is only the carrier.

HAVE YOU THOUGHT ABOUT THIS?

Twelve questions for the product *leader*.

1 Every approved customer interview could become cited, reusable evidence by the next morning. How much of what customers tell you currently disappears after the meeting?

2 Sales calls, support tickets, reviews and product behaviour could produce one weekly map of customer needs. Could your roadmap review start with what the whole customer base revealed this week?

3 Each roadmap item could show its customer evidence, usage, revenue exposure and assumptions. Could every item explain why it deserves investment?

4 Product managers could receive a first specification from approved discovery material while context is still current. Which part of your specification process still takes longer than the judgment requires?

5 A pricing workspace could compare packaging, willingness-to-pay evidence and customer behaviour whenever a commercial question appears. Could your team test pricing every month instead of debating it once a year?

6 Competitor monitoring could alert the team only when a public change matches evidence from real deals. Could you distinguish an announcement from a move that is changing buyer behaviour?

7 Product performance could arrive as an explanation of unusual behaviour with the underlying data attached. How much earlier could you respond if a weak launch became visible within a day?

8 Customer documentation and enablement could refresh from the approved specification after each release. What would fewer outdated promises change for support demand and customer trust?

9 Portfolio reviews could expose products consuming development effort without improving adoption, margin or strategic position. Which product would receive a different decision if that evidence were assembled today?

10 New product managers could search years of research, choices and reversals instead of rebuilding context from presentations. How much sooner could a new manager make a sound decision?

11 Customer requests could be compared with actual behaviour, including needs customers struggle to describe. Which roadmap choices currently rely on what customers say without checking what they do?

12 Every approved product decision could record alternatives, assumptions and the evidence that would reverse it. Could your team stop relitigating old choices while still knowing when circumstances have changed?

These are the questions the programme is built to answer with the people who run the product function, using their own evidence and decisions rather than an outside template.