The state of Product Management in Moldova

2023

Summary

As our purpose at Technovator is to promote the growth of talents to innovate in tech-related fields, we consider **Product Manager** on top of most of the growth of a product-oriented company and even a country.

This is why we have decided to elaborate on this white paper to show you what we as a country have achieved in a very short time, as a community in the Republic of Moldova, and also take more of the potential of this field for the economy.

This White Paper provides a comprehensive overview of product management in Moldova.

It aims to offer valuable information for professionals, businesses, and stakeholders and a view of the industry's challenges and potential, set against the backdrop of Moldova's technological landscape.

This analysis is enriched by empirical data from the **'Product Management in Moldova' Study conducted in 2022**, which sheds light on market trends, salary benchmarks, skill sets, and the demand for product management professionals in the Moldovan market.

Furthermore, the paper spotlights significant local events and resources that have been instrumental in nurturing the community, such as meetups and conferences, alongside educational programs and players that have contributed to the community's growth.

Overall, the white paper stands as both a retrospective look at the journey of product management in Moldova and a forward-looking guide, charting a path for future growth and innovation in the sector. It is a valuable resource for anyone interested in understanding and participating in the intersection of technology, business, and innovation in the Moldovan context.

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Introduction & Benchmark

In the growing landscape of global industries, the emergence of a new sector often heralds a blend of excitement, uncertainty, and the inevitable challenges of uncharted territory. Such is the case with the nascent field of **Product Management in the Republic of Moldova.**

Product management, by definition, is the art and science of bringing a product to market, guiding its lifecycle, and ensuring it meets market demands and consumer needs. It's a multifaceted role that requires a blend of strategic planning, market analysis, and cross-functional collaboration between technology, business, and user experience.
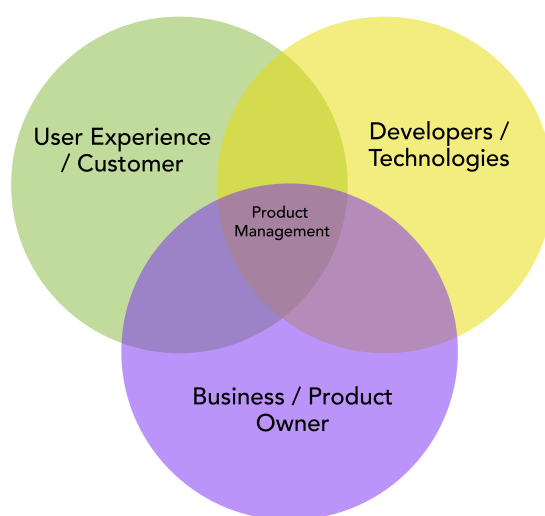
At the global level, Product Management has cemented its role as a cornerstone in the development and success of technology companies and startups. The rise of tech giants such as Google, Amazon, Meta, Apple, and Microsoft (GAMAM) has underscored the transformative power of product management. These companies have revolutionized consumer behavior and established new economic paradigms through astute product innovation and management.

Also, at the international level, there are more communities that facilitate the development of the field of Product Management. We have spotlighted 2 that are more visible:

- **Product School**, established in 2014, is a well-recognized educational institution specializing in product management. All of the instructors are Product Leaders working at **Silicon Valley** companies, including **Google, Meta, Netflix, Airbnb, Uber, and Amazon.**

- **Product Tank** is a global network of product management professionals and enthusiasts. Founded with the intention of creating a platform for collaboration and knowledge exchange, Product Tank now boasts a presence in over 200 cities worldwide.

The power of a well-managed product extends far beyond the success of the company that creates it. In monetary terms, the impact of a successful product can parallel, or even surpass, the economic output of entire nations. For instance, the revenue generated by major tech products often matches or exceeds the GDPs of some countries.

In Moldova, a country with budding aspirations in the global market, product management is an emerging but vital industry. As the country diversifies its economic activities, particularly in the IT sector, the role of product management becomes increasingly crucial.

The Product Management industry in Moldova should be analyzed in the context of the development of the IT sector in the country. Moldova has succeeded in increasing its IT exports **10 times in the last 15 years.** The growth in the IT industry has been driven by Moldova's advantages as a subcontracting destination for IT services, based on cost, skills and location.
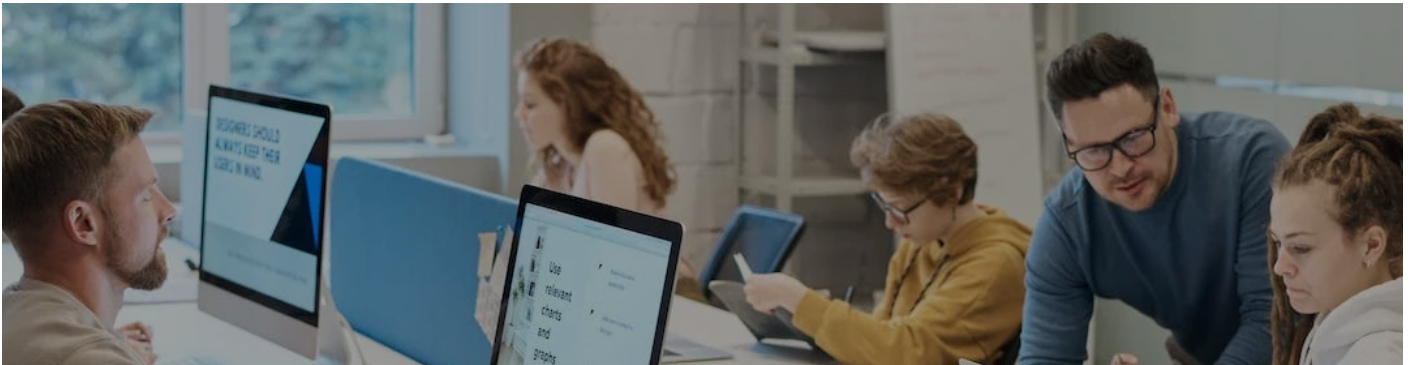
The information and communications technology industry has become one of the locomotives of economic growth in the Republic of Moldova.

As expected, the incentives offered by Moldova Innovation Technology Park science 2018 - legislation gave a significant boost to the ICT sector development.

The positive evolution in the ICT sector is accompanied by the increase in the number of active residents - **1600** at this moment, and **23.600** employees. According to MITP data, the IT services export forecast for **2023** is 12 billion lei, or **90%** of the total sales volume.

1600 IT companies

100 product related companies
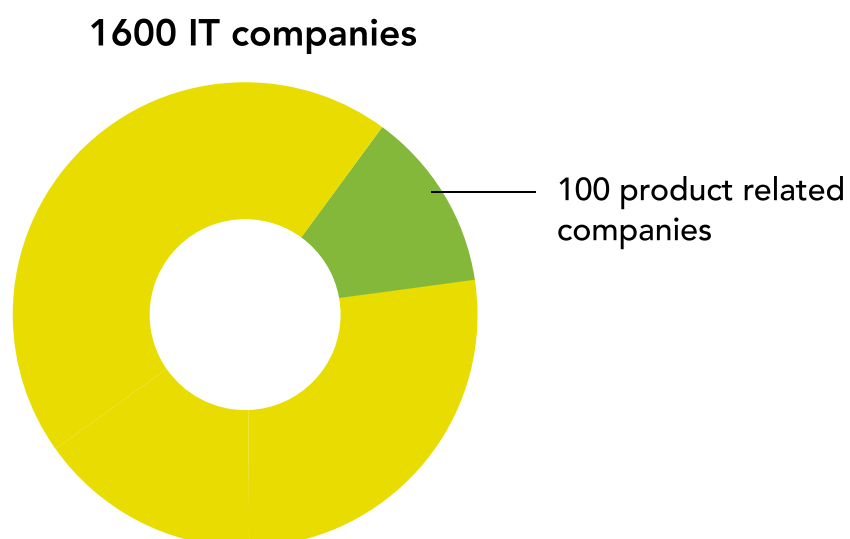
The IT businesses provide an extensive range of services, such as consulting, development, customer support services, operations management, cloud services, and more. Over the recent years, the IT community has started shifting more towards becoming developers of proprietary software and establishing tech startups.

Next, we will do a comparison between **Moldova and Estonia**, considering similarities in size, geopolitical, and historical trajectories, and differ significantly in their economic development, particularly in the tech sector and product management.

This analysis focuses on three key indicators: GDP, the number of startups, the number of unicorns, and the number of employees in the IT sector. These factors are crucial in understanding the role of product management in the development of a country's economy and technological landscape.

	ESTONIA	MOLDOVA
Number of startups	1555	100
Number of unicorns	10	0
Number of employees in the IT sector	31880	23600
GDP/ billion US dollars	38	14

Number of Startups

ESTONIA

Estonia has emerged as a vibrant startup hub, often termed the **'Silicon Valley of Europe.'** Today, Estonia has over **1,555 startups**. The country's digital infrastructure, governmental support, and a culture of innovation have fostered a conducive environment for startups. Additionally, Estonia's e-residency program has attracted global entrepreneurs.

MOLDOVA

Moldova, in contrast, is still developing its startup ecosystem. The number of startups is lower, with estimates placing it at around **100 investible startups**. Factors such as limited funding opportunities, lesser governmental support, and a smaller domestic market contribute to this gap.

Number of Unicorns

ESTONIA

Estonia stands out for its high number of unicorns (startups valued at over $1 billion) relative to its population. Estonia has been the birthplace of **10 unicorns: Skype in 2005, Playtech in 2007, Wise in 2015, Bolt in 2018, Pipedrive in 2020, Zego, ID.me and Gelato in 2021, Veriff and Glia in 2022.** This success is attributed to a highly skilled workforce, a supportive regulatory framework, and strong community networks in the tech sector.

Moldova has yet to produce a unicorn. This can be linked to the nascent stage of its startup ecosystem and the challenges in scaling businesses to global markets from a smaller economic base.

Number of Employees in the IT Sector

The IT sector in Estonia employs a significant portion of the workforce, with over **31880 professionals**. The sector contributes substantially to the GDP, supported by a robust educational system and governmental initiatives like e-Estonia.

Moldova's IT sector is smaller, with estimates suggesting around **23.600 professionals.** While growing, it faces challenges such as brain drain and the need for more comprehensive educational and training programs in technology and product management.

The Importance of Product Management Development for Country Development

This comparison highlights the pivotal role of product management in a country's technological and economic advancement.

Estonia's success in creating a thriving startup ecosystem and producing unicorns is closely tied to its focus on developing robust product management capabilities.

These capabilities are essential for understanding market needs, driving innovation, and scaling products effectively.

Moldova, while at an earlier stage in this journey, shows potential for growth in product management. Investing in education, training, and infrastructure to support product management can accelerate the development of its tech sector, leading to increased innovation, job creation, and economic growth.

Moldova can draw valuable lessons from such models to advance its tech sector.

A story of Product Management in Moldova

The ascension of Product Management in Moldova is a narrative of transformation and tenacious innovation. Once primarily known for IT outsourcing, Moldova is now emerging as a fertile ground for scalable, pioneering products that have begun to carve out a name for themselves both locally and internationally.

In the same vein, Tekwill as a 5 years project, implemented by the Moldovan Association of ICT Companies (ATIC) emerged as one of Moldova's most significant public-private partnerships, symbolizing a collective commitment to advancing the ICT sector.
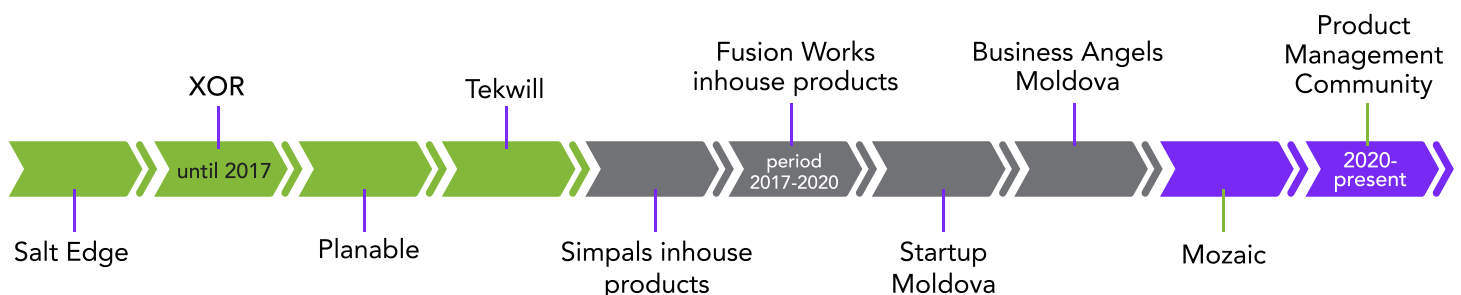
Tekwill represents a unique collaboration between several key players: the **Government of Moldova, USAID and Sweden** financial support, global technology giants like Microsoft and IBM, and other local industry stakeholders.

The primary objective of Tekwill has been to address the critical human capital shortage in the ICT industry and to foster the development of a vibrant entrepreneurship ecosystem, including product management.

Based on our overview, the story of technological products starts with the appearance of **XOR.ai, Salt Edge, Zeroqode, Babymoon, Planable, Medical Tourism Review**, and other luminaries among Moldova's startups who launched and scaled their products.

Local funding opportunities, notably **Business Angels Moldova** and **Mozaic**, have been important in propelling startups through their investment journeys.

The growth of Moldovan startups with a focus on products has been bolstered by substantial investments, signaling a burgeoning confidence in Moldova's product management potential.

On the one hand, some local companies began to become attractive product factories. In this regard, for example **Simpals** (Lobster, Sonr) and **Fusion Works** (Dely, viar.live) - were among the first companies that started developing in-house products.

The synergy between public and private entities has played a pivotal role in nurturing an infrastructure conducive to innovative product development.
Namely - Ihub (at Technical University of Moldova), **ZipHouse** (fashion excellence center), **Artcor** (at Academy of Music, Theater and Fine Arts),
Mediacor (focusing on media industry at State University of Moldova), **FinTech** (ASEM), Tekwill Comrat, Innotek (in Cahul region), Nortek (in Bălți region),
Business Hub Tiraspol - all this are in collaboration with Universities and supported by international donors as USAID, Sweden, UKaid, EU, UNDP and others international development partners.

The development of product management in Moldova has been also bolstered by the international accelerators like Techstars programs, Rockstar, Seedstars, Spherik Accelerator and others.

These international accelerators have played a pivotal role in providing the necessary framework, mentoring, and guidance, which in turn has led to the establishment of local accelerators such as those initiated by Dreamups, XY.

Innovation and collaboration in product management are supported by ecosystem builders like ATIC, MITP, Technovator, Startup Moldova Foundation, Dreamups, XY Partners, YEP! Moldova. These organizations catalyze growth through mentorship, hackathons, and accelerator programs, advocating for policies that nurture the increasing number of products.

In the spring of 2022, a Product Management Community within Technovator. Fueled by a shared passion and driven by a wealth of experience,

Mary Nemciuc - Founder and CEO Technovator, and
Elena Pavlovskaya - Senior Product Manager at Portside, Founder of Techdoor.md embarked on this ambitious journey.

The **Product Management Community**, under their guidance, evolved into a dynamic ecosystem where professionals could connect, learn, and thrive. Every aspect of the community was meticulously designed to foster growth and promote excellence in product management.

Today, the Product Management Community is a strong and proactive **community of 400+ active people** focused on developing local product professionals and enhancing the Moldovan market in the field of product management.

As Moldova strides into a product-centric era, the development of the Product Management section underscores the collective efforts that have led to a thriving startup culture. It's a culture that not only nurtures product management as a profession but also elevates it as a crucial driver of the country's economic and technological development.

Moldovan Product Management Environment

In the landscape of Moldovan product management, the sector has been helped in development significantly by the support of two pivotal entities.

- The Future Technologies Activity (FTA) in Moldova, funded by USAID, Sweden and UKaid, is a five-year (2021-2026), $52.8M flagship program spurring to drive Moldova's competitiveness and integration with global markets, which includes the support of product management development.

- Furthermore, the Moldova Innovation Technology Park (MITP) with 1600 companies as residents, has emerged as a supporter for unveiling the untapped potential within the IT sector's realm of product management. Their strong dedication and forward-thinking show just how much potential there is in Moldova's IT scene.

- In spring 2022 MITP in collaboration with FTA and Dreamups, launched the Product Management program from Berkeley Executive Education exclusively which successfully have been certificated 40 participants, thanks to the support of these players, beneficiaries benefit from up to 75% cost coverage of the 3000 USD course.

- Also, the Product Management Community Moldova within Technovator has proactive engagement and dedication to advancing local professionals in the field. This vibrant community has established a multifaceted platform, fostering connections and enabling a continuum of learning and professional development. A suite of networking opportunities is presented through different initiatives such as:

Regular meetups

counting at this day's **14 editions** to foster continuous learning and dialogue on topics pivotal to the industry.
With sessions ranging from network effects, UX/UI design, systems thinking, to data analytics and gamification, these meetups are critical for those looking to stay ahead of the curve in product management trends and practices.

Each of these initiatives is bringing around **40 participants** in different tech hubs from Chisinau as FinTech Hub, Enpact, and Orange Systems and contributes significantly to the growth and sophistication of Moldova's product management landscape.

They represent the commitment, by professionals from top product-oriented companies from Moldova such as **maib, Simpals, SaltEdge, Endava, Index, IMB, Simpals** and many more, to nurturing talent, fostering innovation, and reinforcing country position within the global product management community.

Meetups	Product Management Community Moldova by Technovator, XY, Moldova Innovation Technology Park
Bootcamps	Product Management Community Moldova by Technovator
Conference	Product Management Community Moldova by Technovator; Product & Project Management Conference by Tekwill; ProductDesign Conference by Yeatakviju, Dreamicon by Dreamups, Startup Moldova Summit by Startup Moldova
Courses	Pivotal Product School by Dreamups, Product Management Community Moldova by Technovator

Product Management Bootcamps and Courses

tailored for individuals at the cusp of their product management journey.
This intensive program equips participants with a comprehensive understanding of product management topics, from user needs and personas to product development lifecycles and data analytics provided by experts from the community.

Product Management Conference

stands as a flagship event that showcases the ingenuity and expertise of leaders in the technological product management space.

Already two editions of the conference are gathering about 250 participants by edition, from 30 local enterprises featuring lauded speakers from companies like Google, Amazon, Spotify, and Bolt. It's an event that transforms perspectives, enriches knowledge, and demands attendance for anyone serious about the craft of product management.

- Parallel to this, the **Design Community**, which began as a private assembly of local designers in 2016, created by Yatakviju Community became a significant force within the product management ecosystem.

  This group catalyzes collaboration between product managers and designers and also actively contributes to shaping Moldova's design narrative.
  This year **Design Community** has organized the 2nd edition of the **Product Design Conference** and showcased creativity and innovation, welcoming seniors and newcomers alike to a day of shared learning and inspiration in product design.

- Amidst this vibrant community lies the **Pivotal Product School**, an educational initiative developed by Dreamups that brings together a rich network of mentors and founders from across the globe - like Netflix, Uber, Miro. Also, Dreamups develops an in-house startup **Moonshot** International - that provides end-to-end product development solutions.

- Complementing these efforts is **XY Partners**, an organization dedicated to propelling startups and businesses forward through strategic mentoring and operational support. Their meetups and product-oriented initiatives are designed to transform business concepts into competitive products, capable of thriving both on local grounds and the international market stage.

- **Product & Project Management Conference** organized by **Project Management Community** and **Tekwill Academy** within Tekwill Expo Day 2023. This event serves as a gathering of professionals and enthusiasts eager to absorb and spotlight the difference between project and product management, showcasing case studies and dedicated workshops.
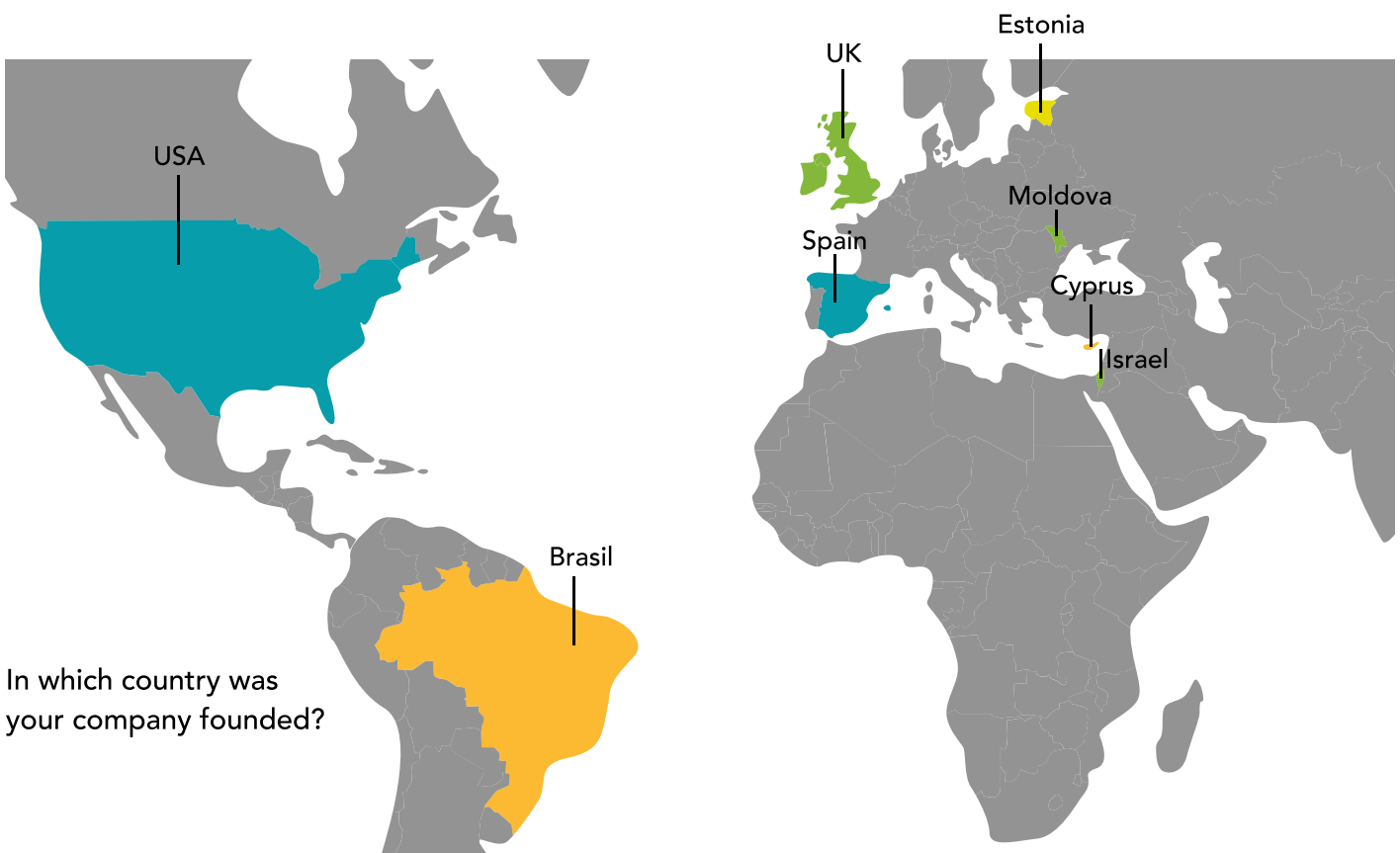
In summary, the Moldovan Product Management Landscape is formed with the collaboration of development partners, a passionate community, and educational pioneers, all contributing to a shared vision of elevating Moldova's status in the global product management arena.

The portrait of product managers in Moldova

Based on the analysis of Product Manager's Portrait in Moldova in 2022, conducted with the support of the Product Management Community Moldova within Technovator, provides valuable insights into the state of product management in the region.

The Analysis was meticulously prepared by **Genadii Chernei**, a serial entrepreneur and investor, and **Elena Pavlovskaya** - Senior Product Manager at Portside, Founder of Techdoor.md.

This section of the white paper delves into the findings of this comprehensive study, which surveyed nearly 70 product managers in Moldova, unveiling a wealth of specific data.

USA

Brasil

In which country was
your company founded?

Estonia
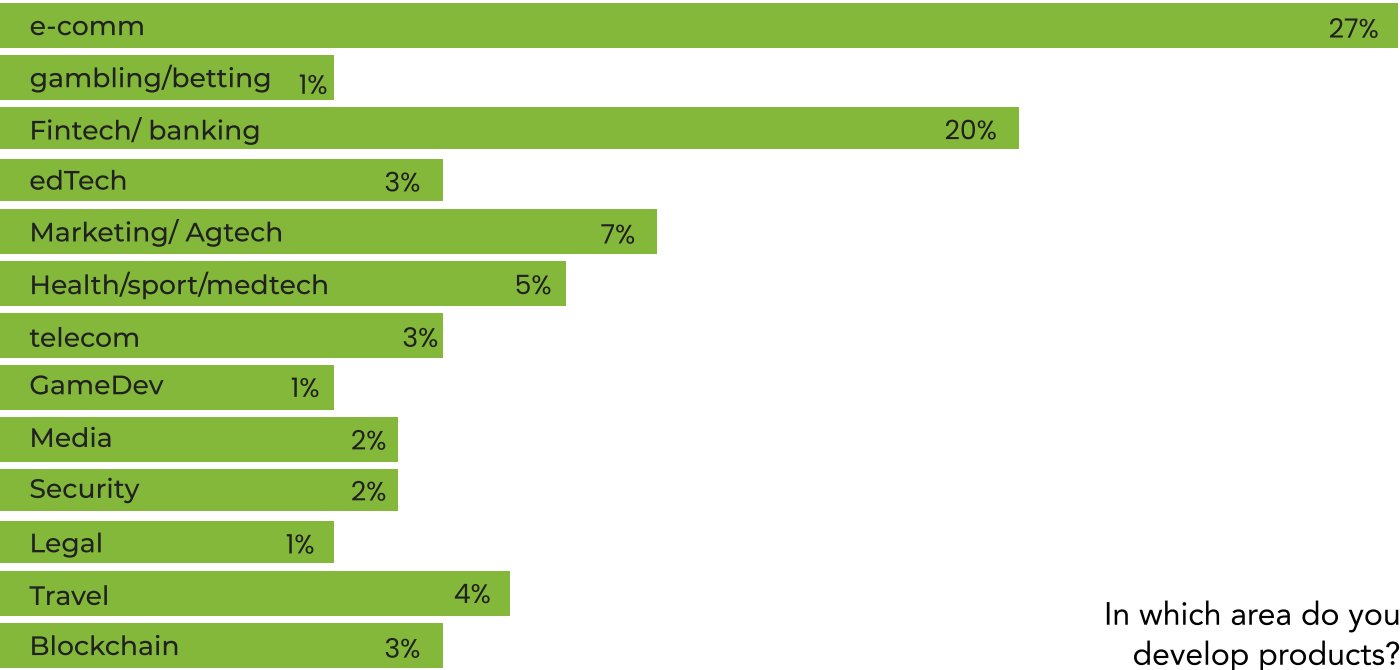
UK

Moldova

Spain

Cyprus

Israel

Key findings include the gender distribution in the field, with a nearly equal split between male and female professionals. The majority of product managers are aged between 31 and 40 years, indicating a mature and experienced workforce.

Notably, nearly half of the respondents possess a master's degree, suggesting a high level of education in the community.

The study also highlights the predominance of English language proficiency in proportion to 40% among Moldovan product managers, a crucial skill in the global marketplace. In terms of experience, a significant portion of respondents have 2-3 years in the field, pointing to a relatively young but growing professional community.

Area	Percentage
e-comm	27%
gambling/betting	1%
Fintech/ banking	20%
edTech	3%
Marketing/ Agtech	7%
Health/sport/medtech	5%
telecom	3%
GameDev	1%
Media	2%
Security	2%
Legal	1%
Travel	4%
Blockchain	3%

In which area do you develop products?

The roles held by these individuals varied from product managers and project managers to product owners and CEOs, reflecting the versatile nature of the profession.

The paths to becoming a product manager are diverse, with self-education and previous role experience being the most common routes. This underscores the importance of continuous learning and adaptability in the field.

When it comes to job search, LinkedIn, Friends/Networking, and local job portals like bestjobs.md, Rabota.md are the primary tools used by product managers in Moldova.

A notable aspect of the study is the focus on the types of companies where these professionals work. Most are employed in product-oriented or mixed (product and service) companies, with a considerable number working in the e-commerce sector, followed by Fintech and banking.

A commitment to continuous professional development was evident, with a focus on enhancing teamwork and product growth skills. Various learning tools, including books, articles, podcasts, and online channels, are utilized for skill enhancement.

The study also sheds light on the salaries of product managers in Moldova, with a majority earning between **1000 to 2000 euros**, indicating a competitive remuneration in line with European standards.

Notably, the study revealed that most product managers are employed in companies founded in Moldova, indicating strong local roots in the sector. These professionals predominantly develop products for Moldovan markets in proportion to **83%** and the other side for **USA, Brasil, UK, Spain, Estonia, Cyprus, Israel,** etc.

A significant finding of the study was the prevalence of self-education and previous role experience as key avenues for entering the profession. This underscores the resourcefulness and adaptability of Moldovan product managers in a rapidly evolving industry.

In conclusion, the Product Manager's portrait in **Moldova Analysis 2022** offers a detailed snapshot of a dynamic, evolving field characterized by a skilled, diverse, and educationally advanced workforce. This study is a cornerstone in understanding the current state of product management in Moldova and paves the way for future growth and innovation in this sector.

This white paper is elaborated by Technovator. Should you have any questions, we welcome your thoughts, feedback, and inquiries.

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