



## **Interview:** Simeon Irwin Product Manager



**Product Manager Simeon Irwin talks about his role at Savient, and the opportunity it affords to help shape how the company works.**

### **Sim congratulations on your new role, what excites you most?**

Firstly, it's great to be back in a role I'm passionate about, but also to see that while the core behaviours of Product Management remain the same, the discipline has evolved much over the last decade and there's a lot out there to learn.

I always loved being that connection between customer and product teams and I'm hopeful my breadth of experience across software development – from ideation and concept through design and implementation – equip me to understand challenges from many perspectives. I'm looking forward to leveraging my experience to deliver real value in the role.

### **Tell us a bit about your career to this point?**

I've always been creative and enjoyed problem solving, and bringing these two together feels natural. Early in my IT career, maintaining systems across an expansive site where when problems arose a significant journey would be required, meant a concise understanding of customer problems was key before acting. This early experience helped developed my curiosity as well as respect for the customer's perspective and the – often – creative planning, anticipation and contingency required to mitigate or resolve issues.

Post university I worked initially in feature film graphics tools development (think The Iron Giant) and subsequently aerospace, there working to develop training emulations for aircraft, engineering software often with real-world control interfaces – one notably interfaced with a physical helicopter in a workshop. During that time, I was helping to create training software ensuring critical procedures were performed correctly, where sometimes getting it right was potentially life and death in any real-world scenario.

I found the work challenging and rewarding, also learning the importance of storytelling. Whether reflecting with customers or helping developers understand complex systems, people often benefit from a clear narrative to help grasp the context of their work. This is crucial – when people understand the bigger picture, they're more invested and effective in building the right solutions.



Storytelling allowed me to connect both my creative side – by shaping engaging narratives – and my technical side, by ensuring everyone understood the goals and purpose behind our work.

My first product management position was within an organisation that was more accustomed to consultancy rather product innovation, so introducing product management was a challenging fit, working on what we now call ‘big data challenges’ – when the term was largely unrefined. While pioneering – in many ways – groundbreaking user experiences and technology, we faced the challenge of looking for specific problems for our products to solve.

The experience taught me a lesson: product development should always start with how we can improve a situation or solve a real customer need, rather than being driven by the tech trends, or sales opportunities.

## **What is most challenging about your role?**

While I remain in the same organisation, stepping into this role feels like both old and new territory. Weighing my experience against new learnings will be key to navigating the challenges ahead successfully.

Initially, there’s a lot to learn about both our technical stack and target markets. Looking beyond research, successfully balancing strategic thinking with day-to-day execution will become more important. As a steady-state product manager, it’s critical to balance more immediate feature priorities, sales opportunities and product survivability against longer-term vision.

## **What is most rewarding about your role?**

What I find most rewarding about this role is the opportunity to shape how we work from the ground up, as product management is a relatively new function within our business. PM’s commonly wear many hats, which is never truer than in a small but growing company. It will certainly keep things dynamic and exciting.

We have a talented team and a shared, inspiring vision for the future, and I’m excited to be a key part of driving our journey forward.

## **What do you think makes product management successful?**

In my experience, successful product management is about blending a diverse set of skills and experiences to keep all the moving parts aligned. It involves the ability to rapidly shift from the analysis of customer requirements to the review of technical or commercial artefacts, balancing day to day priorities and back again. Agility of thought and adaptability are key, as no day goes exactly as planned.

The real challenge – and the fun – lies in thinking on your feet while still adhering to processes. It’s about bridging gaps through structured rituals, feedback loops, and ensuring an environment where creativity thrives, all the while keeping the pace fast and efficient.



## What do you do outside of work to relax?

Outside of work, I thrive on staying busy – it’s actually how I relax. On a good day, I consider myself something of a renaissance man and I enjoy creating, from vine cultivation and winemaking, the building and upcycling of furniture, cooking, drawing and music production to house-scale DIY projects, in which plastering, tiling, plumbing, electrics and parquet flooring (never again) have all featured.

I tend to set high expectations for myself, but rarely feel the need to compete with others (with exception to perhaps my wife!)

I prioritise self-care through activities that both physically challenge and inspire me. I like to travel, last year hiking the Inca Trail, I enjoy snowboarding, skiing and surfing and during lockdown added simple – if effective – yoga, to my routine.

Creativity (and even innovation), for me, is about freedom of thought and drawing on a range of experiences. I feel that being engaged with so many different interests keep my mind open and fresh. I find my best ideas often come when I’m physically (and spiritually) focused – whether that be through yoga or periods when I’m spontaneously moved to dance like nobody’s watching... and genuinely hope that they.. are.. not 😊.