Activity: How We Retire Features

Goals

1. Identify elements of the platform that can be retired

2. Develop a plan for communicating retirement plans with the community

3. Communicate the retirement decision to the community

Prerequisites

Example: None

Who Should Participate?

Program management (tactical thinkers), Program staff (operational experience). This activity is best kicked off with a small group together (in-person or virtually), and then moved to asynchronous work.

Length

X minutes

Activity Instructions

Part 1: Small group together

Note: If a specific feature is already under consideration for retirement, you may move directly to Part 2 of the activity.

1. Discuss/brainstorm together a list of features/functionality that may be suitable for sunsetting. Plotting features on an effort/impact matrix (sample on page 3) may help identify elements that are difficult to maintain but do not provide a huge value to users.

2. If there are several, select 1-2 features for further assessment.

3. Determine a timeline for the remainder of the activity, who will be responsible for its completion, and who will be accountable.

Part 2: Small group asynchronously

1. Gather and review data on each of the selected features:

   a. User data

      i. How many users will be affected?
      ii. What percentage of overall users use the feature?
      iii. Did they try it once or did they use it all the time?
      iv. What percentage of users *do not* use the feature?
      v. Why did those users not use it?

   b. Data on alternative workflows

      i. What specific workflows is the feature supporting? When asking users about how they're using specific features, beware the XY problem; or asking about a user's solution rather than the problem they're trying to solve.

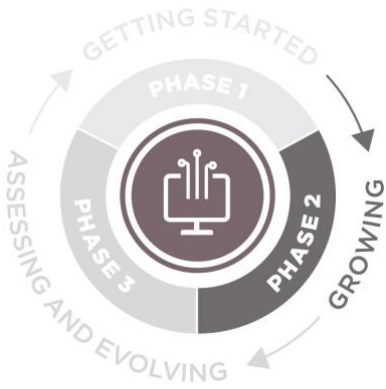   ii. What alternatives are there to complete the workflow?
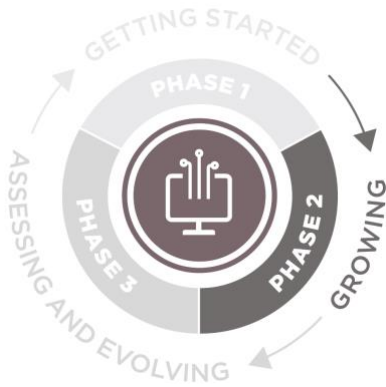
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    c. Data on organizational effort

        i. What resources (engineering, support) does the feature require?

        ii. What percentage of product use and/or revenue comes from the feature?

        iii. What is the expected cost of keeping it vs. the potential loss of removing it?

        iv. Is the product adding or distracting from our program mission?

2. Make a recommendation to retire/not retire features based on the data and information gathered.

If, after the above elements are complete, the decision is made to sunset a feature, move on to:

3. Gain approvals from the appropriate governance/leadership representatives.

4. Develop a sunset communication plan

    a. See Technology Activity: [Developing an End-of-Life Communications Plan](#)

5. Communicate

    a. Internal

        i. Ensure all program team members are aware of the change and the key details - why, when, alternatives

        ii. Update support documentation to clarify that a feature is no longer available, and what alternative workflows are available.

    b. External

        i. Reach out to affected users with a simple, concise message - enough detail so that nothing is unclear, dates and times the feature will be discontinued, and recommendations for alternative workflows.

        ii. Reach out via different channels: emails, in-application messaging if available, phone calls, social media.

        iii. Monitor feedback in the days/weeks following the announcement.

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A matrix chart with IMPACT on the vertical axis (ranging from Low to High) and EFFORT on the horizontal axis (ranging from Low to High), divided into four quadrants by dashed lines.