Software Product Engineering Vs Software Development
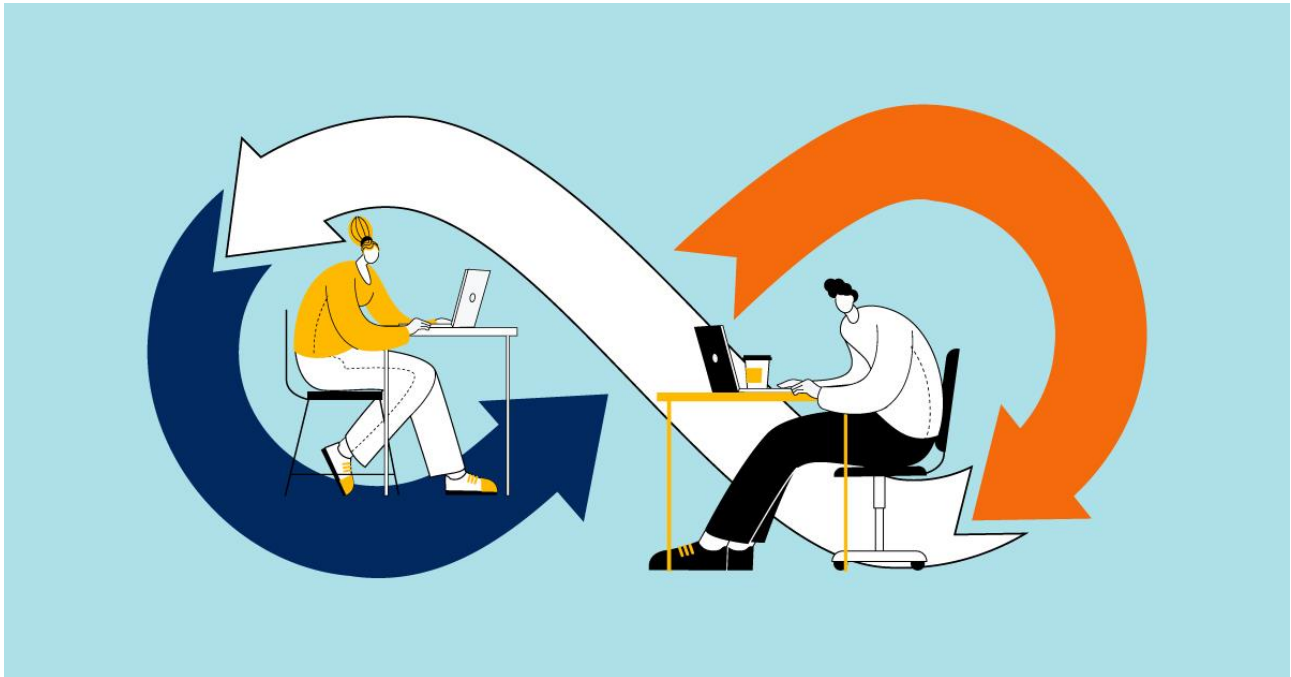
by Satya K Vivek | March 10, 2023

Have you been using the terms software product engineering and software development interchangeably all these years? Well, software product engineers are different from software developers.

Although both the work profiles belong to the IT industry and they share a common goal, the nature of their activities is different. However, a software product engineer and a software developer need the same set of skills. So, what exactly are the differences between these two categories of IT work profiles?

The evolution of software developers and product engineers

At the inception of the IT industry, there was no job profile called software product engineer. Software developers were responsible for the entire set of tasks, ranging from planning to developing software architecture, designing, and developing.

With advancements in software, the development process started becoming more complex. This called for specialized skills, and gradually the profile of a software product engineer came into being. These professionals oversee the design, development, UX, and UI processes, understanding the aspects that make the software work.

Currently, software developers focus more on coding. On the other hand, product managers are responsible for testing user acceptance, market-readiness of the product, prototype working, and communicating with the key stakeholders.

Software developer vs software product engineer
Let's understand the difference between a software developer and a software product engineer under the following grounds.

Key focus
- Developers are responsible for coding software. So, they need to interpret the specific business logic and not the larger picture while coding.
- Product engineers work with a broader perspective. The focus lies on understanding the software features, problem-solving, and making improvements as per the recommendations of the product owner.

Software Ownership
Software developers don't have any share of the ownership of testing, QA, or maintenance. They are solely responsible for working on product codes and passing them on to other teams. The product development process is solely owned by product engineers. They work on improving the quality of the product through different test cases. So, the performance of the tool largely depends on the product engineers.

Production management
Software developers are not responsible for product management or resolving any issue arising from the tool. They only work on the prescribed set of features. After coding, they proceed to the next project. Product engineers work on the process of production management as well. They create alerts during the process and fix potential issues that arise during the product lifecycle.

Flexibility in job roles
The job role of software developers remains restricted to making the recommended features functional by writing codes. So, they are not responsible for managing the ROI from the tool. Product engineers, on the other hand, shoulder a plethora of activities. They largely focus on the ROI and deploy relevant measures to execute the development process. So, product engineers tend to enjoy more flexibility.

Conclusion - software product engineering vs software development
Now that you know the difference between software development and software product engineering, you can draw a line between the job profiles of both these professionals. While developers remain more focused on creating software, product engineers are responsible for managing the same. Developing properly functional software calls for both these talents. So, the skills of both software developers and product engineers come into play in this process.