

## Job Description: Head of Product

**Reports to:** Product Strategy Director

**Location:** Currently operating hybrid working in our West London Office

**Contract:** FTC (maternity cover 1 year)

**Pattern:** Full Time (standard hours 9am – 5.30pm)

**Salary:** £65,000 to £75,000 (depending on experience)

### About the role:

Reporting to the Product Strategy Director and working closely with the Education Director, Programmes Director and Heads of Subject, the Head of Product is responsible for the product strategy and commercial success of a portfolio of subject excellence programmes. The Head of Product will have line management responsibilities for product strategy team members including Principal Design Leads and Design Leads (curriculum design content creators)..

The Head of Product is accountable for the commercial success of a portfolio of subject excellence programmes. The Head of Product will work closely with the Product Strategy Director and other Heads of Product to develop a distinctive roadmap of product and/or programme developments which drive increased impact and financial returns. This is guided by close collaboration with the Education Director and relevant Heads of Subject to understand educational priorities across all components of their portfolio of programmes. It is also shaped by a deep understanding of the competitive landscape, the potential market for new developments, and needs within Ark Schools, other current users and non-users.

The Head of Product will lead a team of in-house and out-of-house designers and authors to implement agreed developments, ensuring strong project and content management processes are in place and followed. The Head of Product will also work closely with the Partnerships and Fundraising teams to ensure the benefits of the programmes and new developments are well understood and communicated and sales and renewal targets are met.

### Key Responsibilities:

#### **Leadership**

- Contribute to and implement the organisation's strategy and mission
- Work closely with the Product Strategy Director, Education Director and Heads of Subject to develop and implement programme strategies that contribute to the overall organisational mission, strategy and sustainability
- Lead identified cross functional projects and activities as appropriate
- Present as necessary to the Ark Curriculum Plus (AC+) Leadership team and Ark Schools' Steering Committee

#### **Educational best practice and impact**

- Work closely with the Education Director and relevant Heads of Subject to understand the vision for subject excellence underpinning their portfolio of programmes, and to ensure that best practice is at the forefront of developments across all programme components so that the programmes continue to drive subject excellence
- Work closely with the Heads of Subject and other key stakeholders to arrive at a shared understanding of educational priorities across all programme components that will improve outcomes. This includes review of internal and external metrics and data points, including but not limited to survey data, school feedback and assessment data
- Establish and maintain relationships with the wider educational community

## **Market insights**

- Build a clear and coherent understanding of the programme portfolio's educational markets and needs
- Build and share a strong understanding of competitor propositions and how AC+ wins against these
- Conduct school visits, interviews and other feedback mechanisms including review of usage data, to observe and gain feedback to inform future developments
- Assess the market for new product concepts and maintain a deep understanding of current users' experience and renewals behaviour
- Work with the Product Strategy Director to continue to improve feedback mechanisms to strengthen market insights

## **Product management**

- Based on these insights and educational priorities, develop a roadmap for new products and/or programme developments in their portfolio to set AC+ up for success
- Build strong proposals/business cases to justify new developments/products
- Work with the Product Strategy Director and other Heads of Product to phase developments within the cashflow available, to be affordable and sustainable
- Influence internal and external stakeholders including funders to further the success of their portfolio of programmes
- Manage and support pilot programmes in building launch proposals, consistencies with other programmes and setting them up for success prior to launch

## **Commercial leadership**

- Input into AC+'s evolving long term vision and participate in strategy days as required
- Build and lead the programme strategies across the relevant programme portfolio
- Ensure the product life cycle 1- and 3-year growth plans and prioritisations are clear, approved by leadership and Ark Schools and realistic within available cashflow
- Ensure programme design and pedagogical approaches align with a viable business case for new developments, prioritising elements that create the highest impact within commercial constraints, and seeking the most cost-effective ways to deliver them
- Work closely with the Product Strategy Director to contribute to the financial planning, forecasting and organisational planning processes for the programme portfolio
- Oversee and manage the programme design budgets within the portfolio, ensuring costs and expenditure are within plan
- Work closely across the AC+ teams to build pan programme consistencies

## **Partnerships and fundraising**

- Work collaboratively with the Partnerships team to build strong go-to-market plans to get the most benefit and impact from product and programme developments
- Work with the Partnerships team to ensure the benefits of the programmes are well understood and communicated to enable sales and renewals targets are met
- Support the Partnerships team in creating and reviewing collateral as appropriate
- Work closely with the Partnerships team to lead external partnerships. Build proposals for new external partnerships by evaluating, producing cost/benefit analysis and presenting to the Leadership team
- In conjunction with the Leadership and fundraising team, develop relationships with existing and potential funders. Create proposals, updates and meet with funders as appropriate to secure funding for organisational priorities and priorities within their portfolio of programmes

## **Content creation and project management**

- Create and deliver strong implementation plans for new developments, monitoring progress, problem-solving, and mitigating risks to ensure releases are on time, within scope and budget and to a high quality
- Work in an agile way, testing and gaining customer input and failing fast, with the aim of ensuring developments meet school needs and have a positive impact. This includes agreeing and implementing consistent processes to co-create and test new developments with Ark and other MATs (multi-academy trusts)
- Identify and select, contract and manage high quality curriculum writers to create content, ensuring adequate briefing, training, scope and quality control
- Be accountable for commissioning, training and briefing internal designers and external contributors
- Set up clear release schedules, capacity planning and scoping documents and work closely with the Heads of Subject and designers to stay within scope
- Lead and manage a consistent and rigorous quality assurance process, ensuring highly structured involvement of the Heads of Subject and the Education Director in pedagogical quality assurance
- Input into and maintain content management processes including content creation, version control, rights clearances, storage and archiving
- Create or input into clear guidance and policy documents building consistency pan programme around design principles

### **Line management**

- Recruit, manage and mentor staff as required and be accountable for line managing product strategy team members including Principal Design Leads and Design Leads, and Heads of Subject for new programmes still in pilot
- Lead and inspire their team to meet defined goals and objectives
- Ensure effective induction and orientation processes for all team members, working closely with the Head of Subject to ensure understanding of pedagogical rationale
- Ensure there is a strong learning and development (L&D) programme for team members to equip them to meet their goals, working in the matrix with relevant Heads of Subject to ensure design team members receive ongoing subject-specific L&D and coaching

## **Person Specification: Head of Product**

### **Qualifications**

- Educated to degree level
- Shows a significant commitment to ongoing professional development and specialist qualifications

### **Knowledge & Skills**

- Leadership and team building skills
- Creative thinking and customer empathy: the ability to articulate new propositions based on customer needs
- Demonstrates interest in education developments and best practice in teaching
- Able to actively listen and provide radical candour
- Ability to multi-task and re-prioritise workload quickly
- Strong understanding of the performance management cycle and how to drive a high-performance culture
- Experience of leading, coaching and managing teams to deliver a consistently high performance to meet defined goals and objectives
- Strong negotiation skills and experience of working with external partners
- Skilled communicator
- Has a strategic outlook when making decisions, recognising the wider impact

- An understanding of the opportunities and challenges of working in the non-profit sector

### Personal Qualities

- An experienced and confident leader with a proven ability to lead and implement change effectively and sustainably
- Ability to probe, challenge and question appropriately and strive for continual improvement
- Highly developed communication and interpersonal skills
- Vision aligned with AC+'s high aspirations and expectations of self and others
- Enjoys working in a fast-paced, ambitious organisation
- Demonstrates commitment to personal development

### Other

- Right to work in the UK
- Commitment to equality of opportunity and the safeguarding and welfare of all students
- Willingness to undertake training
- This post is subject to an enhanced DBS check

*Ark is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people in its academies. In order to meet this responsibility, its academies follow a rigorous selection process to discourage and screen out unsuitable applicants.*

*Ark requires all employees to undertake an enhanced DBS check. You are required, before appointment, to disclose any unspent conviction, cautions, reprimands or warnings under the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 (Exceptions) Order 1975. Non-disclosure may lead to termination of employment. However, disclosure of a criminal background will not necessarily debar you from employment - this will depend upon the nature of the offence(s) and when they occurred. To read more about Ark's safer recruitment process, please click this [link](#).*

*We aim to build a diverse and inclusive organisation where everyone – staff and students – can do their best work and achieve their full potential. We want to reflect and represent diverse perspectives across our organisation because we know that doing so will make us stronger and more effective. To know more about Ark's diversity and inclusion commitments, please click on this [link](#).*