



THE ANATOMY OF A PRODUCT LAUNCH

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction	3
The Product Launch	4
Kickoff the Product Launch	7
Product Development	14
The Role of the Roadmap	17
Jumpstart the Product Feedback Process	19
Cross-Departmental Engagement	21
Set the Stage for Success	27
Product Launch Metrics	33
Hone Your Pitch	36
Make Some Noise	38
The Real Deal Product Launch	41
Your Product Launch Checklist	43

INTRODUCTION

After putting so much effort into designing and building a product, it's easy to minimize how much energy is required to complete the final steps needed to bring it to the market. But, that couldn't be farther from the truth. A successful product launch requires much more than simply activating the "buy" button beneath your product. Every launch needs to be a company-wide effort that involves the coordination, research, planning effort, and enthusiasm of departments across your company.

To give your product the best prospects for success, you'll want to leave as little as possible to chance. That's where a detailed product launch plan comes in handy. A plan that covers all of your bases and leaves no stone unturned along with enough built-in lead time.

I hope The Anatomy of a Product Launch and its accompanying checklist will be this plan for you. This product launch guide will help you, the product manager, think through all the challenges, processes, steps, and assets you and your team must complete before your product launch.

The formality of a checklist at the end also means you'll be documenting everything along the way. You don't have to worry about skipping an important step or forgetting an asset. This isn't an exhaustive list, and the items on the one you develop will likely vary, based on your industry, company, and product. But we hope this product launch checklist can serve as the beginning of your own list.

Without further ado, here are the best practices to implement before giving the "go" for a product launch. It's worthwhile to explore these ahead of time since it's easier to catch potential problems or smooth out a step in advance.

Enjoy!

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1

THE PRODUCT LAUNCH



THE PRODUCT LAUNCH

We'll be discussing the term "product launch" plenty of times throughout this guide. It's important that we're aligned on the definition before diving in. A product launch refers to a company's planned and coordinated effort to debut a new product to the market and make that product generally available for purchase. Product launches help organizations build anticipation for their product, gather valuable feedback from early users, and create momentum and industry recognition for the company.

Start with the end in mind

Before you get too deep in the trenches of building your product launch, it's valuable to determine what you'd like to achieve. Just building the product and shipping it is not a success in itself. If you're building a minimum valuable product (MVP) for example, think about the type of product and business you want to be five or ten years down the line. How are you going to get there? This is the product vision—every product manager needs to have one.

By defining a high-level product vision, you can get the executive team, marketing, support, engineering, and the rest of the organization onboard with the product launch strategy.

Product launch goals

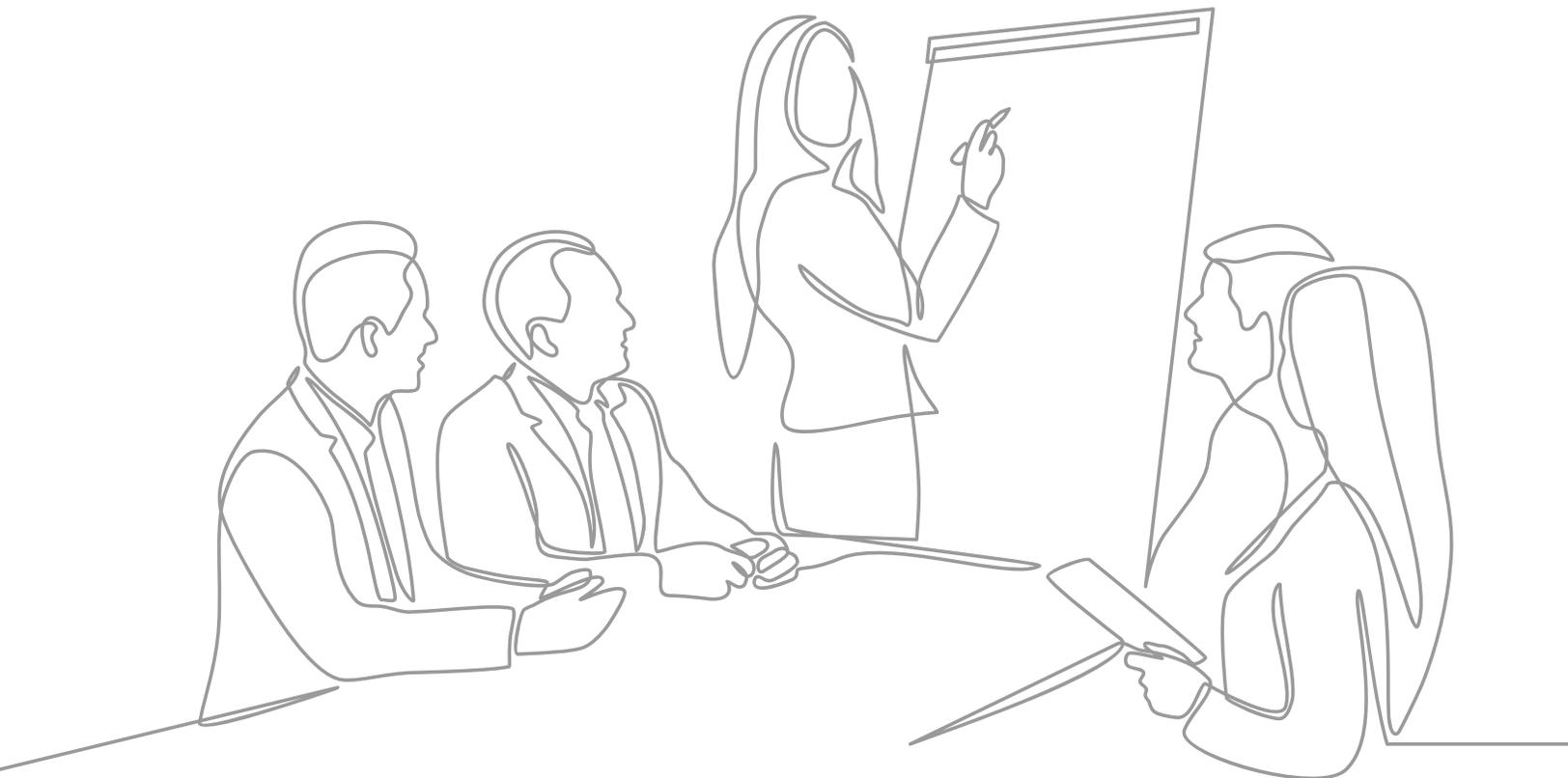
As you read through this guide, always keep in mind the goals of your product launch. What does your product team hope to achieve? Good goals are clear, measurable, and have an expected time frame.

Goals businesses are typically hoping to accomplish with a product launch, range from:

- **Find a product-market fit**
- **Capture new customers**
- **Increase in revenue**
- **Build product awareness**
- **Build the company's reputation in the industry**

Create a high-level vision.

Outline your product launch goals.



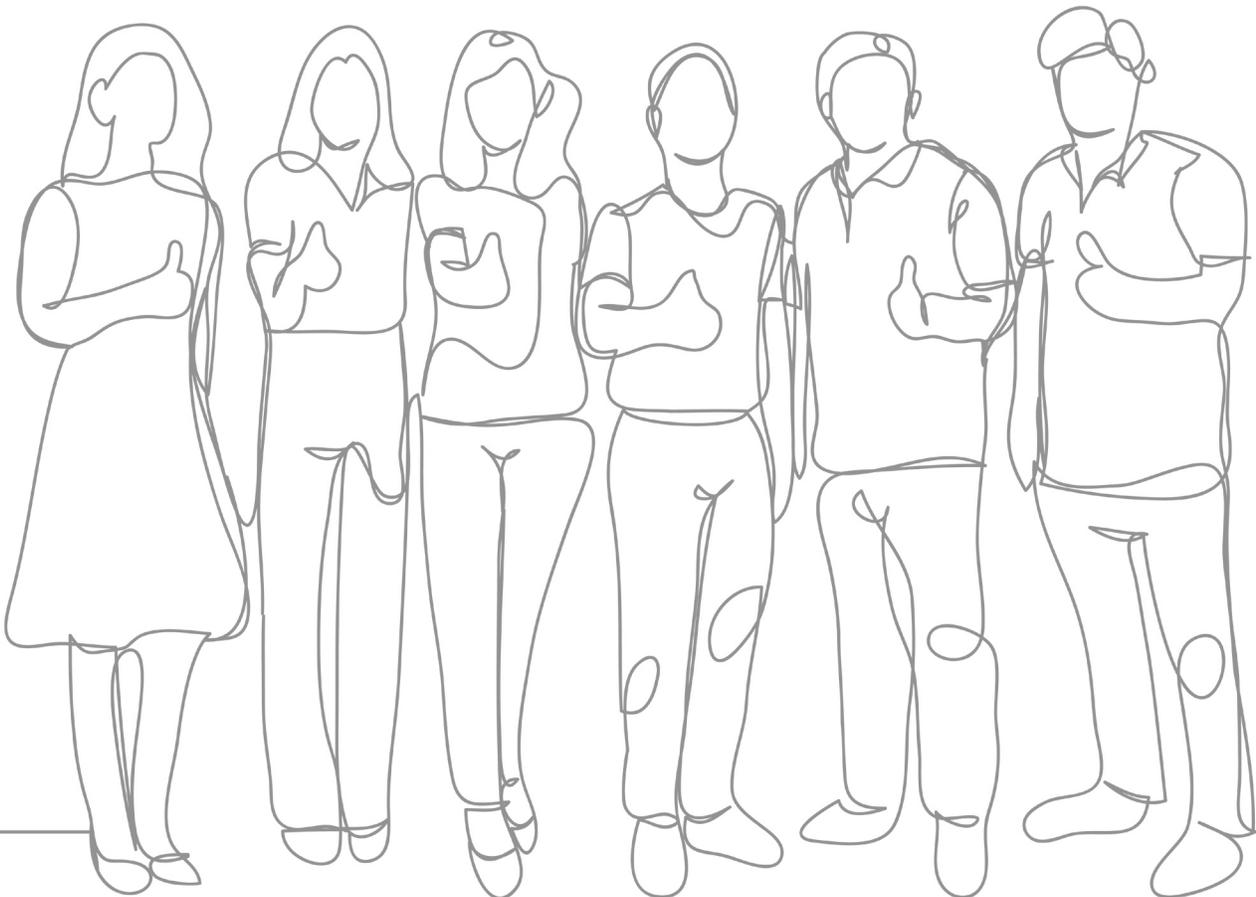
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PRODUCT LAUNCH **KICKOFF**



Who needs to be in your product launch kickoff?

The upcoming product launch activities will include the involvement of representatives from most departments in your organization. Although they may not be assigned any tasks until the final stages of the launch, it's essential to have every stakeholder identified and included upfront at the product launch kickoff. Not all teams need to be involved/represented in the product launch kickoff, but there should be clear communication regardless.



Functional Area	Impact on the Product Launch
Executive Team	Review that launch metrics are accurate. Get your team whatever it needs (within reason) to do its best work.
Product Management	Responsible for running the product as a business. Expert on market problems, how the product solves them, who in the market is being targeted, how the company will make money.
Product Marketing	Responsible for sales readiness. Often the Launch Owner.
Development	Designs and builds the product. Insight into what is coming and when it is coming is essential to the launch team.
Quality Assurance	Assures product quality based on release criteria identified at the beginning of the project.
Manufacturing	Creates the finished physical products.
Marketing Communications	Builds the marketing collateral.
Social Media	Responsible for marketing via large scale, highly accessible channels such as the internet and mobile devices.
Public Relations	Gets the word out to the press and the market.
Analyst Relations	Shapes the opinions of industry analysts.
Direct Sales	Accountable for achieving revenue targets.
Sales Engineering	Provides technical expertise during the sales process.
Channel Management	Recruits and manages channel partners (reseller, distributors, VARs, etc.). Accountable for achieving revenue targets for indirect channels.
Customer Support	Answers customer questions and addresses issues after the product is purchased.
Professional Services	Provides integration and customization services for customers.
Informational Technology	Provides information technology infrastructure for the organization.
Operations	Provides operational support (such as order processing and fulfillment).
Legal	Responsible for licensing agreements, protection of intellectual property, implications of pricing decisions, copyright, partner agreements, supplier agreements, etc.
Accounting	Responsible for revenue recognition, cost of goods sold, commissions, profit, and other business metrics.
Project Management	Provides project or program management services to the organization.

¹ http://mediafiles.pragmaticmarketing.com/Framework-Files/LeadersGuide_1307.pdf

Product launch kickoff meetings can run longer than other meetings. When you're ready to schedule a meeting, 90 minutes will be enough time to do everything while leaving time for any housekeeping items.

When everyone is all together, the first thing to do is inform each representative that they're speaking on behalf of their department. Once you get confirmation that each individual is representing their department, select someone to take notes throughout the meeting. A visual of how each department will contribute to the launch can be a great asset at this stage.

When everyone is onboard from day one, no one can claim they were unaware of things further down the road. It also offers them an opportunity to chime in with ideas and opinions earlier in the process instead of second-guessing things further down the line. By inviting them into the feature launch kickoff process, they know they're valued and have something to contribute.

The intended outcome of this meeting is for each stakeholder to know what they will eventually be on the hook to deliver, so actively address everyone's roles, what they are responsible for, and how you anticipate everyone will work together.

Make sure all attendees know what the product kickoff meeting is for and what the ideal outcomes should be before leaving the room. Then address everyone's roles, what they are actively responsible for, and how you anticipate everyone working together.

Include all stakeholders in the kickoff.

Schedule a 90 minute meeting with someone taking notes.

Kickoff communication

Before the meeting wraps up, let everyone know how you'll communicate any future next steps whether in meetings, online video chat, in the roadmap, or in notes. Some product launch kickoffs can occur months or even years out from the eventual product launch, so you'll want to set up a good system for future communication.

During the kickoff and all future communication, it's good to remember that you don't want to alienate anyone in the meeting. The fastest way to do this is by speaking in the terminology they don't understand. Try to be conscientious of not over-using your favorite acronyms. It adds a tiny bit of extra work for you to be inclusive, but will help you leaps and bounds later on.

Align everyone and establish communication plans.

Emphasize the value of the product

At this early stage, your product launch kickoff should focus entirely on the value the new product (or the next version) will deliver to customers. The kickoff is not the time to delve into particular features and functionality. The details are likely to change and it's better to avoid confusing functionalities with overarching value.

During the kickoff, harken back to the vision, themes, and goals of the product. These should become the emphasis for a successful launch. This conversation will drive messaging, channels, activities, and target audiences.

The kickoff conversations should answer the following questions for meeting members.

- **What problems is the product solving?**
- **How does this align with the company vision?**
- **What pain points is it addressing?**
- **Whom is it helping?**
- **Why are we building this?**

At the same time, it's a good idea to come to terms right away with the fact that the product won't be all things to all people.

Getting too aggressive with your goals from the get-go usually leads to product failure and disappointment. While your organization can have lofty goals of world domination, an individual product release can only do so much. Accepting that this product will not be all things to all people upfront helps temper organizational expectations.

Make sure all stakeholders are conversant about the purpose of the product.

Acknowledge the product's limits and scope.

Delay the product details

Launch kickoffs can be months or years before the actual product launch. As such, avoid getting deep into any specifics. With so much time between now and when the product ultimately is released, there's bound to be tweaks and changes along the way.

Couching the product strategy in themes gets people out of the habit of focusing on specific functionality and back to primary objectives. The goal is to communicate the "why" more than the "what." Everyone needs to be thinking about what the product means for their workflow. Work with your team to understand the why and the jobs to be done before development begins to commit time and resources.

You should still deliver something solid in terms of commitment though. That commitment can sound like, "When delivered, our customers will be able to x,y, and z."

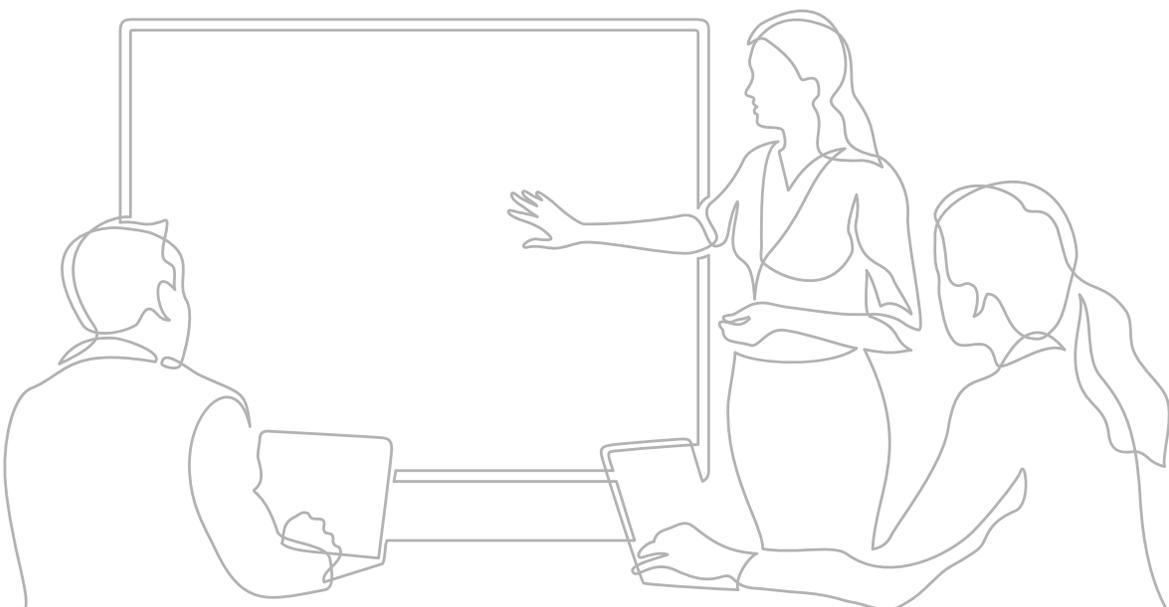
The early stages are more about roles and responsibilities and less about the details of implementation and execution. For instance, avoid conversations around pixels and

buttons. Because you've got such a head start, there will be plenty of opportunities to flesh out those topics at a later date.

Then, conduct a product launch pre-mortem where your product launch kickoff team thinks through possible problems or missteps that could hurt your product launch and prepare plans of action for each potential problem in advance. This emergency preparedness exercise offers peace of mind when moving onto further steps; knowing there are strategies in place (understood by others, not just you) relieves pressure for if/when something goes awry. Since product launches are a team effort, knowing what to do if something doesn't go according to plan enables the timeline of the process to continue smoothly.

Define the relevant themes of the product release.

Conduct a product launch pre-mortem to think through possible problems and prepare plans of action.



PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT



PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT

Demonstrating the value this product will bring to the business and its customers can be undervalued in product development. But it's as essential as ensuring sales and marketing comprehend these things.

Product development has an enormous responsibility in this phase of the product launch to implement the vision. That weight means they'll rebuff following orders blindly and would rather understand what it is they're trying to build and why.

Product development ownership

Instill a sense of development ownership. If they feel like they're part of the process, pride kicks in, and you can get their best effort – which benefits everyone involved. Engineers will help you identify compromises and opportunities. For example, they'll let you know if there are better technologies that may solve the problem faster.

Why is this outcome so crucial? Uninformed equals unengaged. Developers have to make hundreds of decisions during a project, all of which can impact the scope and impact of that project. When they get what you're trying to do and the broader context, they're far more likely to code conscientiously and consider the long-term ramifications of their decisions.

Innovation springs forth when engineers and designers feel like they're part of the team. They're then able to accurately judge compromises and opportunities based on their impact to the end goal.

You'll want to kick things off with an overview comprehensive enough that it gets engineering excited about the opportunity. But you will need to update the team throughout the product development process. For instance, a regular bulletin and a roadmap will keep them inspired and eager to deliver something truly remarkable. It's far

more motivating to have fresh intel rather than being expecting to still be excited about your initial product launch kickoff session that happened many months ago.

Put together a phased approach with your product development team.

Share the strategy and the research that got you there.

Empower engineering to contribute to ideas.

Providing engineering with regular bulletins about what's happening with customers, competitors, market dynamics, and potential deals.



4

THE ROLE OF **THE ROADMAP**



4

THE ROLE OF **THE ROADMAP**

Roadmaps aren't just helpful in product management. They're useful for a myriad of different roles and departments.

Your roadmap serves as your guiding strategic document, communicating transparency and where you want to take your product eventually for your entire company. The roadmap will notify everyone of any shifts in your product launch strategy.

Various departments will be interested in different phases and functions of the product launch. So keep the roadmap updated in order to serve as the one source-of-truth to increase curiosity, engagement, and efficiency.

You may need to create different versions with varying levels of detail for different cohorts of stakeholders. Because some of your stakeholders will need to be attuned to changes down to the sprint level, but other departments may just need to know by quarter.

Don't over-communicate dates early on in the project, but provide enough context to keep stakeholders engaged and confident.

As you get closer to your product launch, the dates in the roadmap must also become more precise. Marketing, sales, and other departments will be scheduling activities based on the roadmap, so it must be accurate. The risk of not keeping it up-to-date is that you could end up with launch-related activities occurring too soon or too late. The outcome of these activities might only affect one product, but there will be a lasting effect on the people across all involved departments in the case of something not going to plan. This can affect all future product launches that you hope to run smoothly. So keep your roadmap as accurately up-to-date as you can.

Create an accurate roadmap and keep it current with updates.

5

JUMPSTART THE **PRODUCT FEEDBACK PROCESS**



JUMPSTART THE **PRODUCT FEEDBACK PROCESS**

Product launches for software products typically happen only after several levels of testing have been completed.

“Regular” employees often don’t get their hands on products until after they’ve been through a formal QA process, have proven capability, and have moved into alpha testing.

Alpha testing is a product’s first round of end-to-end testing, usually done by the company’s employees. When the product clears this level, it’s ready for beta testing, which involves real users but is still before the official commercial release of the product.

But that delay between QA and alpha is precious, sacrificed time. As much usage as possible by your employees will uncover more bugs, reveal enhancement opportunities, and test the product’s scalability. By not waiting until it’s passed acceptance testing, you’ll get product feedback even earlier. It also gets the rest of the company more familiar with exactly how the product works.

Stress-test every prospect and customer touch-point with your new product—such as the signup form, for example, if you’re offering a web-based product.

Additionally, this serves as an opportunity to confirm the product does what it was intended to do. Employee testing verifies the product is heading in the right direction, solving the problems it was designed to address, and adding value for future customers.

Get customer service and other internal stakeholders to start using the product during QA.

Stress-test every prospect and customer touch-point with your new product.

6

CROSS-DEPARTMENTAL ENGAGEMENT



CROSS-DEPARTMENTAL ENGAGEMENT

Different parts of the organization need different things to prepare for launch. Carve out time with each department, pursuing a specific agenda each time. This agenda both provides them with the information they need and ensures those departments will complete their deliverables on time and accuracy.

You may need to set aside more time than anticipated, given that these departments are not ones that you engage with on a daily or even weekly basis. Alignment in engineering and development can often occur naturally because of the extreme overlap; however, this may not be the case for marketing, sales, and support.

Marketing

Every new product launch needs people outside of your internal team to:

- 1. Be aware of the product launch.**
- 2. Understand the value the product provides.**
- 3. When to expect the official product launch.**

All those things won't happen unless the marketing team is involved. Marketing will craft compelling messages and talking points that speak to the product's unique value proposition. To ensure accuracy, it needs to be done in collaboration with product management.

Don't make the mistake and put off talking with marketing until you're ready to speak to sales. The role of marketing, particularly product marketing, comes into the product launch process much earlier. Marketing sets the stage and initiates the processes that will make the sales team successful.

Give a clear priority to marketing when you're developing the value proposition. The team must understand user and buyer personas and how the product fits into the competitive landscape in order to generate compelling, on-point materials and execute successful campaigns for the new product. You can leave the development of collateral, copy, advertisements, and sales tools to the experts. But if they don't have that solid foundation to build on, things can go wrong very quickly.

Product management should have the opportunity to review everything for accuracy early enough that they can catch and correct any errors. If looping in marketing happens late though, this crucial opportunity can be taken away in the interest of shipping messaging and positioning for the sake of the launch.

Repeatedly review the value proposition and launch plan with the marketing team throughout the product development cycle.

Support the development of marketing's go-to-market campaign.

Sales

Marketing might put your product on the radar, but the sales team is the one that reels in paying customers. Training up the sales team is essential to bring in the revenue your strategy was built to generate.

Before getting into the product itself, the sales team requires some foundational education. Train sales on the product's value proposition, benefits, and ideal customer profile. Explain how the product you designed and built offers specific benefits to a particular target audience. Before letting them loose, set some parameters around what makes for a good prospect and realistic use cases for the product. That way your sales team can deliver the right message at the right time to the right person.

Without conveying this information to sales, there's no telling whom they'll try to sell it to and what promises they'll make. Left to their own devices, you risk getting inundated with square peg-round hole scenarios if there isn't a match.

Train sales on the product's value proposition, benefits, and ideal customer profile.

Sales Collateral

Likewise, you don't want salespeople freelancing when it comes to articulating that product's value proposition. Consistency across the sales team is crucial. This consistency is where assets like slide decks, collateral, and sell sheets come in.

There should be a robust catalog of resources, tailorable for different target segments, and with follow-up materials for each stage of the sales funnel. Ensure sales has quality and comprehensive sales tools that you've verified for accuracy and quality.

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Sales Demos

Almost every customer will want to see the product in action before they buy it, which means you'll be swamped with requests to provide customer demos. Chances are there are better ways to spend your time, and additionally, it's not a particularly scalable solution. Train sales on the product, so they're comfortable and knowledgeable enough to give their own demos.

Please don't underestimate the time it takes for them to become enough of a product expert to demonstrate its value and confidently sell it to prospects. It's particularly

challenging if the product is breaking new ground or requires pre-existing technical acumen.

Of course, those demos and presentations will inevitably lead to questions from prospects. You'll want to prepare sales for when things go off-script as well. Arm sales with FAQs, talking points, and responses to common objections.

While some things can be anticipated ahead of the launch, others need to be added based on real-world experiences in the field.

Train sales on the product, so they're comfortable and knowledgeable enough to give their own demos.

Arm sales with FAQs, talking points, and responses to common objections.

Support

Support (or customer service or customer success) is instrumental in the successful adoption and utilization of your product. If the support team feels lost or stuck, you can bet your customers will feel even more confused. In your excitement to move the product along, don't leave your dedicated support crew in the dust.

You might not always have time to answer questions about your product; your future self will thank you for thinking far enough ahead and making the support team product experts as well. When other departments or customers have questions, support can be the go-to, and you'll only be called in when things require escalation.

You'll also want to develop an escalation and feedback process for more difficult product issues (or more difficult customers). A process should be in place to document all contact your support team has with users.

Your customer support team has been properly trained on the product and is ready to assist new users through common questions, issues, and problems.

Decide on an escalation process with your support team.

Legal

It's important to mention you should involve your legal team in your product launch. That way, they can vet all the necessary customer contracts, terms & conditions, and other legal and regulatory documentation in place. It's better to involve them before the launch of the product, where there is time to make necessary adjustments, than it is to inform them afterwards where you and your product could already be under legal pressure.

Have legal vet customer contracts, terms & conditions, and other legal and regulatory documentation in place.



7

SET THE STAGE FOR **SUCCESS**



Decide how to unleash your product

As product development is wrapping up their work, it's time to think about everything required to unleash this fantastic offering upon the world. Unless you have a built-in customer base anxiously awaiting your newest invention, it will likely be an uphill battle to garner positive attention and awareness. Work with your marketing team to create a PR and go-to-market campaign. That includes establishing a prepared way to explain the product's pricing structure.

Don't overlook this step just because it falls outside of strategic product planning and product development. It's your job to not only create a great product but to make it a successful one.

Create a PR campaign and a go-to-market plan.

Prepare how you'll explain the product's pricing structure.

Heavily mine beta data

Consider the public beta your "soft" launch. A "soft" launch is an opportunity to gather massive amounts of feedback. You can tweak as many things as you want without the constraints and responsibilities of an official product launch.

But remember, you never get a second chance at a first impression and the beta is making first impressions on everyone who uses it. They're the early adopters and influencers that could pour cold water on your release before it's even out the door if things seem shaky.

However, the goal for your beta-launch isn't to offer up perfection; it's to generate feedback and spot potential problems. Better to push out a beta that needs some adjustments than to delay it for so long that you won't have enough time left to do much with the feedback you receive.

Make the most of your dress rehearsal, so the final product reaches its full potential.

Rollout a beta program to likely buyers that generate constructive feedback and stress test the product.

Implement effortless onboarding

In most cases, you won't be personally shepherding each prospect through the discovery, trial, and purchase phases. You'll need to put a scalable onboarding solution into place. The goal here is to move prospects as quickly as possible to that moment when they realize the value proposition is real, and the product is helping them do their job or live their lives better.

You can minimize setup time with pre-set defaults. But asking people to check a bunch of boxes and flip a bunch of switches before they've even started using the product is both off-putting and misguided. How will they know what they want until they've got some experience?

Instead, give them a robust and common starting point and then let them tweak it themselves after they're more familiar with the product and see how it applies to their particular needs. Or be prepared to offer training options to new users.

When a product has a steep learning curve, many new users will bail out before they get to realize any value. Acknowledging that users need a little education to be successful is essential and doesn't necessarily mean you've created a scrappy product.

Minimize onboarding setup time with pre-set defaults.

Offer training options to new users.

Train the trainers

Sometimes onboarding a user requires an internal team member's personal touch. In those cases, your peers across the organization will need to be trained on the product. However, it's inefficient to only have the product team responsible for training everyone. Instead, a more efficient approach is to train your trainers. The trainers are your peers across the organization, such as a sales engineer, that can train others rather than relying solely on the product team. Making sure those people are ready before the product launch is key.

Train the trainers on how to use the product.

Training users

Training doesn't necessarily mean a week-long class or a giant user manual. It can be as simple as short how-to videos for specific tasks or interactive webinar walkthroughs. Just make them easy to access and discover, with a mix of self-service and full-service options.

If your product is digital, you can build some onboarding capabilities directly into your product. Identify which behaviors are crucial to converting trialers into adopters. You can proactively nudge them toward those actions with helpful prompts in the user experience. Also, make sure there are implemented means for users to offer direct feedback about the product and the walkthrough experiences.

Whatever your research has indicated as key moments that generate customer delight, do

everything possible to usher users there. On-screen pop-ups and highlights, helpful hints, in-app walkthroughs are all things you can do to decrease the time-to-value.

No matter how intuitive your product may be, people will still have questions about how to use it. Don't leave them in the dark; instead, make it easy for them to overcome obstacles and complete tasks. Make sure support documentation has been developed, reviewed, and made easily accessible.

This documentation could include things like FAQs on your website, a help section built into your product itself, a printed product owner's manual (if you're selling a physical product).

If things go great, you may soon find yourself overwhelmed with new users, all clamoring for help and guidance to make the most of your product. All the new users means it's time to create a strategy for scalability.

When the masses descend, a lone product manager can't be onboarding and training hundreds or thousands of customers each week. Support will play a crucial role in training customers. It's not on the product manager to be responsible for training at this stage. It's Customer Support's time to shine.

Otherwise, turn to self-service or broadcast methods to get users up to speed. Save personalized support for outliers and strategic customers.

Add helpful prompts to the user experience.

Make sure support documentation has been developed, reviewed, and made easily accessible.

Create a strategy for scalability.

Nature vs. nurture

Once a user gets hooked on your product, your job isn't done. You'll need to work hard to keep them engaged. Prevent complacency from kicking in after that initial rush of success.

Craft a strategy for maintaining momentum, such as new assets, for the long-run. Once the dust settles and you've established an initial user community, continue to offer them additional tidbits to encourage usage and adoption. These can highlight other features glossed over at launch, provide more in-depth training or tutorials, and include case studies demonstrating how real customers realize the value in various ways from the product.

The communication strategy should leverage notifications, emails, and prompts. Ideally, base these on programmatic triggers queued off user behaviors in the product (or a lack thereof).

Store up assets for the long run.

Leverage notifications, emails, and prompts based on programmatic triggers keyed off user behaviors in the product.

8

PRODUCT LAUNCH METRICS



With your product about to hit the market, everyone will be dying to know how it's performing. But everyone on your team will have a different definition of success. You need to get the whole organization on the same page about what matters. Revisit the strategic goals for the product that were proposed before and during the product launch kickoff, and create consensus on concrete success metrics.

Sales, revenue, new users, page views, and adoption make a sizeable metric pool. However, many metrics are entirely irrelevant if they don't align with the organization's KPIs. There are many dangers in using such vanity metrics to taint the lense of viewing your product, so don't fall prey to this. Metrics that answer questions about the overall product strategy should always be the focus.

Beyond purely figuring out if you're achieving your goals, you'll also want to establish additional measures to track early on. Develop your plan for tracking user behavior and what key metrics to track that is most important for your team.

Identify those product KPIs and automate data collection and reporting. These include the red flags to watch out for (such as high churn and abandonment) as well as positive trends (such as repeat users and conversions from trials to paying customers).

You'll want to check these figures regularly, so make sure it's not an overly manual process to get your hands on them. By tracking this data right away on a weekly basis or on a schedule you've predetermined, you'll be able to spot hiccups early on. You can then intervene before problems fester and damage the momentum of your launch.

Over time, you may replace the KPIs you looked at on day one or they may need to be augmented by others as you learn more about what moves the needle and matters most.

Acknowledging that you don't know what you don't know and having a plan for that means you won't be obsessing over vanity metrics that are no longer relevant to the product or company's success.

Revisit the strategic goals for the product and create consensus on success metrics.

Identify product KPIs, automate data collection, and reporting.

Set a schedule to reevaluate what you're measuring.





9 HONE YOUR PITCH

After spending so much time obsessing over every detail of your product, you're going to be excited to talk about it publicly, finally. You could ramble on for hours about every nuance and impressive feature. But most people aren't going to give you very much time to grab their attention. Their short attention spans are why you need to nail your elevator pitch.

If you've only got two minutes to talk about your product, what would you say? Work with your marketing team to place these limits on yourself. It forces you to figure out what the most important and compelling points are.

You'll have to leave out some personal favorites, but you're going up against short attention spans and busy schedules. Convey the value, the solution, and give justice to the dedication involved in producing this product.

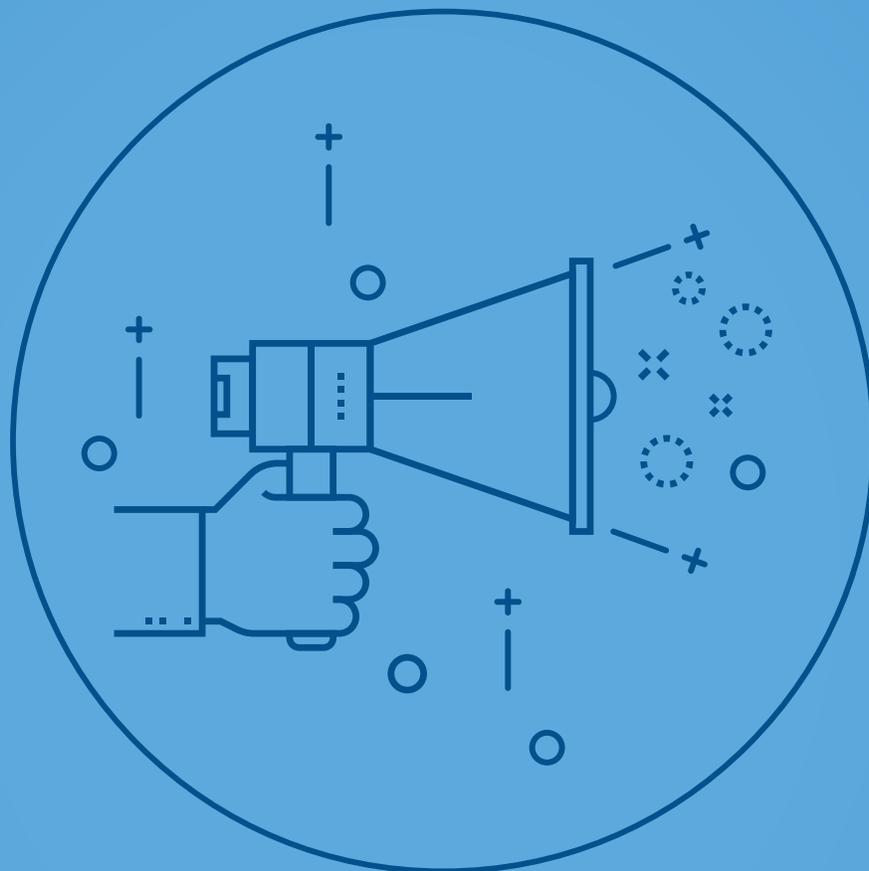
But ultimately, value your customers' time.

You never know under what circumstances you'll need to discuss the product, its reason for being, its main benefits, who its main competitors are, and who it's for, to name a few.

An analyst or prospective customer at a conference might have a full minute or even longer. But you may only have a few seconds with a CEO. Be ready to make your case—and sound intelligent—in both instances.

Practice your 30 second and 2 minute elevator pitch.

10 MAKE SOME **NOISE**



Everyone inside your company is well aware of what you've been up to. Your launch date is set, and you've communicated to everyone throughout your organization who needs to know. Now it's time to officially let customers and prospects know what's coming. The big reveal is an exciting step, but it's also a high risk-high reward moment in your product launch process.

While you'd love to expound for hours on everything the product can do, nobody's got the time and patience for that. Briefly articulate your value proposition. Share the elevator pitch that you developed in the last step. Remember, features and functionality are irrelevant. What matters are the beneficial outcomes it provides to customers.

Select and map out the most relevant and resonating use cases and focus your follow-up announcement on those. There will be plenty of time later to highlight all the other things your product can do.

Parse out the news

You can't talk about everything all at once. The fact that your product has even more to offer means you'll have more to talk about after the initial buzz wears off. Work with marketing to implement out a staged messaging campaign highlighting other remarkable capabilities and benefits post-launch. You'll maintain momentum and win over holdouts that didn't connect with your initial messaging focus.

Today's media landscape makes it harder than ever to capture the attention of the crowds. Research your buyer personas and identify where and how they prefer to gather their news and updates.

Meet prospects where they are by leveraging channels they're already using. Depending

on the product and target audience, that could range from snagging a featured review in The New York Times to advertising on a Twitch stream.

When it comes to your exact launch timing, “as soon as the ink is dry” isn’t always the best strategy. Circle back with your target market and choose a moment when the target market is most apt to be receptive and responsive to your messaging.

Then, identify an ideal launch date. It might be timed to coincide with a related event, industry conference, or even a holiday. While you might feel impatient sitting on a finished product for a few weeks, you only get to launch once, so make the most of it.

Briefly articulate your value proposition.

Map out your follow-up announcements and messages.

Meet prospects where they are by leveraging channels they’re already using.

Identify an ideal launch date.



THE REAL DEAL PRODUCT LAUNCH



THE REAL DEAL PRODUCT LAUNCH

Press the big button, pull the switch, give the command, or nod confidently. You've done your work and shepherded this baby from conception through birth. Now it's time for the big debut and a round of congratulations. Take time to celebrate and acknowledge the contributions of others on your team.

We don't get many moments in life where we can pat ourselves on the back, but this is one of them. However, you didn't get here alone. Make sure you recognize everyone that helped make it happen.

Take time to celebrate and acknowledge the contributions of others.

12

YOUR **PRODUCT LAUNCH** CHECKLIST

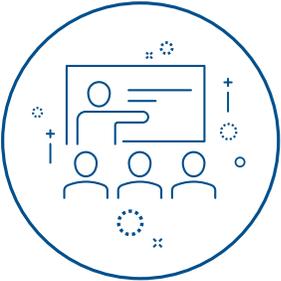




The Product Launch

Create a high-level vision.

Outline your product launch goals.



Product Launch Kickoff

Include all stakeholders in the kickoff.

Schedule a 90 minute meeting with someone taking notes.

Align everyone and establish communication plans.

Make sure all stakeholders are conversant about the purpose of the product.

Acknowledge the product's limits and scope.

Define the relevant themes of the product release.

Conduct a product launch pre-mortem to think through possible problems and prepare plans of action.



Product Development

Put together a phased approach with your product development team.

Share the strategy and the research that got you there.

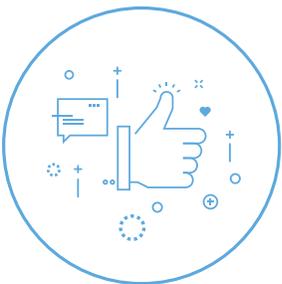
Empower engineering to contribute to ideas.

Providing engineering with regular bulletins about what's happening with customers, competitors, market dynamics, and potential deals.



The Role of the Roadmap

Create an accurate roadmap and keep it current and updates.



Jumpstart the Feedback Process

Get customer service and other internal stakeholders to start using the product during QA.

Stress-test every prospect and customer touch-point with your new product.



Cross-Departmental Engagement

Repeatedly review the value proposition and launch plan with the marketing team throughout the product development cycle.

Support the development of marketing's go-to-market campaign.

Your customer support team has been properly trained on the product and is ready to assist new users through common questions, issues, and problems.

Decide on an escalation process with your support team.

Train sales on the product's value proposition, benefits, and ideal customer profile.

Ensure sales has comprehensive and qualitative sales tools that you've verified for accuracy and quality.

Train sales on the product, so they're comfortable and knowledgeable enough to give their demos.

Arm sales with FAQs, talking points, and responses to common objections.

Have legal vet customer contracts, terms & conditions, and other legal and regulatory documentation in place.



Set the Stage for Success

Create a PR campaign and a go-to-market plan.

Prepare how you'll explain the product's pricing structure.

Rollout a beta program to likely buyers that generates constructive feedback and stress tests the product.

Minimize onboarding setup time with pre-set defaults.

Offer training options to new users.

Add helpful prompts to the user experience.

Make sure support documentation has been developed, reviewed, and made easily accessible.

Create a strategy for scalability.

Train the trainers on how to use the product.

Store up assets for the long run.

Leverage notifications, emails, and prompts based on programmatic triggers keyed off user behaviors in the product.



Product Launch Metrics

Revisit the strategic goals for the product and create consensus on success metrics.

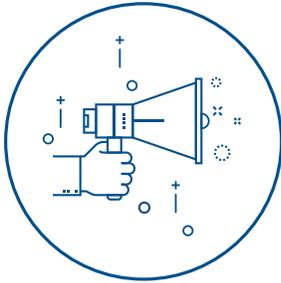
Identify product KPIs, automate data collection, and reporting.

Set a schedule to reevaluate what you're measuring.



Hone Your Pitch

Practice your 30 second and 2 minute elevator pitch.



Make Some Noise

Briefly articulate your value proposition.

Map out your follow-up announcements and messages.

Meet prospects where they are by leveraging channels they're already using.

Identify an ideal launch date.

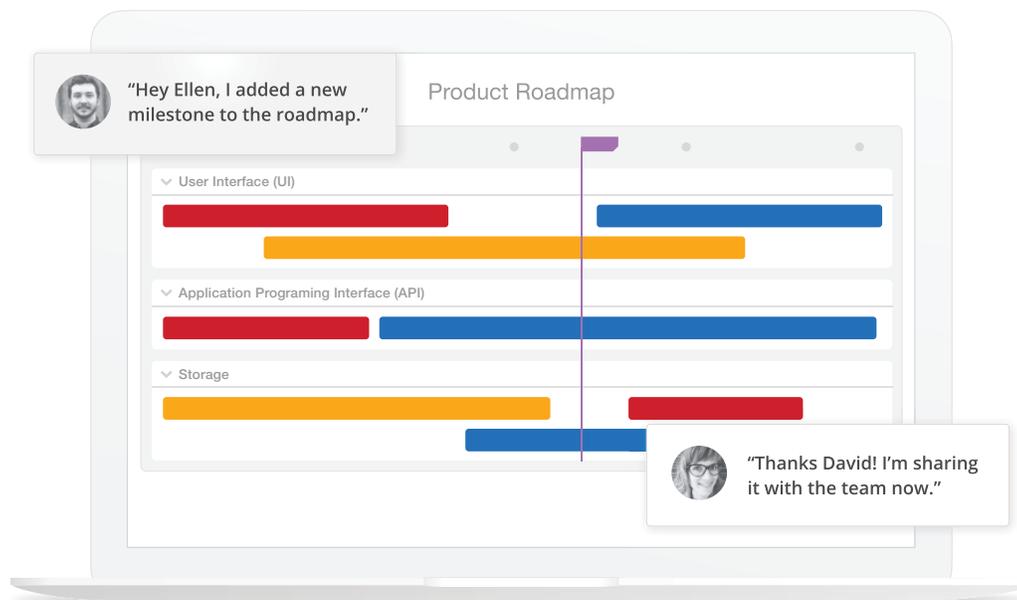


The Real Deal Product Launch

Take time to celebrate and acknowledge the contributions of others.

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ProductPlan makes it easy for teams of all sizes to build beautiful roadmaps. Thousands of product managers worldwide—including teams from Nike, Microsoft and Spotify—trust ProductPlan to help them visualize and share their strategies across their entire organization. With our intuitive features, product managers spend less time building roadmaps and more time shipping products.



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