

Product Launch Playbook

A Marketing Toolkit for B2B Manufacturers

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Why Many Manufacturing Product Launches Fail

Just because you build it doesn't mean they will come. In fact, **more than 50% of B2B product launches fail** to achieve business goals and objectives (McKinsey).

But why? **Why are so many product launches challenging, particularly in B2B manufacturing?**

Because launching a new product presents several distinct hurdles when you are trying to capture the attention of—and engage with—your target market in a meaningful way.

With more than 30 years of B2B manufacturing marketing experience, **RH Blake understands why so many product launches fail.** We have been involved with, and reviewed, countless product launches. We have learned over the years that there are 12 primary ways that B2B manufacturers fail to launch new products successfully.



Strategy

1. Inadequate Goals

Goals for the launch are either too ambitious, unclear, or difficult to measure.

2. One-Off Effort

The launch is a one-time (typically costly) event, not a series of coordinated initiatives over time.

3. Under-Resourcing

Firms fail to supply the budget, staff and/or expertise required for success.

4. Copy & Paste

No two product launches are the same. What works for one rarely works for another.



Market

5. Insufficient Market

The market is brand new, and lacks sufficient customers and an ecosystem to support the launch.

6. Lack of Fit

There is not a match between what the product offers and what the market needs.

7. Delayed Need

The launch targets only those customers who need the product today (the minority), not those who will need it tomorrow.

8. Risk Aversion

New products introduce perceived risks that the market is reluctant to tackle.



Buyers

9. Little Awareness

Target buyers don't know the manufacturer, or don't trust them enough to consider the new offering.

10. No Evidence of Value

There are insufficient customers using the new solution to demonstrate its impact on business value and build trust in potential customers.

11. Capabilities Confusion

Target buyers do not understand the manufacturer's related capabilities, making them hard to engage with.

12. Committee Confusion

Today's B2B buying committees sales have as many as 10 influencers and decision makers, each with information they've gathered on their own.

Build the Right Foundation

Establish Your Campaign Goals & Success Metrics



If your company wants to ensure your launch is successful, you must build the right foundation first. RH Blake has developed proven best practices that help connect your marketing efforts to the sales channel, and effectively communicate the product story.

Start by defining success. What value will this product bring to the organization in the specified timeframe?

It is critical to detail and delineate expected value. Is the focus of the new product vertical market penetration, line extension, base business protection, showcasing innovation, or adding distribution channels?

Once you have defined expected value, you can implement production, channel marketing, pricing and sales strategies that deliver against that metric.

Metrics

Before you launch, determine how you will measure your success. Establish overall success metrics, such as:

- *number of visits to the product page on your website*
- *number of sales inquiries*
- *number of sales appointments*
- *number of product demonstrations*
- *number of product trials*
- *number of products sold*
- *number of complementary products/offerings sold*

Ready, Fire, Aim?

If you fail to establish clear campaign targets, you will likely launch in a haphazard way—and fail to hit your targets. So, at the start, establish your product-launch campaign objectives. Consider your key activities and objectives:

- Confirm business case opportunity and establish budget
- Identify complementary sales opportunities
- Identify communication cadence
- Establish launch overall success metrics (sales, marketing KPI, trials, geographic/territory)
- Create a business case for the new product

Build the Right Foundation (continued)

Get Alignment Throughout Your Organization

Once you understand your campaign goals and success metrics, **start aligning your entire organization around your launch.**



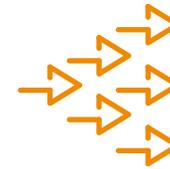
Align with engineering and manufacturing

Make sure your associates in product development, senior leadership, marketing and sales are aligned with those in engineering and manufacturing when it comes to the availability of prototypes and the date your product is ready for shipping



Align with sales

Decide on your sales objectives and commission structures, and how you are going to measure performance. Draw up a list of target accounts and assign your salespeople to each one. Make sure everyone on your sales team understands the sequence of events and key dates for your product launch.



Align with product management

Remember that you are likely adding a new product to an existing—perhaps comprehensive—product portfolio. So, make sure your product management team crafts a coherent positioning statement that describes how your new product fits within your existing—and future—product portfolio.



Build the Right Foundation (continued)

Understand Your Market



The most important person in your product launch is your buyer. That individual buyer is part of a larger market, a market that you must understand thoroughly before launch day (before you even manufacture your product, actually).

Get this understanding by describing the business case for your new product. Establish why and how it meets a viable need in the market. Establish a budget for marketing, advertising and publicity.

Buyers

Create buyer personas for each member of the B2B buying team. Describe them in terms of their job titles, job functions, responsibilities, challenges and compelling events that trigger their search for a solution like yours.

Buyer journey

Then map out what a typical buyer journey looks like. Identify the kind of content (such as white papers, case studies, product specs and pricing information) that each persona needs at each stage of their buyer journey. Describe the unique selling proposition that will appeal to each persona on the buying team. And define value statements for each persona.

Other opportunities

Identify complementary sales opportunities, ones where you can up-sell or cross-sell other products and services while you are selling your new product.

Competitors

Because your marketplace includes competitors, describe the competitive landscape. Identify your competitors by name, describe their offerings, and assess their strengths and weaknesses. Create a simple table that lists competitor offerings and compares them with yours. Pay particular attention to market segments and niches, and the buying needs of customers in those segments.

Build the Right Foundation (continued)

Develop Your Positioning & Messaging

A high percentage of product launches fail not from an inadequate product, and not from an unwilling market, but from inadequate messaging. **A great product launched into a ready market with sub-standard messaging will fail.**

The secret to nailing your new-product messaging is to follow a tested and proven method. **At RH Blake, we help manufacturers and companies that sell to manufacturers create compelling new-product messaging.** Here is the messaging framework we frequently use, and how to use it.

Target Audience

Who is the primary buyer you are targeting with your messaging? This is the most important question you will ask. Your new-product messaging begins and ends with your buyer. **Before you can sell a single offering to anyone you must first understand who you are selling to.**

The more specific the answer, the greater the chance of success as you must prioritize your energy—and marketing budget. Start with the industry that your B2B buyer is in. Then narrow your criteria by geography, company size, annual revenue, compelling events to consider a new solution, shifts in market, function, and any other criteria that helps you pinpoint who your messaging must educate and persuade.

If you had just one sales call to make, who would you call? Take your answer and craft your target audience from it.

Pain Points

What are the pains, challenges and obstacles that your target audience faces that your new product resolves? To be relevant to your market, your product must meet an identifiable need, or needs.

Key Decision Criteria

What will make or break a deal for one of your buyers? What are the must-have requirements on their checklist that your product simply has to meet? Think price, functionality, support, integration with existing systems and processes, warranty, vendor reputation and more.

Product/Offering

What are you selling? Describe it using terms that your target audience understand.

Differentiation

How is your product unique? What is there about the product that makes it different in a compelling way (a way that matters to your buyers) from all competing offerings.



Build the Right Foundation (continued)



Aspirational Narrative

How does your offering uniquely help target customers overcome and/or sidestep the typical hurdles they would face when working towards achieving their objectives. Consider including the following 5 components in this aspirational narrative: **1)** How has/will your customers world change? Why shouldn't they just continue with the status quo? **2)** Within your product's context, what are the key pain points/pressures they are facing? **3)** What does the ideal approach/solution look like? What is the desired state? **4)** How does your product help address these pain points and achieve the new desired state better than alternatives? **5)** What are your differentiated proof points and reasons the customer should believe?

Your new-product messaging is like a skyscraper that's supported by pillars. Each pillar is a promise that you make to your buyer. Typically, at least one of those pillars should be about your company. And at least two should be about your product.

Proof Points

What evidence do you have to support your brand pillars? Think test results, awards, case studies, customer testimonials, market leadership.

What we have here is a failure to communicate...

New-product launches fail for six primary reasons.

1. The manufacturer doesn't have a history of the types of messaging that are effective with a new product of the kind they are launching
2. Since the product is new, the manufacturer doesn't have any case studies or customer testimonials to use as proof points that back up manufacturer claims
3. The manufacturer doesn't know how to create brand and product messaging that differentiates the product in the marketplace
4. To gain traction, new products need buyers. The manufacturer doesn't know how to craft messages that create urgency and compel action
5. Few products are launched into a vacuum in the market. The manufacturer's messaging fails to integrate the new product with the company's existing product portfolio and brand messages
6. The manufacturer concentrates on buyer-facing messaging only, failing to create internal messaging to educate salespeople, support teams and other internal stakeholders

Build Your Go-to-Market Programs

Build Programs to Drive Awareness, Consideration & Preference

You're just about ready to launch, and that means you need to be prepared to **communicate with your potential buyers in a consistent way across all channels.**



Branding: Decide what you're going to call your product. Easier said than done, we know. Go firm on the wordmark, logo, icon and other branding you are going to use to identify this product to your marketplace. Protect them by registering your trademarks or service marks if possible.



Direct Marketing: Market segmentation provides the opportunity to communicate directly with key members of your industrial customer or prospect base. Identify and prioritize target markets, locate sources for prospect lists, qualify and further segment audiences by job function, specification authority, product application or other variables, and then develop focused direct mail to meet your objectives.



Content: Create the eBooks, landing pages, product guides, whitepapers, product publicity, feature articles, newsletters, social media, blog posts and other assets to drive awareness, & consideration and preference.



Trade shows: Do firms in your industry typically introduce products at trade shows and exhibitions? Plan and secure a launch event at the most promising trade show or other venue. Map out a comprehensive calendar of pre-, during and post-show communications, particularly social media, to reach show attendees who are prospects for your product.



Sales enablement assets: Create marketing assets (white papers, product brochures, case studies, emails, phone sales scripts) for your new product.



Publicity: Draft media releases and send these to editors at media outlets that cover your industry. Consider reaching out to bloggers, consultants and other industry influencers to ask them to discuss your product with their audiences. Establish a social media plan, including channels and timing.

Your product is excellent. Put that in writing.

By the end of this stage, you will have created a list of assets that you need to create and distribute. There are more than 30 elements you can consider developing, which we have identified in the **RH Blake Product Launch Roadmap Content Checklist.**

They include:

- articles
- brochures
- channel partner presentations
- infographics
- product photos
- sales presentations
- sales FAQs
- webpages
- white papers

Build Your Go-to-Market Programs (continued)

Train and Empower Your Teams



Now you are ready to start talking to the people who are going to launch your new product to the marketplace. Just one caveat. In our experience, sales teams already have a full plate with selling. You're now adding one more thing for them to focus on. Plus, sales folks are only likely to sell offerings they understand. This is why you must train and empower your teams.

Sales training: Create seminars, webinars, on-demand videos, training manuals, product demonstrations and other education your salespeople need to complete before you launch. If you sell through account-based marketing, collaborate with all stakeholders to define specific plans for selling your new offering to existing customers and potential customers at your existing strategic accounts.

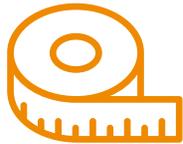
Channel partner training: Determine your distribution strategy for getting your product to market, including the channels you will use. Do these people need training as well? Take the training materials you are developing for your sales teams and adapt them to meet the needs of your channel partners.

Service: Work with your service department to anticipate the information your buyers are going to expect from them. This includes product images, schematics, online knowledge bases and troubleshooting guides.



Optimize & Refine

Launching your B2B product is just the start. Once your new offering gains marketplace acceptance, **you must focus on continuous improvement.**



Measure

Measure the success of your product launch. Review the metrics that you created in step one (above) and compare your projections with reality. Determine the success of your launch by measuring how close your results match your projected outcomes.



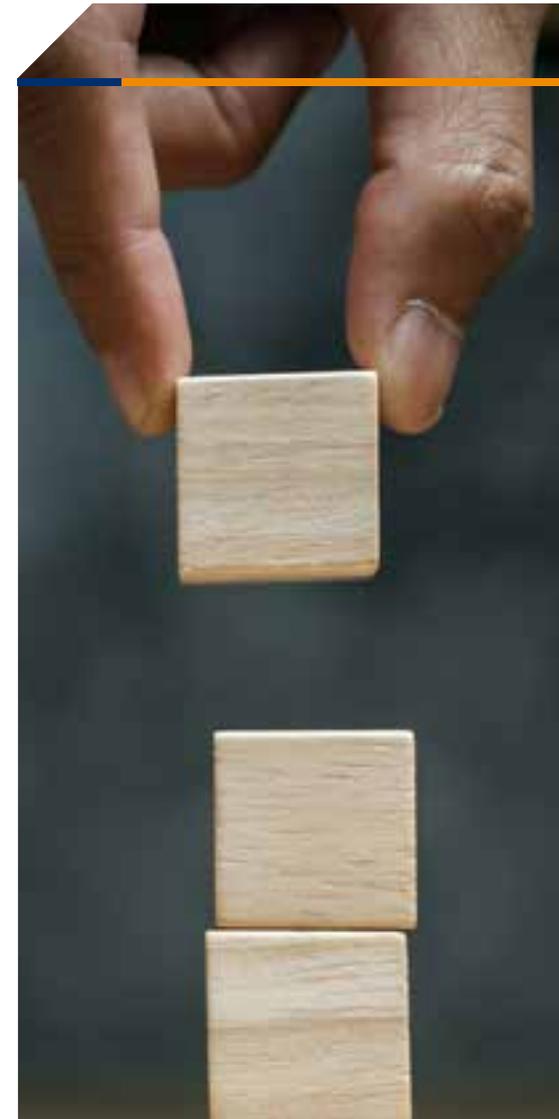
Listen

Talk with buyers of your new product, and if possible, some who did not buy. Using focus groups, blind surveys, interviews and informal chats, discover how satisfied they are with your new offering. Discover what you got right. And what needs a little polish.



Refine

Update your sales training, channel partner training, website content and more to reflect what you discovered by analyzing your launch metrics and by talking with your customers.





Case Study **AeroGo**

Company

AeroGo is a leader in the engineering, design, manufacture and support of self-propelled material transport systems for markets ranging from Aerospace and Defense to Power Generation and Energy. Their focus is helping discrete manufacturers that need safe, cost-effective and flexible ways of moving heavy parts and machinery throughout their facilities. AeroGo partners primarily with Fortune 500 brands.

Challenge

As an innovator operating in an ever-changing category (industrial transfer carts), AeroGo faced the challenge of creating awareness amongst engineers in Fortune 500 firms.

Solution

We began our engagement by conducting Voice of the Customer interviews. We discovered that before manufacturers ever considered purchasing an industrial transfer cart, they typically needed to be experiencing a compelling event, such as a work cell redesign, space utilization improvement, or safety-improvement initiative around ergonomics (particularly how workers move heavy parts and equipment around plant floors).

We took our client through the **RH Blake Growth Roadmap™** to develop a strategic way to reach decision makers and influencers at target accounts. We then created a comprehensive suite of marketing assets to support this strategy. In particular, we created “compare-and-contrast” content that contrasted AeroGo’s innovative industrial transfer carts with traditional material-handling methods, such as overhead cranes and conveyors.

These assets included:

- Comparative approach landing pages
- Ebook and thought leadership lead generators

- SEO-focused articles to drive awareness earlier in the sales cycle
- Google Adwords campaign development and management targeting competing approaches
- Videos explaining solution benefits
- Innovation Award program launch
- Social media

Results

AeroGo generated leads with engineers and other vital decision makers at strategic manufacturing accounts. They nurtured those leads with content that addressed buyer challenges, answered questions, and demonstrated the ROI of AeroGo solutions. AeroGo drove brand awareness, gained traction with their target audiences quickly, and demonstrated to new buyers why their innovative transfer carts are a better alternative to traditional material handling systems.



Case Study **ABB**

Company

Operating in more than 100 countries, ABB delivers solutions for electrification, industrial automation, motion, and robotics and discrete automation in the utility, transportation, industry and infrastructure markets.

Challenge

ABB has an ongoing challenge of creating and communicating marketing messages that closely align with their target audiences and demonstrate unique value propositions. Operating in industries that have sales cycles that are measured in quarters—often years—ABB must create awareness, drive engagement, nurture leads, and communicate value in ways that create preference among risk-averse technical buyers in highly regulated industries.

Solution

ABB partners with RH Blake as a core part of its structured global product-launch process. Leveraging more than 30 years of marketing and content development best practices, RH Blake helps ABB from the earliest stages of their product launches into new markets, regions, and channels. These product launches are typically for multi-million-dollar products and services, and involve global roll-outs.

To date, **we have helped ABB launch more than 50 products**, everything from asset performance management to industrial cybersecurity.

RH Blake partners with ABB marketing leaders and subject-matter experts across numerous divisions to develop content for high-value offerings with long and complex sales cycles. By leveraging a deep understanding of the industrial ecosystem, coupled with proven marketing approaches, RH Blake delivers on-target marketing messages that drive growth for ABB.

Results

ABB penetrates new markets and broadens its footprint in existing markets with strategic marketing messages that **create awareness, generate leads, drive quality traffic, and create meaningful sales opportunities.** ABB maintains its position in the market as an innovator and thought leader.

Avoid typical product launch hurdles with a **structured and proven approach**

Launching a B2B product is challenging and risky, but it can be easier and more successful if you follow a tested, structured process for launching industrial products. Understand your market. Decide how you're going to get your new offering to your market. Plan your training. Create your marketing, promotion and communications programs. Then concentrate on continuous improvement.

Interested in learning how RH Blake could help your next product launch?

[Contact Us](#)



Testimonials

“**I’ve gotten all that I’d hoped for from the RH Blake Growth Roadmap™ and more.** Based on the research and insights, we adjusted our offering scope and sales approach. And this adjustment has been **effective at generating new opportunities.**”

Diane Reko
President
REKO International



“**RH Blake is such an incredible asset.** They have helped improve our internal and external product presence and done a great job developing and executing their projects for ABB.”

Ashley Liddil
Global Marketing and
Communications Manager
ABB Industrial Automation



About RH Blake

For more than 30 years, the team at RH Blake has been helping growth-driven firms in the manufacturing ecosystem build marketing and sales programs that generate quality sales leads and accelerate growth. Our expertise and proven process coupled with hundreds of voice of the customer interviews enables us to challenge assumptions and help you reach untapped opportunities.



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