

Types of Launches

There are 2 types of launches:

The Soft Launch

A *soft* launch, aka an R&D launch, simply means just getting it out there – with no big fanfare - but it's available, and the shopping cart link is live.

This type of launch is announced lightly - keep some traffic going to it without making it a big deal. It's like a 'market test' launch. You may do this when you're not sure of the pricing or you're not sure of the reaction from the market or if it needs something else.

It's about 'completing not perfecting' and then test launching. This is also the route to take for someone new to product creation. All their energy is gone, sunk into the product creation. Gradually, as they mature, they will realize that half the tank or MORE should be left over after the creation part is done.

The Aggressive Launch

If a product wants to make decent money it will need an aggressive launch of some kind. There are degrees of aggressive of course but in all cases you want buzz around the product.

The How of the Launch

- Email >> Sales page
- Freebie Call >> Special Offer >> Sales page
- Live Event >> Special Invite/Offer >> Back of Room

There is a collaborative version of the above – it's about coordinating a whole bunch of people to do the above together (JVs, affiliates, etc)

The Product Is King

In *The Purple Cow*, Seth Godin makes the point that if you're going to create something for sale it's best to think about the marketing while you are creating it as opposed to waiting until the product is complete. As an OBM, it pays to approach the business owner, before the product is completed, to clarify what the offer will be: by asking, 'How does this product/offering differ from all the other stuff out there?' If they can't answer that question, it's better to find the answer before investing time and energy into launching the campaign.



Product Launch Strategies & Plan

Module 3 – Online Revenue Streams – Maps & Processes

- Biggest Launch Mistake: Thinking promotions are more important than your product.
- Rule #1, 2 & 3: Have something outrageously awesome to offer. The promotions are secondary.
- What is your product/offering? Why should anyone care? What are you promising to deliver? Why is it a solution to someone?
- The marketing and promotions should begin in the product creation phase.

If the product is just plain *bad*, the promotion is going to be tough to create. From the OBM perspective – if the product is terrible, say something to the client rather than going with it. One option is to encourage the owner to share the product (before launch) with a group of peers for feedback, or do a mini ‘soft launch’ to a segment of their list... so you can gauge reaction and go from there.

Psychology of Promotions

There are 6 ‘Weapons of Influence’, as outlined in the book *Influence Science and Practice*, Robert B. Cialdini

- Reciprocation – there is an ‘obligation’ to try to repay in kind for something you are given. If you give someone something they are likely to give you something in return.
- Commitment & Consistency– once people commit to something, they are more likely to see it through.
- Social Proof - look at what other people are doing (testimonials, recommendations, etc.). If everyone’s doing it, it proves the value.
- Liking – people prefer to say ‘yes’ to individuals they know and like. This is huge, but often overlooked.
- Authority – listen to the expert, celebrity endorsements. Experts/authority figures can influence people in their purchasing decisions.
- Scarcity - limited time, only X available. Basically, putting a deadline on something. This is highly effective – it conveys, ‘a good time to act is now.’ It’s most effective not to overstate the urgency – remember, ‘never cry, wolf.’

You want to consider and use these strategies with balance – if you go too far overboard you could turn people off and actually end up losing customers instead of gaining them. A good barometer of when you’ve crossed the line is if people regret their purchases later.



The Promotion is Queen

Once your offering is created, who will do the actual writing of the promotional materials? And with audio/video – who's the 'talent'? Will it be the client, copywriter, you? Not all business owners are good with copy or in front of a camera (this is a big issue, actually.), so be sure to explore the best options here. Don't just assume that your client is the best person for the job!

This includes all materials such as sales pages, broadcasts, affiliate materials, autoresponders, videos, podcasts, free calls, etc. A sales page is like the interior environment of a 'bricks and mortar' store – if it's sloppy or slapped together, people will have second thoughts about making a purchase.

The Essentials of Any Launch

Assuming you have a great product/offering, the basics of an effective launch are...

- Create an event out of the launch – is there a big election in your area? It gives the launch meaning and it can be repeatable – i.e. a birthday launch, before school starts or an anniversary launch, etc.
- Create a sense of timeliness through special pricing/discounts/bonuses/season/occasion. Make sure to include deadlines!
- Get sales page ready (manage the process) and polished.
- Follow the 3-step rule for any promotion that has life in it - A.I.R. – announce, inform, remind.
- Imbue the launch with your personality. This is one of the ways you answer the question, 'how are you/what you offer different?'
- Over plan the launch. Leave lots of room for the unexpected. Enlist allies. Get back up support, if needed i.e. tech support, VA.



Promotional Strategies

Promotions can be organized into concentric rings starting with:

- Internal promotions – major list, sub lists, personal social network – i.e. Facebook, Twitter, etc.
- Inner circle promotions – allies, super-affiliates, friends with lists, strongest joint venture partners.
- Outer circle promotions – affiliates, looser joint venture partners, people newly interested as a result of this promotion, advertising, viral movies.
- Maximize all promotions with Tell a Friend campaigns – this is a key, yet often overlooked, strategy.

Role of the OBM

The role of the OBM is to first manage the launch process (but of course!). This includes helping define the launch plan – strategy, elements, timeline, etc.

Don't assume that the business owner knows what they are doing for a launch. They may have a good idea of strategies and such, but many will have no idea of what is needed to implement those strategies.

OR

Many business owners forget about the launch altogether – they become so fixated on finishing the book/product they don't consider the launch until it is almost too late.

Don't be shy - be willing to share your feedback –it's critical to their (and your) success. Even if you aren't in a marketing role, or if there is a marketing manager on the team, still be willing to share ideas, brainstorm and participate in the launch strategy process.



Product Launch Timeline

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Identify Timeline

The role of the OBM is to manage the process of a product launch and a big part of that is the timeline.

The bigger the product/price, the more time you want to plan for launch, for example:

- New book – 1 to 4 weeks
- Training program – 4 to 6 weeks
- Live Events – 2 to 4 months –

There are three simple steps to the launch process that you want to keep in mind – Announce, Inform, Remind (AIR).

The three steps to any promotion are to announce (for the first time), inform them of something, give additional information and third, remind them the launch is ending. To be minimally effective every launch needs to incorporate these three steps at the very least.

Launch Milestones/Timing

Create a plan based on the following milestones:

- Pre-Launch – Prime the Pump
- Week Before Launch – Tend To the Details
- First Day of Launch – Expect the Unexpected
- Duration of Launch – Over-communicate
- Completion of Launch – Maximize
- After the Launch – Sustain. This is not necessarily the end of the process.

A launch can have varying duration – anything from one day to months. You don't want a launch to be too short (ie: a few hours) or too long.

More likely (and better, especially in the beginning) is to have 3-7 days as launch window. This is a nice timeline to get the promotional sequence accomplished. Give affiliates and others chances to get off their marks. Overall, let the market breathe into the launch and take action before it's done and gone.



Product Launch Timeline

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Pre-launch – Prime the Pump

It's best to start this as soon as possible – as soon as you know there is a new product/offering coming and have a rough idea of the launch date. This could be weeks or months leading up to the launch.

- Focus on building up anticipation, dropping hints, telling stories, creating interaction via blog, free teleclasses and such. This is where you want to have your communications going out to the list. For example, Stomper.net – released a series of free videos to build up interest. When it came time to launch their product they had generated a lot of anticipation and attention.
- Focus on List-building in general, build the list before you want to promote to it.
- Set up a pre-launch page with counter.
- Build a sub-list or notification list for launch only.
- R&D the product, get early testimonials.
- Build a network of JVs/affiliates, begin instructing them on expectations, first deadlines. If that network is not in place you can initiate that process to make it happen ahead of the actual launch – it can help get others to promote for you.
- If at all possible, finish the product itself. You could add a 'Pre-Sale' element making sure to set realistic expectations.

When this part of the launch is done well it usually leads to successful launch. The Pre-Launch ends a week before the launch.

Week Before Launch – Tend to the Details

This is the place to tie up all the loose ends.

The role of the OBM becomes critical at this stage and you may need to be able to step in to help the launch be successful with any last minute scrambling - it helps to be aware of this and prepared ahead of time. The product may not yet be complete - if needed, renegotiate the launch date so it can be done thoroughly. It takes as much effort to do a poor launch as a great one!

- Start officially talking about the product/offering coming up – let the cat out of the bag!
- Give affiliates/JVs the official 'go sign' and get them their promotional materials.



Product Launch Timeline

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- Make sure sales page is ready and fully tested, including the buying process from start to finish.
- Make sure all bonuses and other special gifts are in place.
- Add some reserve manpower for customer service and the unforeseen.

Key players are usually well informed but don't forget about the people in the support roles – let them know that 'next week is the big week' so that they can be prepared. Most people on the team are willing to pitch in with extra help especially if they know in advance.

If things are going to fall apart with a launch, it will occur at this stage of the process. You will see all the loose ends popping up.

TIP: If things aren't working out it's not always best to force the launch just because of a timeline. If the product isn't ready or if other barriers arise, you may want to bump back the launch date by a few days. You can smooth things out by sending out an apology to those on the list – you may find it adds even more anticipation to the launch (but best not to rely on this as a strategy – it's not exactly honest and people will 'get wise').

Launch Day – Expect the Unexpected

- Get it out there! Announcement to list.
- Remind JVs/Affiliates
- Be super responsive to errors encountered, friction in the buying process, questions that indicate clarity is needed. Tiny adjustments in a timely manner can make a HUGE difference. This is where the support team will be really key, especially those in a customer service capacity.
- Keep score, play the money game. Ask what else? What else can be done? How many things were sold? How quickly?

Under the pressure of launch day, sometimes great things can happen. New opportunities, new JV partners, key points prospective buyers make – all of these should be acted upon immediately where possible. The launch is an event and has momentum. Build up that momentum and follow it.

Sending regular updates of sales to the client can be a great validation for the client and reinforces the value of the launch process (as well as the value of the OBM).



Product Launch Timeline

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Duration of the Launch – Over-communicate

Launches are just specialized communication - Once the launch is underway, keep communicating.

Remember the three step AIR strategy: “Announce, Inform, Remind.” During the launch you will want to Inform people multiple times, exact amount to vary depending on the length of the launch process.

Inform with:

- Reminder emails, FAQs, overcome objections, give social proof with testimonials, early numbers.
- Updates re: spots left, etc. www.adimpact.com – it’s a hover ad you can put on your page – great to put on the sales page.

One of the biggest (and most often made) mistakes is lack of communication. The business owners who do really well use AIR as their default.

End of Launch - Maximize

Always send out a final reminder. You will lose some people. You will sell more. (There’s usually about 100-150% more juice in the launch at the end. E.g. If announcing the launch sold 30 units, will likely sell another 30-45 at the end of launch). It always pays to over-communicate here.

Honor the deadline or countdown but be willing to make exceptions, with ‘teeth’ - meaning, if you let someone in ‘under the wire’ at the early price, make sure you give them a deadline, like, in the next 3 hours, activate this link. Accept the money flow continuing after the deadline if it does, but don’t be too loosey goosey about it – if someone was away and missing the early bird deadling (or something similar)...okay. A few weeks late? No. Expect something in return for the exceptions.

This is also a great time to ask for one last hurrah from your affiliates, JVs, etc. Remember – you’ve come this far, don’t leave money on the table.

After the Launch – Sustain

How to continue sales:

- Add to store page/site
- Rotate in ‘marketplace’ feature in ezine (once a quarter/month...)



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- Cross promote on various sites.
- Follow up with purchasers for testimonials – create overwhelming social proof and word of mouth.
- For any live or time based programs, look for ways to repackage and offer another version of the product after the launch – i.e. a modified version of your offering, audio only version, CD's, etc. Squeeze as much juice out of it as you can.

The hallmark of an OBM: Document, Systematize, Improve based on what happened this time, in preparation for the next launch.

