

Step 2 – *Define the market window.* The plan should identify the time period when the product must be available for purchase by the intended customers. For some industries, a ‘buying season’ sets the stage. For others, a key industry event or trade-show may be the right time.

Step 3 – *Identify the launch team and the launch team leader.* The Launch Plan is a cross-functional initiative that requires a team leader (a product manager, product marketing manager, or other project manager). An executive sponsor or champion is important, especially if this is an extremely critical product launch, or, if the launch is being bundled in a launch of several products. The launch team membership list can use a table such as the one that follows:

Launch Team Roles	Launch Team Names and Contact Information
Executive Sponsor	
Launch Team Leader	
Product Manager	
Marketing Manager	
Marketing Communications	
Creative Manager	
Legal and/or Regulatory Compliance	
Early Adopter/Market Testing Manager	
Manufacturing/Supply Chain/Logistics	
Operations (Billing, Ordering, etc)	
Finance	
Sales	
Customer Training	
Intellectual Property Management	
Human Resources	
Customer Change Management	

Additionally, since the Launch Plan requires resources at specific times, then the perfect document to clarify roles and responsibilities is the Functional Support Plan. Use a form like the one that follows for each business function (Marketing, Development, etc.)

Deliverable	Start Date	End Date	Information or work needed from other functions (what/when)	Risks to the launch if this deliverable is not completed on time

Step 4 – *Develop a clearly mapped out project plan.* Every launch team should use project management techniques to clarify the work tasks from everyone contributing to the launch. It is recommended that Functional Support Plans be used (see Step 3) and that they be integrated into one document, with all inter-function dependencies called out. A critical path chart should be prepared to show the absolute longest duration of all tasks, collectively. This way, the launch team will know how delays or problems with one deliverable might impact the entire end-date (or announcement date).

Tasks	Resources	Start	End	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May
Task 1								
Task 2								
Task 3								

Step 5 – *Establish launch metrics.* Launch metrics are important to ensure that the product can and will be sold. Sales related metrics are typically most important, although operational metrics will be important as well. Sales metrics might include the number of new sales leads generated, the time it takes from order to shipment, the number of new customers purchasing, the time it takes from getting an order to getting paid, the amount of each sale (to make sure the pricing is right), advertising effectiveness, etc.

Carrying out the Product Launch (Executing)

When the Business Case for a new product or an enhancement is approved, the design and development of the product commences and the launch team begins its work. These work activities are aligned with what was agreed to in the Launch Plan. The following activities, as a minimum, should be carried out during launch execution. You should also work closely with any existing launch organizations, processes or procedures used by your company, to ensure that your plan integrates well with the "normal way of doing business" in your company. Think of launch execution as a multi-step process:

Early phase launch execution:

- *Meet with executive sponsor to make sure that you're aligned on the launch plan*
- *Confirm the market window with the cross-functional launch team*
- *Synchronize all activities with Development (e.g., on testing or trials – timing, etc.)*
- *Review/update other important documents (Business Case, Marketing Plan, PRD, Value Proposition, Positioning, etc.)*
- *Align with any creative groups that need to be engaged*

Middle phase launch execution:

- *Prepare sales training*
- *Assemble sales 'kits' or equivalent documents*
- *Arrange sales training dates*
- *Get marketing materials written*
- *Make arrangements for specific events*
- *Carry out market tests*
- *Get product codes*
- *Make sure the supply chain organization is carrying out its work*
- *Check factory production schedule (if needed)*
- *Assure that all regulatory or standards testing is completed*
- *Finalize pricing (if needed)*
- *Put together any demonstration kits or 'demo' packages*
- *Load ordering & billing systems*
- *Make sure that distributors or re-sellers are trained and ready*
- *Make arrangements for industry analyst meetings or PR*
- *Re-check documents*
- *Review status with executive champion*
- *Set the final announcement date*

Later phase launch execution:

- *Carry out sales training*
- *Train customer service agents*
- *Train distributors and re-sellers*
- *Carry out internal announcements*
- *Distribute marketing materials*
- *Finalize market tests*
- *Verify that all regulatory approvals have been secured*
- *Assign product availability ratings*
- *Load up internal websites*
- *Turn up all operational support systems*
- *Carry out executive final go/no-go for the launch*
- *Make the announcement*