



## BTB INTEGRATED MARKETING | A B2B Product Launch Guide

BTB Integrated Marketing has been helping clients with product launches across varied industries and sales channels for years. While not an exhaustive list of what to do for a new product launch (they are all different), here are some things to think about based on our experience. It's never too early to get your agency team involved to start the planning process and get the ideas flowing.

### Creative Brief

This is the document that serves as the marketing platform. Include input from marketing, your creative team, sales, and the product manager. It includes:

- **Value Proposition**
  - What need does the product fill?
  - Why is it better than current solutions to the prospective customer's problem?
  - Are there any barriers to purchase? For example, higher initial cost before savings are realized, or needed training before the product can be used effectively.
- **Audience**
  - Who will benefit from this product?
  - Who are the people responsible for recommending or approving purchase?
  - Where do they get their information? Trade publications, videos, newsletters, social, distribution, search, whitepapers, etc.
  - What types of information will sway a decision?
- **Competition**
  - How will competitors respond to this product. What potential negatives will they try to exploit?

### Launch Budget

Whether your spend is pre-determined or it's up to you to propose one, you'll need a budget. Your budget should include: external creative costs, photography, media placements, paid search, social advertising, packaging development, public relations, event planning — add every expense as a line item in Excel for easy tabulation and editing.

### Marketing Plan

Using the information in the creative brief, develop a spreadsheet of the channels and tactics that you'll use. Plan a strategic nurturing campaign to keep moving leads through the sales funnel with emails, direct mail, ads/banners, social media, videos, webinars, phone calls, or events, as appropriate. Drive a call to action to different pieces of content about the product for the various stages of lead qualification. Have next steps and actions in place to keep a long-term campaign going. Your nurturing campaign should begin as a part of your pre-launch program.



## Media Plan

Create a spread sheet that details the cost, placement and frequency of paid media, including PPC, and social advertising.

## ROI

How will you measure performance of marketing efforts? Some products are a quick sell, others can take months depending on the purchase process, trials, and approvals. Decide your goals and metrics early on. While sales revenue is the primary goal, have a plan to measure incremental success. Remember not all conversions are direct sales, they might result in the user watching a full video, downloading a white paper, or submitting a form.

- **Measurement Platform-** If your company does not have a system to track and measure conversions, try Google Analytics. GA can be used to track web-based events (such as a click through from an online banner) through to web-based conversions (such as an online purchase or a form submission). It's a powerful tool but requires time and knowledge to set it up. If you don't have the resources in-house consider contracting this out.
- **Tracking Tags-** Include tracking codes in your online ads so you know which channels and messages are performing, and what isn't.
- **Leads-** Hot, warm, qualified. Keep a measure of leads and where they are in the funnel. Keep the nurturing program going.
- **Impressions, Clicks, Click-thru rates-** How are those banner ads performing?
- **Emails-** Delivery rate, bounce rate, click-to-open rates- are your emails hitting home?
- **Website/landing page-** What happens after someone lands on your site? Pageviews, engagements, conversions, contacts, time on site, bounce rate – how is the landing page performing?
- **Communications-** How many downloads, chat sessions, incoming calls, emails, form submissions are coming in? Promo code use?
- **Social Media-** How is social media supporting the product? Positive/negative reviews, likes, feedback/questions, time watching videos?
- **Distribution Partners/Sales Channels-** Who is doing well? What can be done to grow sales through the channels?
- **Referrals-** Where are your leads coming from? Organically, paid search marketing, social media, paid advertising, telemarketing, word-of-mouth, distributors? Know what's working and what isn't. Adjust the plan and resources.

## Launch Schedule

Working backwards from the launch date, use your marketing and media plan to create a production schedule that also include responsibilities of launch team members. Creative concepts, product images, training materials, web landing pages, media materials, video, PowerPoints, press releases—everything you intend to roll out should be included.





Factor in elements such as “teaser” campaigns to create a pre-launch buzz, and shipping lead times—when can a buyer expect their product? It is also important to note how long the launch “push” will last.

BTB recommends that you actively promote the launch for a minimum of two weeks, a month is even better. During this period, you should actively monitor what’s working and what’s not, and be mindful of spamming customers. If they don’t open your email attempt after two sends, they probably aren’t interested. Take them off the list.

## Product Branding & Inventory integration

It may sound obvious, but a lot goes into getting a product ready for launch. It needs to fit within the corporate brand structure and convey the right image in the marketplace.

- **Branding-** Do you have a name for the new product? Do you need a brand hierarchy? How does it fit with your existing product lines?
- **Naming/Logo-** What is your product naming convention? Does it need its own typographical or graphic logo?
- **Trademarks-** Start the trademark process with your legal team if you haven’t already. It can take up to 18 months to get an official TM, so the earlier the better.
- **Part Numbers, UPC codes, ITN codes, Weights, Dimensions, Label Information**—Gather all the information for labeling/ordering/selling the product. Add your parts to inventory systems with your distribution channels.
- **Product Images-** Create a shot list of your image needs:
  - Is there a final version or a prototype for photography? If the physical product isn’t available, you can commission a photorealistic rendering.
  - What features/functions do you need to show? What angles, colors, options?
  - You need visuals for packaging, training presentations, sales presentations, ecommerce, distribution, digital advertising, videos, social media, and PR.
- **Other Photography-** Do you need to show example applications, special functions, or installation? Stock photography can sometimes be used for these. They are economical but remember that other people can also use the same images. Sometimes a product is so novel, custom photography is needed to show comparisons, functions, applications.

## Packaging

For some products and markets, particularly retail/consumer, packaging is very important and may be the first impression of the product and the brand. Balancing legally required content and customer messaging, as well as distribution partner requirements can get complicated.

- **Type of Packaging-** Determine what is best to protect the product during transit and present it to the customer. Get dielines made for the designer.



- **Package Design**- Gather the features, benefits, specs, options, everything that is required for your package. This will vary by product and industry. Write a manuscript for your graphic designer so everything gets included. This will be useful for proofing as well.
- **Carton Package**- Most products will need an outer shipping carton as well. What is required by your distribution partners?
- **Test Shipments** to yourself can avoid product damage, reveal the customer experience, and flag unseen shipping cost issues.
- **Recyclable Content**- Most retailers and distribution partners are working toward LEED certification and will require recycled and recyclable packaging. Consider your options.

## Internal Communication Plan

Before launching your new product for sale to customers, prepare your teams to support the product and avoid missteps or confusion in the marketplace that could hurt product acceptance and sales.

- **Core Message**- What does it do and why would anyone need or want it?
- **Product Description**- Write the description, list the features/benefits, specs—you'll need this for your website, channel partners, customer service training, ads, social media and more.
- **Elevator Pitch**- Work the core message, description, and applications into a concise product pitch to quickly get across what it is, what it does, what it's used for, and what are the benefits of this product over similar products in the marketplace, and how to get it.
- **Communication**- How do you communicate with your sales channels? Is there a special email, form, phone number, chat session for the new product? Be sure to include it your own internal newsletters and send it to your distribution partners as well to include in their communications.
- **Customer Service Line**- Are you going to handle this internally or outsource it?
- **Education Plan**- Start a plan to train your sales teams, customer service team, and distribution network about the features, benefits, applications, specs, operating instructions, cautions or warnings, setup procedures, and troubleshooting. Tailor each presentation to the job function and what they need to know about the product and how it works. Test and review your training materials, installation instructions, etc. with an outside partner, such as a distributor, rep, or key customer to be sure you are communicating clearly. This will reduce calls for support and improve customer satisfaction.
- **Warranty, Returns**- Decide what the warranty will be for the product and how claims and returns will be handled. Write a clear policy so customers understand, and your customer service team knows how to process requests.

## External Communications Plan

Before launching your new product for sale to customers, consider its position in the marketplace.

- **Customer focused messages/collateral**- Infographics, diagrams, signage, sales sheets, spec sheets, instructions, app setup/pairing directions, demo videos—what do you need for the end user to understand and know to use the product?



- **Communication-** How do you communicate with your existing customers? Include the new product in any newsletters, email signatures, phone calls, etc. Run a cross reference based on their purchase history to determine if the new product would be an upgrade, replacement or complement to something they have purchased in the past. Tailor messages for those customers.
- **Nurturing plan-** continue with the nurturing plan for product launch.
- **Scripting, storyboarding-** Your partner agency can help with scripting and storyboarding for video demos, instructional videos, training, or sales presentations, etc.
- **Talent for models or voice overs-** Male or female voice? What is the age range that will most use the product? Pay attention to diversity as it pertains to users of the new product.
- **Email signature-** Include a mention of the new product in email signatures with a link to the landing page.
- **Advertise-** Let the target market know about the new product. This may include print advertising, banner advertising, email blasts, a webinar, Google search advertising, paid and organic social media, tradeshow participation. Build a bank of ads with your agency so promotion is ready to begin. Develop a schedule complete with opportunity, specs, due dates, run dates, contacts, tracking links, and ROI measures.
- **White Papers, Webinars, Podcasts-** The more content, the better. Gate white papers to get leads. Webinars can be live, on demand or both, and offer great leads lists. Podcasts are popular in several markets for pitching new products and applications.
- **Special Offers-** What can you offer to spur action and move leads through the sales cycle faster?
- **Reviews-** Check online reviews daily from retailers/distribution. These are important factors in the buyer's consideration stage of the purchase cycle. Provide feedback on reviews or answer questions posted online. Communication with customers/reviewers can offset the impact of negative comments. Resolution of customer problems in an online setting demonstrates your commitment to the product and the customer experience.
- **Influencers-** share the product key with influencers in your market, but also keep an eye out for product reviews outside of designated channels. Respond quickly to reward positive mentions or correct misinformation.

## Website

Nearly all of your marketing tactics will drive to the product landing page or related content somewhere on your company website. Make your new product easy to find. Have a graphic on the home page, implement redirects if needed, make related URLs, and aggregate content for the product. Have a web tracking method in place to help with ROI.

- **Landing Page-** All those ads have to go somewhere, so make it easy to find the new product on your site. Build a suitable landing page to support the new product using creative elements from your campaign. Make the user experience easy, have all content relevant to the new product, specs, video, technical support, etc., accessible from the landing page. Include an announcement graphic





on the home page linking to the full landing page. Don't forget to include links to sales channels to buy the product.

- **Complementary Products and Cross-selling-** Don't lose an opportunity to create awareness for other products in your portfolio that complement your new product. Maybe the new product replaces old ones—create a cross reference. Are there accessories or optional add-ons or variations? Is a tool or another part required for the new product? Make it easy to find additional or supporting products. Create an alert if they are buying a product that requires something else to function properly.
- **Gated content-** Consider requiring a form for some content (white papers, webinars, podcasts, etc.) to get leads for your product from those who have shown interest, but not purchased yet.
- **Case Studies and Testimonials-** are valuable, if you can get them. Privacy concerns have become more limiting, but case studies can be written to describe an application and a story without violating NDAs or revealing sensitive information or identities. Your PR agency can help with this.
- **Blog Posts-** If your site has a blog, work the new product into it. Highlight a feature, an application, a success story. Keep it relevant.
- **Reviews-** Keep a check on reviews online as people do pay attention when considering purchases. Provide feedback on reviews or answer questions posted online. Communicate with customers/reviewers to offset negative comments.

## Events

Some products may require in-person or virtual meetings or training sessions for an effective sales process.

- **Invitations-** Plan ahead for events with special, send personalized invitations for leads in your pipeline.
- **Tradeshows-** Showcase the new product in your booth, offer demos and perhaps private events for leads. Send invitations or pre-arrange private meetings before the show.
- **Demos-** Demos can be done live in-person, live via video, or recorded for on-demand use. Demos can be a mix of actual video footage plus graphics as long as it's an informative and concise presentation.
- **Webinars-** Promoted and presented to the audience using the subscriber from a list trade publication.
- **Giveaways-** Only use giveaways if related to the product and something someone would actually want or use.
- **Promos-** Consider a special event only promotion/discount/special offer opportunity.

## Pre-launch marketing

Before the product is ready to launch, start dropping hints and small details to create awareness that something new is coming, without giving away too much. Build excitement about the new product with



your customer base, sales team, distribution network and internal employees and external stakeholders before launch.

- **Nurturing Campaign-** Is everything in place?
- **Pre-launch Product Demos-** Reviews and influencers have a lot of sway. You may consider sending out samples to the target audience to build up reviews before official launch.
- **Graphics Bank-** create a graphics bank of images on hand to use for all social media including the product, its application, in situ, etc.
- **Teasers-** Tease it in your social media, newsletters, email signatures, digital advertising, even calls with customers.
- **Promotions-** Start gauging interest in the new product before it launches, perhaps with pre-orders or special early adopter discounts or promotions.

## Social Media

Have your internal sales, customer service, and executive teams get involved in social sharing by liking, sharing, commenting, reviewing, or answering questions posted on your various social channels. Be sure to assign this responsibility.

- **Graphics Bank-** Your bank of images can be tapped for all social. Note which images can gain the most traction, log image and post use to schedule repetition.
- **Elevator Pitch-** This is where that product elevator pitch will be valuable for short messages.
- **Videos-** Feed your YouTube channel with demo videos, instructional videos, app setup videos, application videos, troubleshooting videos. Video is another way to promote the product and support the customer.

## Public Relations

Media support helps build awareness and trust as you introduce your new product.

- **Press Release-** Distribute a press release to publications and news outlets in the target markets announcing the new product.
- **Interviews, articles-** Meet with editors and influencers to talk about the new product, contribute to surveys and studies.

## Launch Day

Products can be launched in several ways depending on their importance to the marketplace.

- **Soft Launch-** Especially useful for the rollout of a new web tool or application, offering access to a select group encourages feedback and a chance to make improvements before launching to the world.
- **Targeted Launch-** Like a Soft Launch, used to reward key customers or sales channels before opening to the public.





- **Full Launch**- Product is released to all audiences in coordination with all media and social channels. Can follow a soft or targeted launch.
- **Event-based Launch**- Typically reserved for a major announcement, the launch kicks off with a trade show, in-house event, or webinar.

**Post Launch Social Monitoring**- Keep tabs on social media, blog, and influencer performance, comments, and reviews. Respond quickly to share positives and address negative experiences immediately.

**Measurement**- Check you're the ROI systems you have put in place to determine what's working and what's not. If a channel is not producing, you need to find out why and make adjustments, or abandon the channel and redirect resources.

**Purchase Follow Through**- Are orders shipping as promised?

**Retention**- Follow up on purchases with offers of support, satisfaction surveys, and discounts towards future purchases or related products.

Just like developing, sourcing, manufacturing, and distributing a new product, marketing that new product takes planning to put together a sales strategy and implement the tactics for success.

BTB Integrated Marketing works with you where you most need support whether it's planning, writing, scheduling, graphic design, coding, or execution. If you lack the internal resources to pull off a successful launch, we'd love to help you bring your new product to market. [Contact us at: btbmarketing.com](http://btbmarketing.com)

