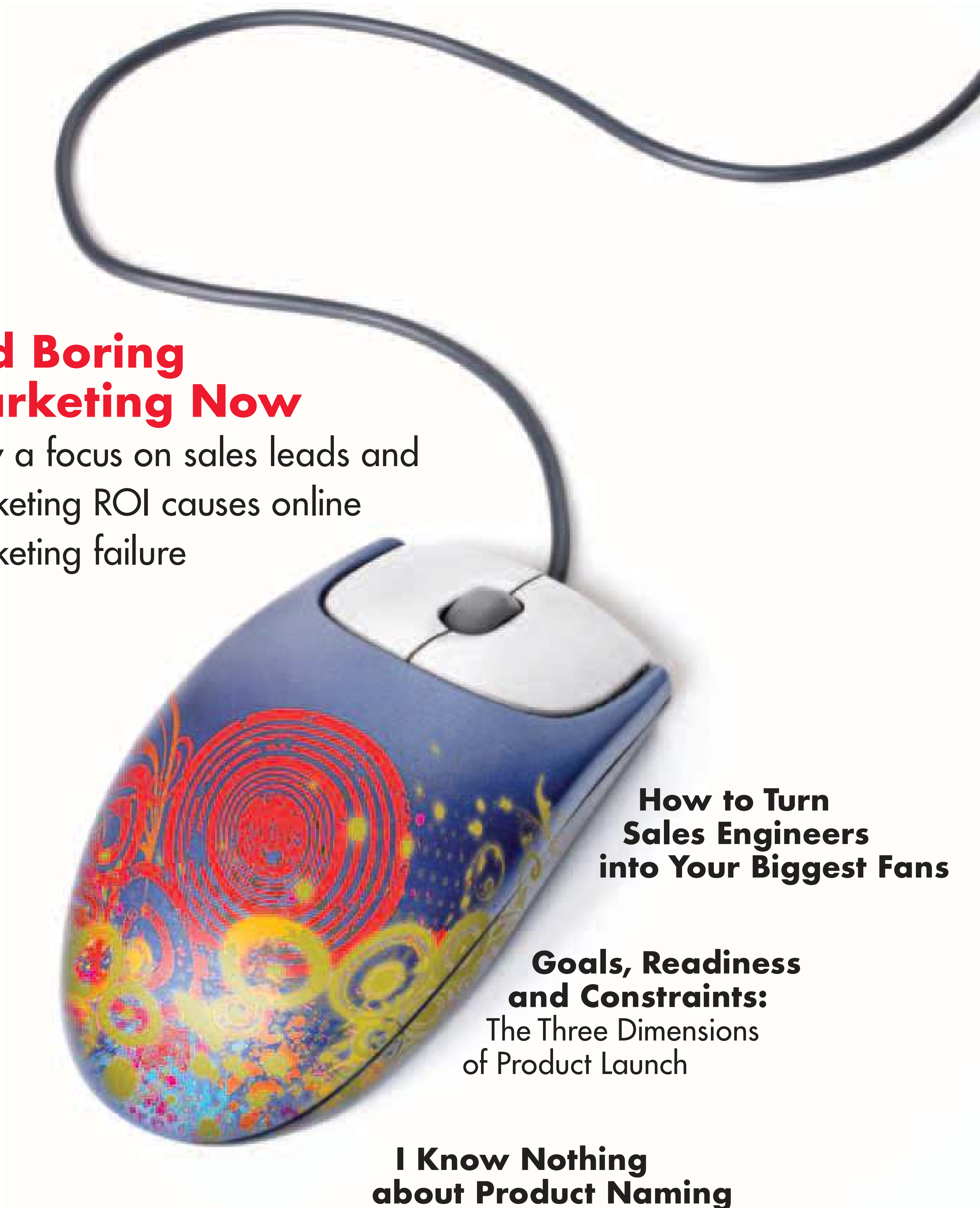
The journal for technology product management and marketing professionals • A Pragmatic Marketing® Publication

The Pragmatic Marketer™

Volume 7 Issue 2 2009



End Boring Marketing Now

Why a focus on sales leads and marketing ROI causes online marketing failure

How to Turn Sales Engineers into Your Biggest Fans

Goals, Readiness and Constraints:

The Three Dimensions of Product Launch

I Know Nothing about Product Naming

(but that Doesn't Stop Me from Doing It!)

The Pragmatic Marketer™

8910 E. Raintree Drive
Scottsdale, AZ 85260

Pragmatic Marketing, Inc.

Founder and CEO
Craig Stull

Editor-in-Chief
Kristyn Benmoussa

Editor
Linda Sowers

Interested in contributing an article?
Visit www.PragmaticMarketing.com/submit

ISSN 1938-9752 (Print)

ISSN 1938-9760 (Online)

About Pragmatic Marketing®

Pragmatic Marketing provides training seminars, onsite workshops, consulting services and an online resource center for technology product managers, product marketers and the executives who lead them.

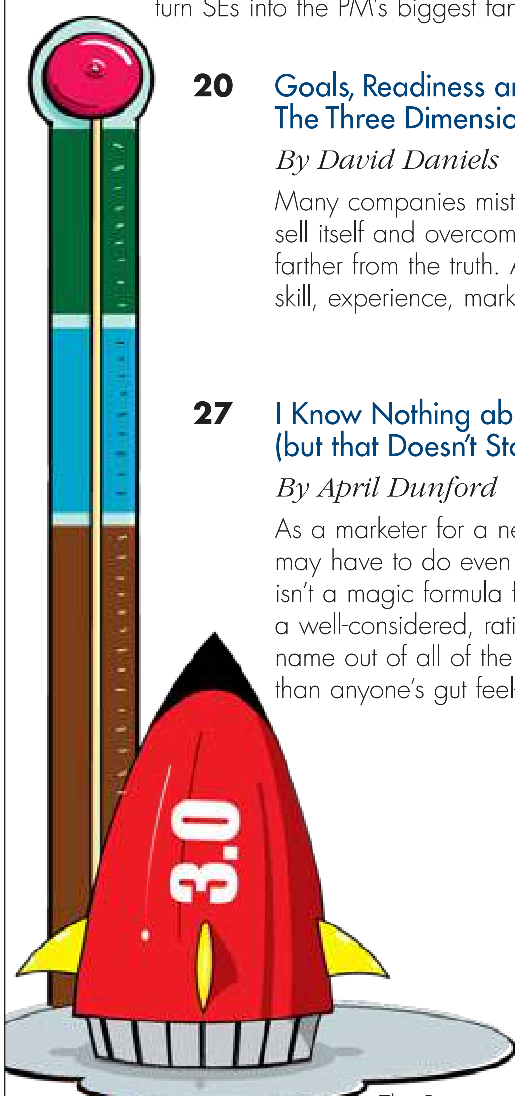
Over 60,000 product management and marketing professionals at 4,500 companies in the United States, Australia, Canada, England, Finland, France, Germany, Hong Kong, India, Japan, Singapore and South Africa have been trained with the Pragmatic Marketing Framework, a practical, market-driven approach to creating and delivering technology products. More than 10,000 have become Pragmatic Marketing Certified, the world's leading product management certification program.

Creators of the best-selling book *Tuned In: Uncover the Extraordinary Opportunities That Lead to Business Breakthroughs,* Pragmatic Marketing has been recognized three times by *Inc.* magazine as one of America's fastest growing private companies (2000, 2007, 2008) and named a Comerica Bank Arizona Company to Watch in 2008.

Visit www.PragmaticMarketing.com to learn more.

Inside this issue:

Volume 7 Issue 2 • 2009



END BORING MARKETING NOW

Why a focus on sales leads and marketing ROI causes online marketing failure

By David Meerman Scott

Matt Harding is the creator of one of the coolest series of YouTube videos I have ever seen. You've probably seen them, too. Harding describes himself as "a 32-year-old deadbeat from Connecticut, who used to think that all he ever wanted to do in life was make and play videogames."

On a trip wandering around Asia several years ago, Harding was in Hanoi when a friend suggested that he film a particular silly dance that he occasionally does when the moment is right. Some time later, a friend posted the video of Matt on his blog, and people passed around a link, one to another, until a lot of people had seen it.

So where *is* Matt?

Fast-forward to 2006. Marketing people at Stride gum had seen Harding's video and contacted him, saying, "We like what you're doing. We want to help you." They agreed to sponsor a six-month trip through thirty-nine countries and all seven continents. "In that time, I danced a great deal," Harding writes. The resulting video, which he posted to YouTube is called *Where the Hell is Matt?*—and has been seen more than 11 million times. "I didn't do anything to promote the video myself," he says. "It was a featured video on the YouTube site, and that was the kick start. But if people don't pass it around, a video won't get a lot of views. It has to be real for people to be interested."

Matt Harding created what I call a World Wide Rave: when people around the world are talking about you, your company, and your products—whether you're located in San Francisco, Dubai, or Reykjavík. It's when global communities eagerly link to your stuff on the Web. It's when online buzz drives buyers to your virtual doorstep. And it's when tons of fans visit your website or read your blog because they genuinely want to be there.

After that first trip, things settled down for a while. And then, in 2007, Harding went back to Stride with another idea. "With the release of the 2006 video, we created an email list on my site and invited people to sign up," Harding says. "Many people danced with me, and we showed some of that in an outtake video. I showed [the people from Stride] my inbox, which was overflowing with emails from all over the planet. I told them I wanted to travel around the world one more time and invite the people who'd written me to come out and dance, too." Stride agreed and, again, sponsored his journey.

The resulting video, *Where the Hell is Matt? (2008)*, is remarkable both for Harding and for Stride. The video was 14 months in the making, and it features a cast of thousands. This time, Harding visited 42 countries, from Bhutan to Zanzibar, and danced in all of them with enthusiastic locals. The first clip was shot in San Francisco on a cross-country road trip, and then he set out abroad. The round-the-world journey required six months and 76 airplane flights. The last clip was shot in Seattle a few days after his final landing.

What's the ROI from 11 million happy people?

I particularly like that the sponsor of the trip only gets a two-second "thank you" from Harding at the very end. Stride's logo did not appear throughout the video (the opposite of what most companies would have insisted on), and he didn't do anything to overtly promote the sponsor, such as holding Stride gum in his hand while he danced. The product never appears; and yet, the video is so powerful that you're almost compelled to watch until the end and see the credits, where Stride is finally mentioned.

Most importantly, the people at Stride did not require registration to see the video. They did not insist on a marketing ROI that was tied to sales. Stride stepped back and let the World Wide Rave spread, and tens of millions of people were exposed to the brand as a result.

"When the 2008 video was released, the 10,000 people on my invite list all got a link to the video, helping to generate a lot of early views," Harding says. "There has been a lot of media coverage. *The New York Times* did a story on the front page of the Arts & Leisure section, and six stills of the video were shown as photos. It was a really generous piece. That fed more media, because so many members of the media read the *Times*. Lots of other stories came out, and many new people went to the video."

Where the Hell is Matt (2008) is a smash-hit World Wide Rave (more than 11 million people have seen it on YouTube and on his site). *But if Harding or Stride gum had tried to use the sorts of measurement that most executives insist on, this success never could have happened. Without their willingness to lose control, the video never would have been made, let alone become a hit.* ➔

What do you have to lose but control?

You don't have to be a dancing machine to have nothing to lose.

Yes, it's inspiring that the Matt Hardings of the world can reach millions and transform their lives and businesses through the power of the World Wide Rave. But even the biggest, most conservative, multi-national corporations will find appropriate ways to capture the power of "word-of-mouse" to spread their ideas in new ways and to generate buzz that leads to increased sales. And they might even have some fun and reconnect with their customers along the way. (When was the last time *your* marketing was fun?)

Creating a World Wide Rave, in which other people help to tell your story, is a way to drive action. One person sends it to another, then that person sends it to yet another, and on and on. Each link in the chain exposes your story to someone new, someone you never had to contact yourself! It's like when you're at a sporting event or concert in a large stadium and somebody starts "the wave." Isn't it amazing that just one person with an idea can convince a group of 50,000 people to join in? Well, you can start a similar wave of interest online, a World Wide Rave. You can create the triggers that get millions of people to tell your stories and spread your ideas.

But first, you've got to lose control.

Spreading ideas and telling stories

For your ideas to spread and rise to the status of a World Wide Rave, you've got to give up control. Make your information on the Web totally free for people to access, with absolutely no virtual strings attached: no electronic gates, no registration requirements, and no email address verification necessary.

Yes, this advice will come as a shock to many marketers steeped in the tradition of direct mail advertising—a form of marketing that always requires disclosure of personal information via a toll-free phone call or Business Reply Card (BRC). Marketers who learned the secret workings of BRCs, the ins and outs of buying contact lists, and the subtle coercion tactics required when creating "offers" naturally want to transfer these esoteric skills (some might even say "black arts") to the Web. As a result, many folks create valuable and interesting information online and then do the exact wrong thing to distribute it—require viewers to provide personal information first.

This forced control is a terrible strategy for spreading your ideas. (However, if your *only* goal is to build a mailing list, then the strategy may still be valid. But how many companies are in the business of just building a list?) When you make people give an email address to get a whitepaper or watch a video, only a tiny fraction will do so; you will lose the vast majority of your potential audience.

You need to think in terms of spreading ideas, not generating leads. A World Wide Rave gets the word out to thousands or even millions of potential customers. But only if you make your information easy to find and consume.

Sales leads are the wrong goal

I'm often confronted with the issue of how to measure an online initiative's results. Executives at companies large and small, as well as marketing and PR people, tend to push back on the ideas of a World Wide Rave, simply because they want to apply old rules of measurement to the new world of spreading ideas online.

The *old rules of measurement* used two metrics that don't matter for spreading ideas, especially online:

1. **We measured leads**—how many business cards we collected; how many people called the toll-free number; how many people stopped at the tradeshow booth; and how many people filled out a form on our website, providing their email address and other personal information.

2. **We measured press clips—**the number of times our company and its products were mentioned in mainstream media, such as magazines, newspapers, radio, and television.

While applying these forms of measurement might be appropriate offline, using them to track your success on the Web just isn't relevant; they don't capture information about the way ideas travel. Worse, the very act of tracking leads hampers the spread of ideas.

People know from experience that if they supply their personal information to an organization, they're likely to receive unwanted phone calls from salespeople or to find themselves on email marketing lists. Most won't bother. In fact, I have evidence from several companies that have offered information—both with and without a registration requirement—that when you eliminate the requirement of supplying personal information, the number of downloads or views goes up by as much as a factor of 50. That's right—if you require an email address or other personal information, as little as 2% of your audience may bother to download your stuff.

Obsessing over sales leads and press clips is likely to be counter-productive and is highly likely to lead to failure of your World Wide Rave.

For decades, companies have offered Web content as lead bait. But the goal should be to get the word out about your organization, not to misuse the Internet for the sake of an outdated technique.

Similarly, measuring success by focusing only on the number of times the mainstream media write or broadcast about you misses the point. If a blogger is spreading your ideas, that's great. If 10 people email a link to your information to their networks or post about you on their Facebook page, that's amazing. You're reaching people, which was the point of seeking media attention in the first place. But most PR people only measure traditional media, and this practice doesn't capture the value of sharing.

To create a World Wide Rave, forget about sales leads, and ignore mainstream media. Instead, focus on spreading your ideas. Make your information totally free, with no registration required.

Here are some questions that can help you learn to measure a World Wide Rave:

- How many people are being exposed to your ideas?
- How many people are downloading your stuff?
- How often are bloggers writing about you and your ideas? (And what are those bloggers saying?)
- Where are you appearing in online search results for important phrases?
- How many people are engaging with you and choosing to speak to you about your offerings?

ROI makes you boring

Once you understand that the metrics of a World Wide Rave are different from what marketers typically measure, you'll need to think differently about ROI. Again, I often get pushback on this idea from executives, who demand that their marketing ROI be measured in precise financial terms.

It seems that business schools teach their students to obsess over measurement and insist that marketing results be treated in the same way you'd treat electricity use at company headquarters or revenue from the Canadian market. These executives want to know exactly how much revenue each dollar spent on marketing is producing, and they want to see it in detailed, campaign-by-campaign spreadsheets.

This trend is causing marketers to become too cautious and boring. Measuring ROI for everything means choosing techniques such as direct mail programs, where you can measure *exactly* how many business reply cards are returned. While that information is useful, lusting after it often prevents marketers from investing in efforts that could become World Wide Raves—solely because traditional measurement data is not available from those efforts.

For many executives, an obsession with ROI is just a convenient excuse to shy away from something new and untested. Yet that's exactly what the best ideas for creating a World Wide Rave are—new and untested.

Here's the contradiction: The same executives who insist on ROI measurements from marketing departments, happily invest huge sums of money on other things whose returns are also incalculable from an ROI perspective—such as the design of the lobby, the fresh coat of paint in the hallway, or even the accounting staff. When CEOs and executives resort to ROI excuses, I ask, "What's the ROI of the army of landscapers who are constantly at work on the plants around your corporate headquarters?" Usually my question is met with embarrassment.

Take a chance. Make the assumption that if millions of people are sharing your ideas (that's a number you can measure), then some percentage of them will ultimately buy your products. ➔

Make it free

Search for the phrase "email marketing metrics" on Google, and you'll find nearly 400,000 hits, plus dozens of paid advertisements. This is a hot search phrase because people who want to manage an email marketing program for their organization—small business owners, consultants, people who work in marketing departments of large organizations, and nonprofit employees—often search for important email marketing benchmarks (things such as click-through rates and the best days to begin campaigns).

With so many companies fighting over the high search positions for the phrase "email marketing metrics," only one can be the top dog. Meet MailerMailer, the company that controls the Number 1 position. MailerMailer sells an online tool that makes it easy to create, send, and track email campaigns. The tool is used by musicians, restaurants, software companies, event promoters, nonprofits, and other organizations. This small company is Number 1 because of its free *Email Marketing Metrics Report*.

Of course, it's no surprise that the Number 1 spot for an important search term was garnered by a company that creates some very valuable information—and offers it to anyone for free. "We analyzed over 300 million opt-in email newsletters and campaigns sent by a sample of over 3,200 MailerMailer customers in the second half of 2007," says Raj Khera, CEO of MailerMailer. "This free report reveals the most recent email marketing trends." For example, readers will discover which industries experienced the highest percentage of email opening rates and how frequently to send emails to reach the most people. Chock-full of charts and graphs, the valuable data made available for free would likely command a price of $10,000 (or more) if a consulting firm provided it.

Twenty or one: which is better?

The free *Email Marketing Metrics Report* has helped MailerMailer create a World Wide Rave. "Our metrics are now quoted all over the Web, in places like *eMarketer* and *MarketingSherpa*, and by ad agencies, companies, bloggers, reporters, analysts, and others who use it for data in their stories and reports," Khera says. "We've seen over 500 blogs pointing to the data. There was a tremendous amount of industry recognition about the report."

The *Email Marketing Metrics Report* was first released October 2004. "Initially we required registration to get the report [downloaders needed to supply an email address], and we got some initial interest, but not big numbers," Khera says. "When we opened it up and made the report available totally free, we found that 20 times the number of people downloaded it. Thousands of people were getting it."

Wow, stop and think about that. Many companies put registration requirements on their most valuable information. But here is real evidence that, if you do, only a fraction of potential readers or viewers will request it. As mentioned earlier, other companies have cited that as few as one person in fifty will download something if personal information is required, compared to when the same information is offered totally free.

Clearly, having one of the most popular and most referenced sources of email marketing data is a huge marketing asset. When people read about email marketing metrics in a report from MailerMailer, they naturally consider purchasing MailerMailer products and services to help them with their email marketing programs. The report contains a free trial offer for MailerMailer services. "We're one of the top 10 companies in the email marketing space," says Khera. "The product promotes itself."

Stop making excuses

Excuses. I constantly hear excuses.

Marketing people have excuses for why they can't create a World Wide Rave. CEOs, company presidents, and other executives have excuses for why their particular product, service, or organization doesn't have potential to spread online. Authors and musicians offer excuses for why their books or music aren't selling.

Often, the excuse comes to me like this: "But David, we're a _______. We can't do that." You can fill in the blank with *your* organization's excuse. I've already heard most of them: big company, small company, public company, venture-funded company, nonprofit, church, accountant, blood donation center, indie rock band, famous university, blah, blah, blah. Sorry, but they're all just excuses.

If you're obsessed with ROI measurements that worked in an offline world, then you're just making an excuse. If you worry about losing control of your message, then you're making an excuse.

Another excuse I hear a lot these days comes from people pointing to polls and research reports that ask questions such as "Do you read blogs?" or "Do you use social media?" or "Do you go to video-sharing sites?" Often the data show rather small use compared to those who, say, use search engines or email.

This sort of data is misleading and dangerous to an organization's overall marketing and PR efforts, dangerous enough that I've decided to close with this point. Why? Because these data are used by resistant executives to justify sticking exclusively to the methods that worked decades ago, such as image advertising, direct mail, and the yellow pages. I frequently hear CEOs, CFOs, and VPs of marketing say things like: "See, social media, blogs, and YouTube are not important, so we won't do them here. They're a waste of time." Others say: "I don't read blogs, so how important are they?"

These excuses miss two tremendously important points:

- First, practically everyone regularly uses Google and other search engines, and the searches frequently return blog posts, YouTube videos, and other social media content high in the results. So even though people may report "no" when asked if they use social media, nearly everyone finds this content via search.
- Similarly, when people who are not regular users of social media ask their (non-social-media) networks for advice, they often do it via email. Frequently the answers that come back include URLs to company and product pages. And those links from friends, colleagues, or family members often include blog posts and other social media content. A mother may ask her friends a question such as: "What's the best baby stroller to buy?" The answer may include a link to a blog post or a site with an embedded video. Again, the person asking for advice probably didn't even know she'd been sent to a blog or video-sharing site. ➔

Portions of this article appear in *World Wide Rave*, the new book by David Meerman Scott, published by John Wiley & Sons, Inc. March 2009. ISBN 978-0-470-39500-4. Used with permission.

World Wide Rave,
the new book from David Meerman Scott

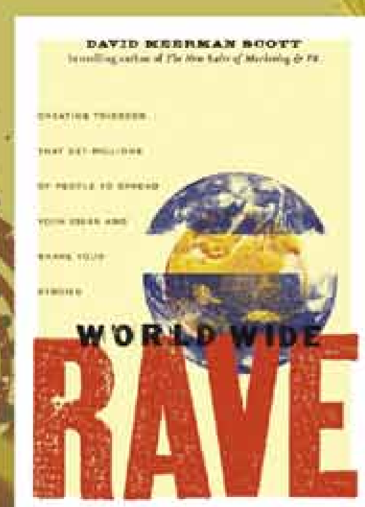
A World Wide Rave is when people around the world are talking about you, your company, and your products—whether you're located in San Francisco, Dubai, or Reykjavík. It's when global communities eagerly link to your stuff on the Web. It's when online buzz drives buyers to your virtual doorstep. And it's when tons of fans visit your Web site and your blog because they genuinely want to be there.

How do you start one?
It helps to know the rules:

Rules of the Rave

- Nobody cares about your products (except you).
- No coercion required.
- Lose control.
- Put down roots.
- Create triggers that encourage people to share.
- Point the world to your (virtual) doorstep.

You can trigger a World Wide Rave too; just create something valuable that people *want* to share, and make it easy for them to do so.



Many people who reach information via search don't know what sort of "media" they're enjoying! Don't let your bosses diminish the hidden value of social media as search engine fodder and as valuable sources of information that people share with their networks.

A World Wide Rave—having others tell and spread your story for you—is one of the most exciting and powerful ways to reach your audiences. It's not easy to harness that power, but any company with thoughtful ideas to share—and clever ways to create interest in them—can, after some careful preparation, become famous and find success on the Web.

The biggest requirement is that you change your behavior, so let me remind you of the most important strategies for successful marketing in a world of social media:

- Stop obsessing over the old measurements of sales leads and marketing ROI.
- Make your valuable online content free, and don't require registration.
- Give away lots of good information (videos, photos, data, graphs, audio, blogs, e-books, and the like) to enthusiastic or curious people interested in your products and services.
- Encourage an organizational culture of sharing.

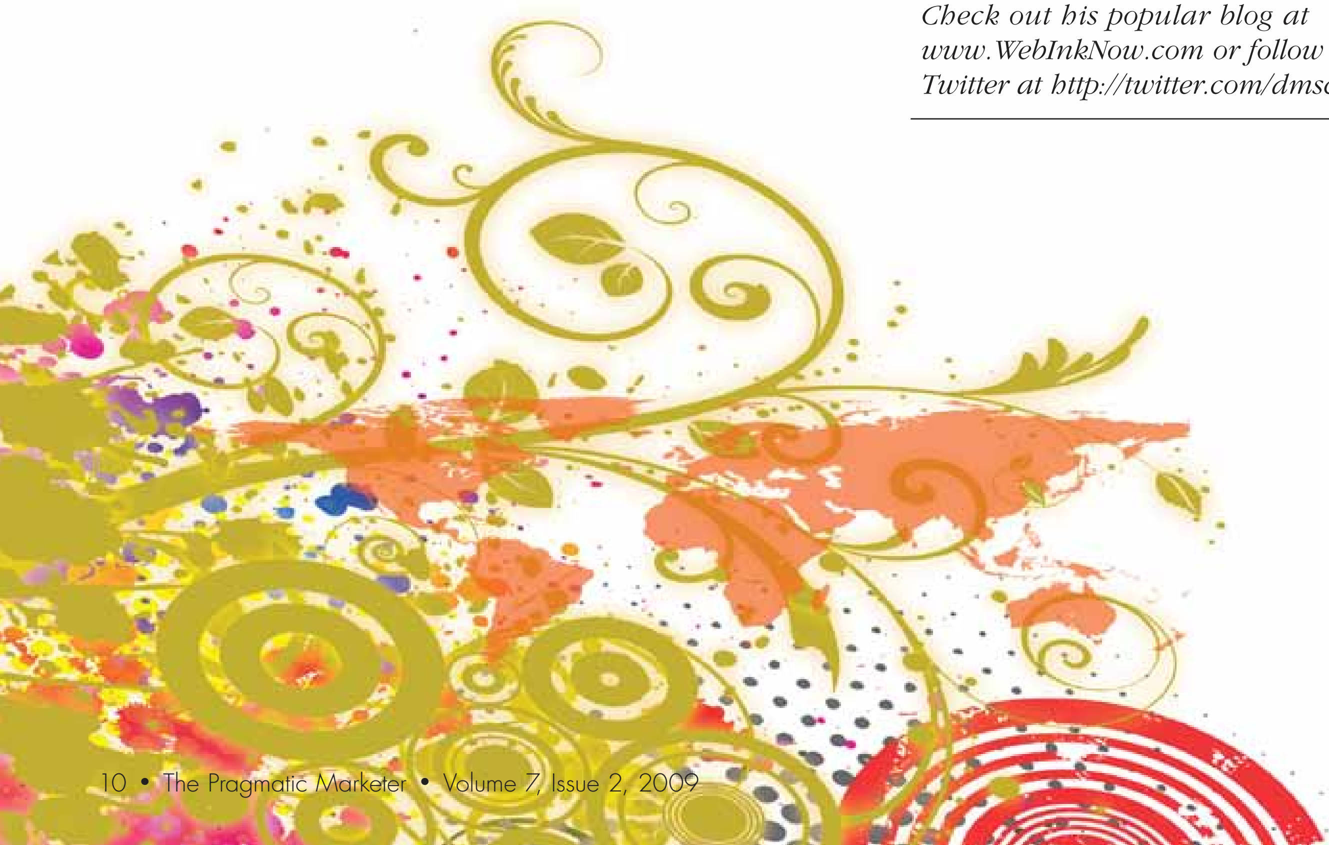
While this all seems simple enough, it's rarely practiced. But those who adopt these ideas usually win big.

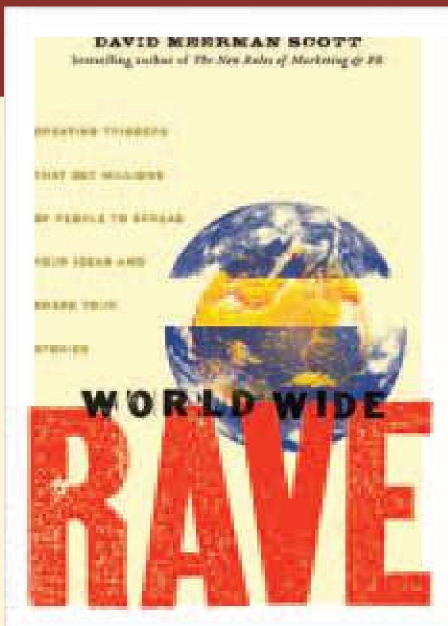
Most important, you can only be successful if you lose control. Your challenge is to let go of your excuses and corporate inhibitions. Go out and create something interesting that people will be eager to share.

What do you have to lose? (Besides control.)

David Meerman Scott is a marketing strategist, entrepreneur, keynote speaker, seminar leader, and the author of a number-one, best-selling business book, The New Rules of Marketing & PR: How to use news releases, blogs, podcasting, viral marketing & online media to reach buyers directly, *which is being published in 22 languages. He is also a co-author of* Tuned In *and the developer of the Pragmatic Marketing, Inc. seminar, The New Rules of Marketing. His new book* World Wide Rave *was released in March 2009.*

Check out his popular blog at www.WebInkNow.com or follow him on Twitter at http://twitter.com/dmscott





Book Review

By Steve Johnson

Some marketers focus on pushing their message with branding and PR and creating "buzz." David Meerman Scott has another approach: get your customers to tell your story.

Few of us are fooled by traditional PR, particularly for technology products. After all, the reporters generally know less on the subject than their readers. And few of us are fooled by fake buzz. On IMDB, it's fairly common to read a glowing review of a just-released movie by a person who has written only one review. Gee, could that be a PR staffer who is trying to prime the pump? Like that guy who laughs so loudly at a comedy routine that you realize he's a shill. Happily, IMDB and bloggers in general are savvy enough to spot such fake behavior and call them out.

Instead of creating artificial buzz, Scott advocates marketing your products by helping your customers tell your story. Talk about an industry problem (that naturally your product or company can solve) and watch customers tell their friends. Create chat rooms and discussion forums to help customers connect with each other; create funny videos and electronic product content that can be shared. Write something real, something that matters!, and be amazed that people share it, pass it along, comment on it, include it in their social networks.

When was the last time you clicked on a link to a YouTube video sent by a corporation? Likely never. But if the link comes from a friend, you'll certainly check it out.

World Wide Rave is a how-to book on using social media in your marketing mix. Or perhaps, using social media AS your marketing mix. If you insist on getting personal information like name, title, buying intention, email, and mailing address, people will most often just walk away and never read your product information. Write an ebook, share it freely (without trying to make it a leadgen vehicle), and you'll get leads anyway. And better still, the leads are people who came to you instead of you coming, hat in hand, to them.

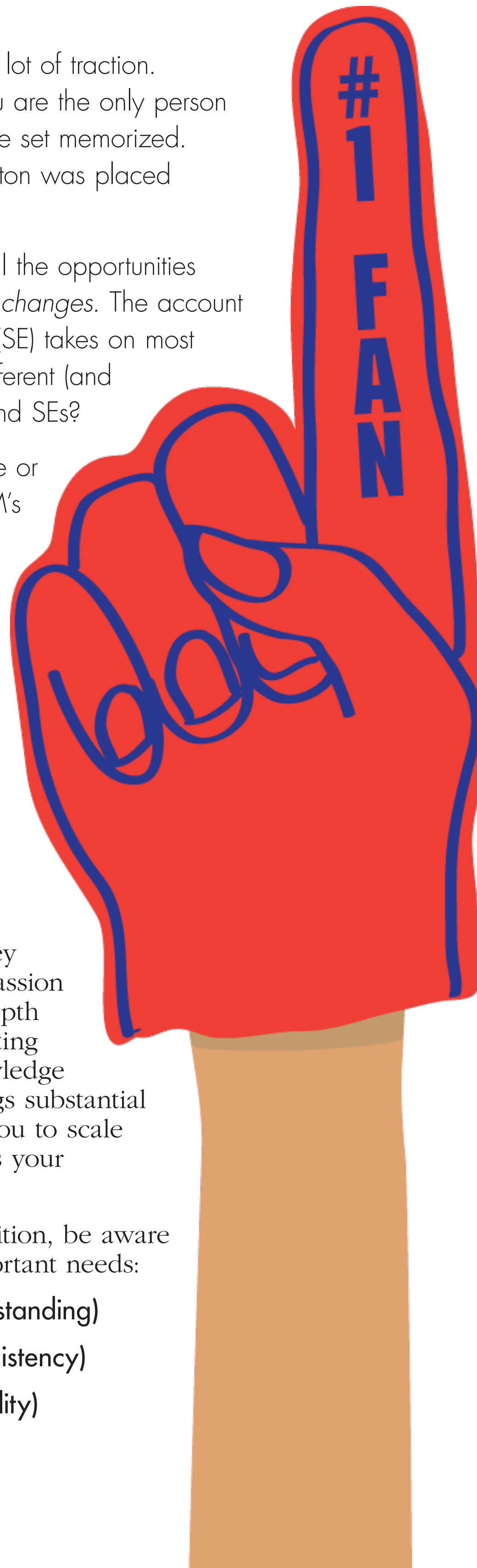
The old rule was "beg reporters for coverage." The new rules bypass the established order of press and advertising to embrace real people with real stories that persuade.

Great marketing programs start with "There's a problem in the industry today." They don't start with "Our product..." Read *World Wide Rave* for using social media to get your customers to tell your story and bring customers to you.

Steve Johnson is a recognized thought-leader on the strategic role of product management and marketing. Broadly published and a frequent keynote speaker, Steve has been a Pragmatic Marketing instructor for more than 10 years and has personally trained thousands of product managers and hundreds of company senior executive teams on strategies for creating products people want to buy. Steve is the author of the Product Marketing blog. Contact Steve at sjohnson@pragmaticmarketing.com

How to Turn Sales Engineers into YOUR BIGGEST FANS

By Darrin Mourer



Let's assume you are the product manager (PM) at a startup that is gaining a lot of traction. You meet with lots of prospects alongside executive management. Often, you are the only person in the meeting who truly understands your product. You have the entire feature set memorized. You understand how it was constructed. You probably even know why a button was placed just so in the interface.

Then the company begins to grow. The founders don't have time to pursue all the opportunities directly, so they decide to hire a sales force. Once that happens, *everything changes.* The account executive assumes the role of the corporate executive, and a sales engineer (SE) takes on most of the role you were playing in front of customers. You now have a much different (and welcomed!) problem: How do you convey what you know to salespeople and SEs?

In reality, it doesn't matter much if you are hiring a sales force for the first time or are a PM in a large, multi-national corporation. The stakes are high in the PM's ability to work with salespeople and enable the SEs who support them.

I have worked with many gifted SEs and PMs who were able to function beautifully together—both inside and outside the office walls. I have also witnessed more than my fair share of strife between these two organizations. Along the way, I uncovered some tips not only for a successful, working relationship, but also the fundamental activities that will turn SEs into the PM's biggest fans.

A *fan* is an SE with a *genuine passion* for promoting your product to your customer base. If you've spent any time with a large sales organization, you'll notice that there are many reps and SEs who go through the motions of selling, but who don't bring the same enthusiasm to the presentation that you might. In other words, they are treating it like someone else's baby, whereas you treat it as your own.

Substantial rewards

Have you ever wondered why sales teams love to get a PM in front of customers, when others on the sales team could have accomplished the same task? There are certainly cases where your "title" is needed or a roadmap topic needs direct committal.

But you may be surprised to learn that some PMs are highly sought after by the sales force, and some are avoided unless absolutely necessary. What is the difference? The two key components are the passion you bring and your depth of knowledge. Translating that passion and knowledge to the sales force brings substantial rewards by allowing you to scale your responsibilities as your company grows.

To complete this transition, be aware of three critically important needs:

- Transparency (understanding)
- Formal process (consistency)
- Transference (scalability)

TRANSPARENCY

Transparency is a combination of openness and honesty. The underlying principle is trust, which is the most important building block for having passionate SEs. Without trust, you will not be able to create a higher level of performance in the SE force. These suggestions are meant to give you the edge in building trust across the sales/SE force.

- **The Pragmatic Marketing Framework™.** Despite being in the field as an SE for many years, I did not have a full appreciation for product management until I began studying the role in more detail. One primary driver of miscommunication is the abstract nature in understanding how products are designed and built. Here are three key points I've learned from the Pragmatic Marketing seminars that all SEs need to know:

  1. **Competencies, personas, and target markets.** Develop personas for your target audiences and introduce your SEs to them. Paint a very clear picture of why personas are important and how SEs can use them to qualify an opportunity.

  2. **Feature selection process.** SEs need to understand how a feature makes it into a product. Having a nebulous cloud where feature requests go in and sometimes emerge in the product takes a huge bite of morale out of the SE force.

  3. **Provide the "why."** One reason PMs make effective product presenters is that they are typically better equipped to provide the "why" behind product features, direction, or perceived weaknesses. SEs not only need to understand the reason behind specific features, they need to understand what *isn't* in the product and the reason behind those decisions. Customers are usually willing to accept a perceived shortcoming if they have a clear explanation of the reasoning that went into the design. Providing SEs with this information gives them a greater sense of confidence in handling objections, which ultimately leads to shorter sales cycles.

- **Share the roadmap.** I've heard arguments for and against sharing roadmap information with Sales. Regardless of your position, know this unmistakable fact: If SEs are not well informed on the subject, they will be less passionate about your product. You no doubt hold in your head a plan for world domination, which serves as the aquifer feeding your passion. Transfer that passion to your SEs.

  Even if you feel the need to hold back your roadmap from sales reps (a separate issue), withholding this information from SEs deprives them of a critical piece of ammo they may be able to use with a customer. Give them advance insight into your plans apart from reps; you will see this trust reciprocated.

  I will make you three promises as to what will happen if you are very open with your roadmap: 1) You will have more passionate SEs, 2) this information will occasionally be misused and will backfire, and 3) the benefits of sharing it will far outweigh any negative effects. You want your customers to understand and buy into your vision. Communicating this to the SE force is the only way to make this happen on a large scale.

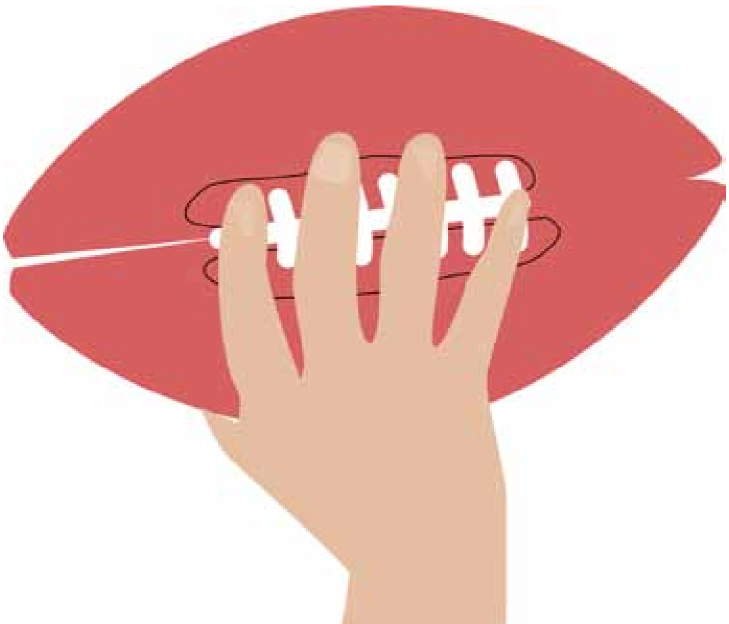
- **Involve SEs in product direction.** The first step is articulating your vision. Moving beyond this, you need to push into participation and ownership—where SEs have a direct impact.

  SEs will often provide generalized feature requests based on their experiences with a handful of customers. Realize, however, that an SE's commission is often directly tied to product direction as it relates to his/her accounts. Because of this, SEs are *very* attentive to customer feedback. Because this feedback is generated during the sales process, you need to qualify these data points—but ignoring them is another huge morale killer. Qualify, yes. Discount, no.

  You likely know who your top SEs are. Get them together and ask for a trusted volunteer (maybe it's an SE manager) to represent the sales force during your strategy calls. Finally, and most importantly, you need to communicate back to the SEs when this input has a direct effect on product direction. When SEs feel they can help influence product direction, they develop a sense of accountability that translates into a genuine desire to see your product succeed. ➔

FORMAL PROCESS

Not only is a formal process for product releases essential with large, multi-product corporations, but it is a key growth enabler in smaller companies. A formal process is vital because it leads to what we crave—consistency. Consistency is yet another building block of trust. Set clear expectations up front for your SEs, and always deliver or exceed those expectations. SEs won't have a strong opinion on the process you follow, just that you have one you stick to and that they can follow.



Too often, feature conversations devolve into defensive posturing. Having a well-defined and well-communicated process allows you to separate emotion from input—and leads to more collaborative discussions.

There are four areas to consider in developing your formal process:

- **Release cycle.** Involving SEs as official stakeholders in your release cycle is critical. Make it super simple for SEs to get involved *early* in the process. Not only do SEs feel like they get a sneak peek, the usability feedback they provide will be invaluable if you obtain it early enough to make corrections before launch. Never solicit this feedback, however, unless you plan to use it.

  What's more, this early involvement ensures that things like Sales training are scheduled with appropriate lead times—so your sales force is ready to start selling your product from day one of your launch.

- **Enhancement requests**. I cringe when I speak with a PM who manages requirements in a spreadsheet. It's not so much the medium itself, but that those PMs who use spreadsheets this way typically don't have a standardized—let alone transparent—process.

Critical Components for the Release Process

It really doesn't matter what your release process is, just that it exists and includes these basic components:

- **Use a standard submission form.** Even if you have to stand up a web server under your desk to create a web form to capture all of your required fields, do it. Do not constantly ask, "Will you send me an email on that?"
- **Keep it closed loop.** Automate as much of the service as you can. Always provide a way SEs can check status without emailing you. It's even better if the system automatically sends a tickler update to the submitter letting them know it's still being evaluated.
- **Don't ask for market research.** That's your job. Too often I hear, "Will you tell what the dollar value is of this feature?" That question signals a PM team is not aware of the market.
- **Always provide a response and a reason.** Though SEs may be disappointed, we all understand not all features can make a release. Always provide a detailed explanation of why a feature was denied or deferred and what you plan to do about it in the future.
- **Build the community.** In other words, don't waste SEs time. Expose all features currently on the list, and let SEs contribute data to existing entries—rather than entering entirely new ones. This also helps automatically bubble up trends.
- **Have a priority flag.** Allow for instances where an SE needs immediate feedback if a deal hinges on your response.

If you don't nail the enhancement request process, you can write off creating passionate SEs. Why? Because SEs need to feel that their customers' input is heard, and SEs need a standard vehicle for communicating deal-breaker requirements that require immediate action.

Believe it or not, it is great to have "too many" feature requests coming from SEs. When they stop, it's time to worry, because they've reached a state of indifference. Actively seek out input, and always exude extreme appreciation for this feedback. Nothing would endear me more to a product manager than this.

- **Engagement process.** From time to time, your involvement in the sales process is required. And it is almost always invaluable. From a Sales standpoint, you are a "free" resource, so you will always have more requests than you can handle. Always budget some time for customer-facing sales activities. It's best to have it on the same set of days, so you are perceived as being "available" and well organized.

A common complaint is that PMs are unresponsive; their inboxes and voicemail boxes are black holes. Whatever system for engagement you choose, communicate it well and enforce it consistently. If you claim to take product roadmap questions in a specific forum, but occasionally respond to email requests, you are invalidating your own process.

- **Play nice in the sandbox.** In large organizations with multiple product groups, it is important that you adopt consistent corporate processes. You'll win more points than you know by adhering to standard practices that make it easy for SEs to "do business with you."

Reach out to other PM teams when you notice that practices aren't shared. You won't convert everyone, but if you are seen as a leader in streamlining processes that impact Sales (and other departments), you'll make many friends in those ranks. Only after you have standardized the process will it become repeatable. And when you have achieved repeatability in your dealings with SEs, your responsibilities can scale along with your growing company. ➔

TRANSFERENCE

Transference is your ability to impart product knowledge to SEs so they will be as successful as you are in front of customers. Essentially, this means removing dependence on you for Sales-related functions, which removes you from the loop.

Documentation and training make up the majority of your opportunity to transfer your knowledge. Though it is one of the most mundane aspects of PM work, it exerts inordinate influence on the perception of the product—and of you—to the field. Make the most of these opportunities.

The following activities will make you a master in enabling the SE force:

- **The "D" word—Documentation.** Everyone knows we need it, and everyone hates doing it. If you follow my advice and add the SE organization to the product release process, you will gain a head start in developing documentation and product collateral, as the SEs will be able to clearly communicate message points to the team developing documents.

  The Pragmatic Marketing maxim holds true: If you don't create the collateral, others will fill the void. Start by engaging the Sales and SE organizations to determine a standard set of collateral templates. Then incorporate them into your standard launch plan checklist, and assign someone on the product team to be accountable for monitoring all points of communication with internal departments and customers.

- **Performance Data.** SEs understand it is difficult to create performance data for enterprise software because replicating enterprise environments is tricky. Still, customers ask, so you need to give your SEs a good answer. Here are some specific guidelines:
  - **Formulas are good.** Providing small, medium, and large implementation examples is better than nothing, but they will be an endless point of debate. It is better to provide variable formulas that can approximate actual customers.
  - **Case studies rule the day.** Though not fully the domain of Product Management, ensuring Sales has real-life sizing studies from large beta customers (for example) is useful to SEs. For the most part, exact sizing comes after the sale. Before the sale, the customer needs to know whether or not your product will scale for them, along with rough budget numbers.
  - **Keep them updated.** More granular sizing data will become available after the product has been in production for a while. Engage with SEs/Services who oversee large deployments to ensure these insights make it back into your documentation. If you skimp on the documentation, Sales might not be comfortable selling your product to their largest customers.

- **Competitive Data.** Many SEs from different types of companies all say the same thing: Our competitive information doesn't give me what I need, and it is usually outdated. This doesn't need to be the case. I have seen competitive data beautifully orchestrated. Coincidentally, these products also had extreme backing from the sales organization. If you want passionate fans, follow these guidelines for providing competitive data:
  - **Constantly update information.** The need for constant updates is so profound that many PMs have turned to wikis for more fluid information. With that said, outdated/inaccurate data is worse than no data at all.
  - **Be honest.** Don't be afraid to call your baby ugly. Articulate your target market and personas, and explain exactly when your product is best and when it is not. Let Sales make the determination about how/when to overcome competitive weaknesses. Let me be clear here: Marketing spin has no business in your competitive analysis.
  - **Include feature/function comparisons.** A common mistake is performing a business comparison without an in-depth, feature-by-feature comparison. For example, an SE is working with a customer to define success criteria in the proof of concept (POC). If they know the competitor (which they almost always will) and have a feature-by-feature breakdown, the SE can customize the POC around your product's strengths.

  - **Make competitive products available to SEs.** Within the spirit of your license (you are actually touching the competitive products, right?), let SEs get their hands on it. Not only does it give them a better understanding of the usability, but it increases their tactile learning, which is far more effective for internalizing information.

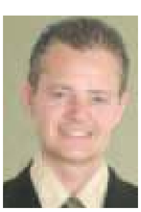
- **Training.** Training is a difficult medium to master because you are dealing with many different audiences and skill levels. Here are some specific tips to maximize your training investment:
  - **Train the trainers.** Unless you have a small sales force, don't plan to train everyone in person. Identify the trainers and give them access to all the information they can stand.
  - **Record and publish every session.** With travel budgets undergoing cuts, enable the rest of the sales force to attend remote training.
  - **Provide several formats.** Not everyone learns the same way. Provide for instructor-led and self-paced training for maximum impact.
  - **Hold training early.** Schedule first rounds of training in your pre-release phase. Eighty percent of your SEs should have training *before* General Availability, or you risk a slow launch.
  - **Minimize slideshows.** Most SEs learn best by tactile learning. Have plenty of lab systems (if applicable) and spend most of the time working in the product itself. With a hands-on understanding, SEs will be able to pick up the qualification and other supporting information far easier.

Bringing it together

Another fantastic Pragmatic Marketing maxim is that Product Management should be focused on helping sales *channels*, not sales *people*. In order to build effective channels, communication with SEs must flow freely and be bidirectional.

To have open communication, you need a high degree of trust. Trust is established by being transparent (open and honest) and consistent (via a standard process).

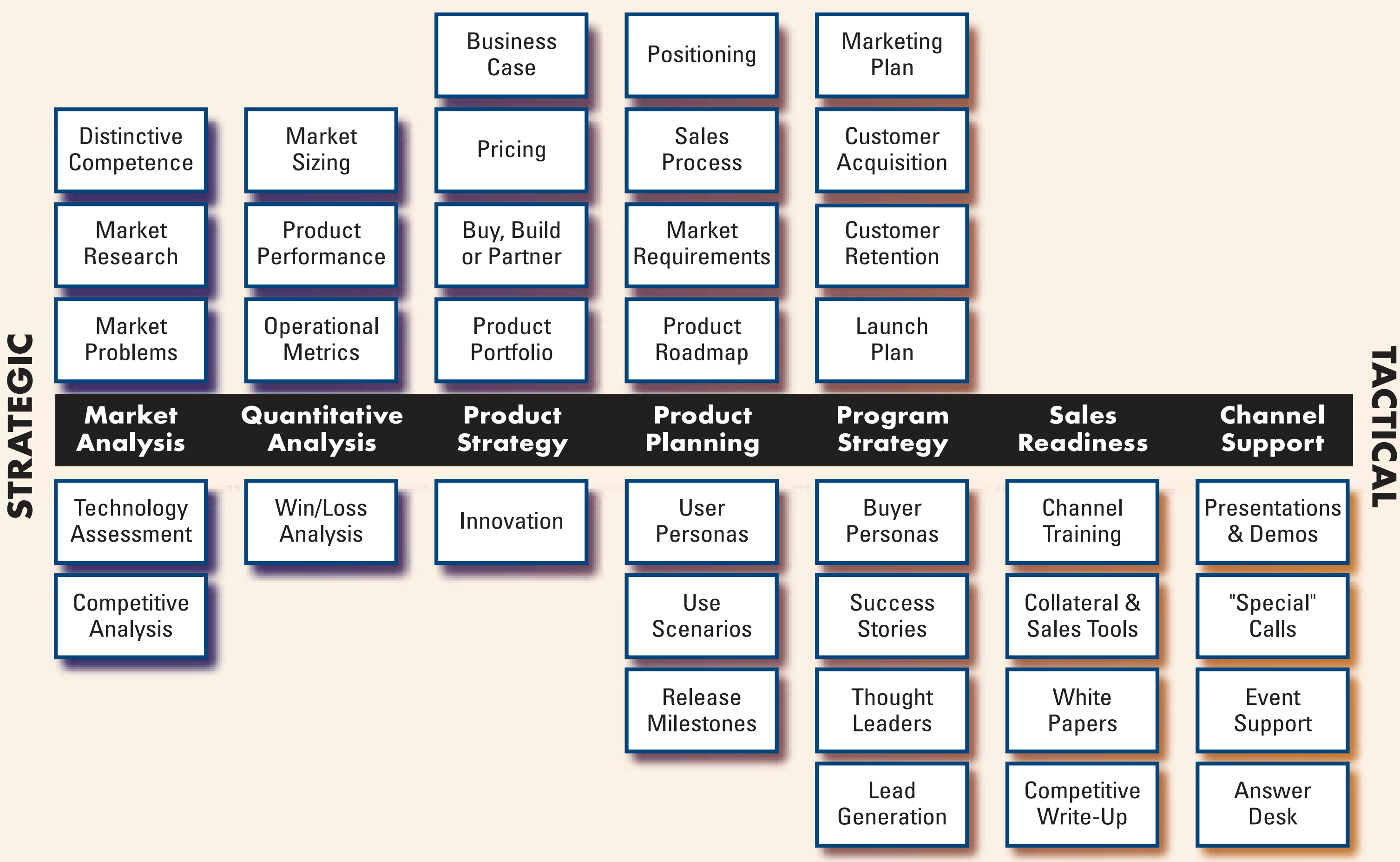
This process isn't really about converting SEs into passionate fans—it's about understanding that your fellow employees are some of your most important customers. Anticipating and responding to the needs of your internal customers to this degree connects everybody to your vision. And it sets you up for the highest levels of success.



Darrin Mourer is a veteran SE, SE Manager, and is Pragmatic Marketing Certified. He is also the editor of thesalesengineer.com, a blog dedicated toward applying principle-centered business practices to sales engineering. Contact Darrin at www.thesalesengineer.com

Are your product management and marketing teams overloaded with tactical activities, spending too much time supporting Development and Sales rather than focusing on strategic issues?

The Pragmatic Marketing Framework™



Pragmatic Marketing®

Visit www.PragmaticMarketing.com or call (800) 816-7861

learn industry best practices

Product Management training

Practical Product Management defines the strategic role of product management using the Pragmatic Marketing Framework™ (left). From how to identify market problems to delivering a successful product plan.

Requirements That Work shows you a repeatable method for writing clear requirements your team will read and use. It discusses techniques for prioritizing and organizing market requirements and clarifies the roles for team members.

Pragmatic Roadmapping teaches techniques for developing, consolidating and communicating product plans, strategy and vision to multiple audiences—both inside and outside the company.

Product Marketing training

Effective Product Marketing teaches how to create successful go-to-market strategies using a structured, repeatable framework that supports an organization's goals for growth in revenue, market awareness and customer retention.

New Rules of Marketing shows how to harness the power of online marketing using blogs, viral marketing, podcasts, video, search engine marketing and thought-leadership to reach buyers directly.

In addition to the extensive published schedule, training can be conducted onsite at your office, saving travel time and costs for attendees, and allowing a much more focused discussion on internal, critical issues.

Pragmatic Marketing's seminars have been attended by more than 60,000 product management and marketing professionals.

Goals, Readiness and Constraints: The Three Dimensions of Product Launch

By David Daniels

Organizations spend millions of dollars in research and development to create the next great product, only to severely underfund the product launch process. Many mistakenly believe the product will sell itself and overcome any adversity. This couldn't be farther from the truth. A successful product launch requires skill, experience, market knowledge, and a process.

Product launch is a topic that either elicits nightmares or euphoria—there is no middle ground. Those terrified by the thought of planning the next product launch understand the expectations are high and failure is not an option. On the other hand, those with great excitement can lack the experience to know what can go wrong.

Launch story

At Company A, great excitement surrounds the upcoming launch of Widget 3.0. Robin, the product manager, has been focusing all her energy on finalizing Widget 3.0. She's under enormous pressure; especially given the product is over budget and six months late. Everyone in the company believes this version will take the market by storm. The product is so good, it can't fail.

Chen, the product marketing manager, has been sitting on the sidelines nervously awaiting word from Robin that Widget 3.0 is finally in a state where he can start planning the launch. There have already been two false starts. The first was an unforeseen technical problem. The second happened when Development—in a moment of false bravado—claimed the product would be ready to ship in a week. Both times, Chen invested his time and energy into planning the launch, only to stop, regroup, and try to save face with Sales. Now, he isn't going to move forward until he is certain Widget 3.0 is ready.

Meanwhile, Bob, the VP of Sales, is growing more anxious each day the product isn't ready. He has a quota for Widget 3.0; and, even though the launch is six months behind schedule, the CEO still expects Bob to "make it happen." Realizing he doesn't have the luxury of time, Bob instructs his sales team to start prospecting for Widget 3.0 customers—even when the final details of the product are not available.

So the sales team starts calling on prospects, with the hopes of building a pipeline for Widget 3.0. They create their own sales tools (without Chen's input); and, before long begin to see their prospecting work transition into a pipeline of opportunities.

The saga continues

Robin, satisfied that Widget 3.0 will soon be ready, meets with Chen to discuss the launch. With her back against the wall, Robin provides a delivery date, but little in the way of direction or product positioning. Chen learns from Robin that the new reporting feature promised for Widget 3.0 won't be in the release, and he's worried about the backlash he will get from Bob and the sales team, who are likely promoting the missing feature.

Chen meets with Rebecca in Marketing Communications to explain that it's crunch time. The sales team is expecting brochures, web content, and the usual collection of sales tools—and they expect it now. Chen is under enormous pressure to make the launch of Widget 3.0 a success. The fact that it's late and missing a key feature doesn't matter. When Rebecca asks what Chen needs for the launch, he requests one of everything, hoping that it will satisfy the sales team. With a little luck, something will stick and cause the market to take notice and buy in droves.

Chen hastily pulls together sales training for Widget 3.0 to explain all the great, new features. He delivers a standard sales presentation and demo. Rebecca then explains the "air cover" Marketing will provide to the sales team. During the sales training Q&A, Chen and Robin are grilled and ridiculed for dropping the promised feature, which the sales team believes is critical to hitting its numbers.

Chen knows that with greater visibility into what was happening with Widget 3.0, he could have better positioned it to the sales team—acknowledging that, while the missing feature is clearly important, there is plenty of value in the other new features.

On launch day, Widget 3.0 is announced. Unfortunately all of the prospects in the pipeline were expecting the dropped feature—and, as a result, become lost opportunities. The sales team now has to build the Widget 3.0 pipeline from scratch, and they have lost confidence in the product. Under pressure, they focus on selling other products to make their quota.

Sound familiar? ➔

The mythical product launch checklist

Too often, the people responsible for a product launch seek out the mythical product launch checklist that transforms any product launch into the realm of the iPhone. It doesn't exist.

Don't get me wrong: Product launch checklists *do* exist. They just aren't very effective, because they give the *illusion* of thorough planning. Successful product launches require a planning process that examines multiple dimensions and adjusts according to prevailing conditions.

Assuming the product actually works and isn't a liability, there are three critical product launch dimensions to evaluate during the planning process:

- Launch goals
- Launch readiness
- Launch constraints

Once the dynamics of all three dimensions are understood, then a product launch checklist can be effective in specifying specific deliverables and activities tailored for each product launch's unique go-to-market circumstances.

Product launch goals

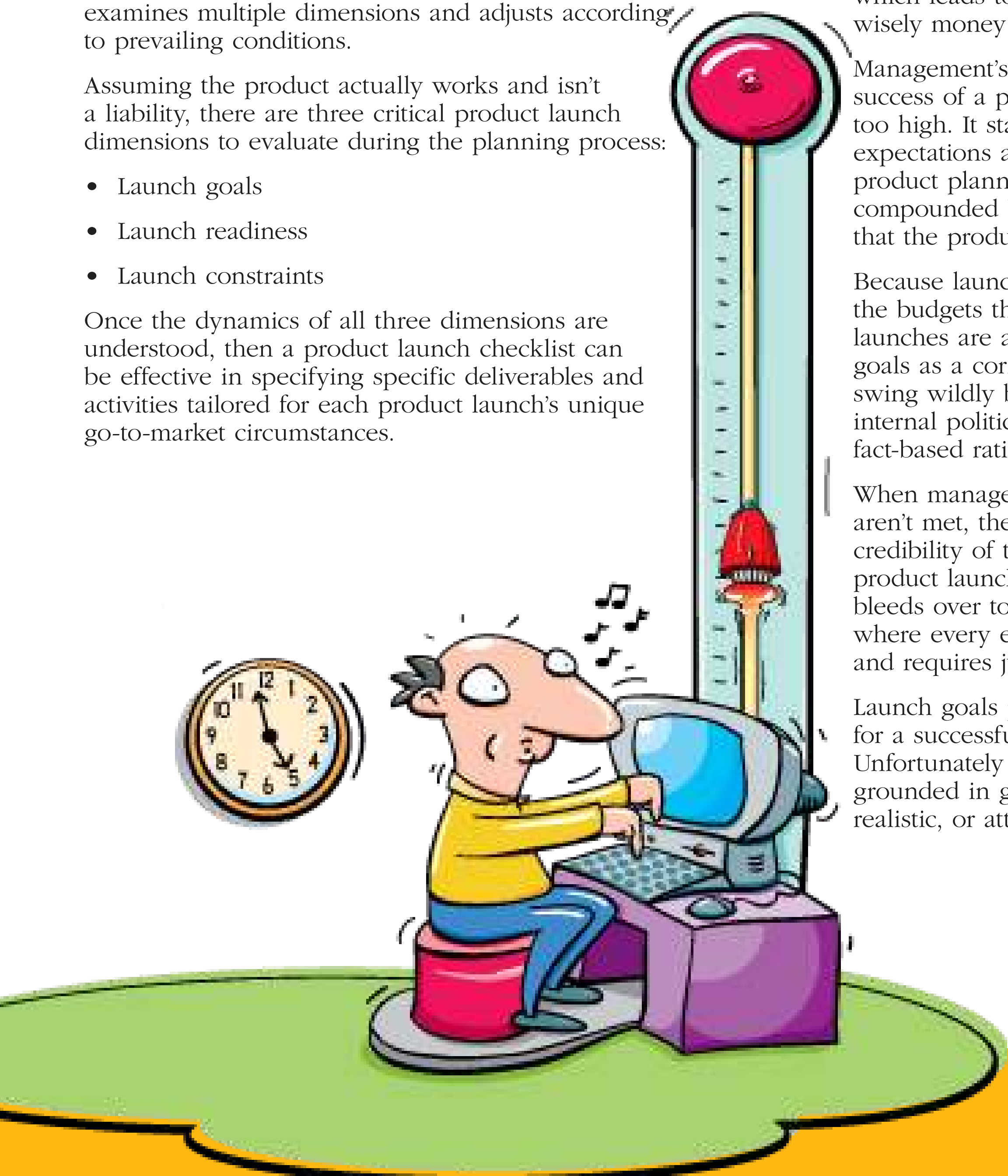
One of the most critical aspects of planning a product launch is to decide, up front, the expectations. Without a specific goal, there is no way to measure what winning looks like. Management's expectations will go unrealized. Resources will be misaligned. Budgets will either be too high or too low. Without a goal, it is not possible to measure Return on Investment (ROI), which leads to skepticism about how wisely money is being spent.

Management's expectations for the success of a product launch are usually too high. It starts when unrealistic expectations are set early in the product planning process, and is compounded by unbridled enthusiasm that the product is so good it can't fail.

Because launch goals are often unclear, the budgets that support product launches are all over the map. Without goals as a cornerstone, budgets can swing wildly based on opinion and internal political clout—rather than on fact-based rationale.

When management's expectations aren't met, they begin to question the credibility of the people planning the product launch. The loss of credibility bleeds over to subsequent launches, where every expenditure is questioned and requires justification.

Launch goals provide the anchor for a successful product launch. Unfortunately many launches aren't grounded in goals that are specific, realistic, or attainable.



Product launch readiness

The lack of organizational launch readiness is a point that many product launch planners fail to fully appreciate. Who is ultimately responsible to ensure the organization is ready to sell and support the product? Is there a reliable way to assess launch readiness?

Product launches can be so focused on the product, that getting the organization ready to sell and support it gets overlooked. We worry about product features, product quality, product documentation, and product training.

Have you considered that virtually every functional area of your organization is affected by the launch of a product? The obvious functional area is Sales. But what about Customer Support, Accounting, Delivery, and Legal?

Successful launch managers understand that launch readiness goes beyond the product, extending into every nook and cranny of the organization. They don't *assume* that other parts of the organization will be ready. They *ensure* that other parts of the organization are ready. They demand it. They measure it. And they make it happen.

The Launch Readiness Assessment

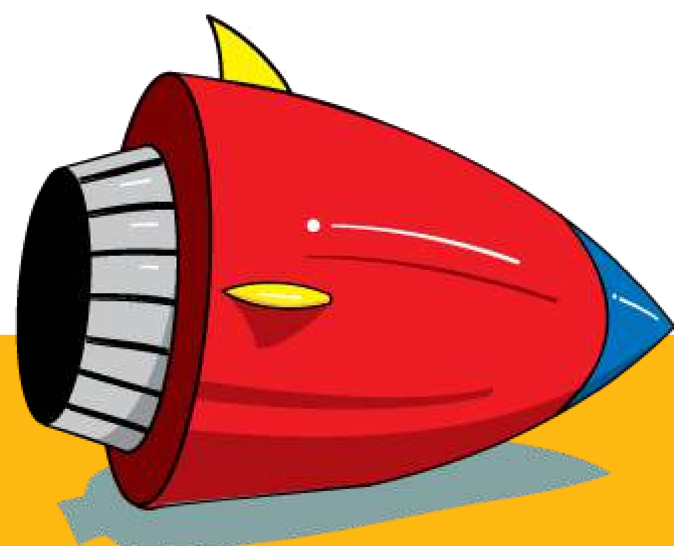
Launch readiness doesn't happen on its own. It takes an understanding of what good launch readiness looks like for each functional area and a way to reliably test readiness in an objective way. One way to address this is through a launch readiness assessment.

The Launch Readiness Assessment is a tool used by the launch manager as a guide to determine how ready a functional area is to support the sale and service of a product. The information contained within the launch Readiness Assessment is a critical input into the development of the launch plan as it identifies readiness gaps that must be addressed in order to achieve the launch goal.

Consider the sales team in the preceding product launch story. Chen focused sales training on the product, which is not uncommon. Share the cool new product features. Show a PowerPoint presentation. Give a product demo. Is Chen's job to create presentations, demos, and write content for marketing collateral—or is it to enable the sales team to be successful at selling Widget 3.0? How could Chen possibly know what level of training the sales team needs without a readiness assessment?

When products are thrown over the wall to the sales team without adequate training and market knowledge, you've guaranteed at least a three-month delay in building the sales pipeline. There will be multiple stops and starts while the sales team gradually figures out what works. If you're the product marketing manager, you'll be pulled into this thrashing process. You'll create more slides, write more marketing collateral, and develop more product demos until you get it right.

When conducted ahead of a product launch, the Launch Readiness Assessment provides context and rationale to management for actions recommended in the product launch plan. If the sales team is expected to call on a new buyer, the plan should show how they will learn to have a conversation with that buyer and the tools to use to move the prospect through the buying process. ➔



Launch Readiness Assessment

Product Widget 3.0
Functional Area Sales (direct)
Conducted by Wiley B. Coyote

	Importance	Readiness	Gap	Notes
Buyer Knowledge				
Economic buyer	3	2	1	To be addressed in training.
User buyer	2	2	0	OK. Ready to go.
Technical buyer	2	3	– 1	OK. Ready to go.
Problems addressed	3	2	1	New capabilities. To be addressed in training.
Buying criteria	3	0	3	Mostly related to econ buyer. To be addressed in training.
Buying process	3	1	2	Mostly related to econ buyer. To be addressed in training.
Product Knowledge				
Technology	1	1	0	OK. Ready to go.
Pricing	3	0	3	New pricing policy. To be addressed in training.
Support Policy	2	2	0	OK. Ready to go.
Licensing	3	0	3	New licensing agreement. To be addressed in training.

0 = none; 1 = lowest; 3 = highest; a gap >1 indicates area to be addressed

Launch constraints

Launch managers don't live in a world of unlimited resources. They are confronted with real constraints that represent challenges to overcome. It's the creativity in addressing these challenges that determines the success of the launch.

There are many possible launch constraints, but the three big ones to always consider are: time, money, and people.

- **Time constraints.** Time is a constraint when your launch window is too short to do an effective job of planning, which leads to readiness gaps. When faced with a time constraint, you have three options. 1) Reassess and adjust launch goals to be more in line with the time you have and the readiness gaps you've identified. 2) Postpone the launch until there is adequate time to plan and prepare the organization. While difficult to justify, postponing may be the only option when there is overwhelming evidence that the organization is not prepared to support the launch. 3) Using the Launch Readiness Assessment as your guide, attack the areas that have the most impact on the launch now. After the launch, systematically address other readiness gaps, such as customer support and delivery readiness.
- **Money constraints.** Underfunding a product launch virtually assures failure. Unfortunately, getting adequate budget for a launch is often a chicken-and-egg problem. More money is available if some success is demonstrated; but money is needed to get to the first success. The Launch Readiness Assessment is your best tool to demonstrate where money should be invested. What's more, connecting launch plan actions to launch goals is the key to getting an adequate launch budget. Make it easy for management to draw a line between the amount of money being spent and the expected outcomes.
- **People constraints.** The most common complaints about resources are: too few, wrong skills, wrong experience. The easiest way to highlight your resource constraints is to tie people, skills, and experience to your launch goals. In our example, one of the launch goals for Widget 3.0 is to achieve $9 million in revenue in the first nine months. The average sales cycle is three months, and the average selling price is $100,000. The VP of Sales indicates that each salesperson can manage six sales opportunities at a time, and the company has seven salespeople. Marketing believes they can add 15 qualified opportunities to the pipeline each month. The VP of Sales states his team will close one in three qualified opportunities (33.3%). ➔

Let's do the math

Launch goal	$9,000,000	in first 9 months
Average deal price	$100,000	
Average sales cycle	3	months
New qualified opps	15	per month
Close rate	33.3%	(1 in 3 will close)
Salespeople	7	
Opportunities managed	6	

Is the launch goal achievable given the people constraints?

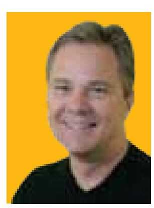
Month	New Opps	Total Opps	Deals Worked	Deals Closed	Revenue
1	15	15	15	0	$0
2	15	30	30	0	$0
3	15	45	42	0	$0
4	15	57	42	5	$500,000
5	15	57	42	4	$400,000
6	15	57	42	5	$500,000
7	15	57	42	5	$500,000
8	15	57	42	4	$400,000
9	15	57	42	5	$500,000
					$2,800,000

In this example, the launch goal is off by 69%! Here we see an example of a marketing team capable of generating sufficient deal flow, but a sales team that can only manage 42 qualified opportunities per month. Clearly, the launch goal is limited by the number of available salespeople. By bringing this resource constraint to management's attention with a fact-based approach, you can better explain the need to address the problem or adjust the launch goal.

Product launch success in three dimensions

Successful product launches are planned with three critical dimensions in mind. The launch must first be anchored in measurable launch goals. The launch goals have to be believable and attainable. Then, the launch goals must be checked against the reality of the launch constraints of time, money and people. The launch goals and constraints must then be balanced against the organization's launch readiness.

When the three critical dimensions of product launch are understood, an effective product launch plan can be developed that demonstrates how the launch goals will be achieved and how launch readiness gaps will be addressed; something that is not possible to capture in a generic product launch checklist. TPM



David Daniels is an instructor for Pragmatic Marketing with more than 25 years of experience in B2B technology companies. David specializes in product marketing and product launch with an emphasis on effective go-to-market strategy and execution. He has an extensive software development, sales, product management, product marketing and executive background with a global perspective of the product launch process from end-to-end.

Previously David was founder and president of Launch Clinic, which was acquired by Pragmatic Marketing in 2008 and continues to publish the Launch Clinic blog (http://launchclinic.com). Prior to starting Launch Clinic, David held executive positions in publicly traded technology companies driving successful product introductions.

Contact David at ddaniels@pragmaticmarketing.com

I Know Nothing about Product Naming

(but that Doesn't Stop Me from Doing It!)

By April Dunford

I've spent most of my career working with startups or on Version 1 products, so I have done my share of product naming. If there's one thing I've learned about naming products, it's that very few people actually know anything about how to do it well.

The few who do know naming are so rare that they can quite comfortably charge an hourly rate somewhere in the neighborhood of your entire marketing budget. As long as you keep working on Version 1 products, the likelihood you will get the budget to use their services is right up there with how likely you are to get budget to have U2 play at your launch event.

As a marketer for a new product, naming is something you may ***have*** to do even though you know nothing about it.

So, as they say in all those 12-step programs, the first step is admitting you have a problem. In my experience, the absolute worst names come from people like me, who know nothing about product naming, yet—unlike me—have managed to convince themselves they have some inherent sixth sense for choosing product names. By simply responding to the aura-like energy emanating from the names themselves, they can "feel" which one is right. "I can't tell you why exactly," they'll say with that maniac glow in their eyes, "but SchmoozePhone just feels right to me."

Don't be that person! Repeat to yourself: "I don't know what I'm doing. I don't know what I'm doing." There isn't a magic formula for creating a good product name, but a well-considered, rational process for picking the least awful name out of all of the possible awful names out there is better than anyone's gut feel—and, frankly, the best you can do. →

Before you get started

Before starting the process of product naming, there are a few things you need to consider in order to make the process a bit smoother.

Nail down your positioning

I always put off naming a product until the basic product positioning is worked out. Having a name that specifically calls to mind one of your product's strengths is one way to name a product. But even if the name doesn't have anything to do with how the product is positioned, you need to be careful it doesn't resonate with something that is opposite the product's positioning. For example, say you are launching a new accounting package, and someone wants to call it Books2Go. Snappy. Catchy. Too bad your software doesn't run on a smart phone, because everyone will expect that it will.

Decide which international markets really matter

Picking a name that works in every language around the world is something that keeps marketing folks up at night. We have all heard the stories about products whose names translated into "canary droppings" or "brothel bed sheets" in another language.

Decide up front which international markets matter to you and which don't. Be honest with yourself—do you have a sales channel to reach into Bulgaria or Turkey? Is your product going to support Korean or Japanese? If not, save yourself the stress, and don't worry about those languages.

Think about your brand

This is a tricky one. For startups, there is often a discussion around whether the primary "brand" is the company name or the product name. This topic could be an entire article in itself, but the reason I am bringing it up here is because it helps to think about this *before* you get into the product naming process. For example, if your startup is launching one product and will probably only sell one product for the foreseeable future, it might make sense to have just one name for both the product and the company.

Consider Facebook, which is both the company and the flagship product. Oracle abandoned its company name, Relational Software, Inc., for Oracle Corporation in the early 1980s to better align with its flagship product. In later years, the product name became Oracle Database to differentiate it from Oracle Applications and other products in the Oracle family.

It takes time, effort, and money to build brand recognition in the minds of customers. If you can get away with branding just one name, consider yourself lucky.

If you are working on a V1 product inside a larger company, you also need to consider what your primary brand should be. I worked inside IBM's Software Group for years; and there are several major brands there, including DB2, Lotus, and WebSphere. I worked on a couple of different products where we made the decision to go forward simply with the IBM brand (using a descriptive product name with it), because aligning product with either DB2 or WebSphere would have been confusing for customers.

Branding decisions are difficult ones to make and often need to be made before a meaningful conversation about product naming can occur, so you might as well get these issues out on the table as early as possible.

List competitors' names and product names

Ideally your product name is going to be memorable for customers, so you want to make sure it isn't too similar to other products out there.

I also have a personal pet peeve with names containing over-used elements such as "soft," "info," "net," "inter," and "sys"—you get the idea. These elements have approached full-blown cliché status and make your name instantly forgettable.

Understand your corporate naming standards

If you work at a large company, chances are you have a corporate naming standard with which you are supposed to comply. Those standards are there for a reason, and it generally has to do with how difficult it would be for customers to find your products out of the hundreds of other products your company offers, if those products were all named things like "banana" or "seesaw."

That said, as with most rules at big companies, there are always situations where rules should be, and are, broken. If you plan to try and get around your corporate naming standards, you will need to mount a case to do so, and that will involve understanding exactly which rules you are breaking.

List of other things to consider

Do you absolutely need to have the URL? Put it on the list. Does your CEO have a problem with a certain set of words (hey, it happened to me once)? Make a note of that. Get it all down on paper, so that when you get the naming team together, everyone is starting with a common understanding of the constraints.

Brainstorm names

Did you know that there are only about 80,000 words in the English language? In 2007, about 40,000 international trademarks were filed. In the U.S., there are more than 200,000 annual trademark filings. Chances are, that great product name you've had in your head all these years is already taken by someone else.

That means you need to come up with a really large list of potential names, because most of them are not going to pass the trademark and international tests you put on them. Luckily you are working on new products, because you think that ridiculously hard challenges are fun, right? Right?

Assemble a team

When coming up with a product name, it's always good to tap into as much creativity and brain power as you can when it comes to generating potential names. Assembling a team from across different functional areas (i.e., Development, Marketing, Sales) ensures you get various points of view. Don't promise your team, however, that selecting the winner will be a group effort. It shouldn't be. There will be stakeholders who will get the final say. At this stage, you just want to generate as many candidates as possible.

When you have the team together, make sure everyone understands the basic rules and restrictions. Go over the work you did to prepare, and ensure everyone understands any branding and positioning decisions that have already been made.

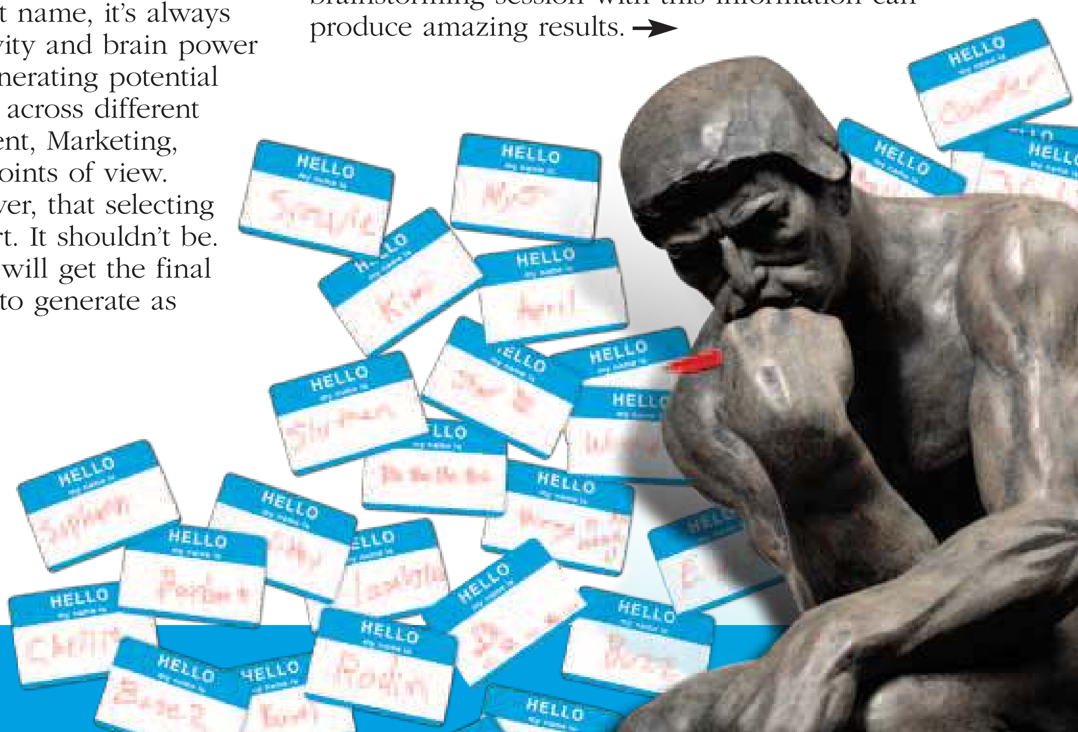
Brainstorm like maniacs

When you are brainstorming, you don't want to restrict people. As I mentioned before, the number of names that make it through the trademark search will be very small compared to the number of names you identify on your list. In a recent naming project for a new product, we brainstormed more than 100 names, and only 6 made it through a trademark search.

The goal of any name brainstorming session is to come up with as large a number of names as you can; so encourage people to let their imaginations run wild. You have laid out the rules, but in brainstorming, it's okay to break them just to see where the ideas go.

Have more than one brainstorming session. People tend to get more comfortable with brainstorming over time, and including different people in each session produces different results. Encourage people to keep thinking about names on their own.

I found that it helps to do a quick trademark search on the first set of names you identify, because it often shows you what types of names are heavily trademarked and point you in a direction of names that may not be. Coming into a second brainstorming session with this information can produce amazing results.



Categories of names

When coming up with a long list of names from which to choose, you might want to think about the types of names to consider. In my experience there are three categories of names:

- **Descriptive names.** As you might imagine, these are names that describe what the product does. Some examples are WebSphere Application Server or SAP Supply Chain Management. The good thing about names such as these is that people can easily understand what the product does from its name, and these names are generally easy to trademark. The bad thing about these names is that they are about as remarkable as white toast for breakfast. If you have a company naming standard, this is the direction they will likely push you.
- **Made-up word names.** Since all the good names are already taken and there just aren't that many words in the English dictionary, many folks go to invented words for product or company names. The name Accenture was submitted by an employee in a corporate contest and is a combination of "accent" and "future." Made-up names are also easy to trademark and, in some cases, can be quite memorable. The downside of these names is that sometimes they can be really difficult to remember, pronounce, and more importantly, spell—because they aren't real words.
- **Something in the middle.** My personal preference is for names that sit between the brainlessly boring descriptive names and the creatively silly made-up word names. These names give you a flavor of what the product does in a way that is memorable, creative, and unique. The obvious problem with these names is that they are really, really hard to come up with—but, in my mind, this is exactly the type of name you want in your naming process.

Sources of inspiration

When brainstorming for names, it helps to have some sources of inspiration to get people's creative juices flowing. Here are some I've used:

- **The thesaurus.** This source is always a good place to start. Start with a few of the most basic words to describe your product's functionality and go from there.
- **The Latin dictionary.** In looking for a name for a communications product, I looked up a few words in an online Latin dictionary and found things like dico, dixi, and fabulor.
- **A rhyming dictionary.** Okay, it's a bit silly, but I like fooling around with this one. For the communications product, I came up with things like ZoneFone, GawkTalk, and @chat. Yeah, I didn't win any naming competitions with any of those, but I'm assuming you might use this tool better than I did.
- **Foreign language translators.** Another good way to get some inspiring ideas is to look for words in other languages.

Narrow the list

After you've gone through your initial long lists, have done a trademark check, and have taken your international markets into consideration, you will probably have a very short list of names left. What's next?

First, I am going to let you in on my dirty, little marketing secret. The first thing I do is look down the list and eliminate any names I can't stand. There, I said it. I just delete them from the list. Why? Because if the list gets in front of my CEO and she picks that one, there is no way I'm talking her out of it. Rather than be the person marketing the "FreeKeyFone," I get rid of that sucker before any decision-maker even sees it. If the person who came up with that lovely gem asks why it didn't make the short list, I usually tell them the name means "horse dung" in another language and leave it at that.

Seriously, you run marketing for this product—and you are going to have to love it. If there is a name on the list you cannot love, just get rid of it.

Next, it's usually a good idea to test the short list of names on a set of prospects. At a big company, you can probably run a short focus group to try out the names and see how people react. If you are a startup, this might be difficult; but, if you have an advisory board, you can run the names past them.

This might eliminate one or two that have bad associations for people. There is something to be said for having an extra set of eyes on a list. After you have worked on the list for so long, an obvious problem may slip past you. For example, I heard of a pool cleaner called Poolife. Now I don't know about you, but I would feel a lot more comfortable with that name if there were an extra "l" in it; because, frankly, I don't want to think about poo in my pool.

Pick the winner

So you've whittled down your list of names to the half-dozen or so you could love. The next step is to choose the name. How you do that depends more on your corporate culture than anything else. If you work at a startup, chances are the CEO will want the final say. Startup CEOs are funny that way.

You might work at the sort of place where a small group needs to have buy-in. If you are making a group decision, I would fight to make sure Sales and Marketing/Product Management are over-represented in the group and Development is under-represented. Sales and Marketing will have to live with the name to drive business, and that should trump any other considerations.

A few last thoughts

Once you have the name, make sure you actually follow through and trademark it and purchase the URL. I've come into companies that have left the trademark work until later, and the name has been taken. Trust me, once you have finally selected a name, the last thing you want to do is go back to the start of the process.

People form an emotional connection with names. If there is a product name that people have been using informally, don't be surprised if it's hard to get folks to use the real name. It's worth making sure you communicate the process for generating the name to the entire team, and that the execs stand behind the name and consistently use it.

So there it is. That is the sum total of what I know about naming products. Good luck on your product naming project. You're going to need it.

TPM

April Dunford has been doing Product Marketing for longer than most people have been alive. She has held senior leadership roles at IBM, Siebel, and Nortel, as well as a handful of startups. She has launched three billion dollar products and one total dud. She blogs on Product Marketing for Startups at www.rocketwatcher.com, Twitters at www.twitter.com/aprildunford, and can be contacted at aprildunford@gmail.com

Seminar Calendar

Call (800) 816-7861 or go to www.PragmaticMarketing.com to register!

Practical Product Management®

Introduces a framework that gives product managers the tools to deliver market-driven products that people want to buy. Focuses on the practical aspects of juggling daily tactical demands of supporting the channel with strategic activities necessary to become expert on the market.

April 20 - 21 (22)* ....San Francisco (Burlingame), CA
April 21 - 22 (23)*..............Ottawa, ON, Canada
April 27 - 28 (29)* ....Chicago (Des Plaines), IL
May 6 - 7 (8)* ....San Francisco (Burlingame), CA
May 12 - 13 (14)*................Columbus, OH
May 12 - 13 (14)*................Boston (Bedford), MA
May 18 - 19 (20)*................Austin, TX

**Day 3 is Requirements That Work*

Requirements That Work™

Provides a repeatable method for writing clear requirements your team will read and use. It discusses techniques for prioritizing and organizing market requirements and clarifies the roles for team members. This approach enables organizations to deliver solutions that sell.

April 22 ....San Francisco (Burlingame), CA
April 23 ....Ottawa, ON, Canada
April 29 ....Chicago (Des Plaines), IL
May 8 ....San Francisco (Burlingame), CA
May 14 ....Columbus, OH
May 14 ....Boston (Bedford), MA
May 20 ....Austin, TX

Effective Product Marketing

Delivers practical tools and processes for product marketing, industry marketing and marketing communication managers who want to improve their strategic contribution and align with the sales organization. Learn how to build a repeatable process to develop, execute and measure go-to-market strategies that ensure product success.

April 7 - 8......................Austin, TX
May 12 - 13...................Reston, VA

New Rules of Marketing™

Teaches marketers how to harness the power of online marketing using blogs, viral marketing, podcasts, video, search engine marketing and online thought-leadership. Learn a step-by-step framework for building an online marketing strategy and a tactical, actionable plan to reach your buyers directly.

April 9 ....Boston (Bedford), MA

Visit www.PragmaticMarketing.com for a current seminar schedule.

Don't see a date or location that works for you? Let Pragmatic Marketing come to your company! Call (800) 816-7861 for more information.