

How to get from start to finish on new product development in 7 steps



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Reading time 11 mins

Key Points

- Define your product idea by analysing the market and identifying gaps and opportunities.
- Develop a prototype to test and refine your product design and functionality.
- Test your prototype through feedback from potential customers and refine your product accordingly.
- Find a manufacturer who can produce your product at scale and desired quality.
- Protect your intellectual property through patents, trademarks, and registered designs.
- Launch your product by developing a marketing strategy, establishing a distribution network, and promoting it to potential customers.

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Do you have a winning idea but are at a loss regarding the new product development process? The steps below will help you get there easefully by ensuring everything crucial is included.

Learn how to turn your product idea into a reality with our step-by-step guide. From concept to launch, we've covered the essential steps for success below – but we can also help to get you there! Check out our [rapid prototyping](#) and [low-volume manufacturing services](#) pages, or [book a free consultation](#) with one of our experts for more info on our end-to-end solutions to help simplify the process of getting your product to market.

The world is continually evolving, and with it comes new opportunities. As an entrepreneur, it's vital to stay ahead of the curve: innovate or evaporate. If you have a new product idea, it's natural to feel excited but overwhelmed about where to start. From conceptualising your idea to launching it on the market, the new product development (NPD) process can be complex and requires significant time and resources.

Before delving into the list, [download our guide to design thinking](#) and the benefits of being a design-led company. Many stages are similar to those listed below and give more context as to why this 7-step approach is so successful.



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Free product/market fit template to ensure you're meeting customer needs

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The essential stages of new product development

1. Define your product idea

The first step in bringing your product idea to life is to define it clearly. Consider the problem your product solves, the target audience, and how it will differentiate from existing products in the market. This process requires a thorough analysis of the market and potential competitors. Conducting market research can help you identify gaps in the market, unmet needs, and opportunities for innovation.

Save yourself some time by using our [idea feasibility template](#), [free product/market fit template](#), [competitor analysis template](#), and [product vision board template](#) to help ensure your product is user-focused and delivers the solutions/services potential customers seek.

2. Develop a prototype

Once you have a clear product idea, the next step is to create a prototype. A prototype is an early version of your product that you can use to test and refine your concept. The prototyping process may involve multiple iterations to perfect the design and functionality of your product. You can create a prototype using 3D printing or other prototyping tools.

[Contact us for more information](#) about prototyping quickly and cost-effectively using our [Kickstarter prototype service](#).

3. Test your prototype

After developing a prototype, it's time to test it. This process involves getting feedback from potential customers, conducting focus groups, and refining your product based on the feedback received. The goal is to ensure that your product meets the needs of your target market and is desirable to potential customers.

Useful templates include a [survey for product testing](#) (to help gain customer insights) and [product risk assessment](#) to help identify potential safety hazards.

4. Refine your product

Refine your product to address any issues or concerns based on the feedback from testing your prototype. This process may involve redesigning your product, adjusting its functionality, or improving its user experience.

Depending on the complexity of your product, using a [product roadmap template](#) will help you keep track of all the changes you made (and why), ensuring that you remain goal-oriented.

5. Find a manufacturer

The next step is to find a manufacturer who can produce your product at scale and in the desired quality. You'll need to work closely with your manufacturer to ensure that your product is built to your specifications and that the production process is cost-effective and efficient. When selecting a manufacturer, consider factors such as production time, minimum order quantities, and shipping logistics.

Depending on the complexity of your supply chain (and the associated risks), if you're working with a [design agency that provides end-to-end solutions](#) (i.e. from concept to design), much of the logistics, planning, and risk mitigation will be avoided.

6. Protect your intellectual property

Protecting your intellectual property is essential to prevent others from copying or stealing your product idea. This can be done through patents, trademarks, and registered designs. Patents protect new inventions and processes, while trademarks protect brand names, logos, and slogans. Registered designs protect the visual appearance of a product.

Seek guidance from an experienced intellectual property attorney to determine the most appropriate strategy for protecting your product.

7. Launch your product

Once you have developed your product, refined it, found a manufacturer, and protected your intellectual property, it's time to launch it. This involves creating a marketing and advertising strategy, establishing a distribution network, and promoting your product to potential customers.

Using the full potential of digital marketing channels (e.g. social media, email marketing) is essential (but time-consuming) to creating awareness, reaching a broader audience, and driving sales. If you don't have someone on your team who you can dedicate to this, consider hiring new talent to ensure your product's visibility and your brand's market positioning is at its best.

Ready to get your product developed and ready for market?

Bringing a new product idea to life requires significant effort and resources. By following these essential steps, you can turn your product idea into a reality and set yourself up for success in the competitive world of entrepreneurship.

Lastly, remember that although we listed the NPD stages sequentially, developing a new product isn't linear and requires continuous learning. After launching your product, the after-sales evaluations and any post-launch activities you conduct will likely highlight areas for improvement. This could lead you back to the idea generation phase for future product development cycles – which isn't a setback.

You're embarking on an exhilarating and rewarding experience: be as prepared as you can be, embrace the unknown, ask for help when you need it, and have fun!

We hope you found this step-by-step guide helpful. If so, please share it!

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FAQ's

1. Q: What is new product development (NPD)?

A: NPD is the strategic process of creating and bringing innovative products to market.

2. Q: Why is new product development important?

A: NPD drives business growth, competitiveness, and helps companies adapt to changing customer needs

3. Q: What are the stages of new product development?

A: Idea generation, screening, concept development, testing, commercialisation, and post-launch evaluation.

4. Q: How does market research play a role in NPD?

A: Market research helps identify opportunities, customer preferences, and market trends to inform market development

5. Q: What is the role of innovation in NPD?

A: Innovation is essential for creating unique and valuable products that stand out in the market

6. Q: What is a prototype in NPD?

A: A prototype is a working model of a product used for testing and refining its design and functionality before mass production, saving time and resources.

7. Q: What is a product roadmap in NPD?

A: A product roadmap outlines the strategy and timeline for developing and launching a product.

8. Q: How does NPD impact a company's competitive advantage?

A: Successful NPD helps a company differentiate itself from competitors, stay ahead, and capture market share.

9. Q: What are the risks associated with NPD?

A: Risks include high development costs, market uncertainty, and the possibility of product failure.

10. Q: What is the role of cross-functional teams and collaboration in NPD?

A: Cross-functional teams bring together experts from different departments to address diverse aspects of product development.

11. Q: What is the "stage-gate" model in NPD?

A: The stage-gate model is a structured approach that assesses and approves each stage of product development before proceeding to the next. It breaks the NPD process into distinct phases, with each gate evaluating the project's progress and potential.

12. Q: How does NPD adapt to changing consumer preferences?

A: NPD continuously monitors market shifts and adjusts product offerings accordingly. By gathering and monitoring feedback, it can stay aligned with evolving needs.

13. Q: What is the relationship between NPD and product lifecycle management (PLM)?

A: PLM manages a product throughout its lifecycle, including NPD stages from concept to disposal.

14. Q: How does technology impact NPD?

A: Technology accelerates NPD by facilitating rapid prototyping, data analysis, communication, and global collaboration.

15. Q: What is the role of customer feedback in NPD?

A: Customer feedback helps refine product features and ensures they meet customer needs.

16. Q: What is the concept of a "minimum viable product" (MVP) in NPD?

A: An MVP is a simplified version of a product released to gather early user feedback and validate assumptions.

17. Q: How can NPD foster sustainability and eco-friendly products?

A: NPD can incorporate sustainable materials, production methods, and energy-efficient features to reduce ecological impact.

18. Q: What are some NPD challenges in a global market?

A: Challenges include cultural differences, varying regulations, and adapting to diverse customer preferences.

19. Q: What role does intellectual property play in NPD?

A: Intellectual property protection safeguards product ideas, designs, and innovations from imitation.

20. Q: How can small businesses benefit from NPD?

A: NPD allows small businesses to compete with larger companies by introducing unique and innovative products that resonate with their target audience.

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