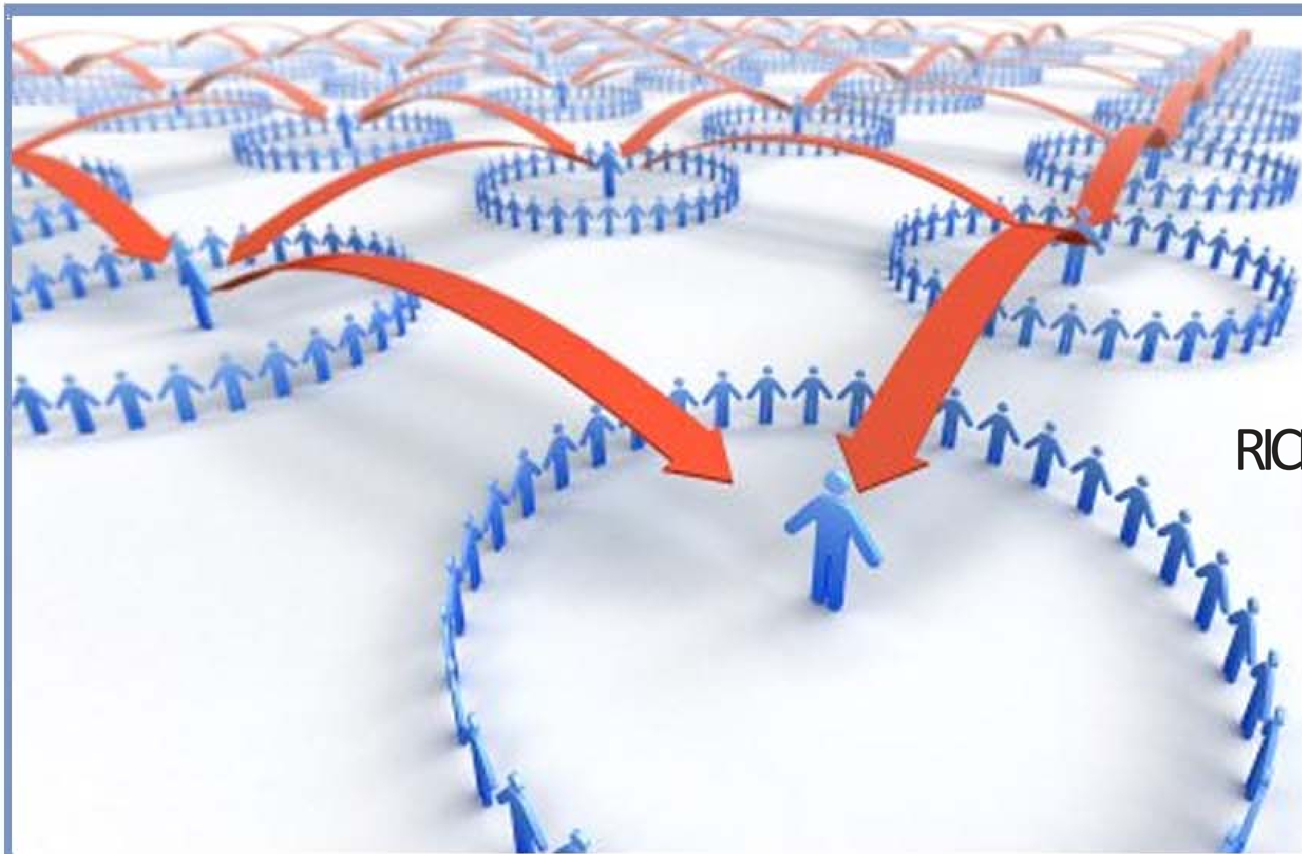

RICK BRADDY

THE NEW RULES OF LAUNCH

How to launch a product, company or anything else via the Internet

Be sure to watch the launch automation video here:
http://www.winningware.com/LaunchVideo?a_aid=ade0a684

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I would like to thank David Meerman Scott for his **New Rules of PR** work, and his **World Wide Rave** book, which inspired concepts and the overall form of this e-book. I would also point to David and Pragmatic Marketing's **Tuned In** and Anthony Ulwick's **What Customers Want** as publications that helped shape my perspective along the way.

Finally, thanks to Internet marketers who pioneered and refined many of the creative techniques and strategies that have helped shape how we launch and sell products today, generate online leads, nurture those leads and optimize online selling, including Perry Belcher, John Carlton, Michael Cheney, Jeff Johnson, Frank Kern, Perry Marshall, John Reese, Marlon Sanders, Yanik Silver and Jeff Walker.

Please feel free to post this document on your blog, website or email it to anyone you believe would benefit from reading it.

THANK YOU

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The New Rules of Launch

How to launch a product, company or anything else via the Internet

The Internet and Web have changed the rules for how we launch anything new, including products, websites, and companies - even political campaigns.

The thing is, many long-time marketing and business professionals just haven't realized it yet - and others have, but remain in denial or are unwilling to change due to fear of failure.

Because the rules for reaching and relating to people have shifted from mostly offline places to numerous online venues over the past five years, how we launch products must also evolve.

The Web and the ubiquitous global communications it enables now interconnect over 1 billion people for the first time in human history. Practitioners who learned based on the old rules have been slow to change. In fact, many old-school experts have refused to change at all, preferring to cling to what they believe are safe, tried and true methods instead.

- **Do you want to reach more of your market faster and at a lower cost?**
- **Do you want to generate more sales and leads from your Web site?**
- **Do you want to launch products and websites with record results?**
- **Do you want to launch a new company and quickly build momentum?**
- **Do you want to build a community of interested followers?**

THEN READ ON

But be prepared to alter the way you think about launches

The Old Rules of Launch

In the old days, a launch was a grand opening event, where the big guns stood on stage and trumpeted their latest products and wares in front of a few thousand…

Before the Web, everybody knew that the best place to unveil something new was to a huge live audience, including press, analysts and customers eager to hear what you had to say.

Ye Olde Launch Rules

- **Nobody saw the actual product or received details until launch day, when executives popped out like a Jack-in-the-box with it on stage**
- **You had to embargo journalists and analysts; and put customers under NDA to discuss the upcoming product**
- **The only thing anyone knew about the product is what the company told you about it, since it's kept under lock and key until launch day arrives**
- **Launches were primarily about getting the word out about new products**
- **The Web is used as yet another outbound marketing channel**
- **Is it any wonder mainstream customers take a wait and see attitude with new products? Isn't it obvious why these products must "cross the chasm" to drive real sales growth?**

NO MORE

The Web has transformed the rules and you must transform your launches to remain competitive in a Web-enabled marketplace

The New Rules of Launch

- Don't hide your new product and then pop out all at once, expecting everyone to be amazed and elated that you've been busy working on a new product – nobody cares.
- Instead, involve your market in your final product development process and launch
- Develop a community of eager launch partners and customers for the launch
- Don't just launch a product, launch a big idea that leads people to want your product
- Give away interesting, high-impact content and become a trusted advisor
- Create involvement, buzz, excitement and demand – before launch day
- Use buyer language that resonates – instead of product language
- Use inbound marketing to build a fresh opt-in launch list of interested prospects
- Use traditional outbound marketing for canvassing and launch list building
- Optimize your online sales and lead-generation processes first
- Get more qualified prospects into your sales funnel with launch sequences.

OK

Now that you've seen the new rules of launch, it's time to take a deeper dive into the fundamentals of these new rules of launch to see how and why they work so well.

Why You Need to Learn the New Rules

Today, savvy marketers use online networking to reach and influence buyers directly

While most companies realize they need to be blogging and having meaningful conversations with those in their marketplace, most of these efforts are disorganized, focused on the wrong topics and are not leveraged in concert with launches.

You need to become familiar with and implement the New Rules of Launch and the related strategies and tactics outlined here. Once you learn to have meaningful, two-way conversations with your buyers and create a launch community, a number of things happen:

1. Your company gains important insights into what buyers actually think and want, yielding a competitive edge
2. Your advertising and marketing costs will go down; and sales will go up
3. Your success rate launching new products and services will increase because you'll become more *buyer-centric.*

By building an engaged community around your company and its products, you will gain influence, trust and respect. These are the essential elements of increasing market share, with both existing and new products in any market. And you'll reach more people who are passionate about what you have to offer. These people will become your champions, helping to sell your ideas, products and company to others within their spheres of influence.

Psychology of Social Product Launches

Effective marketers realize their goal is to both understand and influence human behavior in order to achieve business objectives. There are many ways to influence human behavior. For the purposes of a launch, I want to concentrate on just three for now:

1. Social Proof
2. Proof
3. Stories

Social proof is also known as *informational social influence.* This is a psychological phenomenon that occurs in ambiguous social situations, when people are unable to determine the most appropriate mode of behavior. When we lack clear direction in certain situations, it is human nature to make the assumption that others around us know more than we do about the particular situation. This leads us to deem them as being better informed than us. This form of social influence can lead to conformity of large groups of people, a phenomenon referred to as *herd behavior*. Social proof is important in launches because you're introducing something new and often unknown to people.

For example, I can remember many times when traveling, driving through an unfamiliar city, looking for a place to eat. Especially in small towns, it is common not to find the large chain restaurants, leaving one to choose from a limited number of unknown local eateries. When we find ourselves in this common situation, what do we do?

We notice things like how many cars are parked in front of each restaurant. We assume more cars in the parking lot must mean people who know something we don't about these restaurants have made their choice for good reasons. After all, if the locals are eating there, they must know something we don't, since they're obviously very familiar with all of the options here – right?

This is one example of social proof. We find ourselves in an unfamiliar setting, where we're unsure what choice to make, so we look to see what everyone else is doing. This kind of human behavior probably goes back to when we were hunter/gatherers. If enough people ate a given plant or berry, it must be safe for us, too. This is a survival instinct, and it can be extremely powerful when used properly.

When a social network begins to buzz about a particular topic, others pay attention to it. If some of these people have seen or tried a new product, then people listen to what's being said about it. The more people who are using the product and saying good things about it, the safer we assume it must be. After all, it's what everyone else is doing.

And the fact that other people like us are doing something creates a "*bandwagon effect*", leading to even more people doing the same thing. When enough people get on this bandwagon, it becomes a *herd movement*. Animals prefer to move in herds because it's safer than going it alone.

Lately, more blogs display the number of "Tweets" each blog entry has received, along with a button to "retweet" the blog entry. The larger this number, the more social proof that other people find this blog entry important. The social bookmarking site "Digg.com" is designed to provide social proof, based upon the number of times different people have "dugg" each article posted on the site.

In fact, social proof is so important to some people that they will decide they want your product primarily because someone else they know is using it or wants it. It's more important to have what other people have than taking the time to look at all the available options.

Learning to incubate and nurture social proof and its cousins, the bandwagon effect and herd movement, is extremely powerful. This isn't news to experienced marketers, but making proper use of these forces in your launches may be.

Proof consists of evidence that can be used to demonstrate the truth about something. This evidence convinces someone about what is true and what is not. In marketing, we see many forms of evidence used to assert proof that what we say is true.

Since buyers realize we are selling something, their default assumption is that we could be stretching the truth or even lying to make the sale. And since online buyers are often not dealing directly with another human being they can trust, there is an inherent lack of trust. This trust gap must be bridged in order to attract buyers and make more sales.

Coming up with an effective plan for providing proof is critically important, especially when launching anything new. It's even more important if you are a new company without established brand recognition. There are many forms of evidence that you are telling the truth that people may accept, including:

- **Independent reviews** by someone the buyer knows and trusts; e.g., bloggers, testing labs, magazines, consumer agencies, etc.
- **Free trials** that enable a buyer to try the product themselves before buying
- **Interviews** with experts who have first-hand experience with what's being launched
- **Videos and demonstrations** showing actual results
- **Testimonials** and interviews with real people who are already getting the intended results (not paid promos)
- **Specific numbers**, data, charts or statistics from a respected 3rd party
- **Endorsements** by celebrities and recognized experts

There is no substitute for providing proof that what you say is true. Social proof complements and amplifies actual proof, but is not a substitute for real proof.

Stories are how human beings spread ideas that are important or interesting to them. Storytelling is as old as mankind. We tell stories in many ways, using words, images, sounds, gestures and expressions. Storytelling is at the heart of how we communicate with one another.

The evolution of technology has made storytelling easier than ever. And the human mind is optimized for storytelling. Traditionally, oral stories were committed to memory and then passed on from generation to generation. Jump forward to the Internet age, and the avenues available for sharing our stories are all around us: blogs, Twitter, Facebook, forums, YouTube, email, websites, article sites, books, TV, radio, and of course, the all important and powerful - word of mouth.

As Steve Chazin, former Apple marketing executive says in "Marketing Apple", to have your story repeated you must:

- **Make your message memorable** – Think Big, Write Small
- **Boil the story down to its syrupy goodness**
- **Make your message different and worth repeating**

When we launch anything to an audience (a product, a company, website or a political candidate), we need to tell stories. These stories answer important questions for the audience, including:

- Who are these people and where did they come from?
- Why should I care?
- What's in it for me?
- Why should I listen to you?
- Why should I take action and actually do something different?
- Why should I act now instead of delaying or just doing nothing instead?

Stories provide an interesting way to answer these (and other) questions people have about what's being launched and how it could affect them. Stories can be conveyed in a variety of ways, including blogging, videos, newsletters, and emails.

Crafted properly, stories don't sell – they tell and teach by example.

Stories provide the information that people need to make up their own mind - about you, what you're launching and offering and where it fits in their life. Stories also enable readers to learn by example.

By allowing people to make up their own minds (instead of coercing them through slick offers and time-limited deals that everyone knows are lies concocted by marketers to get them to buy), people are much more willing to listen to what you have to say when conveyed as an interesting story.

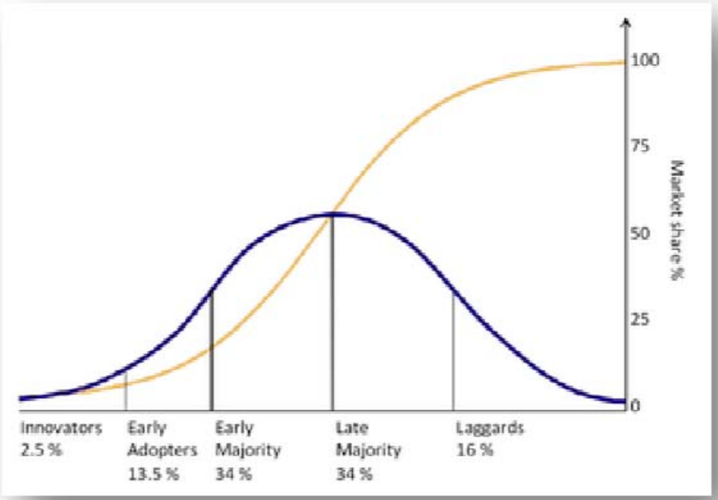
And they'll be more inclined to pass a simple, interesting story along to others, who will in turn be more interested than if you come across as selling your product. Incidentally, this storytelling approach to marketing works well not only in launches, but also in everyday marketing and advertising campaigns.

USE PROOF, SOCIAL PROOF AND STORIES TO AMPLIFY YOUR LAUNCH

Reaching Mainstream Buyers and Markets Faster

In 1991, best-selling author Geoffrey Moore published the seminal book "*Crossing the Chasm*: Marketing and Selling High-Tech Products to Mainstream Customers", which focuses on the specifics of marketing products during the early startup period leading to mainstream adoption.

Moore explores and expands upon the "Diffusion of Innovations" model, shown below:



According to Wikipedia, Diffusion of Innovations is a theory of how, why, and at what rate new ideas and technology spread through cultures. This theory was originally put forth by Everett Rogers in 1962. He defines diffusion as "**the process by which an innovation is communicated through certain channels over time among the members of a social system."**

Isn't that interesting?

Let's break it down further:

- The process by which an innovation is communicated
- Through certain channels

- Over time
- Among members of a social system

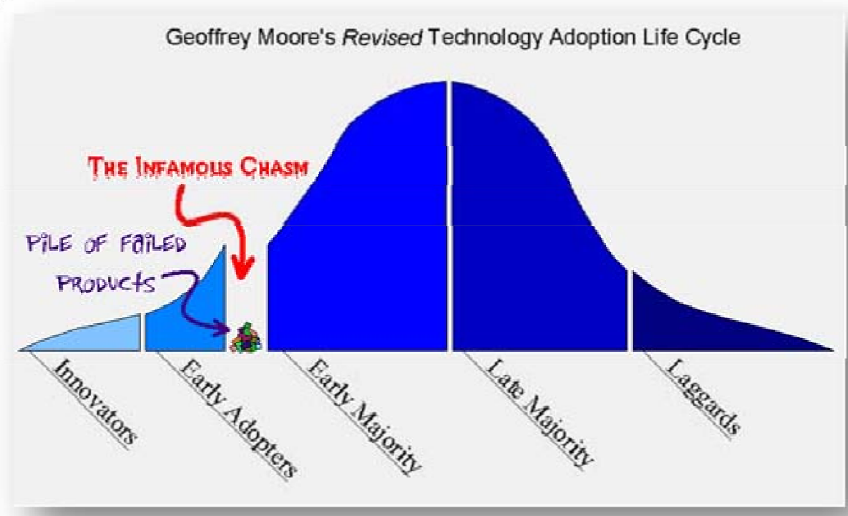
Are you thinking what I'm thinking? **What if there was a way to create and encourage a process by which an innovation is communicated so that instead of it taking years to permeate through traditional channels and social systems, it could take place much more rapidly - in a matter of just a few weeks or months?**

Now that channel exists. It's called Social Networking!

Social networking provides the channels for the word to spread beyond early adopters and reach mainstream buyers much faster – and importantly, with enough social proof and actual proof to enable mainstream adoption to take place much sooner than before.

This is interesting, so let's explore it a little further.

The following is Geoffrey Moore's revised Technology Adoption Lifecycle chart:



As you can see here, the infamous *chasm* is where most products fail to gain adoption by the Early Majority, stall out, then crash and burn, fading into non-existence. It has proven quite dangerous to try and leap across this chasm too quickly. Different industries adopt new products, companies and technologies at different rates, so it's often impossible to just leap this chasm outright (yes, even using the new rules of launch).

However, one answer to this common pitfall of new product introductions is to focus on launching to buyer segments. These segments are groups of like-minded people who reference each other regularly and who share similar interests, vernacular and buying preferences. Moore calls this the "*bowling-pin strategy*" in his book "Into the Tornado".

Without delving into more detail on the theory of early market introductions, let's consider how this relates back to the new rules of launch.

The launch of anything new, interesting and useful will naturally attract the Innovators and Early Adopters. The trick is in convincing enough mainstream buyers, comprising the Early Majority, to give the product a try in order to jumpstart the bandwagon effect and create the herd movement we discussed earlier.

Unlike marketing and selling in the traditional offline world, we are not restricted to the long time constants associated with word of mouth marketing and the corresponding slow adoption patterns that take place when using the old rules of launch.

The rate at which a social network spreads a message, combined with its ability to reference both proof and social proof in a compelling, convincing way (read: non-sales) is one of the keys to reaching mainstream buyers. How can we do this? With stories – true stories.

For example, let's say you're introducing a new product that would benefit both large and smaller IT shops alike. Using the new rules of launch, when mainstream customers see other name brand companies (like them) who are trying the new product, having success and commenting about it on a blog, this serves as compelling evidence (proof) and the necessary social proof (safety in numbers) that signals it's time for them to have a closer look.

To keep things simple initially, I recommend focusing your launch on like-minded buyers (with similar buyer personas); however, if you have the resources and can muster a multi-pronged launch, it is certainly possible to launch to multiple market segments simultaneously.

For example, let's say you're launching the latest version of a solar-powered flashlight (I have one, they're very cool). This device appeals to various buyer segments and each segment cares about different things, reads different blogs and buys for different reasons. Let's take three groups of buyers and understand each one a bit better:

1. **Homeowner Emergency Buyer** – this buyer is primarily interested in a flashlight that can be trusted in an emergency situation, such as after a hurricane or other natural disaster, or anytime the power goes out. The fact that solar-powered flashlights don't require a battery is a very compelling benefit.

2. **Camping and Outdoor Buyer** – this buyer doesn't want to carry batteries or anything heavy or bulky with them while backpacking, camping and enjoying the great outdoors. And should they get stranded for some reason, they want to know they'll have a reliable, renewable light source at hand that can be trusted to provide emergency light.

3. **Environmental and Conservation Buyer** – this buyer prefers using renewable, environmentally-friendly energy, dislikes the disposable nature of traditional batteries and doesn't mind paying extra for the peace of mind that living right brings with it.

One approach to take with this solar-powered flashlight is to create a separate launch mini-community focused on the needs and interests of each buyer segment. Another approach is to create "solution" categories on a single website. This makes it easy for visitors to quickly learn more about how the product fits into helping them get each job done that is of interest to them.

This is in direct contrast to how most products are launched, which treats all customers as if they're the same and centers on what the product does (features and benefits) and how it does it. This forces prospects into translating from what I call *product language* into *buyer language*.

Targeted Buyer Language vs. Generic Product Language

Product language is what we have traditionally used to describe our products to the market. It includes broad claims, comprehensive features and benefits and detailed product and technical specifications. In the marketing departments of larger corporations, this information is often organized into what's termed a "marketing source document". The language used is *vendor-centric* – not *buyer-centric*.

Unfortunately, too much corporate product language today is also full of marketing "gobbledygook", techno-speak and other undecipherable terminology that only the company creating it can make any sense of. Most sales people and potential buyers are immediately confused and turned off when they encounter this, quickly figuring out that this product must not be what they are looking for (incidentally, this is one of the causes of friction and the walls of separation between sales and marketing teams in larger corporations – sales perceives marketing as being out of touch with marketplace realities).

Finally, product language is sometimes selfish and egotistical – it extols the greatness of its creators. It brags. It exaggerates. And when customers encounter this kind of language, it instantly creates disbelief, mistrust and sales resistance - making it harder than ever to make a sale. If you're selling online, this can quickly be the kiss of death, as customers who don't believe you definitely will not buy from you.

Buyer language describes what a buyer wants and desires to get done in their business or personal life. It has to do with the outcome and results the buyer wants to achieve. It acknowledges the pain points, sticking points, negative outcomes, barriers and/or constraints the buyer faces in getting that job done to their satisfaction with existing alternatives. It shows how these issues can be better resolved – by use of the product in the buyer's immediate context.

When using buyer language, we focus on just those product claims, features and benefits which are relevant to addressing this buyer's problems and preferences. Buyer language mirrors the problem the buyer already has and recognizes.

Buyer language "resonates". And unlike generic product language, it doesn't require the buyer to go through complex mental gymnastics to figure out whether the product might be a good fit, capable of performing the job at hand. Buyer language makes it obvious.

So rather than attempting to launch a broad, horizontal foray across every possible market using generic product language, our solar-powered flashlight marketer charges a premium price by appealing directly to large groups of similar buyers using targeted buyer language. This creates more perceived value, since the flashlight is no longer a commodity that can be purchased at the local supermarket.

Launching to buyer segments can be accomplished in a serialized manner, one launch per segment (leaving the horizontal market for later or just continuing to penetrate the most important buyer segments). Whether you're a new company, entrepreneur or small business, I highly recommend this strategy.

If you are a larger company, I still recommend a buyer-centric launch strategy for introducing most new products – unless the new product is an exact fit for your existing customers and routes to market (like a major new version of an existing product), or you're planning to risk investing millions of dollars on a broad market assault (e.g., the Apple iPhone launch).

One of the biggest mistakes made by large enterprises is attempting to enter a new market or reach a new buyer using the existing sales force and channels. I could probably write an entire book on this topic, as it's such a common pitfall and the cause for so many new product failures. For now, suffice it to say that launching new products that appeal to a different buyer than your sales team currently knows and sells to require a different sales strategy (e.g., an overlay sales force, sales specialists or investing in an entirely new sales team).

Once enough individual buyer segments are penetrated, if the product truly has broad market appeal, commoditization may occur naturally as the word spreads organically about the product's many uses beyond its original niches. In larger corporate environments, this is why we need to start smaller, ensure success in targeted buyer segments and then allow organic growth and expansion to take place more naturally (vs. trying to force fit new products broadly across many segments at once).

So as we've seen, there are several viable launch strategies to take. Each one relies upon effective use of social proof, proof and storytelling in conjunction with targeted social networking. This combination gives the launch increased reach, more momentum and creates superior results.

Focusing on targeted buyer segments is a much easier way to achieve rapid early success than a more diluted, broad market assault. Using buyer language makes it easier for people to quickly realize they want the product, reducing the effort and time required to sell the product, and increasing perceived value.

You must decide whether a buyer-focused, niche-based launch is best vs. a more horizontal, broad market assault and optimize your launch appropriately.

Use Targeted Buyer Language to Reach More Buyers

The 3C's of Launch

The new rules of launch involve a simple, three-step process I call the three C's of launch:

- **Canvassing** – in this step, we use all available venues to spread the word about the launch and attract participants who are interested in our launch. Using standard permission marketing techniques, we build a list of interested prospects (aka "leads"). We call this our "launch list".

- **Conditioning** – once we have our launch list underway, we go through a series of moves called a "*pre-launch sequence*", which is specifically designed to condition those on our launch list and take them on an interesting "*learning journey*" with us. During this learning journey, we will become closer to our buyers, uncover what they want most and then do our best to provide it to them.

  In addition, we'll expose them to the social proof, proof and answers to their common questions and objections. These are all key parts of the pre-sales cycle portion of the new rules of launch process (which we'll explore in more detail later). We develop what starts out as a list of individuals into a *launch community*.

- **Cashing-in** – once launch day arrives, it's time to cash in on all the preparation and hard work that led up to this big day. Immediately prior to launch day, we ramp up the communications level, creating increased anticipation, buzz and excitement.

  We also begin applying certain kinds of pressure that often leads to a stampede of buying as soon as the product becomes available for sale. Then we follow a "launch sequence" involving the sharing of social proof, proof and success stories that continues the launch momentum and drives increased sales results.

We'll explore the 3C's of launch in a lot more detail in the upcoming Product Launch 3.0 Launch Plan and Sales Process sections.

It's the Network

In December, 2008 it was realized that the Internet had surpassed a total global audience size of 1 billion, age 15 and older from home and work – not including uses from public computers such as Internet cafes or access from mobile phones and PDAs. In 2009, it was widely publicized that there are so many users and services online that the Internet will soon run out of IP address capacity!

For the first time in human history, mankind is capable of communicating on a global basis at the speed of thought. No other network is capable of reaching this many people. In fact, when you combine all TV, satellite, cable and radio networks, you still aren't connected to as many people as you are via the Internet.

Some of the smartest people on the planet realize this and are tapping into this global audience, creating major businesses and high-growth revenue streams – the likes of which we haven't seen since the advent of the industrial age. And most of them are just getting started on what promises to be a long and prosperous journey.

And it's not just companies selling products and services who have learned how to harness this incredibly powerful global network to get what they want...

Obama Presidency Launch Campaign

Obama came from out of what seemed like nowhere and seized the Democratic nomination, then sailed to an historic, landslide victory in the 2008 Presidential elections. The Democrats raised more money and moved enough minds in a span of just a few months time to seize control of arguably the most powerful office on our planet – and elected their man as the President of the United States of America.

The Democrats were able to outspend Republicans on every front, including television broadcasting. In fact, when the campaign was completed and their candidate successfully launched into office, there was money leftover – a lot of money.

But a superior ad budget wasn't the only advantage the Obama campaign enjoyed. People spent 14.5 million hours watching Obama on YouTube. That kind of exposure on television would have cost $47 million, about half of what John McCain's campaign spent in total.

Had it not been for the Internet, Obama would not be President. He wouldn't even have won the nomination.

The Obama campaign realized they were dealing with more than just a campaign – it was a launch campaign, a contest designed to win the Oval Office. The Obama campaign made use of modern launch technology, including social networking, squeeze pages, e-commerce systems collecting donations 24 hours a day, blogging, YouTube videos and more.

The Obama Presidency was launched into being using a powerful force that gave them a major competitive edge. This edge enabled them to defeat well-organized, traditional competition swiftly and decisively. That edge is the powerful, grassroots community-based launch movement created via the Internet and fueled by social networking.

In short, they used the New Rules of Launch. In fact, the New Rules of Launch can be used to launch anything via the Internet – products, websites, services, companies, political campaigns, theme parks, books, DVD's, movies, TV shows, taking a company public, or most anything else.

Use the New Rules of Launch for All Kinds of Launches

The Power of Grassroots Movements in Launch Campaigns

Wikipedia defines a grassroots movement like this:

A **grassroots** movement (often referenced in the context of a political movement) is one driven by the politics of a community. The term implies that the creation of the movement and the group supporting it are natural and spontaneous, highlighting the differences between this and a movement that is orchestrated by traditional power structures.

Grassroots movements are not confined to political movements. These movements are extremely powerful, because they result in the creation of power structures based upon powerful ideas backed up by passion, commitment and strong beliefs. Such movements cannot be easily created or sustained via traditional hierarchical command structure – and certainly not in a traditional customer-vendor “sales” relationship.

Grassroots movements are often contagious; and like a virus they spread in a seemingly uncontrollable manner, crossing boundaries of every kind until they reach their own natural state of equilibrium.

What if we could harness the incredible power of the grassroots movement and focus it on achieving our strategically important launch objectives?

Let me share a story of a grassroots movement launch that started with just 7 people and grew to more than 350 million – in just days.

Cindy Gordon, VP of New Media Marketing at Universal Orlando Resort had a new theme park to launch. The traditional way to approach the launch would’ve been to invest millions of dollars on advertising and PR and spend your way into people’s mind through paid broadcast media. The old rules of launch say it’s OK to interrupt everyone with advertisements about your company and product to create awareness and demand for your product using radio and TV ads, direct mail, magazine ads and PR.

Ms. Gordon decided to take a different approach this time. She recognized that millions of people worldwide are already aware of and passionate about everything Harry Potter, so she simply needed a way to create awareness of the new theme park broadly and quickly.

So, seven bloggers from the top Harry Potter fan sites were invited to participate in a top-secret webcast. The webcast was hosted at midnight by Scott Trowbridge, the VP of Universal Creative, and featured Academy Award-winning production designer Stuart Craig, who was responsible for the Harry Potter films. Craig discussed how his design team had created a new theme park called “The Wizarding World of Harry Potter,” providing details about the new theme park and its attractions.

At the same time the webcast was taking place, a Web mini-site went live, providing bloggers and the media a place to link to with more detailed information about the upcoming theme park and attractions. These chosen seven then blogged about the new Harry Potter theme park, which reached tens of thousands of people the next day.

So the first people to find out about the new theme park were social networks of the biggest fans of Harry Potter. These people also began blogging about the new theme park, talking about it, posting about it on Facebook and Twitter. Meanwhile, Gordon's team sent an email announcement to their in-house lists of park guests and Harry Potter enthusiasts.

Before long, reporters in the mainstream media picked up on the news and began writing their own stories about the new Harry Potter theme park. It showed up on news broadcasts and in just a few days, an estimated 350 million people were aware of the new theme park that was coming soon.

The Web mini-site allowed interested visitors to register to be kept in the loop as more information about the upcoming theme park became available - building a "launch list" of qualified, interested prospects. This was the first step in "canvassing" the marketplace and beginning to build a list of prospects for the launch.

It didn't cost millions of dollars or takes months of preparation. It involved identifying the most influential seven people with an interest in Harry Potter, giving them a special advantage with some breaking news, and then letting these excited fans spread the word virally across the Internet.

Of course, not everyone has the famous Harry Potter to work with, so reaching millions of people may not be possible. Your target market includes a relatively few key influencers who undoubtedly have their own blogs. These influencers are out there and are actually interested in news that's relevant and interesting to their audience. They love being the first to break news because it brings them more traffic, readers and confers more authority onto them.

Find these top bloggers in your market and do what Gordon did. Treat them with the respect you would a network TV journalist. Invite them to a professional webcast about your launch. Woo them into writing about the interesting news and your upcoming launch. Talk about what's most interesting to their audience and what's in it for the audience (not you and your product).

USE GRASS ROOTS MOVEMENTS AND HERD BEHAVIOR TO CREATE LAUNCH MOMENTUM

Network Influence is the Launch

To reach any kind of scale in a brief period of time, a launch needs a way to spread. It spreads through replication. To replicate broadly, a launch requires:

- Access to a broad, influential network
- A receptive audience, and
- A simple message that's easy to repeat with high fidelity.

There are many kinds of networks available to us. In fact, Wikipedia tells us this about an emerging discipline known as *network science*:

Network science is a new and emerging scientific discipline that examines the interconnections among diverse physical or engineered networks, information networks, biological networks, cognitive and semantic networks, and social networks.

The Internet is an information network, *capable* of creating a physical connection between people located anywhere in the world. But just because we have the *potential* to connect worldwide to an enormous audience, doesn't mean that those connections will *actually* take place.

To scale up a launch, we must tap into both online and offline social networks – the networks of people who have both influence over and connections to other people (and other networks) who also have influence, so our "launch virus" spreads.

There are many kinds of social networks available to leverage in our launches, including:

- Bloggers
- Customers
- Partners, Alliances, Affiliates and Resellers
- Press
- Analysts
- Subscribers
- Employees
- Associations
- Friends
- Facebook friends
- Twitter followers

Effective launch campaigns are deliberate about which networks are used. The messages are carefully crafted so they are easy to convey and repeat and resonate with the buyer personas in the target market. For best results, specific buyers are targeted using buyer language instead of product language.

The level of success achieved with a launch campaign is proportional to size of the buyer network you can reach, how receptive your audience is to the message, how easy your message is to convey and repeat, and how much influence you can continue to exert throughout the launch.

Buyer language usually resonates better and is more likely to be passed on than product language.

As we saw with the Harry Potter theme park launch, seven (7) bloggers can reach 350 million people quickly and inexpensively. The important take away from this example isn't just the enormous leverage involved – it's the fact that choosing the right influencers who have the right network connections and influence is the key.

You probably don't need to reach 350 million people to have a successful launch. You may only need to reach 10,000. The key is figuring out who has the influence that you need to reach those 10,000, and what message will resonate with everyone throughout that network.

Having the proper network strategy will make the difference between your launch being a huge success… or just another morsel for Googlebot to file and forget.

The most important networks of all are the social networks that connect people together; not just anyone, but the people who want to buy your products or whatever you're launching.

These networks make it possible for an idea or news to spread quickly from one person to another in a variety of ways. Email and word of mouth used to be primary ways word of something new would spread. They are still extremely important, but today there are many more available networking avenues.

Of course, word of mouth spreads anywhere people meet and talk; e.g., on the golf course, at lunch and dinner, in meetings, on the phone, via instant messages and text messaging, at church, at a bar, on an airplane, etc.

Today, there are numerous well-organized, Internet-based social networking avenues used on a daily basis by people, including the familiar ones like Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, forums, along with other less well-known, niche social networking places.

In addition, there are millions of bloggers who can reach large audiences quickly. And unlike many of the other venues, bloggers often act as authorities with their readerships – and are looked upon as "trusted advisors", who are expected to provide the latest news, best practices and tips for their audience.

Choosing the best messages and then seeding the appropriate social networks can provide your launch with the scale and reach to catapult you into rapid success - assuming you actually have something worthy of a given social network audience's attention in the first place.

NETWORK INFLUENCE IS THE LAUNCH

Nobody Cares About Your Product

Why is it that we focus our launches on our products? Sometimes it's because it is just the most obvious thing to do; after all, if it is the product that needs to be launched and sold, surely we must concentrate most of the launch effort on the product. If only it were this simple. More often than not, the focus ends up on the product because marketers don't actually understand the various buyer personas in the market, making it easier to focus on the product instead of what each buyer is actually interested in.

Buyers are selfish creatures. Buyers "want" things their way.

Remember Burger King's® "*Have it your way*®" campaign? There's a reason they chose to concentrate on positioning themselves this way – it's very appealing to the burger buyer's selfish desires to have their burger built exactly the way they want it – unlike the competitors who provide standard, pre-built burgers (or at least that's what Burger King would have you think).

When buyers are about to pay their hard-earned cash for something, they can be very picky and discerning. These days, figuring out what buyers want and finding ways to give it to them is often much more important than giving them what they "need". Most people's basic needs are already met today (with the possible exception of healthcare, it seems). So people and companies have shifted their biases toward getting what they want - not just what they need.

Focusing on your product, especially in the early stages of a launch, is exactly the wrong thing to do – because nobody actually cares about your product (except you). Instead, the early "pre-launch" stage of the launch should be designed to:

- **Create interest** in a big idea, hot topic or discuss an important outcome or result the buyer wants to achieve
- **Build rapport and prove you are trustworthy** and capable of helping the buyer get what they want
- **Educate the buyer** so they are in a position to make an educated decision when it comes time to choose a product, service or company (or elect a representative)

Then, as the launch day grows near, you have buyers who are interested in what you have to offer, who put more trust in what you have to say and have their questions and objections answered already. As you can probably imagine, these kinds of buyers are much easier to close.

What if you don't know what buyers want? Heck, what if you don't even know for sure which buyer personas exist, much less what each one wants? Simple enough. Get up out of your easy chair… and go find out!

Rather than myopically focusing on your product, get out of your office and go visit with people in your target market. Take a genuine interest in them and learn about them - what they like, what they dislike, what they read, what they already have and do today and most importantly – what they want that they do not already have – along with their priorities, constraints and limitations they face in getting what they want.

Chances are, you'll find out that there are many different buyers out there and their wants vary considerably.

Once you truly understand what's on these buyers top 10 list of issues, their top problems and important jobs that must get done in their business and in their life, you can sort out how best to segment them into clusters of like-minded buyers. Understanding people's buying preferences, priorities and constraints enables you to cater to them, making you their obvious and best choice.

When you're armed with the information on your buyers, it's much easier to craft the messages that will actually resonate with them. It's also likely you'll be forced to choose an "ideal buyer" and optimize serving that buyer, at the expense of other potential buyers. In today's diverse, global competitive environment, it's very unlikely you'll have the luxury of being a generic, horizontal supplier who serves a very broad marketplace – at least not with a single product brand.

By recognizing your buyers aren't actually interested in your product, you'll be able to concentrate on what they really want. Give your buyers what they selfishly desire and want most - in terms of the outcome, results or experience they seek – and the launch will be easier and much more successful (as will ongoing sales and growth once the launch is done).

Your company and product is simply a necessity for the buyer to get what she wants – nothing more, nothing less.

NOBODY CARES ABOUT YOUR PRODUCT OR COMPANY

Tuning In to What Customers Want

In the last section, we discussed how important it is to understand what buyers want and then find ways to give it to them. We also discussed how powerful a buyer-centric launch and use of buyer language can be.

Sounds great. So how can we actually figure out what buyers want and the language they use?

I recently wrote a blog post about this very topic – how to get "Tuned In to What Customers Want." To summarize here, tuning in to what your buyers want involves getting out of your easy chair and going to see more customers. It involves having more phone calls with customers and potential customers. In short, it requires you to become more intimate with the people you want to sell to.

Tuning in also involves reading what your target market reads and going where they go. Even doing what they do so you have a full appreciation for their circumstances, the issues they face in their life. This is how breakthrough products are conceived and it's also how breakthrough marketing strategies are uncovered.

This cannot be done sitting in your office or meeting in conference rooms with your colleagues, talking to your friends or other forms of staying in your comfort zone. Once you get out and begin mixing with people in your target market, you will be amazed at how seemingly smart these people are about everything. In reality, it's not that they're necessarily smarter than you - they're just living in the world you want to participate in and so they seem like they know more (because you haven't done your homework).

There a many ways to tune in to what customers want. Most of the time, you just need to do one simple thing: ASK. Ask them and get them to tell you about what they want. It's amazing how passionate people become when they're talking about what they are interested in. The key is to actively listen and uncover the "hidden" treasures that may come up during the conversation.

An even easier way to learn all about your potential customers (the ones you don't yet know well) is to engage in conversations with them through social media. You can meet and then develop online relationships with these folks wherever they gather online – in forums, on Twitter and Facebook, and through LinkedIn groups and connections – to name just a few of the more obvious places.

Once you have spoken with enough potential buyers, you will become tuned in enough to understand your *buyer personas*. Then it's a matter of choosing the buyers you will target with your launch, identifying the top influencers for these buyers and crafting your launch for these buyers.

I also like to use brief surveys and polls to get beyond the anecdotal, qualitative level to ensure my conclusions project across the market.

Once you've truly tuned in to what customers want, you'll be able to identify your various *buyer personas*, or buyer profiles. Each type of buyer will likely have different preferences and hot buttons, may use your product for different applications and have vastly different expectations.

By understanding these buyer personas, you can fine-tune your offers using buyer language that attracts these buyers. Your emails, website content and the solutions you talk about will resonate with each of these buyers.

You will be able to give each buyer what they want, which translates to more participation in your launch by everyone – bloggers, affiliates, resellers and sales.

To learn more about this process, please check out the blog entry "Recommended Reading: Tuned In to What Customers Want" for more details: http://www.WinningWare.com/tunedin?a_aid={$affid}

Tune In to What Customers Want and Then Give It To Them

Big Idea = Big Launch

I'm one of those who fell in love with Texas Hold'em poker and really enjoy the game. I have learned a lot from poker – and not just about how to win more poker hands. One of the rules of poker is "Big Hand, Big Pot – Small Hand, Small Pot". This means if you're going to get involved in a large pot (with lots of chips in it), you need a big hand. And if you have a small hand, keep the pot small and don't risk so much.

So what does this have to do with launches? If you want a big launch, you need a big idea as the platform for the launch. Big ideas are remarkable. Big ideas catch on and spread. Big ideas are worthy of our time and attention.

When we discover a new big idea, it sticks with us. We think about it. We talk about it. We write about it. So it spreads.

Launches oriented around a big idea command more attention and attract more buyers – a lot more. It's because big ideas are much more interesting and hold more promise than just another product.

So what is a big idea? A big idea is one that impacts an audience's perspective, perhaps even changing how they view their world.

It's been said that "point of view is worth 50 IQ points." Big ideas provide a fresh, remarkable point of view – one that changes how we approach things. In marketing, these big ideas often shape our positioning, unique selling proposition and how we compete in the market.

However, to be effective, these big ideas must resonate with buyers and be simple to communicate, so they can easily replicate and spread. To assist these big ideas in spreading, it's helpful to boil them down into a catchy phrase that properly embodies the big idea and enables it to spread.

In the Internet marketing world, a bright, entertaining marketer named Frank Kern introduced a methodology for online marketing he calls "Mass Control". The very name implies the ability to gain control over mass numbers of people in a market. This is a big idea that appeals to this particular marketplace. To be successful, a big idea must be authentic and true – not just a catchy marketing slogan.

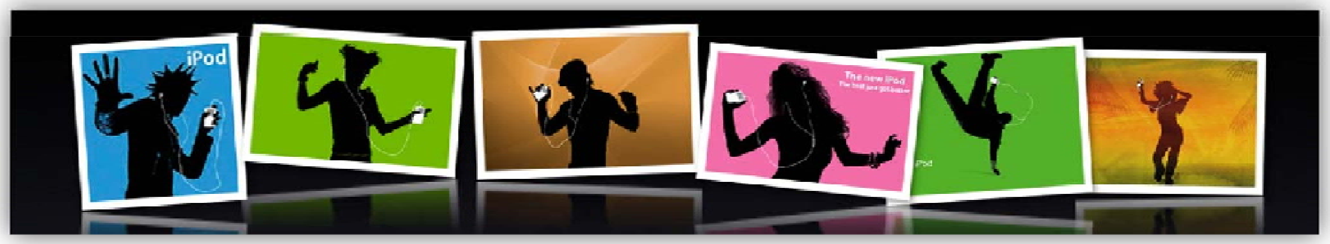
Frank is a copywriter who participated in several successful, high-profile online launches – three of which that generated around $23.8 million in sales – in their first 24 hours! To his target market, the Internet entrepreneur, these kinds of results are highly desirable, fueling interest and desire in whatever Frank had to say next.

He took a very simplistic, low-key approach to launching Mass Control. A sales letter was developed that told the story of how Frank created Mass Control. In this creation story there were multiple success stories providing an insider's perspective on some of the Internet's biggest launches that Frank had been a part of.

These stories sounded authentic (presumably they were all true). More importantly, they provided the background information a prospective buyer needed to get to know Frank, understand what he has done and why he was qualified to bring the buyer what was really a big idea: Mass Control.

Mass Control is an information product – a set of videos and PDF files that teach various methods of achieving more sales. Storytelling is a key part of what Frank uses to grab an audience's attention with his copy. Instead of selling and touting features and benefits, Frank conveys value by way of example – through stories that support his big idea.

Another example of a big idea launch is the iPod. When Apple first launched the iPod, it was "1,000 Songs in Your Pocket". They told a visual story about an experience in advertisements.



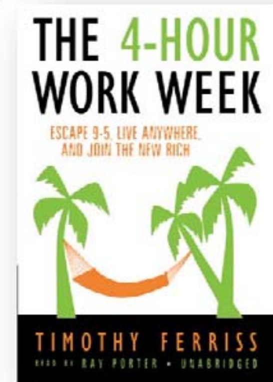
There were happy people dancing and having fun, listening to their favorite music on the go, with those telltale white headsets swaying to and fro. Apple told a story about a big idea – how having your entire music collection would make your life fun. And being seen with the white headset means you're one of the cool people.

Apple sold an "experience" and a big idea. The big idea was the ability to take your entire music collection with you everywhere. Social proof reinforced this as more and more people started showing up with those white headsets on – on TV, in train stations, at airports, at school, in restaurants and everywhere else.

Instead of selling their product, Apple sold the big idea and the experience. You needed the product to share in that experience and get your piece of that big idea.

Frank Kern sold a big idea – the ability to control the masses in your market and make millions of dollars. Unfortunately, not everyone who bought his product made the millions that he has, but he did provide the "secrets" of mass control, and the rest is up to his buyers. Frank reportedly has his own jet airplane, spends lots of time surfing and partying and enjoying his lifestyle.

By the way, Frank was also selling another big idea – the independence and control that comes with owning your own Internet business. Another example of selling this same big idea is the best-selling book "*The 4-Hour Workweek: Escape 9-5, Live Anywhere, and Join the New Rich*".



The 4-Hour Workweek is a big idea about how to leave that boring, low-paying job and boss behind, gain your independence and pursue your dreams and become rich – all at the same time. The author, Timothy Ferris, also tapped into another big idea when promoting his book: donating 10% of his author royalties to charity.

These big ideas made the book irresistible to anyone who was unhappy with their job, tired of the boss and who wished they were rich. Add to that list anyone who values the nobility of charitable contributions, and you have millions of people buying this book!

The book title Ferris chose was no accident, either. He tested a variety of potential book themes and titles before settling on the 4-Hour Workweek – using Google AdWords!

Instead of guessing which titles, words and positioning might appeal best to his target audience, Ferris placed text ads with Google and tested the response rates (click through rates) of various titles and sub-heads to home in on what message resonated best. By far, the "4-Hour Workweek" was the winner, so he went with it. The book became a best-seller quickly. Clearly, this was no accident. Ferris understood his buyer personas, what these buyers were hungry for and most importantly – the big idea he could use to "hook" millions of people into reading his book.

Today, you don't have to guess about which big ideas will resonate. You can test these ideas in various ways; e.g., using Google AdWords and other online direct response techniques, including polls and surveys. You can also test responsiveness to ideas and headline response rates using Twitter.

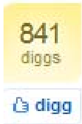
For example, I like to use TweepSearch.com to pinpoint those Twitter users who have my buyer's target keyword in their Twitter profile, then add these folks to a Twitter account. Then, you simply mix a few Twitter posts with your big idea and test various headlines over a several day period, watching the response rates (e.g., using Google Analytics). This kind of testing is free and just takes a little time.

The big idea doesn't need to be yours, either. Sometimes hopping aboard an existing big idea that has momentum is the fastest path to success. This is because instead of starting your own grassroots movement, you can tap into all the energy and pathways that have already been forged for you – and become an important part of the conversation that's already happening.

For example, let's say we are interested in solar-powered flashlights and want to see what kinds of conversations are going on. We could do a quick search on Twitter for "solar flashlight" (or whatever term you're interested in). This would quickly pinpoint the very latest conversations about our topic of interest. With a little bit of research, we may learn the various ways people are using these flashlights, why they like them, and why they don't.

Best of all, we can start a conversation with selected people already engaged in a topic of interest to go deeper. Of course, there are many ways to do this kind research. Google and Bing may produce far too many results, but are definitely one place to go.

Another is to search for your desired term plus "blog" to located relevant blogs; e.g., "solar flashlight blog". It doesn't take very long to realize that "green" is an existing conversation and the "BoGo" solar-powered flashlight is very popular.



Digg.com is another great way to find out how popular certain ideas are. Search for your keyword term and sort based on number of "diggs". Use the advanced search options and sort by most diggs and you'll quickly discover which headline and story angles are resonating and garnering the most attention. Digg is classified as a social bookmarking site. It's also a social proof site.

Another way I like to confirm interest in a given topic is to use **Google Trends** to examine trends in keyword searches. Just enter a search term and see how it's trending (up, down, steady - or Not Found).

Here's the current Google trend for "social media" at the time of this writing:

Continuing our solar flashlight example, let's say we want to learn more about what hikers and campers are using for lighting. Just repeat the above process to locate the conversations taking place in blogs, forums, on Twitter, postings on Digg.com, Google Trends and, of course, Google and Bing search engines. It won't take long and you'll have a lot of interesting insights piling up to sort through and understand.

At the end of it all, you must choose one big idea and go validate it; for example, using Google AdWords to measure click-through rates on various ads and accompanying positioning messages (like Ferris did with The 4-Day Workweek).

This process of testing a concept without actually having the product or deliverable available is called "dry testing", since you don't yet have a product on the market, and simply want to test the efficacy of an idea, its positioning, a title and messaging. Tip: Provide a landing page for the ad and let those who are interested register for more information as it becomes available and build your list assets.

"Wet-testing" is where you actually test-market something and then provide something useful in return – like a white paper, e-book, brief video, etc. You can even use a squeeze page to measure the opt-in conversion rate of your idea and ad – standard Google AdWords stuff.

Some wet testers will even go so far as to sell a competitor's product (before their product is available) to build a list on which to do further research (and help offset the testing costs).

Of course, if you have a list, you can use various traditional market research techniques to further refine your approach; e.g., surveys, polls, etc. Whatever approach you take to testing, just be comfortable that you are on the right track – and there's a market for your big idea (before you launch it). Be careful relying too much on your existing list (and customers), especially if you're extending into a new market or launching something that may appeal more to different buyers.

Finally, launching a big idea into the marketplace helps position your company and product as unique and different. And big idea launches apply to B2B companies who sell to other businesses as much as it does to consumer marketing. For example, market leader Salesforce.com was one the first CRM software vendors to deliver its solution as an online subscription service.

Salesforce.com pioneered the use of Software as a Service (as it's now known), an on-demand software delivery and business model, whereby software is purchased on a subscription basis and delivered as a hosted service. When originally launched in 1999, Salesforce.com launched a big idea: No Software. It used the familiar, universal "Do Not Enter" symbol to visually represent and amplify this big idea. It even incorporates this into its logo in many cases.

The No Software idea was in stark contrast to how most software was delivered at the time. Software had to be installed and run on local servers and PC's. Salesforce.com declared that installing software was a bad idea and unnecessary for many customers. As of 2009, more than 67,900 companies serving 1.5 million paying subscribers apparently agree. No Software is a big idea that matters.

Of course, the Salesforce.com big idea wasn't immediately accepted by everyone, especially at larger companies whose IT shops preferred the traditional datacenter hosted software approach (which keeps IT folks employed). However, the No Software battle cry was a big idea that resonated, especially for small to medium size businesses without large IT budgets – and who couldn't afford to invest millions of dollars on a traditional CRM system. These companies were quite happy to automate their business at a fraction of the usual cost and pay just for what they used on a monthly basis.

Salesforce.com is now #3 in customer relationship management (CRM) and sales force automation (SFA) overall and #1 in CRM in small-to-medium business segment. Large corporations have also begun to realize that spending millions of dollars installing, updating and maintaining software in their own datacenters and on PC desktops has many drawbacks.

Today, thousands of software applications are delivered via the Web instead of installed locally. Salesforce.com proved to everyone that this method of delivering software as a service was viable and more desirable for many applications. The No Software big idea made popular by Salesforce.com has caught on and disrupted the traditional installed software model – a trend that continues today.

Big ideas help people understand a company's unique selling proposition. By taking a firm stand against installed software, Salesforce.com was able to grow a $1 billion annual revenue business against large, entrenched competitors.

Salesforce.com began with the launch of a big idea as the platform for its hosted CRM software – and paved the way for the entire Software as a Service industry to emerge, which is now the fastest-growing segment in the software industry.

I have spent a lot of time going into the big idea because it's super important to get this right. When you do, it will amplify your launch results and pay huge dividends for years to come. When you go about this, chances are you'll come up with more than one big idea – that's fine.

Once you're satisfied you have located and validated your big ideas and buyer segments, it's a matter of prioritizing them, testing and validating, and then incorporating as appropriate into your launch plans, positioning and messaging.

BIG LAUNCHES ARE BUILT UPON BIG IDEAS

New Rules of Attention

Under the old rules, marketers use shouting and interruption techniques to reach buyers and get their attention, and it just doesn't work well anymore. The outbound marketing techniques that worked so well in the 1980's and 1990's don't work anymore because people have ways to filter the advertising out.

Buyers now use caller ID, Tivo, email filters, RSS subscriptions and other techniques to filter unwanted interruptions by advertisements and unsolicited sales calls. Turning up the volume louder only causes people to tune out further and look for new ways to block you and ignore you in the future. The lonely marketer with his little megaphone no longer controls us.

What buyers want today is a relationship – and great content. They want to know more about you and your people, and they want to know that you are listening to them – they actually want to engage in a conversation with you. Since they're doing most of their shopping and more of their business online, they want to know more about who's on the other side of transactions – before they buy.

Unfortunately, when many marketers started using the Internet and Web for their marketing, they brought their usual interruption-based, broadcast methodology with them. This resulted in unsolicited emails, banner ads, pop-ups and other forms of interruption. Finally, most of these same marketers have come to realize they cannot generate a profit with only a 0.1 to 0.5 percent (or less) response rate. People have become very proficient at filtering the interruptions out of their life, because we have to in order to get anything else done. If you use interruption-based techniques as your primary means of marketing online, you will fail and you will lose money (and customers).

Instead, people use their available time to check email (and open only the ones that interest them), surf the web to find interesting and useful content, and interact on Twitter and Facebook. We spend time downloading and listening to our favorite music, watching interesting videos on YouTube and many other sites.

We download podcasts from iTunes and other podcast sites to our iPhone and take them with us, making productive use of travel and commute time. We work offline, as well as online. The only way to reach us when we're offline is by providing competitive content that's more interesting than my other alternatives, so I'll download it and actually listen to it while on the go.

Today, we pay attention to whatever we choose – and certainly not anything that advertisers try to choose for us. If you're advertising, we're not listening – we're ignoring you. And unless you appeal to us in the right ways, the right places and at the right time, we'll just continue ignoring you.

Advertisers are no longer in charge – buyers are in charge. You can't just buy our time and command us to pay attention – at least not online (and the offline methods aren't working so well now, either). And this phenomenon is just as prevalent in B2B as it is with consumers. Just because you're selling to business people, don't kid yourself – we're people, too.

People are consumers first and foremost, and business people second. Our consumer behaviors determine how we prefer to look for and find what we want - and how we make most of our decisions.

Instead of bucking these inescapable trends, smart marketers have learned to update their canvassing and branding strategies. Instead of interrupting people and either shouting louder or jolting people to gain their attention, these marketers figured out if you simply talk about what prospects are actually interested in, they'll gladly pay attention. What a concept!

And it works. The key to gaining people's attention is giving them great content that's interesting, engaging and useful. People love good content and they will go out of their way to actually find it. That's right. Instead of broadcasting and interrupting everyone to find those chosen few who actually have an interest, you attract qualified prospects to you.

Google's success and dominance with its search and text ad engine is undeniable proof. We no longer use the Yellowbook and let our fingers to do the walking… we use Google and let our mouse do the heaving lifting! Google is the new yellow pages. You listed?

We read online news stories. And we read blogs – lots of them. There are more than 112 million blogs tracked by Technorati (as of 2008), not including some 73 million or more in Chinese and other languages. There's no shortage of interesting content available out there.

One of reasons we like blogs so much is because they're written by real people who have something interesting to say. And the best bloggers are persuasive authorities on their subjects – people we can trust to give us the straight scoop.

And whenever someone does have something to say or doesn't agree with the blogger, you can easily see everyone's opinions and perspectives. The jury of public opinion rules in the blogosphere.

Bloggers know that content is king and the only reason their audience shows up is because the content is worthy of the reader's time and interest. And Twitter provides yet another direct way to find relevant content, as well as poke your head into someone's social network tent from time to time and see what's happening.

Blogging platforms like WordPress have made it so quick and easy to become an information publisher than anyone can do it. In fact, WordPress is so robust and flexible now that it's often the best way to build a new website, very inexpensively and quickly. Millions of people are now information publishers.

People are now so busy socializing, publishing and consuming interesting content and taking care of business online, they no longer have the time to deal with interruptions – and when they do get interrupted, instead of paying attention, they get angry and look for ways to block future interruptions (by hitting the SPAM button in email, blocking the user and making a mental note to avoid this time-waster from now on).

Welcome to the age of "**inbound marketing**". Your mission, should you choose to accept it is to join the conversations taking place in your marketplace and add some value, so you'll be noticed and buyers who are looking for you can actually find you.

Now, having made the case for inbound marketing, there is certainly still a place for outbound marketing. It's just that marketers need to choose the right balance in their marketing mix to ensure both routes to customers are used properly.

So what does all this have to do with launches anyway? A launch today must make use of both inbound and outbound methods to intersect with buyers in a market. As you'll soon see, the launch "outreach" programs are designed to canvass the market and attract interested prospects to register for more information about the launch, giving you a way to regain some aspect of control of your audience.

Instead of "driving" people to take action (the old marketing vernacular), we now "invite" people and "attract" them to join us and become a part of our launch. In this way, the majority of our time and energy shifts from "getting the word out" to building a relationship with those who are actually interested in and excited about our launch – and delivering high-quality content for them.

One way to gain people's interest naturally is through storytelling. By creatively embedding your message into a story, it's more interesting and the reader perceives more entertainment value. Stories also stir emotion and reach past a buyer's defenses and avoid triggering sales resistance. In short, we develop a ***launch community***. Done properly, this launch community will actually help us spread the word about the launch to others with similar interests.

So how do we invite and attract people to join our launch party? It's a bit like going fishing. To catch fish, you must use the right bait and go fishing in the right places - where the fish hang out. And if you locate fish that are feeding, you catch even more fish.

The Magnetic Force of Free

In Internet marketing, the now common term "moving the free line" refers to making what you used to charge money for free. This means if you used to charge $27 for a particular e-book, you make it free in order to cast a wider net and achieve more influence. And when you cast a big enough net, you catch a lot more subscribers and customers. For example, this e-book on the New Rules of Launch could easily have been a $27 to $49 e-book, but instead, it's actually free. Why is that?

Because I recognized a huge underserved market – an opportunity to help thousands, and potentially millions, of businesses become aware of the enormous opportunity to launch new products, companies or anything else via the Internet. If I had charged for this information, it would've severely limited the number of people who could benefit from it – and my opportunity to gain exposure and add value in the marketplace.

The term "*money magnet*" is now often used to describe a special kind of free item – one that attracts the right kind of people into the top of your sales funnel. Money magnets are any kind of free (or inexpensive) items of value that attract customers to your business. And money magnets definitely do not have to be free to be effective. In fact, sometimes charging between $7 and $19.95 is an excellent way to attract more qualified people with money into your sales funnel.

Check out this blog post entitled "Powerful Money Magnets" for more money magnet insights, along with a case study of how a $19.95 money magnet is used to sell a custom-built item for over $5,000 online:
http://www.WinningWare.com/moneymagnets?a_aid=ade0a684

The more complex or expensive an item is that you are launching and selling, the more critical your money magnet strategy becomes. In the offline world, when we have a complex or expensive item, we use "pre-sales" people to spend time assisting prospective customers. These folks help both the sales person and the customer by analyzing the customer's particular needs and situation.

The main role of the pre-sales engineer is to educate potential customers on the products and technologies, so the sales person doesn't have to (and most good sales people wouldn't know how). Today, travel budgets have been severely crimped or eliminated. And the availability of every kind of information imaginable on the Web has trained people to do their own research and homework before making a purchase.

So it's now critically important to perform as much of this pre-sales function online as possible. This translates to lots of free content – not fluffy white papers full of abstract concepts, techno-jargon and corporate speak – that's the fast path to nowhere with customers. Instead, the information that used to require a human pre-sales engineer to show up can be captured and delivered in a variety of ways, including video, e-books, technical papers, blog postings, recorded webinars and live online meetings.

Before launching your existing or new products, services or anything else, carefully analyze the equivalent offline sales cycle to identify the key information that a prospect typically needs, then come up with a viable online pre-sales content strategy. Then develop the best possible content and make it readily available. This information is especially critical to leverage in the launch of new products, where some education and learning by customers is required.

Lastly, if you have a consulting arm of your company, you could be in for a rough ride. Since the consulting group earns its bread and butter selling custom consulting, they will sometimes be the best source of information that now needs to be made available for free. You may need to include your consulting folks in your launch and ensure they understand the importance of moving the free line and contributing appropriately. Done properly, moving the free line will actually attract even more value-add services, if that's something that customers expect to pay for in the first place.

Finally, let me leave you with this. A well-designed money magnet strategy can be designed by taking the outcome you seek to achieve (e.g., make your first sale to a new customer) and working backwards to "reverse-engineer" your *money magnet sequence*. A money-magnet sequence is a set of content designed to attract, educate and endear your prospect – before they buy from you.

We begin with the outcome, and then identify the likely gaps that must be filled in order to achieve that outcome. For example, using our solar flashlight example once again, let's assume our goal is to sell these flashlight products. We have identified the following potential gaps in our sales cycle that need filling:

1. **Bait** – Once again, using the fishing analogy here, our first money magnet is something our target audience will find so irresistible when they see it, they will immediately want it. This item is free. For this example, let's say we're targeting the campers and hikers, who we ultimately want to use our solar-powered flashlights instead of carrying the traditional battery-powered flashlights. Our bait will be something of broad interest to these folks – "10 Surefire Ways to Ensure Your Safety in the Wilderness'. This brief

report provides 10 important tips that every hiker and camper should know about before heading out – one of those tips is about ensuring you will have ample emergency light available.

2. **Stories** – after attracting a prospect using the Bait item, we decide that sharing a real-life story about a family who went hiking and camping suddenly find themselves stranded due to bad weather, which washed out the road and stranded them. This story provides the backdrop for learning what can happen when the batteries run out after several days. Later in the sequence, we then provide several additional interesting, useful stories that address some of the most common safety issues for hikers and campers.

   These stories educate the reader and begin to "endear" them; i.e., they begin to appreciate how we are helping them stay safe, something they worried about when going camping and hiking in the past. Finally, we share a story involving the use of a solar powered flashlight which comes in handy.

3. **Video** - we make an interesting, funny video available demonstrating how bright solar-powered flashlights actually are. In this video, two people go out at night to find their dog. One person takes the solar-powered flashlight; the other one has a regular flashlight. The story quickly tells an interesting story that exemplifies the benefits of having a flashlight that's always fully-charged, very bright and ready to go.

This relatively simple money magnet sequence attracts hikers and campers, providing them with interesting, useful content. This content educates and provides real value – information that could potentially save their life. Then we share a funny video that shows how our product helps to find the dog. Now the solar-powered flashlight is a hero of sorts.

This is just one example of a money magnet sequence. By understanding your buyers, the jobs they're trying to get done in their life (e.g., going camping and hiking – safely), we can then design a money magnet sequence that's both appealing enough to attract the right kinds of prospective customers, and interesting enough to educate them while building awareness and interest in our product or service offering.

It may be tempting to take shortcuts with your money-magnet sequence. Be very careful not to fall into that trap. Your money magnet strategy is an important part of your launch (and ongoing sales) process.

Develop an Effective Money Magnet Strategy for Your Launch

Buzz: Experiences Shared via Word-of-Mouth Storytelling

We've talked about storytelling. You'll often hear the term "buzz" used in conjunction with launches. Buzz is what happens when people start talking. For example, at the time of this writing, the movie "Avatar" has just launched and there's increasing buzz about the movie – word of mouth stories being passed around in various ways. News releases indicate Avatar sales are reaching record levels (social proof).

Generating buzz, both before, during and immediately after your launch is one of the measures of launch success. This is important, so let's examine it more closely. Buzz occurs when people share brief insights into an experience with others. In the case of movies, there are movie reviews, blog postings, Facebook postings, late night talk shows and other venues where buzz gets created broadly. Buzz spreads by word of mouth, from those who have seen the movie and are excited about it to others, who then replicate it and keep it going.

When someone talks about their movie experience, the most memorable scenes of a movie are often referenced. An overall "rating" of how much we liked (or disliked) the movie is quickly conveyed, along with a "must see" or "don't bother" recommendation. We pass judgment on the movie based upon our experience, then we share that experience with others, along with the reasons why we feel that way about the movie.

Use of storytelling, both for launches and in your everyday marketing and advertising, can be very effective. Simple stories that are easy for others to repeat are extremely effective ways for word to spread about your launch (or anything else). Posting a brief story on your blog is a great way to deliver the full story.

Then, use social networking tools like Twitter and Facebook to get the word out about your story. I also like to send a story "teaser" email out to my list as either a solo email and/or in a regular newsletter. You can even post these teasers on your websites, where people will see the story headline and click through to read more.

Buzz spreads in much the same way about every other hot topic that's newsworthy, top of mind or that makes interesting and relevant conversation in social settings. This is simply a part of normal human social interaction – gossiping and storytelling. It's how we relate to one another and make it interesting.

It's important to note that buzz can be both positive and negative. Just like a movie, it's important to create a great first impression and deliver a positive overall experience, in our marketing and with our products; that is, if we want the most positive buzz possible associated with our product and company. The critics (and there are always critics and naysayers anytime something is buzz-worthy) will often be the loudest and most noticeable.

Fortunately, the old saying "any press is good press" often applies (although not always – just ask Tiger Woods).

People typically consider the source when they hear a critical review, and if it's something of genuine interest and importance, people will often choose to make their own decision. Still, you need some good press and reviews about your launch, as well as some positive buzz to offset the ever-present whining sounds emitted by the critics.

This is why it is so extremely important when launching anything new to "preview" it first with a small, confined but representative audience and get early feedback – the good, the bad and the ugly. This provides you with one of the most important opportunities of all – objective feedback so you can fix everything possible before investing the time, money and exposure associated with a full out launch.

If your preview tests go well, then you can have increased confidence that it's alright to launch. If the preview goes poorly, it's usually best to drop back, carefully consider the issues that have been uncovered and address them before launching. You will only get one chance to make a good first impression, so don't blow it by adhering to a predetermined schedule at the expense of delivering a quality product.

If you are forced to launch on a particular schedule (e.g., trade show event, speaking event, etc.), then begin your pre-launch preparation far enough in advance and ensure you have enough time to refine things before the launch.

There are also ways to create buzz about your launch, resulting in increased anticipation and excitement about what's coming. We will explore this further when discussing the launch process.

By using stories as the "carrier wave" for your messaging, people will be able to repeat it and spread it for you. Be sure to keep the basic story simple enough that it can be spread by word of mouth. And use a good hook and headline to get people's attention and suck them into reading your story copy.

For more details on how to effectively incorporate stories in your marketing mix, check out this blog post I did back in 2008:

http://www.WinningWare.com/storymarketing?a_aid=ade0a684

USE STORYTELLING TO INCREASE BUZZ AND WORD OF MOUTH

The Launch Community

Whenever we engage in a major launch, there are various internal and external stakeholders who need to be included in our launch communications. I like to think of each of these as a community. The launch communities are shown below as a pyramid.

The launch team spearheads and leads the launch for the company. The pyramid shows how each community layer engaging with us in the launch increases the potential leverage and reach of our launch (by word of mouth, if nothing else).

It's important to begin by briefing our employees on the launch, the importance of its success and our launch strategy, plan and schedule. Briefing employees ensures there is alignment and commitment to the launch. The next group of stakeholders is partners. There are all kinds of partners, including strategic partners, alliances, resellers, affiliates and perhaps others. Gaining the involvement and commitment of these partners in supporting the launch is critically important, as these organizations are capable of providing the launch with much-needed leverage and reach well beyond our own company's limitations.

Media includes traditional press and analysts, who provide the launch with added authority, validity and reach with their publications. Media also includes bloggers and other forms of social media, which can give our launch lift, buzz and added reach.

Existing customers provide another important launch community. We can utilize them to generate social proof and evidence that what we're launching is ready for prime time, and obtain early preview results and testimonials that bring added credibility to the launch.

All of these communities are important. It's important that our launch communications plan include each of these groups, as appropriate, during both the pre-launch preparation and conditioning phase and throughout the launch process.

One way to manage all these various stakeholders is to create a launch list for each one; i.e., a list of employees tapped to support the launch, partners who have indicated an interest in participating, and media who will be approached and invited to participate.

You may already have a list of existing customers and potential customers (e.g., subscribers). From these lists, create a "Launch List", which will become the primary target of the launch sequence communications. The Launch List consists of those potential customers who have already expressed an interest in what's coming by registering for early notification and more information.

Develop and Nurture Your Entire Launch Community

Launch Partnering in Powers of 10

For our launch to have maximum impact and reach, we need to access the resources of others. Partners provide us with access to a much larger audience. Partners have special relationships with their audience, something that has taken them years to cultivate in many cases.

Partners enable us to tap into a larger marketplace using their resources and helping us canvass the market to identify potential customers; i.e., by driving qualified, interested traffic to our launch registration page, enabling us to build a large list of prospective buyers for the launch.

Each major partner we can attract has the potential to increase our launch exposure significantly. If we can attract enough partners, we could easily reach an audience size that's 10, 100, even 1,000 times larger than we can possibly reach and influence directly on our own.

Partners bring something else to the table, that's even more important – credibility.

Partners are recognized as independent parties and therefore more objective about whatever is being launched. This puts the partner in the position to act as an advisor – someone we know and can trust to make recommendations.

When prospective customers are approached by someone they already know, are comfortable with and trust, it's often much easier to generate interest and gain participation. This is because a partner is effectively endorsing you and your launch, which carries a lot of weight.

One way to truly maximize a launch's success is to gain commitments from seven to ten launch partners of equal or larger size (as compared to your company and its list size and assets). Ideally, you can also get several larger companies to promote your launch, as well.

These partners can be bloggers with appropriate audiences for your launch, resellers, affiliates, joint venture partners and others who have some kind of interest in your launch succeeding.

One of the most common shortcomings reported by companies involved in launches is insufficient audience reach. This is often the result of failing to gain the support and involvement of enough of the right partners. It's important to invest whatever it takes to get the launch leverage these partners provide.

Set your launch partner goals, then come up with a plan and apply the resources required to attract, engage and motivate partners to take action on your behalf. Done properly, launch partnering makes your launch an order of magnitude bigger and more impactful.

To achieve your launch partner goals, keep in mind that you must stay on top of your partners, keeping them in the loop and continuing to ensure they take action in support of your launch. These companies and people have their own businesses to run, and your launch is almost certainly not their top priority.

For best results, you should plan a special pre-launch and launch sequence aimed at motivating your launch partners. For affiliate and joint venture partners, it's often helpful to offer a compelling bonus (like winning a trip to Hawaii, a cruise or some other appropriate gift) in a contest for whoever sells the most during the launch. Update your affiliates periodically with a quick report showing the top 10 sales leaders. This creates social proof and causes people to become more creative in order to win – not just for the prize but for the peer recognition of winning.

New Rules of Launch: Introducing Launch 3.0

Companies have been launching products for as long as products have been sold. Political campaigns launch their candidates to pursue election. Like any campaign, a launch is specially designed to achieve a particular set of goals and objectives and generate certain outcomes and results.

Usually, creating awareness and building interest is among those objectives. In political campaigns, the ultimate goal is to win an election. When introducing a product, it's to secure distribution and create sufficient sales to kick-start the sales engines by creating sales inertia, product pull-through and revenue.

I would like to introduce "Launch 3.0", which represents the next evolution in launch methodology. These versions enable us to categorize how new product introduction methodologies have evolved and progressed. In particular, how we conduct launches has changed due to the advent of the Internet, increasingly interactive and rich Web 2.0 technologies and social networks.

Let's begin with a brief look at the first two versions of launch.

This versioning scheme enables us to categorize and understand the kind of launches that exist, and how to evolve our launch methodology and processes to adopt the new rules.

Launch 1.0 was, and still is, the realm of launch most businesses use today. These are "traditional" launches, primarily offline product launches which focus mostly on getting the word out internally, with employees, and externally with traditional media (press, industry analysts and partners) ahead of a launch event. These launches are geared toward a "grand opening" event, a coming out party where the new product is thrust into the marketplace on opening day, and handed over to sales to begin selling.

For larger enterprises, these all remain important steps to take – but they're no longer enough in today's fast-paced social-networked world. A key emphasis in Launch 1.0 is ensuring "field-readiness" – educating the sales force and resellers to ensure they are sufficiently trained to engage in customer conversations and sell the new product, once it becomes available on launch day.

In these launches, it's common for the coming out party to be tied to a trade show event, where the new product is introduced on stage by company executives, and private press/analyst interviews are conducted before and during the event. There's nothing wrong with Launch 1.0 style launches. They serve their purpose; however, more often than not, they serve primarily to "get the word out" and do not create the kind of launch momentum possible using all the available launch options today.

Launch 2.0 – these are "Internet Marketing" online launches, originally created and popularized by John Reese, with his original million-dollars-in-a-day launch of Traffic Secrets in 2005. Jeff Walker worked with Reese on this launch, and then afterwards helped spread the word about this online launch paradigm that he and John Reese cooked up together. Walker then took this fledgling online launch methodology and packaged it up into an information product known as Product Launch Formula, which became the gold standard of Internet-based launches.

The main characteristics of a Launch 2.0 style launch is that it is a purely online launch, using email as the primary mechanism for outbound communications used to drive the launch. These launches include a focus on pre-launch conditioning and creation of scarcity and social proof as primary action drivers. The main goal of these launches is to drive online sales. Frank Kern added the effective use of storytelling and NLP techniques to these online launches, along with creative use of personality and free video content.

Launch 3.0 – these launches incorporate "purpose-built communities" into the launch process, along with leveraging social networking. Launch 3.0 recognizes that a more complete launch process is required today – one that includes both the more traditional offline launch methods plus the newer online venues and methods.

The Launch 3.0 process leverages interactive online media, including:

- Opt-in Email
- Blogging and 3rd party bloggers
- Social networks (Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, MySpace, etc.)
- Social bookmarking (Digg, Del.icio.us, StumbleUpon, Mixx, FriendFeed, etc.)
- Targeted Forums
- Video sharing
- Viral e-books and videos
- Teleconferences
- Podcasts
- Webcasts

Launch 3.0 also includes elements of more traditional offline media and the entire launch community (discussed earlier with the pyramid drawing), including:

- Press briefings and press releases
- Analyst briefings

- Partner briefings and launch co-marketing campaigns
- Field-readiness, both internal sales force and resellers
- Regional and National Trade show events
- Direct mail
- Print ads
- Radio and TV ads
- Other traditional advertising venues

The point of Launch 3.0 is to take advantage of the full spectrum of launch venues and media, making appropriate use of them all in a coordinated way. Smaller companies may choose to concentrate on the use of more affordable online media, combined with launch community development. Medium and larger corporations will want to incorporate most, if not all, of the available media and venues to create maximum launch impact, based upon the significance of the product or business being launched and invest accordingly.

Unlike Launch 1.0, the goal isn't merely to "get the word out" and train the field for a sales turnover – it's to generate both outbound and inbound canvassing activities that identify launch participants early, then bring them along throughout the entire launch process; i.e., to create the launch list and launch community, then nurture, develop and leverage that community to generate not just awareness, but significant buzz, sales motion and ultimately revenue.

Unlike Launch 2.0, Launch 3.0 recognizes the rising importance of social media, as well as using a combination of targeted online and offline social networking to broaden awareness and attract launch participation. Launch 2.0 focuses on online selling. Launch 3.0 accommodates both online selling as well as using online methods primarily for lead-generation and nurturing that feeds a traditional sales force and channels, which close the sales.

Launch 3.0 builds upon and extends the proven strengths of both earlier launch paradigms, resulting in leveraging the efficiencies of online launch methods with the proven effectiveness of traditional launches.

Launch 3.0 Process

Before diving straight into the Launch 3.0 process flow, it's important to realize that a proper launch usually involves preparation that takes place long before the launch process itself begins.

In particular, proper market research needs to have been done to accurately identify market segments and buyer personas. This research enables the launch to be positioned favorably for the buyers and markets vs. the competition.

Another important activity that should take place prior to scheduling the launch is some kind of limited "preview" step, whereby real customers can get their hands on early versions of the product that will be launched. In the software industry, these steps are known as "alpha" testing and "beta" releases.

These early tests provide an opportunity to validate that the product functionality satisfies the market's needs and expectations, as well as identify any critical gaps that must be addressed by the product before it launches. Another important facet of these early tests is to uncover the buyer language to use in marketing the product during the launch.

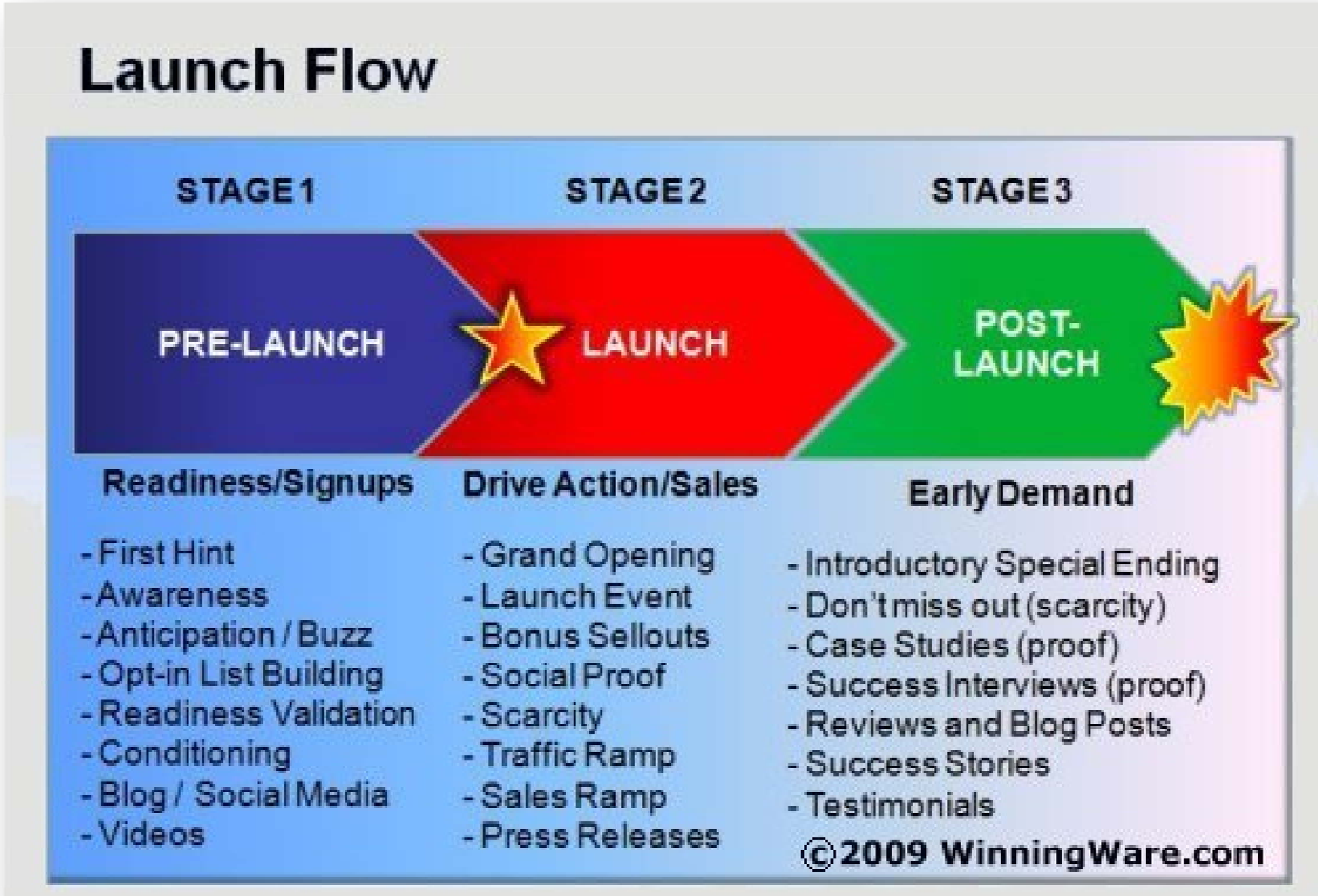
It's also now common practice to allow a limited number of early customers to experience the product or content in a controlled environment ahead of the main product launch. For example, top information marketers typically hold a paid seminar with limited attendance ahead of launching their information products and record these sessions as product content; e.g., Traffic Secrets 1.0, Mass Control, The 7 Figure Code, etc.

Suffice it to say that this early market feedback is so critical that attempting to skip this phase in order to rush to market has been the downfall of many companies and products – that are no longer around to tell about it. It is also common practice to build these preview and validation steps into the "pre-launch" phase, creating a longer pre-launch ramp up phase.

The launch is organized into 3 distinct phases, as shown in the Launch Flow diagram below. Let's explore each launch stage in more detail.

As shown in the following flow diagram, launches are organized into three distinct stages:

- **Pre-Launch Stage** - the weeks and months leading up to the Grand Opening event
- **Launch Stage** - the main launch event and Grand Opening
- **Post-Launch Stage** - the weeks and months after the launch event



Pre-Launch Stage creates early awareness and begins to build a launch list of early adopter community members around your product offering, site and business. The early adopters serve a dual purpose – a set of early customers who can validate the product and who (in some cases) may even pay for early access to the product; e.g., paid seminars, webinars or "charter" members.

This early adopter community is essential to ensuring everything is truly ready to take to market before the launch.

This early adopter community is leveraged to validate your product's readiness for market. It's important to do this before the main launch phase. You can also uncover major questions and objections that need to be addressed in marketing and selling processes. I will often use a brief survey to get detailed feedback from early adopters, well prior to the launch taking place.

The pre-launch period is where we deliver money magnet content and begin ramping up social network awareness and involvement in the launch. It's also a great time to brief influential industry analysts (for larger companies and markets), who require lead time to incorporate your new product and big idea into the publications their subscribers receive.

Pre-launch is when we brief everyone shown in our community pyramid about the launch that's coming soon. It's the time to recruit the launch partners that will provide the launch with lift, reach and credibility.

During the pre-launch, it is important to educate the marketplace about what is coming, using a variety of media and methods. A key part of the process is known as the "Pre-launch sequence", a combination of email, blogging and video communications. These sequences are choreographed to take place at the proper times during each stage of the launch process to generate the maximum buzz, anticipation and social proof momentum.

It's also time to build the launch list. The launch list is a subset of the company's in-house lists, containing just those prospects that have opted in and expressed some level of interest.

At the very beginning of the pre-launch phase, word begins to leak out about the product that's coming soon. These "leaks" are no accident. Instead of embargoing press and bloggers, we simply control the amount of information that's made available in the early stages. We must also build anticipation and keep the interest of our media partners throughout the pre-launch process.

This process starts the word of mouth and buzz engines that begin to spread outward ahead of the grand opening event. This activity creates a "backdrop" for your launch. This is extremely important, because the anticipation prepares people for what's coming next. And it gives everyone time to think about, ponder and wonder about what's coming.

The Launch Stage creates early momentum around the big idea, the product and sales process. For larger corporations, it may also involve formal announcement and availability for sale. The "grand opening" event can be an online venue (such as a web mini-site or sales page), a live trade show event, or both.

This is a great time to make special offers and bonuses available that create scarcity around early purchase decisions, giving customers a reason to try the new product now.

It is also very important to drive social proof to increase mainstream adoption - using blogs, videos, interview and other techniques that heighten the appearance of and celebrate early success.

If the sales venue is primarily offline using a traditional sales force and/or resellers, then the launch list provides a set of pre-qualified leads for telesales, sales and reseller follow-up. If the sales venue is purely online, then the launch list is used to drive e-commerce based sales.

The Post-Launch Stage continues driving early demand, showing actual proof of real world results, along with expert interviews, success stories, testimonials and 3rd-party reviews of the product.

During this early demand generation phase, sales should ramp up sharply. For offline selling and items with longer sales cycles, a sales pipeline forms and the sales cycle gets underway. For online selling, actual sales and revenues occur immediately, often thrusting the new product into immediate profitability.

The use of multiple sources of business partner leverage (e.g., affiliates, joint ventures, resellers, etc.) fuels sales growth and business leverage. This is a great time to add more co-marketing and joint venture partners, who either were unable or reluctant to support the original pre-launch push, but now that they see success become willing to jump aboard.

Case studies and testimonials fuel further interest by both customers, resellers and affiliates, and begin to charm the early majority buyers, the mainstream buyers who find comfort in not having been first. Seeing other people like them who have taken the plunge and survived it, these customers and partners will join in now that they can see others have taken the desired action and succeeded (social proof at work).

All of this creates momentum. Success breeds success. Marketing's job is to continue fueling and leveraging this early momentum. As new, interesting uses emerge for the product, marketing recognizes this as opportunities to drill deeper into certain niches where the product is seeing early success, reinforcing that success and driving sales even higher.

As sales momentum builds around during and immediately following the launch, the product reaches "critical mass" – a magical point where both the marketplace and those selling the product become "believers".

Once people believe in a product, having seen firsthand proof of its success, they will invest their resources much more freely and vigorously to take full advantage of this great emergent opportunity. This is especially true of sales people, resellers and affiliates, who now recognize this product is worthy of their time and investment.

Canvassing - Building the Launch List and Community

Canvassing is a term that's long been used by sales people to describe "establishing contact with a target group of individuals." Wikipedia says that "Canvassing is the systematic initiation of direct contact with a target group of individuals (commonly used during a political campaign)". It's also commonly used by sales and marketing teams.

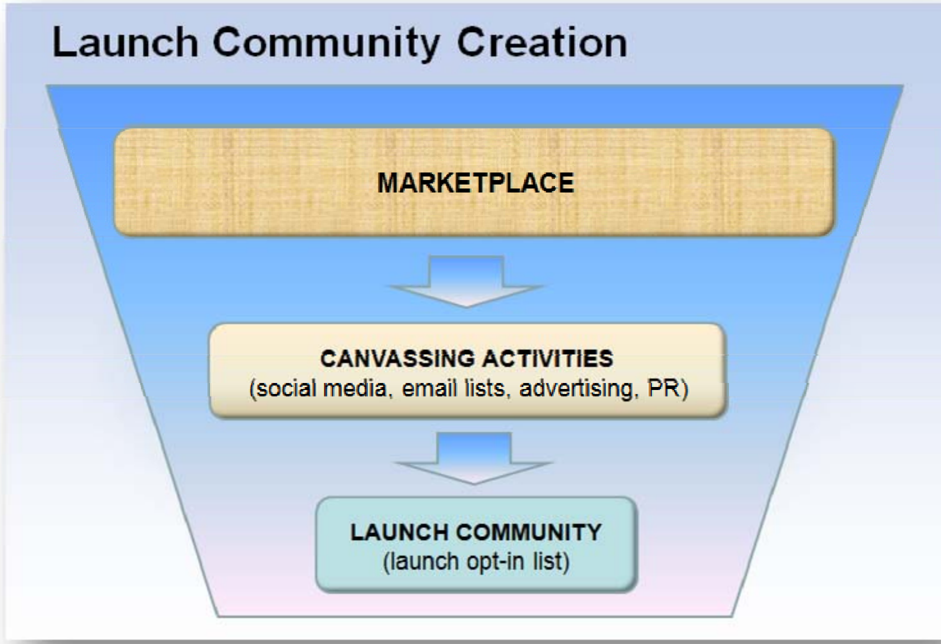
The purpose of canvassing is to identify "supporters" and "prospects".

Supporters are partners, evangelical customers, bloggers and other influencers with significant interest in the big idea and/or product that's coming. They see an opportunity to jump on the bandwagon early as a means of gaining an edge or advantage.

Prospects are those who have some level of interest or curiosity at this stage – enough to register to receive more information and stay in the loop.

In Launch 3.0, the purpose of canvassing is to create a list of early supporters and prospects, which will form the core of the launch community. This community core includes the launch team, employees and partners who have stepped forward to support the launch.

As shown in the "Launch Community Creation" diagram below, canvassing activities take place throughout all launch phases to identify interested prospects and bring them into the fold – into the Launch Community. We use an opt-in email list to keep track of the pre-launch community members, and provide outbound communications and drive launch sequences. All available methods are used to canvass the marketplace and build this launch community.



We use a pre-launch "nurturing" sequence to inform, educate and build increased anticipation about the upcoming launch. This sequence uses brief emails to keep the community members informed, along with links to the launch blog, where videos, articles and other rich content is regularly surfaced and always available.

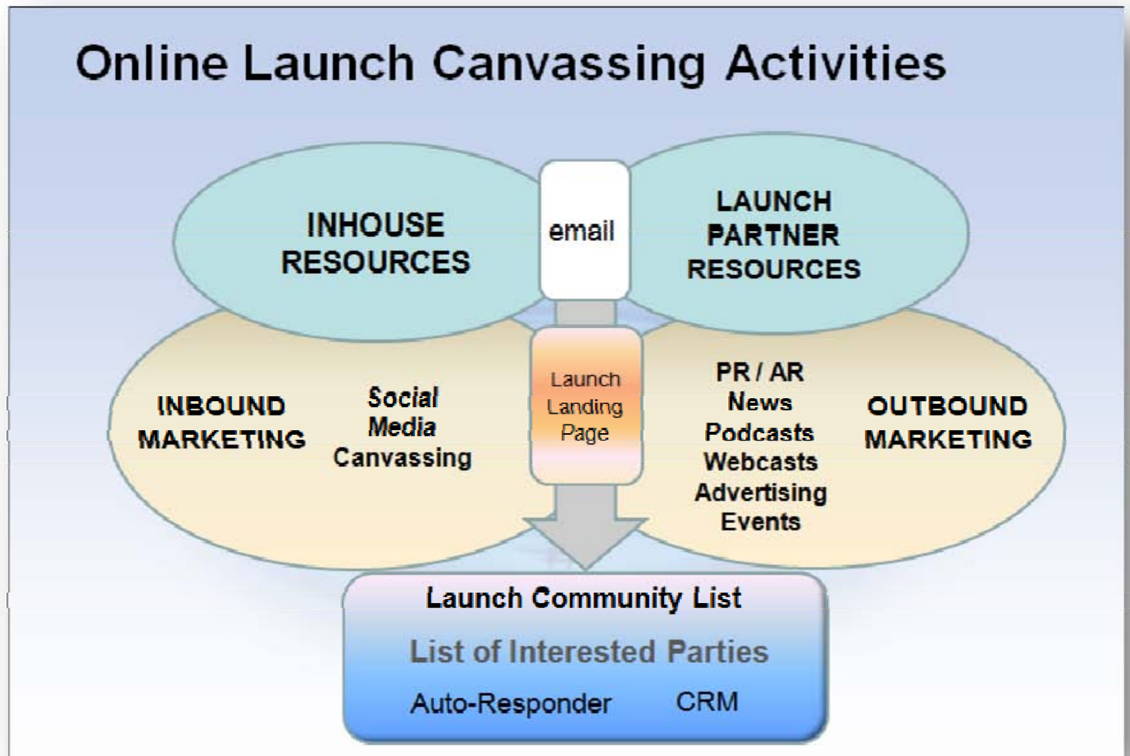
The launch blog serves as the "launch portal" – a place where participants coming into the launch fold at any point in time can easily find all available information (regardless of when canvassing activities caused them to enter the community or when content was posted).

The following diagram "Online Launch Canvassing Activities" shows how in-house and external launch partner resources are used to lead potential community members to the launch landing page.

This page can take on a variety of forms, including:

- **Launch landing page** – this landing page provides a high level overview of the big idea and launch that's coming, offering visitors a way to register to get on the "priority notification list" (which we call the "launch list"). Everyone on this list is an interested prospect. Like any landing page, this page includes a headline, intro paragraph and 3 to 5 major bullets conveying the benefits of the big idea and/or product that is coming soon. It may also optionally include a brief (2 to 3 minute) video introduction.

- **Countdown page** – similar to the launch landing page, this page includes a countdown timer, showing how much time remains until the launch event. Countdown timers can be especially useful in the last few weeks leading up to the launch, during the pre-launch.



Once a visitor provides their contact information (name and email) on the launch landing page, their information is recorded in the Launch List and they become a part of the launch community. The launch list is typically an email auto-responder or CRM system prospect list.

Both inbound and outbound marketing tactics are employed for canvassing. You must choose a launch "canvassing mix" that's right for your particular situation. Keep in mind that a balanced outreach program is usually needed for best results. The more venues the message about your launch shows up over time, the more likely someone is to become interested and join your launch community.

Consider the following launch canvassing example. This launch uses a combination of email, social media, video, PR, podcasts and webinars to effectively canvass the marketplace, not only getting the word out about the upcoming launch, but building the launch community and launch list.

You may choose to use an auto-responder, such as AWeber or Constant Contact (there are dozens to choose from today) or you may already have a more advanced CRM or other lead-management system, such as Salesforce.com or Infusionsoft, as shown below.

You can set up a Facebook group for your launch. Pick a name that will be relevant to your buyer audience and reflect your big idea and/or your product. One approach to take with this page is to pre-sell the launch that's coming, giving people a way to register for priority access (like a launch landing page). Once the product launches, this page can be converted into a product overview page or a sales page. It's still best to continue building your launch list, which will continue to feed the sales funnel during and after the launch. You may also want to consider advertising your launch using Facebook ads.

Twitter is another social networking tool that's great at getting the word out about your launch and for attracting prospects to your launch. How to set up and use Twitter is beyond the scope here, but I can recommend several great publications for going deeper into both Twitter and social media marketing:

- Secrets of Social Media Marketing by Paul Gillin (paperback, Amazon.com or book store ($15.95)
- The Twitter Survival Guide, by Bob Walsh & Kristin Nicole
- Check my blog for more Twitter tips and links: http://blog.conxentric.com

For launches, Twitter is a great tool for canvassing and attracting a launch audience. At the time of this writing, I like to use TweepSearch.com to locate prospects. TweepSearch searches Twitter profile "bios", which people use to describe themselves. The bio is a great way to find people who describe themselves as in your target market; e.g., if you're selling to CIO's of IT shops, then search for "CIO", or "hiker" and "camper" if those activities are your target.

You then "Follow" each of the people in your target market using Twitter. Be sure to make several useful, interesting Twitter posts before inviting people to follow you on Twitter. Most people will "Follow" you back (if they're active, valid Twitter prospects). Then, you can invite people to your launch in the usual ways – by giving them useful, free content and offering them the opportunity to register for the launch on the launch landing page.

Remember that Twitter users are not always online following you, so you will need to repeat yourself once or twice a day (at most) to ensure maximum coverage. Importantly, on Twitter, you need to attract lots of "ReTweets" to increase your exposure. If enough people retweet your tweets, you can reach tens of thousands of people very quickly. There are plenty of articles available on ways to get people to retweet - use Google to search "get more retweets" to learn more: http://www.google.com/search?hl=en&source=hp&q=getting+more+retweets&aq=f&oq=&aqi=

Also, Twitter is a great way to locate and develop a relationship with key influencers in your market. You will need to build rapport with these folks and develop a basic relationship, before asking them to assist you. Many of these influencers will be bloggers. If your launch and product are newsworthy, then they'll likely want to break the news to their audience. Be prepared to give them free access to your product so they can do an independent review. These people are busy, so you should begin this process as far in advance of your launch as possible.

Twitter and Facebook are good places to supplement email notifications throughout your pre-launch and launch sequences. They are also great places to locate affiliates and other launch partners to support your launch.

Your blog is the "hub" of your launch content publishing and delivery strategy. Your blog is where everyone can find the "table of contents" for your launch – the list of posts; i.e., all of your important launch content, including informational posts, videos, recorded teleconferences, articles, etc. Importantly, it's also where everyone can see direct social proof, in terms of tweet counts and comments made by those in your launch community.

You should be using a "Tweet" tool on your blog that displays the number of tweets and makes it easy for others to tweet your blog entries to their followers. You can see an example of this on my blog (and most anyone's blog, who is in the know today). This is an extremely powerful tool for creating visible social proof.

Of course, in order for people to want to share your blog entries with others by tweeting, it must be "tweet-worthy" (if that's not a word, it should be). Your blog entries must be passionate, brief and stir an emotional response to get tweeted (or to get comments for that matter).

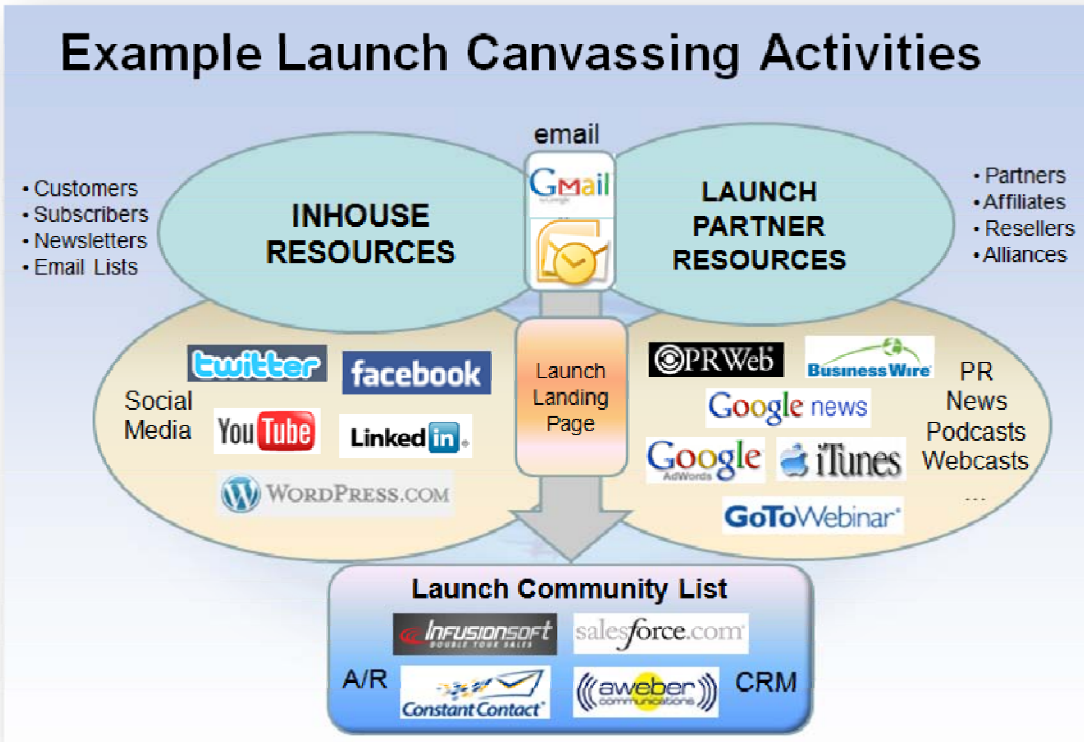
And to get read in the first place, your blog entries must begin with great headlines with a "killer hook". This blog entry provides 14 ways to develop killer headlines and hooks: http://www.winningware.com/killerhooks?a_aid=ade0a684

Hopefully by now it's clear why the Big Idea underpinning your launch is so important. If your big idea doesn't resonate, it will not garner the attention required to get people to spread the word about it. In order to make effective use of social media to spread the word about your launch, the big idea must be:

- **Remarkable** – so that people want to share it with their friends and followers

- **Newsworthy** – so that people want to be recognized for bringing the news to their friends and followers
- **Relevant** – so that it's worth everyone's time and attention.

By now it should be crystal clear that unless you're launching the next Apple iPhone or Harry Potter movie with major brand equity with an established market base, your big idea is what's going to give your launch and message the weight required to carry it throughout the market. If your big idea resonates, it will get repeated and spread. If it falls flat, nobody will care, it won't get repeated and your launch will be a dud. It's a simple as that, so make sure you get the big idea right (like we discussed earlier by testing and validating it early on).



Back to the launch canvassing big picture, it's important for your launch partners to see this big picture, too. You want partners to realize this launch is a major undertaking, one worthy of their time and investment. You should encourage partners to use social media and traditional media, as well as their own in-house lists in their canvassing activities.

When working with certain partners (e.g., affiliates), be sure to provide them with launch sequences to use, as well as money-magnet content, so they can support your launch without much effort on their part (they have their own business and priorities to deal with, so you must make it simple and easy for them to participate or they probably won't follow through).

Speaking of money magnet offers, you will often need to appeal to people's selfish interests to get them to register on the launch landing page. So for example, you might offer a free video, report, webinar or other inducements to build your launch list.

Once someone is added to the launch list, they become a part of your pre-launch and launch sequences – a series of auto-responder and social network communications welcoming them to the launch community, directing them to the launch blog and keeping them in the loop as the launch progresses should be established. So all a partner is typically responsible for is the initial canvassing campaign.

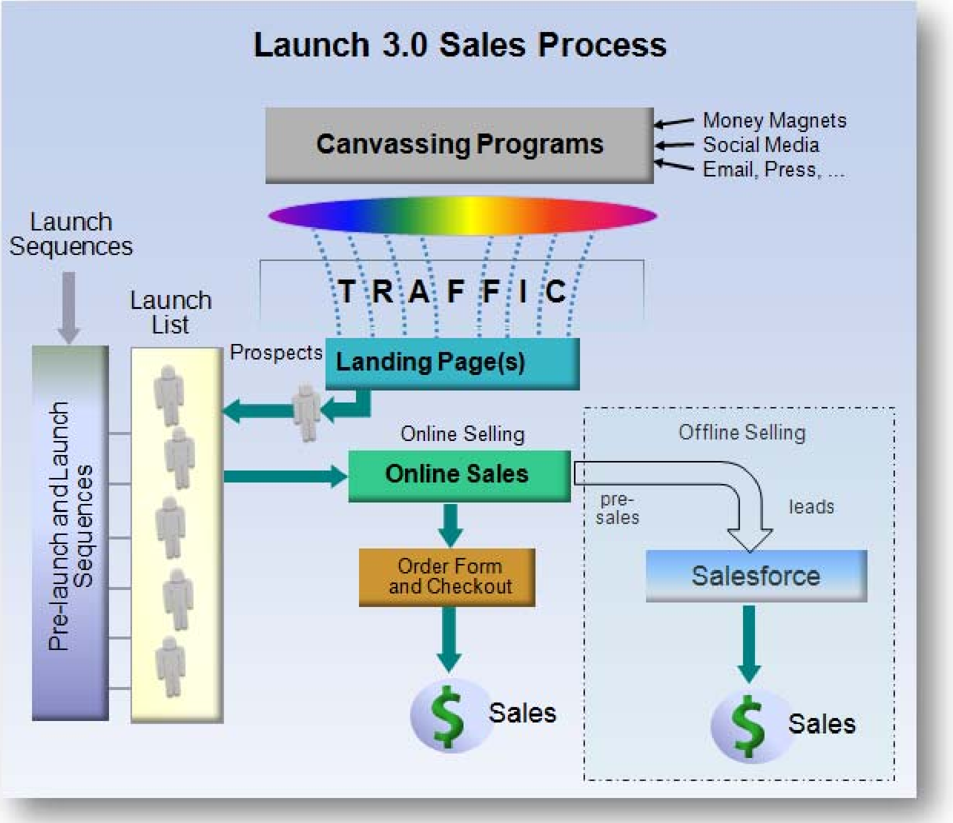
Everyone on the launch list should be exposed to all launch marketing activities from that point forward in time, through the pre-launch conditioning and nurturing phase, then into the launch sales processes designed to close the sale.

Build a large launch list with your canvassing activities. Turn those on your launch list into a launch community with a well-planned pre-launch sequence that delivers lots of great value and conditions your community for what's coming. Use the blog, Twitter and Facebook to create social proof for your launch. Then focus your launch efforts on closing sales and increasing your canvassing coverage once the product launches.

Use Canvassing to Build Your Launch List and Community

The Launch 3.0 Sales Process

The objective of any launch is to successfully introduce the product, company, website or whatever you're selling – then make the sale! This diagram depicts a typical Launch 3.0 sales process. It all begins with the launch canvassing programs, which bring traffic to the launch landing page, as shown below.



Canvassing programs attract traffic to the launch landing page, where visitors can register to receive more information. Money magnet offers, such as free giveaway items including viral e-books, videos, reports and other items of interest to the target audience are used to attract more launch prospects. The Launch List keeps track of the prospects, providing a convenient way to communicate with these folks.

During the pre-launch stage, a series of emails and related content are provided to everyone on the launch list. This is called the pre-launch sequence. This sequence is designed to develop a relationship with those on the Launch List and begin to form the Launch Community. One of the keys to creating this community is to initiate discussions on the Launch Blog (not shown).

The blog provides a convenient way for launch participants to share their comments, insights, opinions and perspectives with each other. It provides social proof to everyone that the launch is a happening thing that is worthwhile. As the pre-launch sequence progresses, the launch big idea is further developed and discussed. This provides a backdrop to begin discussing the product in the context of the big idea.

A range of content is used during the pre-launch, including:

- Spy videos that provide an inside look at the upcoming product (or whatever is being launched)
- Useful "money magnet" giveaways that provide value, build trust and move prospects closer to buying
- Video and audio interviews with key employees, experts and 3rd parties discussing the big idea and product
- Free webinars including experts discussing relevant, useful topics (and <u>not</u> selling the product)
- Stories that enable the audience to learn by example
- Conditioning emails and videos designed to answer questions and overcome potential sales objections
- Proof points and evidence, such as that gathered from preview customers who have tested the product
- Testimonials from preview customers

The pre-launch sequence drives partners, resellers and affiliates to make a major push immediately prior to the launch stage. It prepares, educates and energizes the launch community, building buzz, anticipation and excitement. This creates pent-up demand for the product, increasing the market's appetite for it.

Once launch day arrives, the doors open and a major push to convert sales begins. As initial sales pour in, information about how well the product is selling is shared, creating social proof.

Discussions in the blogosphere, news and social networks appears, where people's experiences with the product surfaces. Assuming these discussions are favorable, this provides further buzz and interest in the product that just launched, further supporting sales growth.

Most of the effort at this point is aimed at getting prospects on the Launch List to visit the Online Sales page, where selling takes place. The launch sequence is designed to drive traffic into the selling processes. It also builds interest in the product using social proof, proof and scarcity. It's also time to make a big push to energize partners to invest in marketing and selling the product.

If a traditional sales force is used, then the Launch List is a big pile of unqualified leads. The online selling processes act as a pre-sales automation tool, preparing those in the Launch Community to buy the product. These leads need to be further qualified, in terms of timing and budget (for more complex sales), before being passed on to Sales to sell and close.

One way to do this is simply email the list, providing a link to an appropriate web page enabling qualified prospects to provide more information about their needs and then request someone to contact a sales person directly, or to locate a reseller near them. Companies with established sales processes follow whatever process is already used to qualify leads flowing into their sales funnel and channel.

Everyone's sales processes and launch sequences will vary somewhat, based upon what's being launched, the level of awareness and understanding the market already has about the big idea and product and the desired selling motion the launch needs to generate.

The great news is, a properly executed Launch 3.0 campaign typically generates hundreds to many thousands of sales within the first few days to a week. For small businesses, it's common to see hundreds to a few thousand sales generated in the first week, even with relatively small lists. For larger companies, the quantities can be much bigger due to the huge list assets and partner leverage these companies enjoy.

In the past, launches were focused on getting the word out and making the marketplace generally aware that a new product is available. Today, everyone is too busy to care, since they are too busy, inundated with opportunities and don't really care about your product anyway.

Instead, the Launch 3.0 process builds and nurtures a community of those who are genuinely interested.

The launch community provides a springboard for driving early success, significant sales and revenue, and building a solid foundation for future growth. The goal of the launch is not only to get the word out, but to start the sales engines and drive a profit from day one.

Design Your Launch to Drive a Profit from Day One

Prepare to be a maverick

If you're read this far, thank you.

If you're a smaller company or entrepreneur, then what you've learned here is likely a breath of fresh air, as you're used to executing swiftly and making things happen. You're all set. However, if you work for a larger corporation, there could be trouble ahead.

So now I must warn you: Many people who adhere to the old rules of launch will fight you on executing this strategy. If you are a marketing professional who wants to reach your buyers directly and take control of your launch, you will likely encounter resistance from corporate people. They will tell you the old rules are still in play. They will say that you can only launch products along with other "big news" at upcoming trade show events. They will say you can't give the competition a look at your new product and expose yourself before the product is available for sale.

But the old rules are for those who don't realize the world has changed around them. By taking the initiative and orchestrating your pre-launch sequence properly, you'll do much more than alert your competition about what's coming in a few weeks – you'll get your customers and marketplace excited about what's coming and hit the ground running, racking up more sales and new customer accounts than ever before.

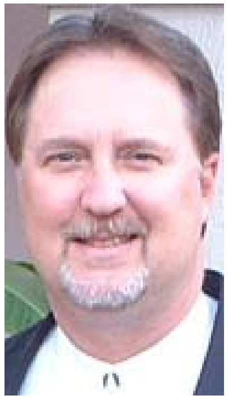
You will need to be a maverick.

Next Steps:

Download the Launch Leverage Report:
www.WinningWare.com/LaunchLeverageNewRules?a_aid=ade0a684

Watch 3-minute launch video and try my launch automation software free:
www.WinningWare.com/LaunchVideo?a_aid=ade0a684

Stay abreast of the latest launch developments:
www.WinningWare.com/launch?a_aid=ade0a684



About the author

Rick Braddy is a writer, consultant, software developer and marketer, specializing in product launches and Internet marketing. His company's products and services help businesses optimize results from launches, email marketing and online selling processes.

Prior to forming ConXentric and WinningWare.com, Rick spent the previous five years in upper management at Citrix Systems, Inc. (CTXS; NASDAQ), a billion-dollar-plus manufacturer and marketer of application delivery and virtualization software. During Rick's leadership tenure at Citrix, the company's revenues grew from $527 million to more than $1.4 billion and the company diversified from a single product company to diversified top 10 ISV.

As Chief Technology Officer (CTO) of Citrix's Virtualization Systems Group, Rick was responsible for the vision, technology and business strategy, along with product architecture and intellectual property for Citrix's application delivery software division for Windows applications and Windows desktops.

Prior to assuming the CTO role, Rick served as VP Product Marketing and Product Management, leading several major global launches across multiple sales geos.

Rick has also operated successful Internet-based businesses and been involved with numerous multi-million dollar product launches. He also served as Group Architect for e-business, Internet and ERP/CRM software for BMC Software throughout the 1990's.

To learn more about Rick, his company and products, or to contact him, please visit:

Website:	www.ConXentric.com
Blog:	www.ConXentric.com/blog
Products:	http://www.WinningWare.com/launch?a_aid=ade0a684
Twitter:	www.Twitter.com/rickbraddy
LinkedIn:	www.LinkedIn.com/in/rickbraddy