

Good Product Launch, Bad Product Launch

Inspired by the [Ben Horowitz classic](#) Good Product Manager/Bad Product Manager

A good product launch introduces a new product that solves a real problem for a specific set of people who find that this problem makes their lives difficult. A good product launch doesn't seek out a problem that their solution can solve, but instead waits to receive affirmation of the problem through customer discovery and deep listening. A good product launch is the mindmeld of a creative Product Marketer who knows the customer intimately, and an empathetic Product Manager who has developed a scalable way to solve that customer's deepest problem. A good product launch is one where everyone working on it is excited to show the world what they've helped build and, in their heart, believes that what they're introducing is a game-changer.

A bad product launch occurs when an engineer or a Product Manager builds something in isolation, does not follow an agreed-upon internal process, does not exhaustively talk to customers, and then "demands marketing "launch" it and sales "sell it". A bad product launch is made even worse when that engineer or Product Manager cannot articulate what problem their solution solves. A bad product launch begins to show signs of danger when no customers validate the need for this solution. A really bad product launch occurs when internal teams ask what the product is and who approved it. A terrible product launch is one where the company decides to launch anyway.

A good product launch is one where the Product Marketer, the Product Manager, and the lead Engineer can all describe how the product works and solves the problem their target customer is facing. A great product launch is one where all three people are describing the same product. Most can't be great, but they can all be good.

A good product launch has clear objectives and a path forward to achieving those objectives. Good product launches bring teams together. A good product launch makes evident the value each team provides to a company and inspires teams to help one another. A good product launch has clear owners of the steps and processes required to make a product successful. A good product launch doesn't present teams with surprises about their roles or responsibilities.

A bad product launch is one where nobody wants to give objectives because they don't believe in what they're launching, why they're launching it, and they don't want to be held accountable for the outcomes of launching this product into the world. Bad product launches happen when there is poor alignment, poor internal coordination, and siloed communication.

Bad product launches cause finger-pointing and teams to lose trust in one another. Bad product launches leave teams asking who owns what and defending their own processes. Bad product launches leave people impacted, wanting never to be part of a launch again. Bad product launches are bad for morale and bad for a company's culture.