

Herman Miller

The launch of a complex product of any kind is a daunting task. For manufactured products, scale, quality, debugging of the factory processes are key to product flow. In addition, complex products require a well-trained field and operations team, to ensure that early customer expectations are met or exceeded. The downside of a failed or partially successful launch is a disappointed field force, unwilling to risk their reputation with an “unproven” or “different” product.



Herman Miller’s Resolve product had all the characteristics of complexity and a paradigm shift in its category. Our task was to identify launch-related challenges and propose solutions that would maximize the impact of the product launch and minimize the risk.

One critical launch-process innovation was the addition of a new phase to the launch - we called it a “gamma” phase. Alpha and beta are well understood concepts in product development. Our goal with the gamma phase was to identify paying customers who valued access to early product. They agreed that in return for early access, they would receive strong, direct, and personal support for their deployment, and would provide a testimonial in the event they were delighted with the product.

By focusing on a small number of high-touch, committed customers, the field was able to build product knowledge; the early customers received intensive support; and effective testimonials were developed.

In the end, the product reached full production a year ahead of schedule, and has won multiple industry awards. It continues to develop as one of Herman Miller’s great innovations in the field of workspace planning.

Problem

Plan and implement the successful launch of a groundbreaking systems furniture product.

Strategy

Scaling and support for a new product can cause stalling and disappointment for sales.

A focused program for early customers provided critical learning and managed expectations as the field skills grew.

Outcome

Early adopter testimonials accelerated ramp-up and increased sales team confidence.

The launch outperformed similar products, reducing mass adoption times by a year.



Case Study

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