

New Product Launch: Ready, Set, Grow – Ten Tips

Your new product launch is a big deal, comparable to the birth of a child. The first days are critical if you want to raise a “healthy brand.” Listed below are Export Solutions’ ten tips for launching your company for the first time to a new distributor or expanding through a new product introduction.

Firm Calendar

Distributor and brand owner should align on a “firm calendar.” This includes dates for sales materials development, launch meeting and key account calls. All dates are dependent on arrival and customs clearance of the first order. No product, no meeting!

Get Ready

Allow adequate time for printing of point of sale materials and development of key account presentation. In some cases, translation or local adaptation of brand owner supplied tools may be required.

Memorable Meetings

I still remember motivational meetings with themes around boxing and magic. Create new memories with a special theme or an external speaker. Off-site meetings contribute to making your launch special, with an added sense of commitment. Have fun!

Mandatory Attendance

The distributor CEO, brand manager, and export manager must all attend and have speaking roles. Best is to have one meeting with sales and merchandising teams together. However, in some cases, a follow up meeting may be required. Invite logistics, finance, and customer service people to make it a “team effort.”

In-Store Objectives

Establish clear measures for in-store presence. This includes shelf positioning, space allocation, pricing, and off-shelf merchandising. Share a photo. What qualifies as a “good store” versus a “bad store?”

Frequently Asked Questions

Prepare a list of potential questions and logical responses. Role play with the team. Share a printed one pager with sample answers to tough questions.

Samples, Samples, Samples

Provide generous quantities of samples for all distributor employees to enjoy and take home. Prepare recipes if your brand is a food product. Samples are your best advertisement.

Personal Goals

Each team member should have personal goals for your launch. For a key account sales person, this could be acceptance of the core product lineup. A retail merchandiser could be assigned a target of a specific number of stores with displays or eye level shelf placement. For the launch, focus on implementation goals versus case shipments.



Key Account Calls

In many countries, large supermarket chains dominate sales. Develop a personal strategy for each key account. What are the buyers internal goals? How do we fit with the chains consumer base and plans? Which chain “push” programs can we participate in? Schedule a “lead call” with an easier key account to get feedback that will help you with a tougher buyer. Invite the export manager or distributor MD to participate in the sales call if it will help.

Audit

Schedule a retail audit of stores to coincide with the expected retail availability of product. Bring other people from the brand owner’s company and have 2-3 teams auditing the market against a specific set of goals. Visit secondary cities, not just the stores around the distributor’s office. Recognize that conditions will not be perfect and celebrate progress to date.

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