Product Development Summit
The Organization for Product Development Leaders

OVERVIEW

How Service Can Enable Better Product Development—Every Time

by Charles Alexander of Xerox

Nobody knows your current products like the service team. Could including their input in the product development cycle improve your success rate?

CHARLES ALEXANDER was full of questions after Xerox promoted him to VP of worldwide quality and customer service two years ago.

"I started asking people what our time to market was," says Alexander, a former criminal prosecutor who has been with the company for over two decades. "If I asked 50 people I got 50 different answers."

In his new role, Alexander saw an opportunity to improve Xerox's product development process by building in feedback from the customer service team.

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"It's a pretty easy marriage. Generally people in the service world, they want to share what they've got."

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Full-Cycle Opportunities

Feedback from service experts can help at every stage of product development, not just the post-mortem phase.

In planning stages, service experts can offer key market insights. If service teams are usually called to repair a function only when something else breaks, consumers may not consider it an important feature.

"If you have to kill a project when it's just in an idea phase, you might hurt someone's feelings, but you're not going to hurt your bottom line," says Alexander.

In the design phase, service input can be key to accurate cost projections. Changes that make sense in the lab—moving a service panel, for example—might translate to increased repair costs in the field.

Alexander lays out the opportunities at each step of Xerox's phase gate development process (PGDP) in this table:

How Service Can Enable Better Product Development:

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Preventing Common PGDP "Critical Failures"

TTM Phase	Critical Failure	Prevention Approach
3.1M	Market assessment misses emerging requirements for quality, cost, or timing; offering goals therefore established with significant marketplace gap (e.g., price-premium available for "highest quality" overestimated).	Ensure (a) a full, unbiased Market assessment is completed before an offering proposal is generated (to avoid a "results-driven" assessment) and (b) prior assessment "failure modes" are understood /avoided.
3.1P	Offering proposal has "hidden" significant gap to offering goals (e.g., cost of service underestimated).	Ensure (a) all costs, quality, and delivery time-table assumptions are vetted by core stakeholders and (b) prior proposal "failure modes" are understood /avoided.
3.2	Offering technology immaturity results in critical gap between offering design and offering goals (e.g., marketplace-driven up-time requirement compromised).	Ensure (a) all cost, quality, and delivery time-table compromises are vetted by core stakeholders and (b) prior design "failure modes" are understood /avoided.
3.3	Internal reliability testing fails to capture that offering is not on required maturity curve (e.g., ease of customer self-service overestimated).	Ensure (a) comprehensive testing procedures and targets are agreed to *up-front* (to avoid timetable-driven quality compromises) and (b) prior testing "failure modes" are understood /avoided.
3.4	Offering does not meet launch readiness criteria (e.g., availability of complete service documentation).	Ensure (a) comprehensive launch-readiness criteria are agreed to *up-front* and (b) prior launch-readiness "failure modes" are understood and avoided.
3.5	Lack of effective post-launch review results in failure to capture "lessons learned " for application to future offerings (e.g., "hidden" design flaws).	Ensure post-launch review develops "lessons learned" both with regard to the offering and the overall PGDP – and that these lessons are then *used* going forward.

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"There is nobody who is with the customer, and with your current products, more than your service team," says Alexander. "The more you can plug that knowledge into your process as you're designing, you can really build on what your customer are liking and change what your customer is frustrated by. You're really putting your company in a much better position."

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The executive summary above was written by staff from watching the presentation and many other ideas were presented. Members may watch the full presentation if wished by logging in.