LEARNING LAUNCH

A learning launch is an experiment conducted in the marketplace quickly and inexpensively. It forms a bridge between customer co-creation and commercial rollout.

PRINCIPLES OF A LEARNING LAUNCH

1. Set tight boundaries.
   Since this is a learning launch and not a pilot, it is important to plan for it to end. Set concrete limits on key variables, such as time, geography, number of customers, features, and partner firms.

2. Design with a sharp focus on key assumptions.
   Review the key assumptions that you identified. For those that you indicated will be tested in the market, keep in mind the following when planning your in-market experiment:
   a. See to it that the prototype reflects the key assumptions you need to test.
   b. Translate the assumptions you plan to test into specific metrics.
   c. Be explicit about how you will generate the data you need, especially behavioral data.
   d. Be explicit about the search for disconfirming data.
   e. Match the budget to an affordable loss calculation.

3. Build a team that is both disciplined and adaptive.
   The composition of the team makes a difference. Yes, you want the passionate supporters of growth and innovation on the squad. But having a few skeptics around will ensure that you are not designing a test to give you the answers you want. Also, someone with a financial perspective is valuable—and project management skills are essential.

4. Work in fast feedback cycles.
   The learning launch is when your growth project first makes contact with reality. Expect surprises and be prepared to respond quickly.

5. Make it feel real.
   A successful learning launch must make it easy for all participants to suspend their disbelief. It needs to feel real to customers, partners, and your internal team. Everyone has something at stake. If it feels like a game or make-believe, then the behavioral data it generates are suspect.

6. Have back-up plans for everything.
   As the old adage says, if it can go wrong, it will go wrong. Be prepared for the worst-case scenario. Having a process for handling dissent, resolving conflicts constructively, and adapting on the fly is a great asset to any in-market experiment.

What Works?