New Product Launch Process Adoption in the Technology Industry

Technology Commercialization

Process from within a Case Business

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Abstract

Establishing a thorough understanding and implementation of best practices in the product launch (commercialisation) process is seen by many academics as a key determining factor that yields the most effective results for global product launches.

Although this is advocated by a number of academic peers as forming one of the most critical juncture of the launch process many organisations appear to neglect the associated risks by not investing resources in fully structuralising the process up from the beginning of the process.

Previous academic research has established three critical elements; firstly strategic and secondly tactical and thirdly, organisational integration. The aim of this study is to analyse, evaluate what challenges are presently facing the case business when starting, and in the subsequent execution of the product launch process. Some of the specific areas evaluated included; the various types of techniques being adapted to facilitate the process and how their strategic and tactical decision making combined with inter-functional cooperation affects the overall performance of global product launches for the business.

After carefully evaluating various methodologies, the researcher determined that a case study approach was most practical and suitable as an optimum research approach for this study. The reasoning for favouring case study research over other research approach is that the aim of this study is to build a context within the case business and therefore, this method provided the flexibility to explore the problems that emerged during the data collection process.

The research has shown a clear pattern that the case business appears to be somewhat detached from strictly adhering to academic theories or adapting best practice principles for product launches. It also reveals that internal and externally directed strategic activities are equally important and has an effect on the performance of the global product launches. It’s can be also argued that the process of centralisation and consolidation should be taken into consideration ahead of commercialisation and as a result, product strategy and organisational integration presumably plays a more crucial role in realizing the commercial benefit the business is seeking.

Declaration

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Student Number: 16112733

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1. Introduction

1.1. The Background of the Study

Product launch is defined as a process that introduces a new product to market design to achieve maximum performance, it has two key objectives; initially, forming acceptance and inclusion of the key project groups in the design and development process through exceptional internal marketing. The second is to monitor all aspects from the introduction through to product completion (Hollensen, 2015; Gbadegeshin, 2017). When introducing a new product to market it is essential to acquire competitive advantage (Porter and Millar, 1985). Today, the pace at which a product is brought to market is crucial, and requiring ever-increasing speeds of product development in order to ensure new products are ready for market release within tightly defined timeframe (Lakemond *et al.*, 2013). While vast communication opportunities do exist to help share new products to markets rapidly advancing markets and globalization, mean businesses still face increased competition from new entrants and incumbents as a result. As a consequence, this contributes to shorter overall product life cycles (Chiu *et al.*, 2006). The rate at which the product may become outdate, businesses are forced to bring new products to market quicker (Ali, Krapfel and LaBahn, 1995). The process of designing a product launch strategy and skilfully managing it through each of the steps of the product development cycle will involve identifying issues and any problems at the very beginning of the launch process. It could be the very thing that separates success from failure (Langerak and Jan Hultink, 2006).

Constant advancements in the technology world, means organisations have to become increasingly more global and cross functional, especially with regards to new technological advancements in connectivity and breaking down of silos (Cross, Rebele and Grant, 2016). This requires responding to the market either by developing new and innovative products or by extending current product lines and by looking at ways in which to address new market segments which in turn brings added complexity to both the technology industry and other markets (Gbadegeshin, 2017).

It is argued that the product launch process should carry out marketing launch activities starting as early as concept evaluation and product development stages. The alpha / beta tests should provide inputs into gradual development and continued revision of the marketing plan and then followed by repeat end-user concept screening and target marketing positioning, product line changes and tentative sales forecasting (Wienclaw, 2017). Furthermore, these activities should aid in completing augmented product requirements planning; which should support beta/gamma testing in the initial stage of the product and help to finalize a core marketing plan (Dibb, 2012; Hollensen, 2015).

In addition, these steps than can provide valuable input in to the creation of a comprehensive launch plan. Which can then reliably support the development, testing and implementation components such as promotional materials, setting up of viable distribution channels, calculation of product pricing and thus providing all the information required to train and equip the product sales force (Crawford and Dibenedetto, 2014; Johnson and Sohi, 2017). This requires finances, resources and commitment and arguably to be one of the least managed parts of the product launch process (Chiu *et al.*, 2006; Talke and Hultink, 2010). Ultimately, the company may only receive one chance at launching a product in the market successfully. Albeit, at this most critical stage, organisations seem to accept those risks by virtue of the fact of not strategically investing in the process up front (Chiu *et al.*, 2006; Kirchberger and Pohl, 2016).

When considering globalization, this can become even more challenging as a result of the added complexity of economies of scale across markets and success or failure of a product launch can depend on how well formulated a strategy that the organization has employed from the beginning of the process (Johnson and Sohi, 2017). Consideration such as, how well the organization understands their potential customers, the market, market competition, do they validate, how they test, how effective are communications, and finally, how the overall process is managed (Kuester, Homburg and Hess, 2012; Hollensen, 2015).

One ethos of understanding the product launch (commercialization) dynamic is by observing how the various activities and components contribute to the new product launch process in the chosen technology sector. Past research has established two critical launch decisions, firstly strategic and secondly tactical (E. J. Hultink *et al.*, 1997). The aim of this study is to analyse and evaluate what challenges are facing the business case when executing the product launch process; what techniques have been adapted to facilitate the process; and how their strategic, tactical decision making and inter-functional cooperation affect the performance of global launches.

1.2. Justification for Research

The product launch process has received significant attention from academic researchers in the past. Commercialisation viewed as the most important of stages in the product development process and many current publications adequately document the recommended processes that companies should follow when initially developing a product from both a technical and marketing perspective (Guiltinan, 1999; Talke and Hultink, 2010; Wienclaw, 2017). Academics also recognise the need for commercialisation to be initiated at the technical launch stage along with other marketing activities and they highlight elements in the process that can heavily influence and contribute to the performance of product launches in general (E. J. Hultink *et al.*, 1997; Tzokas, Hultink and Hart, 2004; Johnson and Sohi, 2017). Further literature review has documented attributes that contribute to product strategies and includes sets of decisions that the organisation should consider when designing and implementing this process from the beginning of the process (Chiu *et al.*, 2006; Lakemond *et al.*, 2013; Hollensen, 2015).

Recent academic research reveals that even though organisations are aware of potential opportunities for process improvement during each of the product launch phases, they can further optimize returns by adopting a best practice approach. An example of this might be where a process is lacking any stringent compliance steps; recognition of this deficiency and then decidedly implementing new policies that place adequate controls ensuring greater overall governance of the launch process (Kirchberger and Pohl, 2016).

With this in mind, the researcher decided to pursue further exploration on the chosen dissertation title and subsequently consulted with the Chief Executive Officer of the case business. This was conducted so as to improve and refine the chosen topic title and objectives and in turn provide further narrowing scrutiny of the research topic by focusing the core analysis on the adoption of product launch process by the case business, determining whether or not best practices are currently in use and identifying potential areas for improvement.

What’s more, attainment of this knowledge may provide the researcher with a foundation for furthering career aspirations in the technology industry as well as improving the application and process improvement of the product launch strategy. The researcher believes that this research may also add value to the case business by potentially increasing efficiencies in the product launch process. Thus eliminating any gaps observed throughout the course of the case study.

1.3. Research Aim and Objectives

The aims of this research are to understand the dynamic of the product launch process in the chosen case business and to provide an insight into what, how and why certain processes are occurring. This is so that the case business may understand the effect of the current situation and perhaps improve their time to market, including product launch performance while at the same time remaining competitive (Hu, McNamara and Piaskowska, 2017). On that footing, the researcher will be focusing on the applications employed by the case business to achieve successful product launch and for the purpose of this exercise, the case business under examination will remain confidential. Common and different process frameworks were identified to assess how it influences the new product launch process. The researcher will also seek to gain better understanding of the cross-functional team dynamic and any possible correlation that may influence the performance of the launch process. These issues will be critically analysed and compared to existing theoretical frameworks and results of earlier studies.

The following research objectives were identified under this study:

Objective 1

(a.) Why and what strategic and tactical launch activities are seen to impact on the performance of global product launches.

Standard marketing techniques and tools have limited utility for the product launch process. It presents oneself to be difficult to apply in practice, and it appears that a clear understanding of the technologies and markets is essential to the applications and the factors that eventually leads to success (Geum, Jeon and Lee, 2016; Kirchberger and Pohl, 2016). The innovation and marketing literature suggests that different managerial processes, structures and tools should be used when enhancing the effectiveness of the product launch process (Hultink *et al.*, 1999; Talke and Hultink, 2010; Tura, Hannola and Pynnönen, 2017). Thus, there is a need to look at the ways in which to drive a learning process that enable and build strong product launch capabilities while recognising the moving targets which are represented in terms of technology, markets, competition and strong leadership (Chiu *et al.*, 2006; Gbadegeshin, 2017). Moreover, the ability of the organization to translate it's technological advancements into commercially viable processes and products (Klompmaker, Hughes and Haley, 1976) whilst determining whether their inputs and outputs measure anything of relevance (Tidd and Bessant, 2013; Tura, Hannola and Pynnönen, 2017).

Objective 2

(b.) How does organizational integration play a role during the product launch process in enhancing the product launch success.

Product launch teams are generally cross-functional and must collaborate with internal and external sources that may have a number of facilitating factors (Lakemond *et al.*, 2013; Millson, 2015). The team needs to be able to balance insights they gain from the customer and with the desired outcome (Klompmaker, Hughes and Haley, 1976; Kirchberger and Pohl, 2016). It is a very iterative process and questions the merits of market needs, technology used, whereby the technological possibilities are usually coupled with market opportunities (Heirati and O'Cass, 2016; Gbadegeshin, 2017; Johnson and Sohi, 2017). However, technologies sometimes have their limitations, or the market is not ready, or no obvious commercial applications can be anticipated, or the product may open up a completely new market without customers knowing that they actually wanted it in the first place (Tidd and Bessant, 2013). Therefore, the organisation needs to have a clear idea of what type of innovation will affect success and failure and allow some scope for process innovation while managing and executing on the product launch process (Millson, 2015; Griffith and Lee, 2016).

Objective 3

(c.) Does a centrally managed global product launch approach have an impact on the performance of a global product launch strategy.

A single comprehensive process must govern the product launch and its strategy (Klompmaker, Hughes and Haley, 1976; Hazrul and Pandit, 2016). This is to ensure that the organization can manage the complexity and align across different regions, documenting and capturing the process with clear milestones, roles, and responsibilities, including protocols that define metrics in terms of how the defined acceptance and success criteria is linked back to the performance of the product launch (Hultink *et al.*, 1999, 2000).

By adopting a standardized global approach to product launch management, it enables streamlining a systematic application of specific methodologies to ensure consistent execution which aligns with the core business strategy and benefits realisation (Hazrul and Pandit, 2016; Johnson and Sohi, 2017; Wienclaw, 2017).

1.4. Research Question

The research Question of this paper reviews under the following topic heading,

'New Product Launch Process Adoption in the Technology Industry.'

And the research question specifically sets out to evaluate the,

'Technology Commercialization Process from within a Case Business.'

The aim of the research question is to examine the importance of a formal governance structure for evaluating and when deciding on a product launch strategy to improve product launch performance. This dissertation analyses the strategic product launch process of a case study business and in turn seeks to highlight and evaluate strategies seen as the most effective for global product launches.

1.5. Scope and Limitations

Product launch strategy is widely researched and is primarily concerned with the last stage in a new product development process and therefore reviewing every aspect of the subject would exceed the physical time constraints of this research. Therefore, this study will only provide for an overview of a new product launch processes when involving the strategic, marketing perspective and which is respectively based upon the literature reviews carried out in order to create a baseline understanding required prior to the actual research being conducted.

Since this is a case study, the validity and the extent of the research was limited to the case business and one particular product launch process that was identified. It is also important to emphasise that the researcher had access to a restricted number of management and limited time to raise questions which reflect meaning of the facts presented during the course of the research (Tharenou, Donohue and Cooper, 2007).

1.6. Dissertation Structure

The researcher decided that in order to achieve as clear and comprehensive a perspective as possible that it was necessary to formulate comparisons of findings under this research study. The researcher's structure developed as follows,

The literature review chapter will review the over-arching academic work conducted in the field of product launches and only those considered relevant to the research study would be emphasized. Chapter three provides justification for the research methodology and the choices made in terms of the overall research strategy, approaches, philosophy used and methods applied within this study. Chapter four discusses and analyses research findings. Chapter five will close the research study with conclusions and some recommendations for practitioners and future research and evaluation.

2. Literature Review – Theoretical Background

The main purpose of a literature review is to provide framing of the research problem, pinpoint the relevant concepts, methods and facts, and to position the research (Ridley, 2012). This section examines and provides a more general view of the theory and practice behaviours in the case of a new service or product launch, and assumes that the person who reads is familiar with the basics of this field.

2.1. New Product Launch Strategy

Product launch strategy is concerned with identification of the benefits that will be delivered to the customer and has been considered an important aspect in enabling the market performance of new products being launched (Talke and Hultink, 2010). Hereof, consideration should be made to the launch strategy components as laid out in figure 1 (E. J. Hultink *et al.*, 1997). If the methodically mix of strategies is adapted; it should provide insight into where, when and why to launch. While these steps prescribe a potential roadway to success; according to the research, this process is not fully employed since it requires substantial upfront investment and may be time consuming (Ali, Krapfel and LaBahn, 1995; Guiltinan, 1999; Hultink *et al.*, 1999; Chiu *et al.*, 2006).

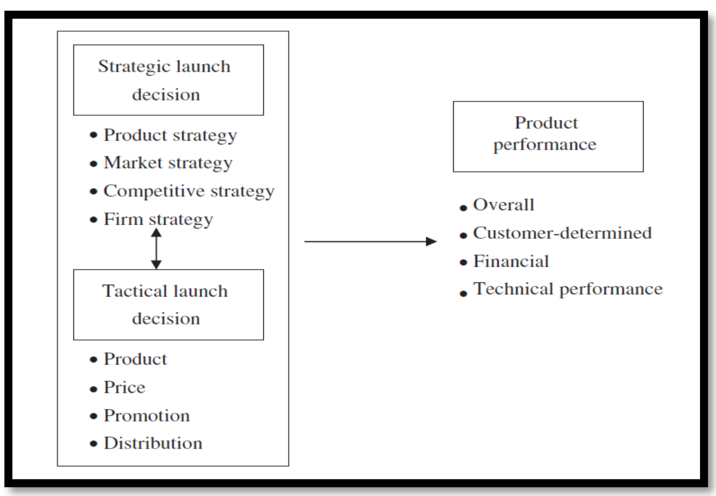

Figure 1: Industrial New Product Launch Strategies and Product Development Performance. Reprinted source Hultink (1999).

It is important to note, that although there is a lot of emphasis placed on the importance of a well thought out strategy for success. Research suggests, that it cannot be observed in isolation when identifying the common attributes that contribute to product launch strategies and how it actually impacts a new product launch success at a local or global level (Klompmaker, Hughes and Haley, 1976; Chiu *et al.*, 2006). It is equally as important that organizations look at the technical and marketing activities in parallel and include set of decisions that set the overall tone and direction of the product and the decision that defines the target market and how to sell, whilst considering the impact of organizational subsets (Choi, Shin and Lee, 2013; Wienclaw, 2017). In fact this is a highly iterative process, with radical or incremental changes such as the continuous new product introduction and followed by entry of new competitors; this part may not be as straight forward (Henderson and Clark, 1990).

Research recommends that good practice should consider remembering that by simply maintaining a new technology in the market will not equal to its overshadowing business priorities and a common misconception of, winning at all costs (Cooper, 2000).

Further studies conclude that product or service can become inherently obsolete and should be taken out of the market as soon as possible unless a new solution can be derived from it (Tidd and Bessant, 2013; Shubhabrata, 2014).

An organization can master the new product launch process by carefully navigating the launch cycle and tactical decision making steps required. This can be realised by applying some rigidity to the launch management systems designed, developed and by better management of applications throughout the process (Wienclaw, 2017). This suggests that early decisions being made must align with the factors that are eventually associated with the success of a launch (E. J. Hultink *et al.*, 1997; Talke and Hultink, 2010).

Similarly, considerations should be made for development techniques including further evaluation of existing concepts, how cross-functional teams must be established, what marketing techniques and channels will be used and implemented, as well as reviewing the sales organisations and customer engagement requirements while maintaining a competitive advantage (Blythe and Zimmerman, 2005; Crawford, 2007; Lakemond *et al.*, 2013; Michel, 2014). Nevertheless, the company should make further efforts to consider what it wants to achieve with the product in terms of the budget available and marketing activities planned keeping in mind that requirements needed to sustain the product launch throughout the process may vary (Klompmaker, Hughes and Haley, 1976).

2.2. Marketing Plan

In the world of the internet; the marketing element of a product or service is one of the most vital aspects of sustaining a business. The literature informs that a marketing plan is a process that clearly outlines specific steps required to achieve the marketing activities and objectives (Blythe and Zimmerman, 2005). An effective marketing plan should evaluate all of the systems employed in order to address new product development, product distribution, product pricing, promotions and sales forecasting for the product solution offered by the business (Dibb, 2012). A process in any of the above activities that captures one or more inputs and transforms or adds value to them may provide further outputs (Dell'Era, Marchesi and Verganti, 2010) also suggesting that organisations need to think about the value and meaning of products in buyers lives and businesses.

This business process can be supported by various functional areas of information systems such as market research and analysis, promotions and advertisement, pricing, sales analysis, product positioning analysis and so forth. This can then be followed by developing a way of bringing this into the innovation process, where both knowledge and technology push and market pull can be positioned (Slack, Brandon-Jones and Johnston, 2016; Vickery *et al.*, 2016) and strengthening the underlying commercialization process and the overall strategic direction of the organization (Dell'Era, Marchesi and Verganti, 2010; Geum, Jeon and Lee, 2016).

Nevertheless, the organisation must ensure that the launch process is congruent with its core strategy (Hultink *et al.*, 1999; Michel, 2014). The ability to launch a technology by moving a product from an idea to market swiftly and efficiently is pivotal in the context of relative changes in market conditions (Nevens, Summe and Uttal, 1990; Rosas-Vega and Vokurka, 2000). Once a concept is successfully realised; the last step in the commercialization process is to make sure that it remains competitive in the market and achieves the potential value that has been generated (Cooper, 2000; Geum, Jeon and Lee, 2016).

2.2.1. Competitive Analysis

According to Porter, an organisation has a competitive advantage when it has an edge over rivals in captivating customers and where it counter competitive forces (Porter and Millar, 1985).

Corresponding to the rules of measurable success, it is essential for an organisation to have clear vision with focused investment in assets such as information infrastructure and technologies to further achieve a competitive advantage (Christensen and Raynor, 2013). Some sources of competitive advantage consist of attributes such as being the first in the market (i.e. having first mover advantage)(Lieberman and Montgomery, 1988); having the best made product; delivering exceptional customer service; producing at a lower cost than rivals (Ingenbleek, Frambach and Verhallen, 2013).

It is also seen to be achieved by attaining a proprietary technology, success formula or unique algorithm (Geum, Jeon and Lee, 2016). Likewise, these benefits are seen to be achieved by having greater organisational alignment and shorter time between the initiation, developing and testing of new products (Sombultawee and Boon-itt, 2018). A business , having made a name for itself and earned a reputation of providing customers more value for their money, is also seen to add distinct advantages (Hitt, Ireland and Hoskinsson, 2012).

Furthermore to compete globally and in order to develop and sustain resources, research advises that organisations must have a defined and unique skillset with specific assets that are superior to those of its competitors (Michaux, Cadiat and Probert, 2015; Griffith and Lee, 2016) and also holding the ability to negotiate these resources in the market place (Harmeling *et al.*, 2017).

Together, resources and capabilities provide the organization with distinctive competencies to make the organisations offering potential at a lower cost through value creation (Rangan, Menezes and Maier, 1992; Ramarapu and Lado, 1995).

Kotler (2009) has suggested that the major segmentation variable for customer markets are geographical, demographic, psychographic and behavioural. So, it may also be ascertained that there is a relationship between segmentation, targeting and positioning and relevant to the research conducted (Harmeling *et al.*, 2017). Critical elements of segmentation are also seen to involve the strategic analysis of competition (Geum, Jeon and Lee, 2016). Although the process has been identified in the literature, there appears to be no one correct way to go about it and therefore, a mix of data analysis coupled with industry experience is often a fundamental determining factor needed in order to carry out effective segmentation (Michel, 2014).

The literature also suggests that this process requires the organisation to focus on environmental trends and how the factors and conditions may influence profitability potential, while predicting competitor actions, responses and intentions (Hultink *et al.*, 2000; Ledwith and O'Dwyer, 2008; Bhargava, 2014). The overall objective is to understand how new or improved product compares to competitive alternatives and how closely it aligns with core business and strategy (Beal, 2000; Kim and Meyers-Levy, 2008). Therefore, it is important that the organization collect the legitimate information that support the strategic and tactical goals of the organization (Ledwith and O'Dwyer, 2008). This process is also seen to assist in identifying competitors based on customer attitudes and behaviours (Geum, Jeon and Lee, 2016). Moreover, it also concerns itself with weighing market responses with regards to any strategic developments that the company initiates (Blythe and Zimmerman, 2005).

Although it might seem obvious, it has become evident in the literature, that companies are likely to dismiss their competitor strategies, except occasionally in relation to pricing strategy (Rosas,Vega and Vokurka, 2000; Montgomery, Moore and Urbany, 2005; Pavlou and El Sawy, 2006; Ingenbleek, Frambach and Verhallen, 2013).

The above section illustrates that it is critical that segmentation, positioning and creating differential advantage are essential part of an organisations marketing strategy. It also suggests that these elements need to be clearly defined and communicated through development by way of a value proposition. Therefore, further development of prospective positioning was decided to be investigated in the following sections.

2.2.2. Positioning

In consideration of changes introduced by the advent of the internet; it is vital to realise that most businesses competition is simply a mouse click away (Tidd and Bessant, 2013). Research finds that it is increasingly important for an organisation to ensure sufficient importance is placed upon retention of its current customer base (Husen, 2017).

Evidence indicates that the internet has affected companies worldwide and economic transformation illustrates that there is a shifting emphasis from a process of simply conducting business transactions that also now requires inclusion of a further essential need by organisations to manage existing relationships effectively (Harmeling *et al.*, 2017). Hence, leveraging and managing is equally as important as new product introduction and development (Husen, 2017). If data is appropriately collected and safe-guarded, it can also uncover the next potential products or product line extensions that customers may value (Crosier, 1986).

The above potentiality to create additional value is seen to be of key strategic importance for an organisation (Fernandes, Reis and Di Serio, 2017).

Research informs that Marketing managers must determine how to change the scope of the organisation in order to address new markets and new product capabilities (Sombultawee and Boon-itt, 2018). It is also seen that techniques should be used to identify tactical strategies that increase sales while identifying and navigating through target segments (Hultink *et al.*, 2000). Yet, keeping in mind how the organisation will compare with its rival in the context of product quality, service quality, price, fulfilment of time and what the value is perceived by their customers (Rust, Lemon and Zeithaml, 2004; Hu, McNamara and Piaskowska, 2017).

Academics also argue that focused strategic positioning in the marketplace can include building on existing strengths and offering product customisation (Bolos *et al.*, 2016; Griffith and Lee, 2016; Fernandes, Reis and Di Serio, 2017). This is also seen to be achieved through raising performance excellence by providing favourable pricing to existing and loyal customers (Ingenbleek, Frambach and Verhallen, 2013).

Transactional excellence may be realised by coupling pricing information and providing access to real time information on products. Relationship excellence may also be improved upon by creating an excellent brand experience through additional design influence factors and rational elements such as, ease of use, content quality and overall performance (Harmeling *et al.*, 2017).

Subsequently, the above positioning aspects remain applicable since its often found relevant with Porter's competitive approach to cost of leadership, product differentiation and innovation (Porter and Millar, 1985; Michaux, Cadiat and Probert, 2015).

Others have defined positioning as the act of plotting the product in a way that establishes a distinctive role in the target customer's mind (Beal, 2000; Zhao, Libaers and

Song, 2015). The concept of positioning was advanced by Ries and Trout; the authors articulated that product already has a distinctive position in the mind of customers. With this in mind, the overall objective is to define the product to solve customer problems (Crosier, 1986; Ries and Trout, 1986). Further enabling the organisation to focus on important key attributes of the value proposition (Ledwith and O'Dwyer, 2008). The task of an organisation is to determine how the service or product will be perceived by the prospect coupled with an understanding of whether or not it will differentiate the offering from a competitor (Cooper, 2000; Blythe and Zimmerman, 2005; Ingenbleek, Frambach and Verhallen, 2013).

It is equally as critical to test the new product concept which has been defined as a statement which describes the benefits the new product will provide to the customers versus other products or solutions the prospect is currently using with description of the form and technology though which these benefits will be realised (Crawford and Dibenedetto, 2014; Wienclaw, 2017). However, in business products, radical new technologies are difficult to test when customers cannot visualise the benefits (Blythe and Zimmerman, 2005; Fernandes, Reis and Di Serio, 2017).

2.2.3. Product Launch Plan and Training

Product launch not only draws in on marketing collateral requirements that communicate the product features but also ensuring that each function within the organization are informed about the upcoming product launch and is ready for it (Lakemond *et al.*, 2013; Husen, 2017).

A well thought out product launch demands a launch plan, complete with a list of activities that clearly communicates the deliverables in relation to time (Blythe and Zimmerman, 2005; Ledwith and O'Dwyer, 2008). Generally, these are categorized in the following areas: product management, branding, channel management, and sales and post sales (Hultink *et al.*, 2000). Milestones mark specific deadlines for testing, commencement of the alpha, beta and gamma version to a controlled group of users, and making the product generally available (Fernandes, Reis and Di Serio, 2017). The objective is to release the product and gain quick wins (Beard and Easingwood, 1996) and especially making sure that the original concept thus far holds (Tidd and Bessant, 2013). The success in the market deemed to depend on how controlled and consistent product launches are and will determine the performance to a high degree. Hence the need to train and motivate the organisational teams promptly across all markets (Fernandes, Reis and Di Serio, 2017; Johnson and Sohi, 2017).

The overall aim here is to enable the sales element of the organisation to sell the new product which dependent on customer-orientated team, dynamic training programs, employees with autonomy to make decisions and solve problems and collaborative team (Griffith and Lee, 2016). Apart from product knowledge, driven salespeople must also learn a sales strategy for the new product. For organizations to stay focused, employee attitudes and actions must be customer orientated and need to recognise the role of training in customer service and engagement development (Geum, Jeon and Lee, 2016). Often organisations fail to acknowledge that new product launch will always involves sales challenges (Bhargava, 2014). When introducing a new product, the aim is to achieve time-to-market share as quickly as possible (Jackson, 2007). This signifies the need for adequate investment in sales training and the need to be bedded in the process before the product launched to market. The greater innovation presented, than more extensive training is required to skill and develop the team before the launch (Fernandes, Reis and Di Serio, 2017).

2.2.4. Customer Relationship Management

This section reviews the marketing and sales activities and primarily pre-sales activities of organisations. The ability to integrate processes, flexibility in development and the range of the products and services offered, as well as the need to corporate on a strategic level, have been emphasised by many scholars.

Literature suggests, that integrated marketing communication has influence both in theory and through professional practice of communication management (Sombultawee and Boon-itt, 2018). These activities can include marketing literature creation, a communication plan with existing and potential prospects, pricing goods or services and resource based activities with corresponding time related aspects (Harmeling *et al.*, 2017). This should include increased relationship marketing and direct marketing and the development of new information technologies, even by fragmentation of media audiences and saturation of media channels (Blythe and Zimmerman, 2005). Among some of the aspects listed above, technical information plays a vital role, as organizational customers require more information.

Therefore, organisations are attempting to learn more about customer needs and behaviours in order to widen, lengthen, and deepen their relationship with them by implementing methodology for managing an organisations interaction with it customer and potential clients (Geum, Jeon and Lee, 2016). Consequently, the business might be required to innovate and automate a number of its activities such as marketing, customer service, sales organisation and technical support process. It is now in fact necessary that organisations need to constantly adapt its approach to how its target prospect will react and use their information (Harmeling *et al.*, 2017).

In order to develop and rollout a successful customer relation management strategy, organizations need to consider policies and business processes including key metrics for managing customer service, provide employee training throughout all areas of organisation with key focus which values customer service and satisfaction (Bolos *et al.*, 2016). Data collection, analysis and sharing in all stages of customer experience is equally important, for example, demand generation, sales, support and so on need to be recorded, analysed and shared in order to optimise the benefits of managing customer relations (Ingenbleek, Frambach and Verhallen, 2013). Therefore, the organisation needs effective tools to be able to execute on customer relationship strategy by having a well thought out and through promotional campaign in place (Harmeling *et al.*, 2017).

In addition, selling works best as part of an integrated marketing campaign (Michel, 2014). Sales organisations find it easier to call on prospects who have already heard something about the organization through various channels (Fernandes, Reis and Di Serio, 2017). Therefore, to enable effective sales organisations, marketing teams need to execute on marketing strategy which designed to aid the sales process from prospecting through to closing of sales and above (Massey and Kyriazis, 2007; Wienclaw, 2017). This also means finding the balance of efficiency of marketing communication channels so that the product offering reflects what the customer wants and expects (Geum, Jeon and Lee, 2016). These activities are adapted for specific regions, representatives, contract size, industries and so forth that are designed to inform the customers and the market that the new product is or could be available on the market, and the problem it solves may satisfy their requirements (Annacchino, 2007).

Nonetheless, sales and marketing organisations often have divergent views about the relationship between selling and marketing and this can sometimes be a source of conflict amongst them (Bhargava, 2014). Likewise, a campaign plan's entire purpose of a pre-launch or also known as market testing is to target a group of potential prospects and get them onto a sales leads list (Hultink *et al.*, 2000). From there, an organisation would then release additional information such as news, videos, images, e-books, reports, and other types of media throughout the launch campaign as this could help cultivate the energy needed to carry the product forward (Blythe and Zimmerman, 2005).

Employing media is critical in the launch of a new product and customer relation management because the media, in whatever form, creates advantage. This leverage enhances the result of the initial launch (Beal, 2000). Consequently, the organisation and product name brought to the forefront of the marketplace. Without this, the organization could not dedicate enough energy, time, and funds to achieve the same impact (Annacchino, 2007). It is equally important to maintain the marketing momentum after the product launch phase in order to successfully sustain future sales growth.

2.2.5. Incentives and Reinforcement

Peer reviewed articles suggest that sales performance can be improved by training but it is limited to innate ability. Ultimate success in selling is seen to be very much associated with certain staff characteristics and specialised skillsets are required (Johnson and Sohi, 2017). Equally, motivational techniques may trigger sales organisations to realise higher sales by pushing products through the direct or indirect distribution channels. Similar to customer promotions, incentives may be extended and designed in a way that drive behaviours to excelorate and sell new products (Hultink *et al.*, 2000; Ingenbleek, Frambach and Verhallen, 2013). Broadly speaking promotion is the sales incentive scheme. Rewards are presented to participate that allow for target based earnings over and above normal sales remuneration (Fu *et al.*, 2010).

When establishing sales incentives schemes, one must consider targets, timing, success criteria and rewards (Fu *et al.*, 2010). Typically these schemes may include new product introduction or slow moving item down the pipeline, development of new prospects, to obtain wider exposure or coverage or even just to develop new sales skills (Johnson and

Sohi, 2017). Depending on the compensation plan, additional bonus points could be earned for over performing on a specific short-term targets such as boosting sales of a particular product or signing numbers of new customers (Schoenherr and Swink, 2015).

Additionally, it is critical to make sure that the product launch framework has been adapted according to plan and therefore rapid and accurate information sharing through the organisation is a must (Tzokas, Hultink and Hart, 2004). Both vertical and horizontal communication is desired in linking together activities and people concerned with implementation (Kuester, Homburg and Hess, 2012). Problems tend to occur during the adaption phase, and the outcome might be depended on how fast or how well plans are put into action and are not limited to competitor's actions; there also might be inter-departmental resistance, loss of key staff, shifting business environment and so forth.

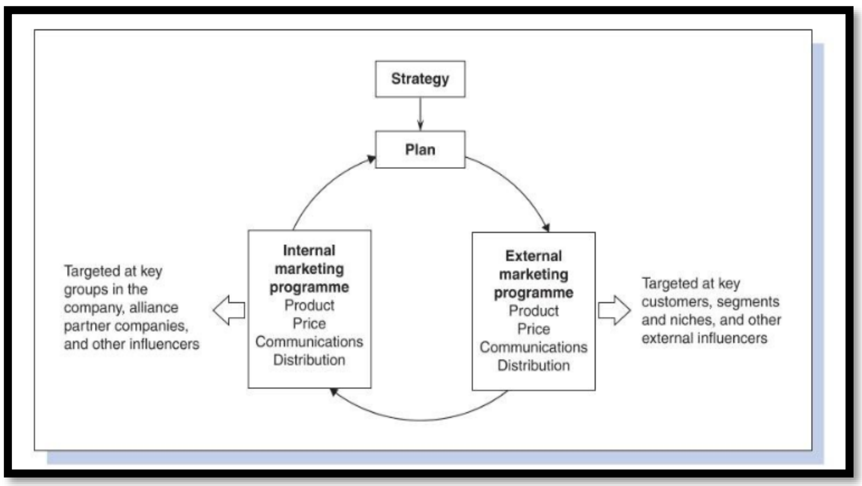

Figure 2: Internal and External Marketing. Reprinted source Piercy (2009)

One approach is to enhance the adoption of internal marketing methods as shown in the figure 2 by designing programs that win line management support for new strategies; cultivating attitudes and behaviours in working closely with customers; and retaining those who have problem solving skills required for superior execution of the strategy (Piercy, 2009; Griffith and Lee, 2016). However, evidence has shown that organisations fail to deliver on planned user experience as a direct outcome of insufficient internal marketing (Massey and Kyriazis, 2007; Kuester, Homburg and Hess, 2012). This suggests that organisations need to look at transforming company's internal marketplace and consider how these changes can be introduced. The critical element in this process is to gain buy-in from the staff to the strategy employed and may also rest on company and network wide efforts to put the product launch into effect (Srinivasan, Wuyts and Mallapragada, 2018). One comprehensive way of dealing with difficulties seen in the execution of the marketing plan is by employing a balance scorecard. This is a formal governance control system that re-enforces a given business strategy by factoring activities across fiscal, customer engagement, internal organisational process, know-how and growth or innovations (Talke and Hultink, 2010; Tidd and Bessant, 2013).

Considerable benefit of the balance scorecard is that it helps to form a broadly defined strategy into much defined actions. Through delivery and monitoring of these key performance indicators, management can then assess and reinforce the success of the product launch and also revise and adjust as necessary (Klompmaker, Hughes and Haley, 1976).

2.2.6. Success Measurement

As the product launch plan is developed, performance criteria needs to be selected in order to monitor performance (Crawford, 2007). Formal performance measurement becomes more central to product launch planning and control activities as it helps document and drive the effectiveness of product launch actions and therefore a dashboard has become an integral tool for management (Talke and Hultink, 2010). A dashboard facilitates control of an organisations short-term activities and long term planning and it helps if objectives and processes are aligned with the product launch dashboard. This could also be used to evaluate internal processes like innovation and internal communication (Feng, Morgan and Rego, 2015). This allows the organisation to compare with planned results and identify further opportunities and potential performance gaps. Although, it has been acknowledged that there is a danger that the dashboard may tend to contain metrics relevant to assessing past performance rather those which give insights into present performance and future development. Nevertheless, it is critical to note that the general principle for product launch planning, implementation and control are the same (Kuester, Homburg and Hess, 2012).

2.3. Launch Tactical Decisions

The innovation literature in particular debates the relative merits of “market pull” and “technology push”, the usual compromise of truth is to agree on a paired model, where technological capabilities are joined with market opportunities (Michel, 2014). It's clear that the centre of marketing are the needs of the customer in attempt of creating value by providing services or products that satisfy customer requirements (Klompmaker, Hughes and Haley, 1976). However, the literature points out that there is a need of separating marketing strategy, new market entry; and tactical marketing that is concerning itself mostly with differentiating existing products or service, along with any extension to such products (Blythe and Zimmerman, 2005). Planning and implementing marketing tactics is complex because too many activities impinge on each other and almost all the activities of the organisation and its employee's impact on customers in one way or another. Controlling the process is far from simple and planning often seems to be a big task, when one considers the number of factors to be taken into account (Beard and Easingwood, 1996; E. J. Hultink *et al.*, 1997).

2.3.1. Marketing Mix

Marketing concerned with the wants of a customer, and thus "should begin with an analysis of customer requirements and attempt to create value by providing products and services that satisfy those requirements"(Tidd and Bessant, 2013).

Marketing mix is the set of variables that are largely controlled by the organisation, typically referred to as the P's: product, price, place and promotions and is designed to produce mutually satisfying exchanges with a target market (Blythe and Zimmerman, 2005; Talke and Hultink, 2010). Each of the marketing mix components should be controlled and influenced by the marketing manager while incorporating all the various elements to achieve optimal results and innovation (Chiu *et al.*, 2006; Dibb, 2012). Product innovation results can be seen in improved or in new products or service, and may alter the basis of competition (Beard and Easingwood, 1996; Ingenbleek, Frambach and Verhallen, 2013).

Product innovation permits for premium process introduction along with pricing and may result in price leadership. Accordingly "innovation in logistics may affect how product or service is made available to customers" (Tidd and Bessant, 2013), as well as sales channels and nature of targeted prospects. Innovation in media may present new points for promotions (Johnson and Sohi, 2017).

PRODUCT LIFE CYCLE & MARKETING MIX

Strategies	Introduction	Growth	Maturity	Saturation	Decline
Product	Basic product marketed	Product improvements or new product development	New product development; extension strategies	Extension strategies critical to maintain sales	Weak products withdrawn from market
Price	Cost-plus, skimming or penetration pricing used	Penetration prices slightly increase	Competitive or promotional pricing used	Competitive pricing used	Price cuts are made.
Promotion	Informative advertising used	Persuasive advertising used	Extensive advertising to remind customers of product	Aggressive advertising carried out to emphasize benefits	Advertising reduced to a minimum
Place	Selective or restricted distribution takes place	Intensive distribution or more distribution outlets are used	More intensive distribution or a wide range of distribution outlets	Widest range of geographical distribution outlets used	Selective distribution and unprofitable outlets are eliminated

Figure 3: Product Lifecycle and Marketing Mix. Reprinted source Dibb (2012)

Variation in marketing mix do not happen by chance; canny marketing managers formulate marketing strategies to win over competitor advantage and develop a plan how best to serve the wants and needs of the targeted segments (Griffith and Lee, 2016). When taking advantage and influencing the elements of marketing mix, marketing managers can create an offering that will achieve the competitive success initially envisioned (Talke and Hultink, 2010; Tidd and Bessant, 2013; Michel, 2014).

Consequently, focus is on making the product available at the right time, at the right place, at a price that is adequate to customers and with appropriate support, while taking into consideration the four major stages, which way products move as shown in figure 3 (Dibb, 2012). By understanding the typical lifecycle pattern, marketing managers are better able to maintain profitable products and drop the ones that are in decline. It also requires disseminating marketing communications with collateral that will assist customers conclude whether the product will in fact be able to appease their needs.

2.4. Organizational Integrations

The impact of organisational integration has been substantially developed along with the study of new product development and launch as explained by the number of articles published in scholarly journals that the primarily focus is on organisational integration such as those which use independent or dependent variables. Research studies mostly concerned with the link between organisational integration and target markets (Millson, 2015; Griffith and Lee, 2016; Bai *et al.*, 2017).

Organisations likely to organise into functional operations or departments and subject to the appointed role, will be determined how the specific function revolve within the organisation and outside world. The organisational structure and managers need to navigate, support and provide encouragement to enable and motivate customer engagement teams and operational support staff alike to provide satisfactory service. The intent is to promote and facilitate cross-functional collaboration rather than specialisation. Investing in centralised internal business processes that likewise advance cross-functional operations extending to engineering, marketing, sales, finance, product and operations working together to identify, assess, develop, launch and commercialise the new product concept (Richtnér and Rognes, 2008; Hoonsopon and Ruenrom, 2012; Lakemond *et al.*, 2013).

Comprehensive planning is critical when combining the skills and resources, as it requires trust, respect and willingness to share information with each other on various self-interest issues (Massey and Kyriazis, 2007). Realizing that conflicts will occur is also an important aspect in organisational integration (Millson, 2015). It is important to recognise the interdependence between functions as well being flexible in order to adjust to changing conditions and strategic requirements and accepting cultural differences and capitalizing on each other's skills and experience (Griffith and Lee, 2016). Particularly when it involves developing and transferring technology into commercial applications, special attention needs to be given to the process that's going to realize the strategy, especially when appointing a team to successfully achieve the transfer and building validations and acceptance mechanisms into the product launch plan that achieve an effective result (Hoonsopon and Ruenrom, 2012; Bai *et al.*, 2017).

2.4.1. Product Launch Roles & Responsibilities

Launch teams may consist of the people that represent each functional area across the organisation (Cooper, 2000). The people of the launch team are competent in their area of expertise and should be accountable for their deliverables by owning centralised launch process and making sure that information about the product launch disseminated throughout their respective area (Richtnér and Rognes, 2008). Can happen in many different forms and are not limited to implementing pricing structure, designing internal systems, validating and running acceptance tests, or providing training, and would be very typical process in large organisations (Geum, Jeon and Lee, 2016). It may also mean being responsible for tracking milestones and controlling due dates to ensure the launch is staying on track (Blythe and Zimmerman, 2005).

2.5. Conclusion

The literature review highlights that organisations must have a product commercialization process and that a product lifecycle is the underlying reason for the necessity of a product development and launch process since products can be replaced by newer technologies and the time to market share may shrink rapidly. Organisation must work hard to excel on the determinant attributes such as how it will attract, serve, and retain the customers targeted for its range of products. The marketing and product development process must be simultaneous. The formation of management teams across world markets is a challenging task, which requires team leadership and cooperation. Planning, implementation and controlling marketing tactics are a vitally important link in a series of strategic activities in order to realize a successful campaign. Designing a centralised formal governance structure, with clearly defined success measurement that aligns with global product launch strategy would drive efficiency and accountability across all business units.

3. Research Methodology

Choosing the right research methodology recognised as being the most important element in a research study and has been acknowledged that it can be also the most difficult step in this process. Research methodology involves underpinning the theoretical background (Remenyi, 1998), interpreting an issue, reviewing the literature, group and analysing data and forming concepts and solutions for the problem being investigated(Collis and Hussey, 2008). It is important that there is clear research strategy that provides a clear direction of the process and in the area of which the research is conducted. A case study is one such strategies (Yin, 2014) and for the purpose of this paper; a case study research strategy will be adopted. This case study seeks to examine the product launch (commercialization) process in the case study business, with an aim to add value to the case study business. The case study strategy will generate the ability to focus on “what” and “why” questions (Yin, 2014; Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2015) and should help to establish whether any association or factors have affected the way in which they managed their product launch process.

In order to define the study, research objectives were set and a number of research questions were raised. The nature of this research requires encompassing a range of subject domains within a new product development process including technical and marketing launch processes. However, to position this research in a specific context, the researcher primarily investigates the new product commercialization process from a marketing launch perspective. Therefore, a case study approach was selected as the strategy for the research and mono source of evidence conducted through qualitative inquiry using semi-structured focus group interview (Collis and Hussey, 2008; Fisher and Buglear, 2010; Horn, 2012).

The philosophy for selecting a case study research approach above other research strategies warrants adoption within the research, as its aim is to build a context within the case business. Providing the flexibility to explore the problems that emerge during the data collection process (Ponelis, 2015). The researcher began by conducting a brief overview of the theoretical basis of research strategy and its fundamental role under this research. The use of a case study discussed and warranted by presenting the motive for adapting a case study strategy for this particular research. While capturing case study criteria to ensure validity and reliability of the research.

3.1. Proposed Research Methodology

Research is a planned activity directed at laying out the foundation of new facts and information about particular phenomenon. Scholars (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2015) have described this process as a "framework for collection and analysis of data to answer research questions and meet research objectives providing reasoned justification for choice of data sources". On a related note, (Fisher and Buglear, 2010) identifies techniques as the " study of methods" and the focus is to identify the problem to be solved. A well-known scholar Saunders et al. (2015) introduced the research "onion" as a means to illustrate the problems and the choices of data collection by peeling away the outer layers before reaching the median position, as shown in figure 4. When determining the research methodology, it is critical to take each layer in sequence e.g. philosophy, approach, methodological choice, strategy, time horizon and techniques and procedures (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2015). Although many definitions exist, the one put forward by Saunders is preferred here, and provides a framework for this research. The discussion here will be concerned with the research strategy and its applicability for the specific dissertation research study.

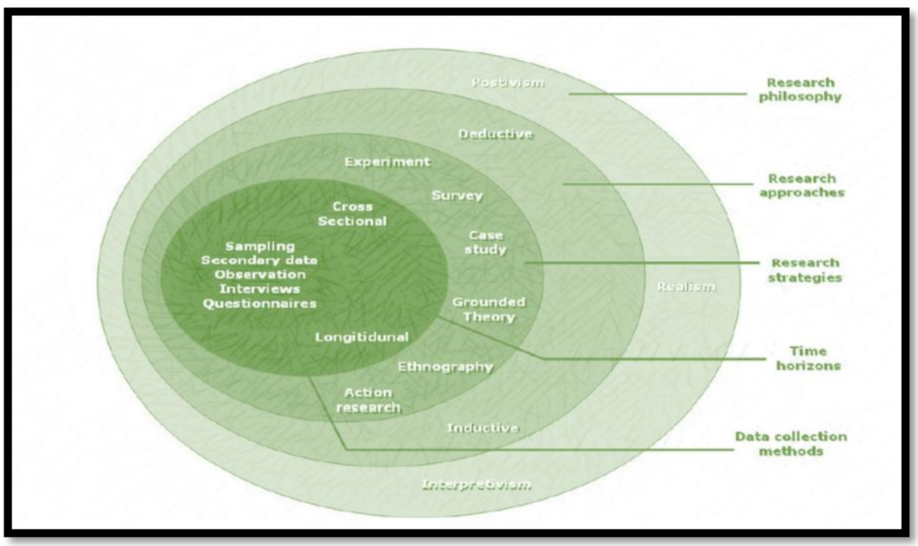

Figure 4: Research Onion. Reprinted source (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2015)

Remenyi (1998, p. 289) characterizes research strategy as "the basic philosophical orientation of the research". Brymand and Bell (2015), confers that research strategy relate to "a general orientation to the conduct of social research". Saunders (2015, p. 680) identifies "research strategy as general plan of how the researcher will go about answering the research question(s)" and the key is in identifying the research question and selecting the research objectives, the coherence with which these link to researcher's philosophy. Nonetheless, the choice of strategy will provide a framework for the actual work that will follow. However, Yin (2014, p. 9) has suggested and sets out as follow, "(a) the type of research question posed, (b) the extent of control a researcher has over actual behavioural events, and (c) the degree of focus on contemporary as opposed to entirely historical events".

Although, different strategies exist; it has been acknowledged, that there are large overlaps, therefore, it is essential to select a strategy that is most beneficial for the specific research study (Yin, 2014; Bryman and Bell, 2015; Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2015). The strategies generally discussed would be experiment, surveys, case studies, action research, grounded theory, narrative enquiry, ethnography, longitudinal study, participative enquiry, cross sectional and hermeneutics (Remenyi, 1998; Collis and Hussey, 2008; Bryman and Bell, 2015). For the purpose of this research study, a case study seem to be the most fitting research strategy to adapt. The subsequent sections will briefly sum up why the case study strategy was chosen over to other methods.

3.2. Research Strategy – The Case Study

Some scholars have described case study as a "methodology that is used to explore a single phenomenon (the case) in a natural setting using variety of methods to obtain in depth knowledge" (Collis and Hussey, 2008, p. 332). Referring that case study research can adapt different research techniques and can be used when the research study demands to obtain an in depth knowledge about particular situation. Whereas Yin has characterized a case study as "a study that investigates a contemporary phenomenon in depth and in its real-worlds context", while highlighting four different strategies (Yin, 2014, p. 237). In addition, draws attention that a case study can use single case as well as incorporate multiple cases. As asserted by Remenyi (1998) case study methods by its nature qualitative, however pure descriptive evidence can be converted into quantitative. However, concerns have arisen over lack of rigour, inability to generalize, demanding and intensive and avoiding bias(Collis and Hussey, 2008; Yin, 2014; Bryman and Bell, 2015; Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2015). It should be recognised that the research study could be augmented by logical tests: construct validity, internal validity, external validity and reliability (Yin, 2014, p. 45) and will be further discussed here within.

Yin has also proposed three conditions that can be used to test which method is the most suitable for the research study. These tests consist of "(a) the type of research question posed, (b) the extent of control a researcher has over actual behaviour events, and (c) the degree of focus on contemporary as opposed to historical events (Yin, 2014, p. 9)". Evermore a case study is preferred when a case study design helps to explain the process of a conundrum within the case study business to explore the "Why" and "What" questions that are difficult to explore in a traditional closed question survey. By doing so, the researcher can adapt a range of information gathering techniques while using personal observation, which will depend largely on qualitative methods. Since the research study has been developed to answer research questions, as (a) How does the case study business manage their product launch process and what impact it has on product performance? (b)What lessons can be learned from their current practice; (c) How and why the product launch has worked?

Further current research study questions will predominately consist of "Why" and "What" questions and therefore safe to say that this justifies a case study research approach. Furthermore, the research question being investigated is contemporary in nature; the researcher will not have full control over the product launches or processes examined, nor the process that influences the launch (Ponelis, 2015). The researcher has chosen to use the organisation in which they are currently employed as a single case study business, within which the product launch cross-functional team and two product launches are embedded cases (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2015). Therefore, satisfying the second and third conditions for deciding on a case study research approach.

3.3. The Case Study Research Philosophy

This section examines the way in which research data will be clustered in a way to answer research questions and will determine the research philosophy. Typically, when completing a research study, it is common to lay out the epistemological grounds or philosophical approach to demonstrate that what understood is what known (Bryman and Bell, 2015). Research philosophy well-known as a knowledge development in a specific field and the purpose is to answer a specific problem in a case business while developing new knowledge (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2015).

The case study could be positioned from couple of perspectives, realist or positivism and provides with an opportunity to choose in which direction the researcher would like to conduct the study. The advantage with case study approach is that the researcher has the ability to adapt a range of philosophical positions and tailor the research that is intrinsic to the phenomena investigated (Yin, 2014).

Nonetheless, careful consideration must be given to the design that will address the objectives under the study. For the context of this study to achieve the alignment, the researcher has approached the study from a pragmatic point of view and as stated by Saunders (2015), pragmatism is a viewpoint that disputes the “determinant of the epistemology, ontology and axiology adopted in the research question”. Further the nature of research questions under the study suggest that the research has reduced to subjectivism, interpretivism, value-based and emphasises the qualitative essence of the research philosophies as indicated in previous business and management research (J. Watson, 2010).

Research can be conducted by following a positivism approach as suggested by (Fisher and Buglear, 2010) and the qualitative case study approach will be adapted to explore the case business, which usually also identified with pragmatism and interpretivism (Bryman and Bell, 2015). Furthermore, it recommended that case study research positioned between idealism and interpretivism implying that it is common to adopt such a philosophical view (Ponelis, 2015). Since the research demands to understand and evaluate the findings from a participant’s subjective point of view rather than from the researcher stance. Likewise concerned more with how applicable is participant’s perspective to the study under the research than rigor. Supports the researcher’s decision to adapt case study research approach as the preferred research methodology.

3.4. Research Approach

The researcher has no control over the phenomena studied and as such, the researcher cannot manipulate the independent variables to observe the dependable variables. Furthermore, the quantitate strategy usually correlates with a more structured (deductive) approach and it is critical to ensure reliability. As already suggested, this researched inclined to lean towards a more inductive approach (Ponelis, 2015). Hence, survey methodology was considered not relevant for this research study. The researcher was also limited by time to undertake intensive research and combine into the case study business to observe the actual process from a longitude perspective (J. Watson, 2010). Ethnography did not appear applicable for this research study either. Grounded theory pursues a theoretical line of enquiry rather than to achieve representativeness and could be proposed as an alternative method for this research study. However, the researcher sought out to explore the situation in real life and examine how this is significant with regard to the case study business and might be applicable to similar product launches in the technology industry (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2015). It is critical to note, that the research is not seeking purely develop theory out of data but rather employ existing studies to the product launch process in the technology industry. For that, reason grounded theory was regarded as less suited for the research study when compared to case study strategy.

3.5. Secondary Data

According to Saunders (2015), researchers have proposed categorizing secondary data into documented, survey based and multiple source secondary data. This case study research will include both published summaries and contains documentation gathered by the case study business (information on product launches), academic books, industry related journal publications and peer-reviewed papers. The secondary data collected from NCI library catalogue, Elsevier and ResearchGate electronic sources were all used for writing up the literature review on the subject under the study.

3.6. Qualitative Data Primary Collection

A focus group interview qualitative collection method was chosen so that the researcher can concentrate on the product launch process rather than on the outcome. They are valuable for the research relating to evaluation of certain processes within the business (Bryman and Bell, 2015). This technique helps to identify all the variable elements, and explores the phenomena researched in more detail and seeks for unanticipated aspects of the headache under the research study. Since this is an exploratory research and the data accumulated through semi-structured interviews (Ponelis, 2015). These interviews were conducted in an informal setting to discover how each of the interviewee's think and feel about the product launch process and whether or not issues or opportunities exist or are not realized. The focus group interview was set up to clarify a documented process already in place, to identify problems, to understand what informs the decision making in this process, how the strategy is developed and various resources allocated. The key advantage for choosing this method was to obtain information about the selected group's perception and opinions, why this is the process, how they feel about it, also to observe their dynamic and provided a broader view of the research topic being investigated (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2015). Furthermore, given the limited time availability allocated to conduct this case study research, the researcher decided that in choosing focus group interviews it was found to dramatically save time compared to conducting individual interviews.

Additionally, the informality of the focus group setting provided participants an opportunity to answer questions openly further validating that the logic used for the purpose of this study was appropriate. The key element during this process was to ensure that while it was semi-structured, all participants had a chance to provide their individual opinions that in turn lead to highly productive discussions. The focus group interview session was audio recorded and subsequently transcribed at a group summary level.

3.7. Population

As regards to the characteristics of the focus group participants, scholars suggest that participants should share some common characteristic traits or aspects so that there are opportunities to realise most favourable level of engagement and situations may be avoided where one participant dominates the interview or does the opposite – withdraw (Bryman and Bell, 2015; Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2015). On that basis, the focus group consisted of five respondents, and to ensure that they were a sufficiently diverse group of people, the researcher selected participants from cross-functional teams. Each were chosen based on their seniority within the case study business and in turn invited to attend. Focus group participant responses were vitally important as they are leading experts in their field, and were found to work closely with the product launch team and to whom, collaborate with conflicting functions from both internal and external sources.

3.8. Analysing Qualitative Data

Choosing the right research method considered as being the most important factor in a research study and has been acknowledged that it can be also the most difficult step in this process. Research methodology involves underpinning the theoretical background (Remenyi, 1998), by formulating an issue, reviewing the literature, grouping and analysing data and forming concepts and solutions for the problem being investigated(Collis and Hussey, 2008). It is important that there is clear research strategy that provides a clear direction of the research process and in the area of which the research is conducted. A case study is one such strategies (Yin, 2014) and for the purpose of this paper; a case study research strategy will be adopted. This case study seeks to examine the product launch (commercialization) process in the case study business, with a view to develop a best practice framework for the case study business. The case study strategy will generate the ability to focus on "what" and "why" questions (Yin, 2014; Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2015) and should help to establish whether any association or factors have affected the way in which they managed their product launch process.

In order to define the research, research objectives were set and research questions were raised. The nature of this research requires encompassing a range of subject domains within a new product development process including technical and marketing launch processes. However, to position this research in a context and provide some substance, the researcher primarily investigates the new product commercialization process from a marketing launch perspective. Therefore, a case study approach adapted as an overall research strategy and mono source of evidence conducted through qualitative study achieved with semi-structured focus group interviews (Collis and Hussey, 2008; Fisher and Buglear, 2010; Horn, 2012).

Just to conclude, the rationale for favouring case study research compare to other strategies is because the view of this study is to build a context within the case business and this method provides the flexibility to explore the problems that emerge during the data collection process (Ponelis, 2015).

3.9. Ethical Issues

This paragraph highlights the importance of using the information collected in a manner that the discovery does not harm the population involved under the study. In principal approval was sought for this project in the earlier stages of the research. As part of the process, the case study business deemed necessary terms of reference for the research study, while ensuring that the agreed terms provided enough scope for the researcher to investigate the phenomena from different perspectives (Fisher and Buglear, 2010).

3.10. Limitations to Research

There can be a limitation associated with focus group interviews, for one, it might be challenging to get the participants together on time for the agreed group session (Collis and Hussey, 2008). A few candid and verbal participants may influence other person who take part during the course of group conversation. Due to the nature of group discussion, some participants may conform to the responses of other participants, even though they may disagree (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2015). The success of focus group interview process is seen to depend heavily on whether the researcher is skilled in managing the group interaction throughout the process.

Despite some of the limitations mentioned above, focus group interviews considered as invaluable tool for collecting qualitative data. Also can prove superior for research that is relating specifically to process improvements and when evaluating best practice (Fisher and Buglear, 2010).

Furthermore, the validity and scope of the research is limited to the case organisation and particular product launch process discussed. It is also important to stress that the researcher will be working within a limited number of resources and time to raise questions of the meaning to the facts presented during this research (Tharenou, Donohue and Cooper, 2007).

Although, a case study approach presents many advantages, one of the most prominent critiques is lack representativeness, replicability, difficulty in assessment, unclear comparative advantages; the issue of external validity or how it can be generalized are also present (Horn, 2012; Yin, 2014; Bryman and Bell, 2015; Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2015).

4. Research Findings

The results under this research study are conferred into themes within this chapter. The aim of this chapter is to construct and define the results of the content analysis, which is based on a focus group interview. As previously stated, the main objective were defined in order to provide a framework for the qualitative part of investigation by conducting a focus group interview with six case business product launch team experts whom represented the case from both an academic scholarship and the case business perspective. Hence, the participants were deemed able to provide a representative view on what would be useful for the process in which they discussed.

4.1. Objective 1 Research Findings

To investigate the strategic and tactical launch decision activities and the impact these activities may have on the performance of global product launch.

The researcher employed questions that helped to provide insights starting with gathering respondent's insights about their experiences, knowledge and understanding of the techniques and requirements during a new product launch. This lead to an evaluation and characteristic identification of the overall product launch process within the case business. Ultimately, in the end, responders were asked to identify the theoretical models or techniques that were being adopted to accommodate the product launch process within the case business in question.

4.1.1. Theme One: Product Launch Decisions

The results under study demonstrated that the strategic and tactical decision-making ability of an organisation plays a pivotal role throughout the product launch process. Focus group experts agree that technical, marketing and organisational elements should be considered in parallel when designing and managing the product launch process (Lakemond *et al.*, 2013). Both academics and focus group participants see this as critical requirement for the need to define scope, individual requirements, roles and responsibilities and have management commitment in driving this forward. Specifying what activities are going to lead to the concept realization; what are the milestones and how it is actually going to be commercialized, as it is all about the benefit realization and not just launching the product.

Case business is no different compare to similar organisation, as the participants point to the same challenges that are often tend to appear across the industry when executing on new product introduction and may crop up due to financial constraints. For example: “no clear go-to-market plan; no single product launch owner; lack of insight in to how the demand generation process is defined; lack of sales and marketing involvement in early stages; how sales estimates have previously been validated for accountability and so on”. Hence the fact that scholars draw on the importance of having strategic direction and decisions defined and not being limited to the type of demand sought (E. J. Hultink *et al.*, 1997).

The other element that was drawn upon is time-to-market being the priority. It was stated that even if the product is not fully ready, the preference often is ‘just to go live’ in order to ‘hit the deadline’. If the above mentioned checks are not present, undermine factors associated with launch process strategic management, such as goal clarification, testing and milestone validation, which may lead to missed and disconnected communication, threatens the quality and performance of the launch.

As of result, it is evident that many of the above activities are happening in isolation and may not be as rigorous and disciplined as the respondents may prefer. In addition, one major issue that been identified by the group is the overall process being “guided by minor feature and customization requests for specific customers” as opposed to strategic market intelligence. This may point out that global priorities are overshadowed by the need for local regional buy in, this in turn coupled with the group points of ‘questionable targets’ and ‘assuming these targets are always set’; yet again, likely to negatively affect the overall product launch performance (Ali, Krapfel and LaBahn, 1995).

A well- defined process means placing a new product into the market sooner and a well- prepared sales organisation can recognise the right opportunity, correctly evaluate the market size and deliver messages, and submit targets that are measurable and doesn’t compromise the success of the new product launch. Also providing the right content at the right time and assisting in the sales ability in delivering, seen to be as equally important.

According to the group, typically, the focus is on the ‘sales’ and ‘technical attributes’ due to lack of dedicated resources and business alignment. The group further outlined that this sometimes 'lead to duplicate efforts' in 'fixing bugs' which in turn may come with other operational issues between product and production system (Lakemond *et al.*, 2013). Although, participants were aware of the associated risks, there was seen to be a wider consensus that very often other functional and operational constraints 'took priority' when considering the overall product launch process and many agreed that this process should be "driven to milestones and not by the hard deadlines or potential outcomes". As pointed by scholars, when neglecting other functional areas, with no single owner for each launch or go to market involvement in early stages, with little organisational motivation and momentum ahead of the key launches, may prove challenging to achieve commercialization (Kirchberger and Pohl, 2016).

The success of the product launch is largely contingent on the approach and attention to detail and it is as vital to take a holistic view of product lifecycle management when considering performance success factors during a product launch (E. Hultink *et al.*, 1997; Hultink *et al.*, 1999; Bai *et al.*, 2017). By establishing a new common document and product launch portal that would serve as a project management tool for the entire product launch process. As envisioned by the participants the portal should contain all elements of the product launch phase with an overall timeline visible to all company (Kuester, Homburg and Hess, 2012).

Having said that, the team acknowledges that while the clear structure have not been present for most product launches discussed. Since the product roadmap has become a lot more crystallised coupled with some more defined process behind even so, due to lack of rigor there is still some danger that the product may not yield what the team thought it would turn out to be from the beginning.

4.1.2. Theme Two: Market Testing

As already called for the focus group responders attested and emphasized the importance of market testing, apparently "usually, there is very little movement ahead of the launch date and training is often separate from testing". By virtue, this step in the product launch process should allow an evaluation of the marketing plan and to test customer acceptance of the product, the strategy and the communication plan (Choi, Shin and Lee, 2013). Nonetheless, secondary data informs that sometimes this process can become confused with ideas generation and new concept development (Klompmaker, Hughes and Haley, 1976). Market testing allows to conceptualise the new product introduction process and concerns itself with the marketing plan and fine-tuning all the operations for success, and not solely with idea generation or concept development (Talke and Hultink, 2010; Hazrul and Pandit, 2016). This may be signalling that there may be few underlying issues in the case business under study. For one, an unwillingness to kill projects early, the acceptance and validation criteria are not stringent enough, may not have the right stakeholders involved at the right stage in the process, lack of communication, or even that senior leadership team is overriding them (Klompmaker, Hughes and Haley, 1976).

What's more, a few focus group respondents placed significance on the "method used to obtain the information needed to forecast sales estimates and having defined metrics for success" suggesting that there is a real need for a defined standardized demand generation process and metrics that can track its success. As formulated in the literature review above, market testing, provides a platform for gathering information and should allow for not only product improvements, concept testing, attraction generation, and minimarket rollout and in addition provide insights into customer budgets and the potential size of the opportunity (Hazrul and Pandit, 2016). Further sales organisations should be able to utilize the close relationship with innovative customers. Likewise, research study data findings support the fact that sales techniques such as speculative or controlled should commonly be used particularly for business-to-business products and target size identification (Talke and Hultink, 2010; Johnson and Sohi, 2017).

Consequently, from a sales and marketing perspective, providing early visibility into the product launch process is equally important. As clearly expressed by the focus group, the business has tried "to sell the product only when the product is about to be launched" in the past, from technical perspective it meet its deadline but in return sales fall behind on meeting the performance expectations. Supporting the apparent pattern that there is a need within the organisation to get further ahead of the curve in terms of being able to sell their innovative products more efficiently in conjunction with collateral or pricing (Johnson and Sohi, 2017). This process needs to be "bedded out" even though the product may not be released for few months.

With a particular focus on particular events that signals the business of its products readiness for commercialisation and underestimates the gravity and effort required leading up to and following a launch. Participants can only conclude "yet another step to be adopted" perhaps as a decision gate in determining whether or not the product is ready for a gradual or rapid global rollout and is this as a result meeting the global strategic priorities for the business (Hazrul and Pandit, 2016).

4.1.3. Theme Three: Launch Management Systems

All focus group interviewees admitted that there was value to be gained by setting validation rules, defining acceptance criteria, including control and contingency plans during and post the product launch process. It is evident that the case business under study has not been firm in designing acceptance and variable tracking and measurement criteria with feedback highlighting that there is no formal uniformed governance structure in place and that setting of sales targets was not backed in accountability, as they would have expected. Ultimately, the success of the product launch performance can be measured only if the organization got out of it commercially what they wanted (Johnson and Sohi, 2017).

Scholars reciprocated that the success is partially dependent on the effort that the organization puts into the product launch planning stage. According to (Chiu *et al.*, 2006; Annacchino, 2007) the means to success in the product introduction is often attached to the product launch strategy which is used. Therefore, implementing a launch control plan is equally important as developing a marketing plan. The launch control plan lays out product launch activities leading up to the product launch, that allows time to review planned results versus actual outcomes, document lessons learned and layout the next steps (Ramarapu and Lado, 1995). As pointed by scholars, establishing milestones and measuring them against actual deliverables seen as an essential step during the product launch. This is to not only oversee and regulate the process of and associated risks, but to encourage the right behaviours across the launch team and reinforce them with meaningful incentives.

The case study findings also suggest that in some cases, for example the sale that were being forecasted against a new product being launched were grossly overestimated with no traceable process history of how the projected sales figures were first decided upon and how they were initially calculated. Certainly, it is evident that some type of formal sales forecasting structure is lacking or has previously been forecasted as estimates based on product that has taken to market without complete or formal validation of market entry steps recommended to be taken.

In summary, the group illustrated in many cases that there was an obvious shifting of ownership of tasks within the process and that there was an absence of transparent communication, accountability and leadership and that core functions such as engineering, marketing, sales, operations and customer engagement teams often do not work together effectively. Moreover, it highlights that there is a lack of standardized governance and performance measurement systems that may indicate that core business priorities are disconnected from launch success of the case business, leading to a risk of misaligned practice (Lakemond *et al.*, 2013).

4.2. Objective 2 Research Findings

The aim of this objective was to obtain feedback from focus group participants about an inter-organizational, cross-functional team corporation; and how the process enhances the product launch success. The questions were designed in a way that challenged their views and ability to work and manage the cross-functional relationship, analysing critical areas and the likelihood of converting their activities into tangible product launch success. This prompted questions about how to enhance and streamline some activities that would lead to collaboration that is more effective.

4.2.1. Theme Four: Early Cross - Functional Involvement

The focus group emphasised that pre-launch meetings should be introduced for the entire launch team and felt that there was a real need for complete cross-functional involvement before kick-off. As this could serve as an introduction to the project by discussing the concept, including possible features, benefits with potential customers in mind, setting the tone and pace for the launch (Kuester, Homburg and Hess, 2012). As provided by scholars it would also facilitate cross-functional team interaction and help to avoid some of the problems that may sometimes become apparent with production complexity, which may also result in rework and increased cost (Lakemond *et al.*, 2013).

This call out by the group demonstrates that the management of a new product introduction is a complex process and highlights an understandable need for cross-functional involvement early on and then further encouraging that regular checkpoints are present for the duration of the process (Bai *et al.*, 2017). This supports scholars views that a well-designed product launch plan requires the functional expertise by having a solid plan from marketing and proper positioning, target market research and analysis (Fredericks, 2005). Product commercialization should be given considerably more time than merely as the last stage in the product design. Product launch process is an intrinsic part of the new product development cycle and must involve the right stakeholders from concept to the actual product commercialization, with clearly defined roles and single owner that oversee the end-to-end management (Kuester, Homburg and Hess, 2012).

Case business has demonstrated that they have been giving some thought and drawing in marketing resources earlier in the process to enable such things as launching of key whitepapers, definitive product descriptions including specifications and press releases as soon as the product opportunity is comprehensively defined. As this is a way for the business to understand, early on what the organisation is actually offering to the market and secondly to enable the sales team to become familiar with the concept and possible advising potential existing or future customers of what to expect post product release.

In addition, since “people have been gunshot” to proactively fix things and sell what they thought the product is, but it is not. Further showing a clear pattern that part of this needs to come with changing the organisations ability in terms how the business performs and putting product out into the market, consistently, in time and in a manner that aligned with the initial expectations. It is all about delivering on what has been set out to be achieved; getting everyone involved early and gaining an understanding for what product is coming out. Then feeding the right information so that the team is confident and aggressively out with customers selling and winning new business (Ellis, 2013).

Consequently, “due to lack of dedicated resources available” within the case business, adds a level of complexity, not always, global priorities defined or understood. Demonstrating, that the organization is not only lacking common process but also indicating that the business should focus more on defining and agreeing on product roadmap priorities and follow through in what they set out to achieve. The conclusion from the group appears to show that while the commitment is there, it is lacking the execution (Massey and Kyriazis, 2007) as the need for some customization and local buy in may take the precedent, which does not always seem to be warranted.

The best practice that seen proposed by scholars, is where each cross-functional team is a strategic partner and held equally responsible for product launch outcomes. Others argue that the core building block for coordinating knowledge and ownership should sit within the specific function (Bai *et al.*, 2017). Ultimately there should be one decision maker, usually being the role of a product manager, as they should be the voice of the customer and own roadmap, so on that basis they should have the expertise and ability to override or make the final call (Lehmann and Winer, 2002).

Perhaps the case business under this study should look closer at how their teams are formed, integrated and where the ownership and decision-making lays within the process, and how to adapt the right behaviours.

4.2.2. Theme Five: Communication and Trust

As already touched on above, focus group respondents have referred and focused in on factors such as communication and trust, which seem to be down to the lack of information transfer in a timely manner, the quality or validity of the information received and the way it facilitates problem solving during the product launch process. The marketing and product innovation literature analysis identifies communication and trust as vital contributors to effective cross-functional and interpersonal co-operation (Kwaku Atuahene-Gima and Felicitas Evangelista, 2000; Massey and Kyriazis, 2007).

Consequently, it is evident that the case business under this study has failed to deliver on internal marketing and there might be some underlying frictions, which affects the current working relationships and disrupts the productivity of other function/s. One approach is to enhance the adoption of internal marketing methods by implementing programs that win leadership and line management buy in to execute on new strategies (Piercy, 2009; Kuester, Homburg and Hess, 2012). Formal performance measurement systems becomes more central to product launch planning and are set out to implement a given business strategy across all the functions (Talke and Hultink, 2010).

Furthermore, the frequency and type of communication used during the process is equally vital, as scholars point out "sharing project data and facts helps build creativity" (Massey and Kyriazis, 2007), facilitating role and responsibility definition brings clarity to the process and task ownership, encourages more open conversations, organizational integration and problem solving (Kwaku Atuahene-Gima and Felicitas Evangelista, 2000).

New product launch management demands different functions with "distinct skills, resources and faculties, to work together effectively" (Massey and Kyriazis, 2007). Accordingly as summed up in the literature review, the case business should actively encourage integration, direct marketing and open communication towards common objectives of product launch teams by investing in appropriate structures (Millson, 2015). Unclear and confusing messaging coupled with inconsistent product launch process, leads to inefficient use of time and organizations resources (Lakemond *et al.*, 2013). Providing clarity on global priorities, critical activities and designing a formal governance structure, inter and cross-functional corporation will lead to have a positive impact on the product launch success (Cooper, 2000; Massey and Kyriazis, 2007).

4.3. Objective 3 Research Findings

The third objective was established to determine how centrally managed global product launch impacts the performance results of a global product launch (commercialization) strategy. The researcher had formed questions that allowed participants to share ideas in terms of how product strategy is managed and what the case business under this study has adopted in the past. In addition, how their elected strategy approach would influence the overall success of product launch performance. Moreover, the group was asked to identify best practices, processes or applications that could be further investigated.

4.3.1. Theme Six: Centralisation

Initially, the focus group had divided views in terms how product strategy should be approached. At first, a participant signalled that it would be a good idea to take a regional approach when developing product launch strategy. The secondary data suggests the opposite: it would be hard to work that way and difficult to formalize and adapt the behaviours the organization was after (Richtnér and Rognes, 2008). When evaluated further, it is safe to conclude that their reasoning was down to the fact that the expert had employed customization not only at the market but also at the customer level compared to utilizing commonly known practices in the industry (Beard and Easingwood, 1996). On that footing, the expert was well used to only one way of working, it seemed feasible, nonetheless, that after hearing everyone else's position; the expert joined in to conclude that a centrally managed global strategy is the way forward.

Implementing a single comprehensive product launch process is vital (Tzokas, Hultink and Hart, 2004). The product built as a global system so that operationally the case business still can have one team that makes the changes or adapts the product at the local level, rather having huge teams in each region. Some proposals emerged from the group discussions; as an example, creating a 24-hour operation. One example provided by a responder describes the importance of ensuring worldwide coverage where "one coder goes to bed in Singapore and another one wakes up in the UK and then the work is carried on by US and so on, so essentially establishing a 24-hour operation.

Either way, customer engagement and sales teams must be present locally. Likewise, the group point out that there are many areas such as cost and organizational implications from having built local systems as opposed to centrally and therefore it is not necessarily the right way to go. Nevertheless, the point of a global strategic approach is that the team can pick up the phone to anybody, anywhere by email or video call and therefore it would make sense to have designed product strategy from the global approach and have it locally adapted (Fredericks, 2005).

On another note, an interesting point brought to light by the group was that – "the product is becoming more difficult to generalize" and "make it applicable to fit all" or "may not meet needs in certain markets". Thereby flagging that here might be some anomaly present in terms of how the global product strategy is defined and how the priorities are in turn managed. Even so, there could be a simple explanation, the organization may be going through some changes following an acquisition and might be trying to figure out what processes the case business use to have vs the current situation and the direction it should take following the integration (Christensen *et al.*, 2011). It also highlights that there may be too much flexibility in terms of individual customer product customisation demands placed after the launch phase of a standardised product has taken place. While this may have initially proven a successful method of winning new customers in the past, it now also appears to be creating mixed messages between key departments involved in the launch process. Since, this is phenomena outside the research problem investigated; it is still advisable for the case business to consider the point further.

4.3.2. Theme Seven: Project / Product Manager

Likewise, respondents mostly acknowledged that there is a need for having a dedicated project manager, one whom is seen as someone who could support the product manager to drive the requirements, running technical and marketing launch activities in parallel, while working with people across the business. Respondents suggested that this should be someone with a clearly defined role and ownership of the process and who can manage market entry timing and support the success of commercialization. Secondary data suggests that well- managed, timely and formulated processes will result in removing unnecessary noise out of the system, reducing time to market and ultimately drive adoption and product launch performance (Kuester, Homburg and Hess, 2012).

The group felt that by empowering product managers to lead the end-to-end launch process would provide them with sufficient autonomy to deliver on the global priorities and providing the appropriate system in place to carry out the role. The role of the product manager is seen by the participants to drive the process and ultimately ensure success of the launch. In addition, by centralising activities into well-designed focused roles, frees up the time of those, who have owned tasks across numerous launch related activities (Massey and Kyriazis, 2007).

To further this, a couple of respondents have made arguments about the current role of product manager within the organisation and their lack of control and governance in the process (Beard and Easingwood, 1996; Crawford and Dibenedetto, 2014; Wienclaw, 2017). This hints that it may be worthwhile for the case business under the study to review this closer in order to define roles and responsibilities, their position and how the process should be governed going forward.

5. Conclusions and Recommendations

5.1. Conclusions

The key to this study was to research the new product launch process and its effect on the product launch performance of a case business within the technology industry. The goals of the three objectives set out under this research were to investigate and understand how product launch decisions are made from within a case business perspective, and furthermore determine how organisational integration impacts on new product launch performance.

The primary goal of the theoretical analysis was to clarify and understand what strategic and tactical elements are recognised as best practice in successfully managing global product launches. The purposes of empirical findings were to asses and learn about the process applied in the case business and what decisions should be taken into consideration when approaching global launches.

Objective One:

(a.) Why and what strategic and tactical launch activities are seen to impact on the performance of global product launches.

The case study identified characteristics mainly related to product launch decision making, market testing and launch management systems. Under the first of these themes, the researcher concludes that while the participants of the case business appear to understand where, what and why issues are emerging during the product launch process, they are unable or do not have autonomy to implement changes from a strategical or process standpoint.

Further, the entire launch process seems to be driven predominantly by a deadline milestone, rather ensuring products are fully tested before the launch and release phase. It further concludes that certain areas of the launch process are now attracting a greater focus and demand such as on sales and technical adjustments that in turn appear to pull attention away from other critical areas such as design and test team functions.

In addition, this case study also reveals three key points, firstly, that in some cases, comprehensive market validation is not taking place in every instance or the product was launched to market before they had been given an opportunity to fully understand how it works. Having broader customer conversations sooner in order to really understand what the common needs are, not only from a customer perspective but also from a product and its production point of view.

Some challenges and disconnect exists in terms of forecasting sales methods used and can be concluded that in certain instances sales forecasting was not developed in a conclusive manner whereby key metrics and standardised methodology were not strictly adhered to so as to track against actual sales performance which has undermined the product success. This, the researcher believes may have allowed for some detachment to occur or loss of traction at a priority point during the launch phase and may in fact correlate with the findings and deficits seen in sales forecasting and planning. Coupled with lack of comprehensive process and goal clarity, and alignment with business priorities shown to have an impact on the performance of global product launches.

Objective Two:

(b.) How does organizational integration play a role during the product launch process in enhancing the product launch success.

It has become evident during the course of this study that the further the product launch team has visibility into what's coming down the pipeline, the further it is possible to bring the right stakeholders together. In addition, can be concluded that the entire product launch team should be assembled at the beginning of the process for all future product launches. Thus providing a more thorough and dedicated use of cross-functional resources and in turn driving marketing and channel enablement by validating the commercial readiness to realise the benefits initially set out by the case business to achieve.

Even more, it is apparent that early cross-functional involvement facilitates collaboration, communication and enhances the product launch success. Provides a platform for strategic partnership, develops the know-how and drives success and accountability across the board. Although the case business under this study has some challenges yet to overcome, it is clear that in order to achieve a competitive advantage it must involve the right stakeholders from concept to the actual product commercialization, with clearly defined roles and single owner that oversee the end-to-end management.

The researcher believes that the further the product launch team has visibility into what's coming down the pipeline, the further it is possible to bring the right stakeholders together, building trust and pulling the project around.

Objective Three:

(c.) Does a centrally managed global product launch approach impact on the performance of a global product launch strategy.

The case business under the study has shown to be heavily focused on particular events that signals the business of its products readiness for commercialisation and underestimates the gravity and effort required leading up to and following a launch. Lacking somewhat in a solid formal governance structure and responsibilities for specific stakeholders appears to shift due to what is determined by the researcher as a lack of dedicated resources that may in turn facilitate a smoother processes flow. It is evident that the case business appears to be somewhat detached from strictly adhering to academic theories or adapting best practice principles for product launches.

In can be concluded that it is critical to design a single true centralised process, with single product owner for each launch and clearly defined success measurement indicators that aligns with global product launch strategy would drive efficiency and accountability across all business units. This is especially valid for the case business global launch process under research; the most important element is not only if the organisation has the product ready on time, but that functional teams are able to skilfully carry out the execution and adaption necessary.

5.2. Recommendations for Future Academic Research

Although this research has provided an overview of the product launch process and its applicability to drive product launch performance, there are areas that could be addressed further. Product launch management and its strategy is a widely researched topic however only few have drawn parallel in from technology industry perspective, particularly within the privet sector.

The researcher feels that is a further necessity exists to expand on the importance of individual elements within the process considering the dynamic among the various factors. Also, in looking at how the new product launch directly targets its competition and whether by gathering input from the receiving end there could be information that the innovative business can use to input and start their product commercialisation performance.

Future research could also explore new product launch strategy and the aspects and characteristic that may add value in constructing strategy hierarchy for attaining product introduction success.

5.3. Recommendations for Practitioners

The success of the product launch is contingent on the approach and attention to detail and it is as vital to take a holistic view of product lifecycle management. Therefore, product launch practitioners in the technology industry would be encouraged to look at adapting a single, comprehensive product launch process to control risk and improve the success and performance of the product launch. A well-designed process is seen to result in lower cost to launch, faster time to market, and increase adoption and impact. Further, a well- prepared sales organisation might recognise the right opportunity, correctly evaluate the market size and deliver messages, and submit targets that are measurable and will steer the success of the new product launch. The key is for the practitioners to appreciate that product launch is vital business process that requires a dedicated team of experts and is demanding in achieving global strategic objectives and sustaining benefit realisation throughout commercialisation.

Recommendation One – Introduction of a More Definitive Process Structure

Certain elements might be seen to improve efficiencies, for example; by clawing back into a more rigid process driven structure and giving more consideration not only from a strategic element, but also from a marketing and organisational integration perspective.

Recommendation Two – Further Market Research before Deployment

Another solution might be for the case business to tailor new products closer to general market needs or a local customer population. As opposed to shaping a product by somewhat biased and individualised customisation requests, as this can ultimately lead to a narrow focus of a specific product with significant design complexity that may not suit for the localised customers the business originally intended in chasing. It is further recommended that potentially further market investigations are carried so that better visualisations can be made prior to the design phase of a new product.

Recommendation Three – Designing a Centralised System That Measures against Strategy

The researcher recommends that the case business should design and adhere to a truly centralised process which clearly defines success measurement parameters that aligns with global product launch strategy and is seen that it would drive efficiency and accountability more effectively across all business units.

Recommendation Four– Establishing Accountability for Processes

It is recommended to introduce more accountability and competency resources for stakeholders with a clearer definition of budgets and expectations for delivering on the projected targets and commitments. In addition, by centralising activities into well-designed focused roles, it would be seen to free up the time of those, who have ownership of specific tasks across numerous launch related activities and will allow time to concentrate their efforts on a specific goal each time.

Recommendation Five – Greater Availability of Content and Specification Information

At the end of the day, commercialization is all about enabling the sales organisation by ensuring their training is comprehensive and keeping them informed, and so as sales content is aligned and not simply limited to tactical, technical or strategic content. It is recommended that this information is controlled and made available from centrally managed resource libraries and effectively coordinated by the product launch team.

Finally, the findings throughout this paper suggest that by ensuring excellence of best practice is followed during the product launch management process it can be seen as key contributor to the success of new products and thus influencing the product launch performance element. It’s can be also argued that the process of centralisation and consolidation should be taken into consideration ahead of commercialisation and as a result, product strategy and organisational integration presumably plays a more crucial role in realizing the commercial benefit the business is seeking.

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Appendix

Appendix A:

Submission of Thesis to Norma Smurfit Library, National College of Ireland

Student name: Ligita Osipova **Student number:** 16112733

School: ____________________________ **Course:** Masters of Business Administration

Degree to be awarded: Masters

Title of Thesis: ____

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One hard bound copy of your thesis will be lodged in the Norma Smurfit Library and will be available for consultation. The electronic copy will be accessible in TRAP (http://trap.ncirl.ie/), the National College of Ireland's Institutional Repository. In accordance with normal academic library practice all theses lodged in the National College of Ireland Institutional Repository (TRAP) are made available on open access.

I agree to a hard bound copy of my thesis being available for consultation in the library. I also agree to an electronic copy of my thesis being made publicly available on the National College of Ireland's Institutional Repository TRAP.

Signature of Candidate:

____

For completion by the School:

The aforementioned thesis was received by__________________________

Date: _______________

Appendix B:

Sample Consent Form that has been adapted for this study

Title of Research Project

"New Product Launch Adaption Process in the Technology Industry"

Name of Researcher: Ligita Osipova

Course: Master of Business Administration

- I confirm that I fully read and understood the focus group information sheet provided which relates to the study of this project
- I understand that my participation in this study is voluntary and I can withdraw from the process at any time
- I give my permission to record the focus group interview through audio recording measures
- I give my permission to the researcher to use direct and indirect quotes in their research project
- I agree to take part in this focus group interview solely for the use of this research project and I understand that it is completely confidential and anonymous

Name:	**Date:**	**Signature:**
Researcher Name:	**Date:**	**Signature:**

Appendix C:

Transcript of Focus Group Discussion

*Names of participants have been changed and expert titles removed to ensure confidentiality.

Linda, Billy, Dilly, Jordan, Edward, Bob

Moderator: Let’s start, to start with thank you all very very much for coming. I really do appreciate the support and your participation. The topic I have chosen, is taking a case study, being case business technology and looking at best practice for product launch starting from the start to the point where the product is launched to the market, sold out to customers and then adapted for use.

I am trying to learn and understand more about the tactical launch activities that we have gone through during the process and overall gain an understanding of how you understand the process works and what has been done or hasn’t been done. Just to help you focus your thoughts, I have chosen AYZ & MNH product launches and thought were best examples as you have been involved in that process already so you may have an understanding where case business is coming from or what you have or haven’t done or what you haven’t heard has been done. There are no wrong or right answers and if you could provide me with insights and we can develop questions from there.

First questions: please provide an overview of the process and how you see its working? Who would like to start?

Bob: Are you talking about the actual introduction the buying out to the customers or are you talking about the process that leads up to the process that leads to so about starting from the development and integration stage it's always about the customers. So, starting from the initial product identification of what we want to do, leading in to the actual doing and then the engaging with marketing, sales and all the rest in preparation for going live. So, it's the full product development lifecycle that you're really talking about.

Moderator: I am investigating from starting the identification, leading into doing and involving everyone else, so the commercialization process starts at the same time as the actual product cycle starts because in terms of case business starting to develop something new and getting marketing to execute on the initiative; Does that help?

Bob: Well, I haven't seen any real justification or validations of these projects are these new product features prior to them arriving into the product world. I know that when previous product manager was here and what they did. Let's take one example the 'ZYN' revamp product that he did an initial call out to the sales guys to try and validate if there was a need for it out there and if they felt the customers were looking for it and try to get from sales some estimate of potential revenue out of it. So, that's positive so, we are starting off the very first point is justification that we're going to do this based on some numbers. Now, I suppose my question would be, how solid were those numbers? There were numbers there but where they come from and how realistic were they? So, in that process we did the whole pain point and the need first initiated by sales identifying 'ZYN' as something that was needed by customers. There was an actual revenue number put beside it. So, that's I suppose a relatively good starting point to say, customers actually want this and here's how much we think their willing to pay for it. There might be some questionable elements to that as to how we came up to those numbers and just how much the customers actually wanted it or was it just something that was sitting there not properly finished, that we thought we could sell but that was the first point in the process. So, product management came up with his process for evaluating the main visions for Case business for the year, which I think is a really positive way of doing it as well. You know, you want to have a vision; you want to have something that the company is trying to achieve you in that year. If you don't have the US you can find yourself sort of meandering aimlessly from one project to another as one priority jumps above another one and some fires burn. So having a vision for the company is really important, Product Manager had that vision that by the end of the year we were going to have our three rocks complete. The person was very passionate about having no disruption to that as well because again, disruption kills the whole product delivery process. So, we had three things to deliver for the year and we were going on those. There was some justification as to why they were important with ‘ZYN’. There was a dollar value put beside it. So, that seemed to justify it. And, also, there was you know hmm this was run by the senior leadership team and they all bought into it and agreed that that was the right thing for us to do. So with this in motion, it was assigned to me and I had to spend a period of time to understand the current situation, what we're like now at the moment and what capabilities are in the product at the moment, what we needed to make it better and what new stuff we needed to introduce.

So, to do that, we needed to reach out to the CS guys, talking to customers, trying to validate our understandings of where we are at the minute and where we want to be so this is the process that we go through with lots of documented discussed, presented, get feedback, iterate through it and at the end of that then for ‘ZYN’, I have a vision and its split into ten deliverables. So, it's a program of work that is in ten different deliverables and then I have to put together a sequence and a roadmap and a structure to deliver this in a sensible way.

Usually there's kind of a logical way to deliver A before C because it makes sense technically or business wise you're phasing the introduction of the product in so you're not going big bang launch once all ten things are in place; you are delivering number one and number two together because they make sense and can go independently and then you're delivering three and four because they build on number one and number two. That's the idea, we just put together sequence and the plan delivers. And again, this is all looped back internally validated with all of the stakeholders and the team. Once we get that sequence in place and this is where it gets a bit messy, a whiteboard might help us with this but once we've got to sequence a place of ten things that we want to deliver for our overall ‘ZYN’ program of work. We have to start doing number one. So, We get into the detail of number, that means engaging closely with the dev [development] teams because we get feedback from them and how things should be built. It then goes into our Agile development process where you put together stories the dev team, they iterate through them and they gave us something to look at and we give them more stories. So, we just kind of build our way through our first step of the project. And an example of that would be our task D; that was the first thing we were trying to do; we were trying to get D up and running for ‘ZYN’ and that was that was number one. We worked with the dev team to do all this. And then we move on to Step Two; but the ‘Gotcha’ in this for me is while I'm giving the dev team the information that they need to build Step two; I’ve actually got the first step which was the D kind of being prepared to go live. So, this sounds lovely if your kind of talking about delivering you know in incremental bits and building and building and building, it all sounds great but unfortunately, I found myself in the situation where I'm still in the development phase for steps two and three, whereas I'm in the ‘Go Live’ for the product launch phase for step one. So, it's really at that point where I get heavily involved with the likes of marketing. I get involved with Jimmy to try to bring him up to speed on what has happened; now Jimmy would have been involved in the early stages of this when we were brainstorming it and talking high level sort of stuff, so he would have known D for was coming but then he would have disappeared off my radar for a while I was working with dev team to get it built. So, now that the D for a product was built and pretty much ready to go and tested internally with dev and the ops team and harvesting. Then, I reengage with Jimmy and discuss this thing we talked with two months ago is pretty much good to go that starts getting our act together about how we're going to communicate this to our sales guys to our CS guys, what sort of marketing collateral are we going to put together. So, that's the stage I am at right now at the moment with Jimmy where we're preparing for; I suppose it's an internal communication to the wider sales and CS organization.

You know, in hindsight, would it have been better to keep Jimmy closer to me during the process, I don't know if it's entirely necessary. You know it is a lot of dev technical, bitty sort of stuff and it's not something that I think necessarily needed to eat into Jimmys time to stay close to me over the last two month period while we were doing this. But we did, we had regular weekly calls that Jimmy could attend. So we did try to keep him in the loop and we have a weekly and 'ZYN' working group call where we discuss progress so anyone can join that. So yes, I found myself in a situation then where, I'm working with the dev team on steps two and three which is a lot of user stories, it's a lot of thinking through different scenarios, there is a lot of 'Gotchas', edge cases and all that sort of horrible stuff where we are trying to come up with a solution. But right now, I'm trying to work towards delivery of the actual marketing collateral, to sales training the videos and all that sort of stuff that is necessary to support launch of Step one. So, that's just a bit of a messy time for me now at the moment.

And so what'll happen with the D for example is we will have that meeting with our CS and sales guys next week, where we are going to describe to them what item maintenance for PRODUCT looks like. We're going to explain the benefits that this gives our customers and we're going to identify some of the limitations and restrictions that are in place with the products with item maintenance that was going to outline some of the good stuff that's going to arrive as well in the next step few months which will work well with the item maintenance for PRODUCT stuff that we're delivering now.

The whole point of that is to try to encourage the sales guys and giving them that little bit more confidence about selling the ‘ZYN’ product now that we've made some changes to it; to give them a refresher on it as well because I think that there has been a lot of bad press about in the past so I don't know how confident they are in it and I don't know if half of them have even seen the ‘ZYN’ product, so it's really to give them a refresher to say, ‘guys we are addressing this, it's going to get good and you can start selling with confidence now’. And we've also built it in such a way in those early stages that we can we can switch it on or off for different regions and different customers so we can control the rollout which I think is really important.

You know, we are a global company; we do have some large customers, some small customers, and some medium sized customers who all do things their own way. And so, allowing us control the rollout of this means that if it's a product graphical thing and because we don't have harvesting data or because particular item maintenance in a particular country isn't as important as another country or if a particular customer doesn't want item maintenance to ruin the way that they're currently operating, you know we can control that. So, I think that's this is a really important step that we try to build into our ‘ZYN’ when you are you will be a product of the new features we're going to have them toggle and controllable so that just helps us in the rollout.

This meeting is happening next week; we're going to talk to the guys then and there's going to be training classroom material; I'm going to put together some videos that will be up on our ‘Help Centre Portal’ to help customers after their initial training and CS that they have some place to go to, to get a refresher on it themselves if they’ve any questions. And so, that's a whole world of work that we have to do to leave the customer in a good state once we've actually put this out in the world. There's no point in half doing that part because otherwise they just might not use it, or incorrectly use it and cause more problems down the road.

I will move on to the next stages; stages two or three should be by that stage be developed and in a UAT type of state and I'll be working with the dev team to do steps four and five while I'm trying to work with the business to get Steps two and three validated; UAT'd.

The next things that we're delivering are going to be very Insight's impacting so that's going to mean I'm going to need CS people to actively engage with this in a sandbox type environment for a good period of time. Like, I want them to be playing with it for about two to three weeks; I want to give them fresh data into it every day. That phase in the process gives me a lot of confidence in it and hopefully at the end of that period of time, provided there's good feedback; I should be fairly confident that it's solid, it's robust, it does what it is supposed to do, its bug free and it's been challenged so you know, there's no little 'Gotchas' out there. And again, once I am through that phase, this toggle on/off switch should allow us incrementally rollout to customers that wants it and where it makes sense.

And then, just rinse and repeat; keep doing that process all the way through the whole ten steps. That's my understanding of the ten thousand foot view of product involvement in the rollout feature like that.

Linda: Well, Bob you summed up all, we can go now … (laughter in the room).

I guess the first thing to think about for any kind of product launch, I mean I am a big believer in having all of the right people in the room at the one time. Definitely one thing I noticed for example on AYZ launch is we would have separate meetings with the joint product launch team and then we'd have separate meetings with rest of the case business team. So, I think one important thing, whatever the context is, is to have everybody in one room. That just saves time but also feels more of team accountability for the progress of things. I think this is something that we would want to do differently next time and that's obviously a bit of an anomaly because of where we are between the integration between two companies. I do feel that it took more time than necessary having two meetings rather than just one meeting between the two groups.

I think in terms of launch activities within those groups we were clear on who was accountable for what, we were clear on when it needed to be done and we tracked really well against that so I think that worked well. I think that we had the main bases covered so if you look across product management, tech, test, go to market planning for the whole marketing piece and then internal preparations so training, of sales teams, and then the sales teams selling.

We weren't quite as commercial as I would have expected in terms of setting targets so there weren't any sales targets to sell to, which ultimately if you think of this as a commercial launch rather than just a product launch, then I think one should focus on is as example; not necessarily, have we got it to market which is obviously important but its then a question of after one month, two months and up to one year later – Have we actually got out of it commercially what we wanted from it?, as this is the whole reason behind putting it to market in the first place.

The other bit is test, so I don't have much visibility of the Case business test process but I think more structure around the handover from and technical testing which I believe they probably automate by their automated systems to then what we call UAT, so then the operations team testing, product management testing, anyone else suggested that need to test.

I don't have any visibility of how structured we are around such things like test scripts but that is something I would definitely see as best practice for product launch. So you have really well defined test scripts in cases that everyone runs through, you report on how successful those cases were and then you can make a decision based on that as to whether you go live and equally when we give customers test access I would have expected we would have given them certain criteria to test for however I don't think we necessarily did in this case so that's another opportunity which could be added for best practice towards a next product launch that we do.

Billy: For me right at the back the things that helped me in the product launch process is becoming and being imbedded with the product managers in an earlier date so that I can understand the product being developed from inception – from idea till we bring it to market. Otherwise, I was scrambling to figure out what the product was, what the benefit was, how it worked, what the limitations were, what the theory was behind it. While trying to build out material. The two products that you have chosen are good example of that. Like MNH for pretty much for everybody here just landed on everybody's lap, nobody understood what it was, what it did, how its going to be packaged, how it will be sold, nobody new anything about it. Until everybody here you go and lets figure out how to sell this. So I contrast that with AYZ, where I was working with the product from the beginning, trying working out what I was trying to achieve from the product and incrementally, how we are going to go about trying to achieve it. So when it come time to launch, I had an intimate understanding already, of what the product is going to be (paused) …

Dilly: You had a lot of clarity

Billy: What it was and what it meant to do.

Dilly: Yep, I think its very important to note, that I would eco everyone in the room that as well, that the key success to a launch is where you actually start from. In addition, you need to start from the very beginning. Its not when you try to pick it up when its developed and trying to launch it, you have to be thinking about the launch when you are designing, when you are still in that product stating stage.

Billy: Think about 'ZYN' launch, I know outside the one you wanted us to consider, but I though was a very good example; we created that product and then when we were trying to bring it to market, we realised all the problems that we are going to have trying to have supported operationally. And like we didn't bring operations on board, in early enough juncture, and that kind of blue everything out.

Dilly: Yep,

Jordan: For me from product standpoint perspective, which is at the very beginning when designing and developing the concept, I think it has been very useful to have all the teams together and gather all the knowledge as it helps to define the dependencies. Having everyone in the same room, identifying the entire various stream, with ought to saying it lout it provides a structure and more rigor to the process. I can start thinking ahead of the actual deliverable, as I can envision how this potentially may slot into the process. For example if we look at our current launch checklist, I know someone will be expecting to see step 1,2 or 4 complete before they can start their piece. This helps me to action and help to get ready and priorities se the order or way execute on the task. Execute in a way they get and understand what's going to be next and how what I feed into the process is going to impact their stream. This has helped me to understand how my work is affecting everybody and helps to try to stay ahead of what's coming down the line. There is something that I may not be able to do anything about, but at least it mitigates or lowers the risk of things being missed. Therefore, it is important to have an end-to-end process and having understanding of the full picture.

Dilly: Uhmm

Billy: and now, a, I am trying to get even further ahead of this, just from total launch process, by bringing the products to the sales team, well before, we begin to start launching them. So I can just tell them, okay there is going to be product that's going to be coming out, this is XYZ and in general what it's going to do and the value it's going to provide. We currently have it scheduled for this time. So that when I go to train sales and customer success, I am not starting from zero. So its kind a the same thing there.

Moderator: Billy, just to clarify, where do you think we were effective or the areas felt that were done really well and we could build on it and make it work going forward?

Billy: I think the go to market plan was really good, so it was really well thought out. The marketing plan covered lots of different bases. It made sure we were ready internally and then made sure we talked about in the right way to customers. I think that worked really well. I think how we tracked the things that we needed to do worked really well so we had a really good template and way of doing that and making sure we checked in against it every week – I think that worked well. I think the opportunities of being more commercial about the targets, making sure we actually follow up on those, having everybody in the right room and then potentially the testing and the mechanism we go through for test as well.

Edward: I think one piece is that validation and set off expectations, that the product is fitting a need. And what that need is, when using MNH as an example, I think there were thoughts in terms of how this can be used, and how it fits the customer.. But than actually, you know, when we pushed things forward, and when it actually got into hands of some folks, we quickly realised, who fed into this the underlying data, and we had no export feature. There were some obvious bugs in the system. and so, my senses is that we missed on that one, the validation , how bugs were utilised and the solution and the way we reasoned that there were leverages.. to a point that it become challenging for us and the business to get what we were set out to do. It wasted a bit of time and effort into manner in which customer would have welcome to leverage the solution for what they needed to do to leverage and benefit their business. So my sense is that probably in the past done things in a more light coloration with less validation with customers and end users throughout. Which than led us to develop product that had missing piece in terms of how the end users would want to use this product instead how it was developed for.

Dilly: Yes, and I would say that it's also through, the Edwards point about the customer facing nature of the product, let's call it the product market fit, is exactly the same as the operations fit. Which is that it gets delivered to us that we could not operate and just was not performing for us. So I think those things, like getting joined up earlier are so important and testing things a lot earlier.

Billy: That was particularly through with MNH, because as I understand it, it was bunch of custom capabilities, that Mr Xman had built on series of one off for one or more customers and then we tried to package them together as a whole solution, an so there have been very little, market validation done. You know in a normal process we should always try to have broader customer conversations, to really figure out, what the common needs are, and try to build solutions of the back of that. And some it's been followed now, but it's been slow development..

Dilly: Ahmm, agree

(Everyone went silent ….)

Moderator: Thank you everyone, those are very valid points and just on the back of that, I would like you to focus more on the weaknesses. You have identified, that validation is key, what you think should be done, to make sure that; we fit the strategy going forward.

Dilly: I think, from my mind, it's the getting involved very early, the launch checklist is brilliant, in its almost like / or let's call it as a delivery checklist. But having that launch checklist start as and when product management pieces happening, to be able to go okay, you got this bit, have you validated, have you done, you know, have done all these checkboxes done, before it goes off to the development . so having those sanity checks done earlier and I think it's actually in here, which is de augmented product requirements, its actually the early stage, I guess. We don't think about product launches starting before we even have requirements, but I think that for me is one of the key things and need to be looked at closer.

Billy: We can always see things that we do not do. The key here is that a lot of people missed the point that marketing plan should start with technical development plan. I might be mistaking but this process should be really done in parallel with product development. But its something the organisation need to think about and look how do they integrate this element into the process. We did have a process that I think has fallen a side a bit. The other earliest possible stage, I would try to meet with the product manager to try to understand the high-level value proposition, and then I would go and work with the rest of the marketing team to develop that we call competitive positioning document or something. And that document was meant to give the marketing team everything they needed to know, in order to being able to least begin the development of whatever marketing materials, training, or focus on other deliverable that they eventually might be on hook for. We have made attempts, to start thinking about marketing early to be fair.

Moderator: You have all obviously worked on different product launches and different releases and integration projects in general. From your perspective, do you know if there are any existing models that have been used in the past or that you think would be good to look in to and adapt in the process that we are going through.

Linda: I would say not necessarily particular models but more structure around things and I don't know if this has come up with any discussions with people but the agile versus waterfallers is a really interesting one. So, lots of tech companies have been using agile for years and much bigger companies find it harder to work in that way. Agile seems to be viewed as the Holy Grail. Agile is not very helpful when you layer commerciality on to it because you typically budget for the financial year and you say, as example, we will launch three products this year and we think these will bring in X amount of revenue and to do that, you have to hit those dates and you have to have the types of features you first estimated would bring you that revenue in the first place. And so, that whole process is completely at odds with Agile. So, if you speak to Mr. Smith for example and I am asking him, 'Are we going to hit a date or are we going have it tested in a particular time?', his answer might be, 'Well, we work in an Agile way' so we might hit the date but we might not have all the features and it might not be fully tested and we just release it anyway. And those two things are completely at odds with one another. So, what I have seen in the past is that you work in a waterfall way and you have your set date and you have your set features and you make sure that it is tested and ready to go but within that you work in an Agile way and what I mean by that, when you start out, you might have twenty to forty stories that you think you will be building as part of the product. But as you go through and you learn more and talk to customers, you might change those stories so you end up with a slightly different set of product features. Or you might decide that you're happy not to go live with one hundred percent of things working because you can iterate on that but you will have all of your top priorities stories working and then your find there is some defects but you still hit that launch date and you still recognize the revenue when it is expected. There aren't necessarily models that work better in other companies but, I think there's potentially a little bit more structure around certain aspects and so that kind of Waterfall versus Agile thing is one. I think the other one is the test process I talked about. I come from a background of much more stricter testing whereby you have published results so you know you have tested as example, one hundred stories and eighty percent of them have passed and therefore you'll go through to the next phase of UAT and then with the new AT, everyone has their test scripts written out, everybody works and reports on progress. That is something that I think would add value to what we do here because it is definitely not something that I saw in the AYZ launch.

Dilly: The same here, I cannot speak to a model, I think one of the things we clearly missing, and we have been calling it out for years, a project manager, who would track and pull all together all the elements that are required, from beginning to end. Because a product manager is, a marketing manager is a marketing manager. And there is assumption that any of those individuals can do the project management. There are two very distinct things in mine mind.

Jordan: Yeah and I think I can relate to that, and feeling that pain personally, because, that's what has happened. We try to take ownership. Because we understand the niche and the long-term benefits of delivering on the process. So what we are trying to do is once we know what we want to do, we create a wireframe and then we work it through with other parts of organisation to work it out what everyone else is going to do in this process. From my point of you that is not fair to product managers. We already putting a lot of pressure and responsibility on the other parts of organisation, asking them to agree on acceptance criteria, while we don't know what the story is going to look like, in what format the data is going to flow. There are so many unknowns and with those, thumbs up to people sitting on these meetings, saying okay we will go to development and start developing it. And that's a big issues, as there is no one who can check all the relevant areas and all the assumptions are flying around, data effort, customers, other feature.. we missing some tabs, and someone has to go back and check and very often we reveal the feature wit ought doing full testing and validation (user acceptance at each stage). And than its hard to ask someone to take a responsibility on something that has not been integrated and managed properly in the first place.

Dilly: It is a real challenge in this business, and I think it's something that has to radically change. If we are going to be successful, we got to stop throwing things at the wall, we gotten better, but there is still an element of doing this. For example last launch ('AYZ') was throwing at the operation. Were people in operation organisation still manually checking, to see if the data coming through, development team on their end also checking making sure that the data is also coming in to them the way expected on their end on the technical side. And everybody like, that's fine. All look I understand there are all these dates, and all deadlines we need to meet. These things have to be happened. But that responsibility should not be on operations. There should be somebody pulling all of that together and saying , okay this is known, this is accepted risk, this is the mitigate, this is what we are going to put in place, bla, bla blaaa. That is common practice and we do not do that here at this business.

Jordan: I think the thing here is that lot of people …hmm.. how to say.. like to be problem solvers or just solving stuff. For example in operation they have sense of responsibility, and instead pushing back they just say we want to success, let's try to bring this across the line at all cost..

And the pain may not be felt across other parts of the organisation. People just take ownership and just do it, or because it has to happen from that day.

Dilly: Yes, agree

Jordan: But that's not fair on that team. Someone should say stop, this is no go.

Billy: That also happened when we tried to bring 'ZYN' to market. Because we had this fundamental tension between sales, operations and trying to describe what the product was and how we are going to support it and therefore, how we are going to sell it. So I was… khmm.. there was no body there who is going to take it on, so I kind a took the responsibility to actually bring sales and operations together to an agreement, and I felt that if I don't do this, than it just not going to happen, and this product isn't going to go to market. And so I tried to schedule all these meetings, to try to me that happen, and you know it sort of worked, but, that what happens. Things will fall through the cracks. In addition, people will step up and say well no one else is going to do this so I will.

Moderator: What do you think this is caused by? Perhaps we have too distant teams?

Dilly: No,

Jordan: No

Billy: NAhH

Jordan: I work very well with all the cross-functional global teams. And we don't really have issue communicating. For example AYZ is actually built with remote teams, partially because were we as an organisation are and had its challenges but having said that it still has worked out well.

Dilly: In my mind it's roles and responsibilities

Edward: Using 'AYZ' as example, I know some felt that there were things that just came in.. and I think it was felt a little bit from communication end-to-end process. Listen, we are going to have, you know… this is a pilot, this was something we were kind of stitching some of the information together and so if you see some of the communication that was we like put together for sales side and then some of the google sheets tracker, a lot of that was just done because the sense was that it was really necessary to have this information open and to easy to access. And as an essential reason and for what we were looking at. In addition, just kind of just pulling something together and may not have necessary been the right thing for what we needed but we were just looking for a point of resources for information. To put something together and that somehow spoke to me that it was not really a very thought process or pieces in the end-to-end and kind a rather just putting something together, vs speaking through what's actually was going to happen. how its going to happen and that we are going to closely review not only from communication perspective but also understand what it would have resulted in. So it just added an extra layer on that that made even more difficult to follow what was happening.

Moderator: In terms of collaborating with the teams in the process, how do you think that worked in terms of the lack of structure? Did you take into account that we are a global organisation, that some of the regions may be you didn't feel you that you could collaborate at the level that you would have preferred?

Linda: Not really, I think Case business works very well as a global organisation so, people like Mr. Smith and Mr. Smith, they have global roles and therefore they don't just work for the Dublin Office or just work for a different office – they work very globally. They always think about product from a global perspective. I have definitely work worse in other places so I'd say it works pretty well for case business. You never feel like there is a priority market or you never feel like because you are talking to someone who based in Dublin, their only talking about the UK or their only talking about the Republic of Ireland so I think that actually works well for us.

Dilly: I think on the 'AYZ' side having a process worked, that was good. For sure having regular meetings, touch basis, having them very open and honest. And having a very wide audience, I think that was very helpful. All bee it that it could be improved upon, having something was significant better than having nothing.

Billy: yea having a process, list f things we are trying to do and then getting together, bi-weekly basis to check in with it, a mean it did pull all of us together and give more sense of purpose an central lace to rally around

Edward: I would also like to say that I think this was the first time, that it was the right information. Also for the first time I felt that confluence page was used and it was actually like contained all the actual elements and sources that related to this launch/ version a truth relative to initiative. Aa so if you did need something or if you want t be able to use that information confidently, you could trust that it was the latest and the greatest and you were not pulling things from different aspects. We actually felt that there was everything in single spot. That it was current and up to date, the over feeling was that there was some sort of structure added to the process, which was very important to be successful to an extent.

Moderator: Given the time limitations, I would like to move to the next stage / next objective under this study and ask you questions about Inter-regional Corporation and how cross-functional teams work together. How do you feel about teamwork and the various element.

Jordan: Personally, I have to deal with all the various regions and at the beginning; I was always doing different meetings, in the last 3 years working here, we have extended the teams across the globe. Which come with challenges, time difference, cultural differences, and different priorities for each region from product development and launch perspective, everyone reads one word differently and so on. To make it easier – I make them all work together and dash it out in the room – it is challenging to have all the regions, just clockwise its not workable.. – time tables and time zone for that matter. But we have started doing Europe + Americas r Europe + APAC and so on to reduce the meeting time. this help to asses for starters their individual pain points, second what can they already have and can potential use to help each other and that than helps to define the priorities and how decide what we are going to do first. This also helps to get the right understanding of each other oppose to me trying to translate the same message multiple times in 10 different ways until we get to common theme. However, there are moments that you need to still have 121 with each of the individual regions, partially that is true for APAC region. It is completely different mentality, different cuture, different priorities. And take me a while to put my head around it. We still need to find a common ground and support them as best as we can but it can be challenging at times. With our current product strategy, we want to role out a global core product but at the same time not forgetting about the ability of all the other regions to deliver on the objective.

Dilly: (addressing Jordan) Can I ask if you have been there?

Jordan: No

Billy: By the sound of it do you think it would help if someone actually visited the region they are working with?

Dilly; 100%. Two things – there is massive cultural differences, no doubt about that. In addition, relationships are really important. I think going out there is helpful. Even going out there and spending time out there, they fell listed to, and that is important. However I can relate to above, that it can be very challenging in dealing, particularly with APAC region, and you can often get yes point, when actually what they mean is a no.

Billy: HMAHAHA

Dilly: that's a common challenge I have been faced with. the other challenge I have is that APAC moves so fats, that we are always 6 months behind. And we are trying to be the best product in foreign market, and I don't think that's possible, with the way we are set up at the moment, I think that particularly in china and korea, that market is so far ahead, of where we are at the moment. Trying to build one product to satisfy everybody. It's not really realistic.

Moderator: So do you think there is a technology that we can employee to support the process or to help to deal with those challenges?

Bob: It is all excel spreadsheets or post it notes and that sort of thing. You know; what would be great is if we had a proper operating webcam type solution. That would help even more when communicating with China. If we had some way of being able to share a whiteboard particularly with China, I think it would definitely help.

Dilly: My biggest thing right now is also to do video conferencing, so we use join.me which is terrible for video conferencing but with Fuze being implemented across the globe will help to improve and resolve some of the face time issues that we are having. It will not just give us high quality video conferencing but I will be asking everybody as to default to video for their calls going forward. that way you can read better what there are saying but also making someone to be more engaged as they know they being observed.

Jordan: I totally agree with video conferencing, I have read article before that video conferencing you build not only better experience but you also can build a better relationship that may lead to better collaboration. It gives you the opportunity to see people reactions, and give you an opportunity to react and build better repo with them.

Linda: Yes, I think yes is the answer from my perspective; but I think part of the problem on this particular product launch, we had what I call it three different legacy companies working together so we have Case business, “B” and “C” and a really simply example; I thought that the tools you used in compliments were great. I couldn’t access them so unless you downloaded it every time and shared with me, I couldn’t go in at any point. Equally, if I were to put something on SharePoint instead, then probably you could not access it. I don’t have ‘Joinme’ but you guys have and I have ‘Views’ but I don’t have that so I think yes it the answer but, I think it’s where we are as a company as opposed to something that is wrong within one of the organisations because I am sure if you just have people from Case business or just “B”, or just “C” it would work perfectly. That said, I guess, you typically would be working with people from different organisations so when I have done it in the past, I have done it with third party providers that provide the tech and therefore, you always have to have that frank conversation about, ‘ok, I want to share documents on google drive, does that work for everybody?’ and ‘I want to communicate using WebEx’ and you get a reply such as, ‘I’m sorry, I cannot download that on my PC’ so, I think the simplest thing is that when you kick it off is to have that upfront conversation about how you are going to share documents and communicate with each other and ensure that everyone can access whatever the chosen route is.

Bob: For me it is a real, real challenge, it really is; if we take ‘ZYN’ for example; I've got my key stakeholders for this; I’ve got a U.S. person, I've got a European and I've got an Asian person so I pretty much have to communicate the same message three times including the same documents. I have to talk through with these guys three times and then after, I receive conflicting feedback every time I have a conversation, so I have to try to consolidate that feedback, try to make a sensible response to that feedback and then communicate it out three times to see how that response actually fits with the guys. I think it's probably the most challenging part of the whole thing. If we had everybody sitting in this office here and we could get them into a meeting room.

It would be done in a fraction of the time, you know; like ten percent of the time; so that part of the communication cycle is, an absolute killer. There's the time for me to literally get the feedback from the guys to document it; so that takes time to document this stuff into some reasonable state, while I'm also doing two or three other things and then I have to communicate that out; then I have to wait a period of time, a few days for them to review it, to listen and to think about it. They've got a day job as well. Their day job isn't helping me do this project. So, you have to allow for that and there's a few days, then there's scheduling meetings which might be difficult to do so you miss another few days and then you finally get on the call and you talk and you get feedback and you can study again which is another two three weeks gone by the time you get to get feedback, get it updated, get the document out there again, schedule a meeting. So, it is quite difficult; is there anything that can be done to improve it. I don't think this is a purely a Case business problem you know, I think this is just a global company problem.

Actually, you know what; back to Dilly's point , there is something that could be done to improve it. The way that I understand how we manage product at the moment; well, the way I understand the product works at the moment is more of a, business analyst type role, so more of a product ownership type role, where we refer back to the business constantly for validation. So, we have to come up with ideas, we think this is how it's going to work given our internal processes and systems and all that. We think this is solution, we validate out that to the business, also trying to find out what problems are right there, we have to go and ask the business. So, that's why we have to do so much communication.

What would be far better is if we became those experts in that area. So, if there wasn't a need for me to validate this out quite so much or to ask questions so much if it was more of a communicating out saying, this is what I've decided we're going to do; throw it to the whole company and get feedback. But we should be relatively confident that I've got the right direction; I know the problems that are out there and I know the proper solutions to address those. I think that is by far a more preferable way of working where we are proper product managers. We know the industry, we know the customers, we know the problems and we know the case business way of working, case business systems. And so, we've got both sides of it nailed down and we can actually make the decisions ourselves and we are empowered to make the decisions and we don't need to go looking for confirmation. It's a much better way of doing it in my opinion.

Moderator: What do you think about working with other during the launch processes? Do you think there could be things done differently the way we work with each other. To make it even better or even easier in terms of delivering on the process.

Edward: I just wanted to say, and I know that probably its not sustainable but having someone on the ground that works on different product management items that happen to be specific within our region. Taking in consideration that she also works with customer success, I would say that there is a much more connectives between these regions and the customer, aa coalescing that back into tangible business views. The voices than is fed back into product, having someone there is as important as product management function that sits within a region. We feel it have been very helpful for ourselves just to understand what's coming out of the product and helps us to provide just some feedback and get connected more within the business. Has been… I think people feel a lot more engaged relative to what is happening, what is in product. Simply having someone sitting here in the local office that works within that group. But not sure how feasible this would be.

Dilly: I have a theory about this but I would eco also Edwards point.

Jordan: Agree, as I work together with Dilly she is my spy, so she helps me a lot and helps me get all the stuff together. and getting the information I need. It helps me personally a lot.

Dilly: Laughing

Bob: I would like to add, I suppose we could get smarter at. What I'm always afraid of is leaving somebody out of the communication loop. What would be great is, if as example, I put together a document that I need everybody to communicate on as opposed to putting it together in an email, hoping that people are going to read this e-mail, try to detail in the email what's going on, attach the document and send it out to the world and see what's happened or wait for some response, and then not get any response for two days, then having to ping everybody in order to get a response, getting further non-response and then this results in it being escalated up the management chain in order to get those responses returned. That's kind of the process right now and again, I don't think that it is a purely case business thing at all; this happens everywhere. What might be good for a new system, is if there were a new way in which we worked; as example, whereby we put in place a centralised system where these sorts of documents are shared in a system which is developed and put in place that supports the movement and visibility of where we are in the process. So if I could just send that one e-mail to all the stakeholders in this process and say, 'guys we're going to be using this new system; it's called x, y, and z and it's going to show you all the documents that you need to review, it's going allow you to click to review them, click to approve, click to add a comment on this and a statement to say, 'we can't move onto the next stage until everybody has moved their documents from this bucket to this bucket'. It just might be an easier way of managing the workflow. So then if that process then supported the wider delivery process, it wasn't just me trying to deal with my stakeholders to get the development done if it actually went wider to improve the dev organization to include sales from a communications perspective, that they knew that item maintenance for PRODUCT was just one month away. This kind of idea would help in the communications a lot more and the way it would help me is that I wouldn't have the responsibility for constantly pinging people; they know this is the site that you go to find information on the 'ZYN' program of work, you click on it, all the information that you need is there. Now you could say that this could be considered as confluence but I don't think that it really does. Again, I do not want to come up with a process that means more work, more maintenance from me. It should be something that I can work with fairly seamlessly.

Moderator: Please hold that though Dilly, Edward do you feel like you get better product understanding from the local person for more than just the products she is working on?

Yes, ahm.. we also what we do as part of that is once a month we sit down with the local team and just talk about – here are some things that coming outside of my project or things that are people working on, or you may here from customers asking about. It also provide kind of a feedback group you know. Obviously its not the core function of her role, but to date and at this point the current engagement within the team and what's happening and being able to communicated that out. Then get feedback and there is a working tracking document what we kind of hearing in the market, is there a commonality or one off from a specific customer base. Just helps having that kind of feedback route. And continue prioritization relative to region, ahm, just gives us something to concentrate, and also get some updates and make people more connected. And just that they are going to know that their voices are going somewhere, that they know that it can get fed back into the product organisation.

Dilly: I would say that there is a second aspect of that as well, which is that the ohm, having a local product expertise, helps you really bottom out the things that really bubble up so case in point that something bubbled up to smt, about high frequency tool in china.

To listen to the team member to say it, you think the world is going to fall down if we didn't have this thing in the morning to service 25 customers. But when Operation team when out there, and asked them very pointed questions, turned out a it was nothing to do with frequency. He got better sense what the background was but he was also able to validate that it was only about two customers, that wanted this thing. So having local expertise on the ground, would help

Jordan: bring the noise out

Dilly: Yes

Jordan: of the language and so on

Dilly: I really think it would and so I think it would help in many respects. video conferencing for one slack is other one. A lot of chats – for things that moving fast. I know that confluence is our chosen thing, however it s sometimes hard to search for things, is there a way we quickly search for things. Perhaps we could organise the page a little bit better that we do it now. But foremost there is a need for formal governance.

Billy: I love one note by Microsoft, but the sharing ability can become tricky and very complex and may add extra complexity in terms of managing information access, that we may not want and may not be sustainable. However, it is easy to work and build libraries of information. Moreover, keep them organised. Confluence is almost like a blog platform, so you have to continually save things, compare one note it would be much more dynamic compare to that.

Moderator: I think we have exhausted this point, let us move to the next questions. I would like you to share your insights and thoughts about global and local approach to product launch management. What could be done to make sure that our product gets adapted not only at a local level but at global level and that our customers see the value.

Jordan: What first springs to my mind is 'ZYN' France specific feature and in few weeks I had built matrix with different categories, and than suddenly we look at it and we say ooo we actually can do this now in china Americas and so on. But than we stumbled on that t actually the one won't fit all as there were different call outs and complexities associated with it, with different needs and how the customer see them using this product. At the end it was still the same product but different toggles needed to be able to turn the functionality for each specific region and would require local marketing, the data flow requirements would be different with different fields. and we came to conclusion that it would be almost impossible to standard this product at the core and it was driving everyone crazy. There were so many scenarios, all the different stories. Customers with different needs and ways of working. And in the end we were quite stretch and we in the end actually didn't manage this really well. A lot of things were out of the place and there was no other product manager looking at it. The problem was that we just assumed that we have a global product and we are going to be great. Ignore so many call outs for all the different regions. And the bottom line is that we are still trying to fix it and we are having a lot of problems and business decision will need to be made.

Dilly: I think we are, you are right. 'ZYN' is a great example where I still to this day regards this product as a totally different product that doesn't fit our core, and even compared to each of the regions – for each region its totally different product and would mean different things to the customers. And you cant compare them and that comes back to very early validation, and David is right one customer in france, gathering the requirements, folloed by sticking in front of other customers and looking to see if they understand what it is. And also what I would say is that as part of that we also need to accept a No as an answer. And if we built a product that we feel it has a great potential and will drive al ot of revenue in certain spots but isn't perfect for certain, let say for sake of argument in china, grand let's not launch it china. Let's launch it in other markets. I think we spent soo long trying to make one product work in so many different places and there is a point where we have to say no this is it…

Jordan: I agree with that, that happens for example in tv show industry – e.g. movie releases. You can try one app; and you try in another place and you cannot download and it does not exist and probably it does not exist in other markets because there is not enough market fit and we should be okay with that. This also means that it has very specific market requirements and strategy that does not fit others.

Dilly: Yes totally.

So, ohm. Just to clarify – you feel that its more appropriate to have local regional strategy than global approach for each product.

Dilly: aha

Jordan: yes… and that would remove a lot of noise out of the system as well. As you are setting the right expectations. The Sales team now where we stand and they can communicate appropriately. We often forget that we can provide the same for everyone for simple reasons such – different cultures, different way of working, different market requirements. Why I am not having x feature and why its not doing xyz – well its because its partially the way they understand what that means how it should work in their market…

Edward: The point is spot on – even dealing with global customers there is a view that they will want to work with a local provider in certain regions. There are nuances in that market, where their people in that market feel that specific solutions will better fit those needs. So it's always we need to find that balance that we are that business that got global standards but there is element that has to be delivered for local marketing in order to position ourselves, and to get a value out of solution. Yes, I obsoletely believe that there are certain elements that can be achieved through global process and approach but than are certain elements that need to be looked at regional or even country based level.

Dilly: So just to further on that point, I think the core of our product in terms of the core and the service that we provide – for example search- those are generic, we can make those generic, but I think we are now beyond the point where we can assume that anything can build beyond and still will have generic interest. And I think we have to assume, that something is going to be local unless there is an appetite for it in multiple markets. And then occasionally, we will find something that will have as global applicability that we then put into global core product for one a better term.it is very different of doing thing though.

Moderator: Just on that do you think there is no point in having a globally managed product launch process? Does it still require local management?

Jordan: At a high level we still need the global team driving the perspectives and those two things should not be done in isolations. But we should have champions for each of the regions or what you want o call them. I believe someone still need to be able to see the big picture from local perspective.

Dilly: And as mentioned governance as well. If you dont have a global view of how things can be done – than we have them done in 20 different ways. What ever about local product and being local, local tuning, you have to have global standards or otherwise we wont have common language.

Moderator: Than going back to launch checklist and launch process in general. Just to clarify, Is it fair to say that the way we manage them at global should be adapted and customised at the regional level?

Jordan I think its applicable across the board. We still have global call and each of the regions can speak out for their specific region and than try to find a common ground. Making sure it is translated if needed for the specific region, do we support the right data in the right language etc. or even call out that something does not apply to this market. Wants it gets documented than there is something to go back and review this to validate at the later stage to see if that still the case once the story is realised. But just to go back to the process management in general – need to stay central and should be managed centrally.

Billy: Yeah seems like strategically we could approach global and local launches the same way but they may have different tactical implementation requirements in different markets. But would like to note milestones that we have to hit along the way.

Bob: Not sure, makes sense, if it fits. From a communication out to customers' point of view alone, it probably makes sense if you can phase that roll out and take a local approach. It just helps CS guys in understanding; it helps us with communicating to everybody of the change so giving you that type of control is really useful to have whether you do it at a regional level or whether you do it at a customer level, whether you get customers to sign up to the new feature before you switch it on for them. I think probably in the past, what we didn't have, was a way to sensibly roll out new products or new features within a product. I think what we're trying to do now is to allow us control that a little bit better so we do have the feature flag idea now which is a 'no brainer' – makes total sense. That just gives us control; it allows us to ensure that we've actually spoken to the customer, that they know of the change that's going to happen, that their happy with the change is going to happen and then we switch it on for them and they've got it, as opposed to just throwing it out to them and hoping that they want it, hoping that they understand it. I suppose that's for some features, for other features, yes, it could be a no brainer, just throw it out to the world but you should have the option to be able to switch it on or switch it off or control it at a regional level or at a customer level. I think for most of the stuff I am building with 'YZN' , I have all of these controls on it at a customer level because we need to be able to control this sort of stuff so we can test it ourselves to make sure it works in a fully productive before we give it out to all the customers. So, yes definitely, product graphically it makes sense and not just product graphically but at a customer level, we should be able to control that. You might not apply it to every feature you release.

Our report builder for example; that's probably a very useful feature that everyone is going to want and like; why not fire that out to the World and give a bit of communication. Just big bang with that but if you change the calculations on an 'YZN' report or similar; you need to make sure that customers' understand the change before it hits. Will you be able to communicate to all of your customers with confidence before the date that it's going to hit? Probably not, so let's allow it on or off so we can talk to USA customers; this month their going to get it; UK customers, the next month.

Moderator: Linda, would you like to add anything?

I am new to this organisation and it's difficult not knowing exactly where their coming from on that; my instinct is that is not the right way to go.

Dilly: We have a core product and they feel the core products are not suitable in every market and then we have to look at other ways of customising or building something different for different markets. For example, China – China seems to be up to the curve, always ahead of us in everything and the way they work and their technology is totally different however, having said that, some of the team have acknowledged the fact that very often it's not the whole market; it might be specific customers that they want us to adopt their way of working and maybe this might be an issue.

One of the things that popped into my mind, for example, McDonalds; they have branches all over the globe but if you go into their stores, their menus are different or customised for each of the markets.

Jordan: Also, the other thoughts and insights provided were, when we go to market trying to commercialise and trying to compete with our core product, there is often pushbacks and some of the customers prefer to go with local providers because they understand the market better maybe and the intelligence and the knowledge might be from their perspective, they feel they might bring more value from it.

Linda: So, the McDonalds one is a good example because their menu is different but I would imagine their systems that they use in store to order from those menus are exactly the same so if you transpose that over to Case business, are platforms are exactly the same but the products that we show customers within those platforms are different locally. I'd say generally companies would develop global products and there may be some customisation within that but it would be a global product, so I can give you an example of something I've done in the past that works on an E-Commerce website rollout for a large global beauty company and they were based in Germany. And so, they built a global template based on Germany's needs and then each country had certain customisations they could turn and off for example but everyone ultimately has the same system and so what that means operationally is that you can have one team that makes these tweaks to the website for each region rather than having a huge team in each region that amends the system. So, there's lots of like cost and quotations and organisational implications from having local systems and then I don't think that's necessarily the right way to go. It is worth pointing out, if you went and read it already; Case business is seeing as having lots of customisation compared to some people so particularly for certain customers, there is a lot of customisation and we will give it to them which isn't the case with a lot of providers. So, getting those responses from the teams might be partly due to the fact that people within Case business are used to customising and therefore they think that's a good solution. I would say generally, you would have one global product however it is really interesting if their saying, were not actually able to meet needs in certain markets. I think that is a separate question that is worth looking into.

Dilly: Good point, it is a time to start thinking more about our core products and be able to say no and not to bend over customers, or trying to chase our competition. and I guess when we were a smaller organisation, we were in a totally different position and we were trying to grow the organisation, build our customer and we were more lenient in terms of adapting to the customer but now we are part of a bigger group and I guess your thoughts make a lot more sense commercially and strategically.

Moderator: Just more on that, in terms of talking about just one global theme, do you think there is a value in still having experts in each of the different regions you work in as opposed to having one centralised global team?

Linda: Yes, this is a really good question. It depends what function you're talking about. So, there's pros and cons, one model is that you have people operational across different regions so that. As example, one coder goes to bed in Singapore and another one wakes up in the UK and carries on, and then goes to bed and then another one wakes up in the US so you essentially have a twenty four hour operation. Similar things like with customer services so your call centre'ish operations because it allows you to work for longer. Sales units, you have to have locally because you have to have those relationships and those people understand the local markets. I don't think you necessarily need to have to have local experts because the point of a global organisation is that you should be able to pick up the phone to anybody, anywhere or email, or video call so I think it's quite normal to split things by productgraphy so for example, you might have your operations team based in Dublin and I think that's the way Case business has been recently so I'd be surprised if we went back to a locally based organisation. Are there particular functions you were talking about when you asked that question?

Moderator: I was thinking more about product expertise, product managers because what I can see is the way our product team works – they are more like business analysts and product owners. Just to eco Bob's perspective. I think because they gather requirements and they continue pushing back on the business to validate everything they have gathered and I think from our perspective, I don't feel that we develop our product managers as experts. One of the things that I have noticed is that when we have forums, I don't really see product management teams heavily involved in this unless of course it's a PERs project or unless it's a customisation but when it comes to core and developing stories and building into core product; I haven't seen that and this is why I am wondering whether there is a case in which we do need to look at regional experts in each of the regions to make sure we have our product manager or champion in each of the regions to ensure that they don't have to just remain as business analysts or product owners.

Linda: It is a really interesting point on product management so my experience of good product management is; the product manager is like the voice of the customer so they own the roadmap. If I take the last company I worked for, the product owner and product managers drove the whole show so the business analysts, the project managers and the development team and the testers kind of worked for them and so they were the ones that drove the requirements working with people from across the business. Then the business analysts documented them, exactly as your point; the product managers wouldn't do that. The product managers would be the ones that would say; 'No, that's not the right thing to put in this product' because division for this product and is x,y,z what your telling me doesn't fit with that. So, your right, its typically a very different role like very pure product management and so, sometimes when you see marketing as example talking about what would go on the roadmap, I would see that as very much product management. So, the role that Mr. Smith is doing at the moment, I see that as very much product management. He is driving the division for the product, the roadmap and then working with the “B” tech team to say what features should be in there but then there is somebody who then documents those stories and hands them over to the engineering teams. So going back to the local expert’s questions, probably what you are getting at, we need to better define the role of product managers and make sure that it’s the right role for our organisation as opposed to; ‘we need local experts’. The way I would usually align product managers, is to align them to the products, not necessarily to regions and that in my personal opinion that this makes sense that they should be based or if not in really close contact with the local engineering teams because they work so well with development teams.

And, then in terms of product managers involvement with the externally facing team likes sales and customer engagement teams, do you have any views in terms of what level they should be working together, what the engagement levels should be for them to ensure the roles are positioned correctly.

Yes, so, again, from previous experience, the product managers would be the ones that are working with sales, the ones working with marketing because they are the ones that know the product inside out and understand the vision of it and can get that translated so I would probably expect them to be working incredibly closely with them.

Bob: so things like case business Forms; why isn’t Product involved in those? That gives us a perfect opportunity to hear from people who work in the industry; it provides a perfect opportunity to meet with customers. That’s a no brainer; why there's no product representation in that? blows my mind. I cannot understand that. I don't think that would happen in any other big global SAS company. Another question is why aren’t Product engaged more in the sales process? So, again one of the main roles of Product is sales support. So, again, I don't get why that isn't the case. The whole point of that is the more time you have talking to customers and the more time you're sitting down listening to them talking about their pain points and what their trying to achieve, the more you get out of it; the more confidence you get in that you do actually understand what’s going on out in the market. It's not rocket science what we do, it really isn't; it's not complex financial instruments or you know; it's fairly understandable. From the conversations that I have had with customers, it's not rocket science; they [customer] want to know what's going on out there and they want to know how they're represented on the sites and they want us to be able to infer from information from that. It's not an overly complicated thing, it's just a matter of, I suppose, getting out to customers more often, sitting in front of them, listening to their pain points and their stories more often and understanding how they work.

It is one thing about understanding that you know e-commerce insights, but then there's another thing about how customers consume that in their organizations. So, you know, after a point in time you start realizing, ‘oh these guys use it completely differently from these guys over here’. So, in doing this, we can really understand what happens to the information once it leaves the platform. I think it's kind of a bit of a waste of resources to be honest with you.

Not to blow our own trumpet here, but you know; there is quite a few bright people there on that team and they could be put to better use rather than simply writing user stories based on demands that have been provided to them by CS people or something like that. So yes, from that whole communications side of things, which is what we started this question on I suppose, is just to try and cut down on the amount of questions asked, getting responses and then asking for validation responses to cut down on that process. Just make the one person responsible for it.

Moderator: Anyone would like to share some thoughts about commercialising of a product, it should be all about performance and results. What could be done for making sure that if numbers are thrown around, that they do get validated, that someone is accountable for them, that there is follow ups happening and that when someone comes back post product launch and reviews it and says, 'Well ok, we had this number originally stated to achieve in the market, how do we know we actually achieved that number and how we came up with that number?'

Linda: In pure program team management, it's what we call benefits realisation and it is so hard to get right. What we have done on the AYZ launch is we have called it success tracking so we define three things that we say, when we've launched, these are the three things we are going to look on a monthly basis to make sure that, yes, we hit the go live deadline but so what, let's make sure that we actually hit the commercial point of this and also even if we sold it, let's make sure the customers are actually using it and that it's actually adding value to them. So to prove all of the initial hypothesis so the three things we put in place were, qualitative customer feedback, so like interviews, surveys or whatsoever; visits to the customers actions dashboard, so before we launched AYZ visits to the product actions dashboard we're ten percent of all volume of visits to the case business portal. And so, the hypothesis was that should increase because more people want to use the report now because we have this extra. And the third thing was what we called, 'Customers One' but it is essentially revenues so out of joint customers, 'How many have we signed up to AYZ out of Case business?' and then post 90 days, 'How many have we converted and paid subscriptions?' So, the point of this is these are the little bits that can provide you an early heads up that you are not going to hit your benefits which as part of our overall, as example, ‘AYZ will make us one million Euro a year or whatever the number may be’.

I believe that was something slightly new so that is something that I introduced for the launch but I don’t know if that had been done before but it worked out great; we looked at it for the first time this week and visits to the products actions dashboard are good; we don’t have any customer feedback as yet so it prompted people to say ‘ok, who is going to that and when and push that accountability’; the sales figures are not looking so good so at the moment, we have no Case business only person so therefore we cannot even speak to people about paid subscriptions, post ninety days let alone get any, so it’s an early warning flag that we are not on-route to hit whatever that target is. Now, we think part of the problem might be that part of that target wasn’t set, but that, that’s a good way to see in the short term look at whether or not you are going hit that big target.

In terms of the big target, that’s so much trickier because typically what happens is there are a number of factors that will affect that, and so one thing could be that, ‘we, didn’t do so well in AYZ’, but then you could be down on sales across the board so you could say, well actually, the markets much smaller or, ‘we lost one of our best sales people and therefore that whole region, all of EMEA as example, it hasn’t sold as much’ so it’s not just to do with AYZ so it’s so hard to isolate it to one particular reason. It is so much harder to say we have not hit our target for AYZ because of the product. Like, it is so hard to say that and I think in my experience whatever change you are trying to introduce whether its product based or not there are always a number of factors. I think it’s, best intentions and then you have to find base line comparators, so for example, if AYZ was down but every other product is up, you could reasonably attribute to that to AYZ or if AYZ is down in the UK and all other products were down in the UK, you can feasibly attribute this to the performance of the UK market. I think usually what I would see is that the product owner owns that process along with finance.

Moderator: Just to build up on that then, do you think for example, on AYZ, do you think let as example, sales teams to have a caveat by saying ‘we need assess the trial results first’ before and that they should be reserving the right to adjust target upwards or downwards on that basis? Do you think we should be giving that flexibility to sales people in terms of launching and commercialising a product?

Linda: I would say whatever normally happens for sales targets, so if usually they can flex targets, then yes, if not, then no. I would just follow what happens will all the other targets.

Edward: I think us as organisation struggle and it something we need to definitely improve on, to make sure we can call it not just launched but commercialised product. A lot of the times the product comes out, and then we need to look at it were is the tale behind it. The reality is that if want that customers are budgeting and purchasing from us the products, we launch, we essentially need to have more up front materials and build that into more proactive product roadmap. Having said that the roadmap has become a lot more crystallised in the last 4 months, before we can go out and put those things in front.. aaa… knowing in the past we felt like we are going to release something but than were is that info that we can use to sell. And just on the point josh made about marketing – were he goes out and trying to pull information so that we can get some access behind it… or just try to pull together some process behind it and than in the end may not yield to what we thought is coming out for example in September. The further we have visibility into that, the further we have people coming together and pulling projects around. For example key feature will be available in few months and having that messaging 4 or 5 months prior, with collateral, opportunities, benefits and positioning, where customers can budget and sign up and say yes I want that in September. So hen it actually launches, you know we have things to deliver vs in past we than go to market, when its released and than try to sell to people. I just think that we need to get further ahead of the curve in terms of being able to sell efficiently the innovation products with collateral with pricing with those things kind a bedded out even though the product is not going to be released for another 2-3 months.

Moderator: What can be done that improvise the way we deliver on this and work together going forward.

Edward: If I ma canned about it, I think people been gunshot to proactively fix things and sell that they though that it is but its not. Having history on delivering and putting things in front of customers on time, so obviously if you want to put incremental incentives around that is a one way to drive the behaviour, but I also thing that part of it is getting people the right material. Providing and assisting in the ability in delivering this. And if people are going to gunshot for something that they need to deliver on and that we are not going to have something available – I mean it prompts commitment that we can't deliver on. I think part of this comes with changing our ability in terms how we perform and putting out into the market, consistently in time and in a manner that its aligned with the expectation, where it will be aaa..it more about delivering on what we are saying we doing, getting feeling for coming out, feeding the right information to people so that they can be confident and aggressively out with customers for expansion.

Dilly: The key for us is getting better at building a hands free product. So product that we do not have to get involved. So that there is actually no manual intervention. I think we have done much much better around that. And product have been designed in that way. I think that's been very great. 'AYZ' being exception. For us its designing with hands free in mind. And designing for quality as well. Those are the really big things from our point of you. And this comes back to education training, because when we launching a new product, support is going to be the first people who are going to get questions. And that's have worked well, they do receive the training in a timely manner, getting all our guys upskilled and getting understanding what it is and getting that sort of stuff out there. Therefore, those are very important as well.

Linda: So, to summarise, this should be applied across the board or the process should be standardised. I think usually it's the Sales Director or head of sales that would be able to influence those targets with the Managing Director but whatever happens usually.

Bob: I have to imagine a situation, 'what would happen if I came up with some unrealistic estimates and they we're all wrong?; I would be held accountable for them I presume? I don't have a huge amount of experience with this in case business but that example of the number that was given to product management by the sales guys; I don't know what science went into that but if people were held accountable to that number. I am actually very uncertain about that number because, is that number based on getting the existing case business product better or right or does is that number based on getting the existing case business product right plus all of the new stuff that we were supposed to build so you know, there is none of that subtlety built into those numbers.

Maybe, the effort has to be put in upfront by the sales, by the CS guys, by the product guys to validate those numbers so that it's not just a number that's thrown out; so, we don't get into the situation where we're all looking at each other after the event saying, 'Jeez, those numbers we're so wrong' and start pointing fingers as to who is to blame. I think the time and effort should be put in to make sure that those numbers are correct, up front so that at the end, if the numbers aren't being met; we all know where those numbers came from and it's not so much a pointing fingers exercise; it's a genuine, 'we got it wrong', because this 'area' was 'under-estimated' or 'we didn't think of this'. I think the important thing of that is, that there is an evaluation done afterwards and that there is somebody to ask to justify, 'where did that 1.5 million number come from?' They should be able to answers with, 'It came from this breakdown here, across these regions, across these customers, spending this amount of money'. Then we can ask the question, 'we're not making the 1.5 million, why is that, where has it dropped?' So, I think it's a combination of things; it's not getting to the 'finger pointing' idea. If we put enough time in up front; the numbers are more accurate; there more reliable; there more realistic and that kicks off the whole product selection process. What gets built based on these numbers? But also at the end of the process and everyone knows that six months after the product launch that there is going to be an evaluation of the numbers compared to what we had said. Unless we do this and unless there's that knowledge that we're going to be asked to justify these numbers; I don't know if that's the case at the moment. Unless you know that you are going to be asked to justify those numbers, you're not really going to care about the numbers you're throwing initially; you're going to throw in the biggest number that you think you're going to what to sell.

So, I think, 'checks and balances' afterwards; we must always follow up on all of these estimates that were given, but the only fair way of doing that is making sure that time and effort is spent in making sure that those numbers are correct up front.

For example, nobody knows how much it costs to build and operate a 'YZN' product so could it be that those numbers are actually more expensive than the revenue that people proposed to get, nobody did that work.

Moderator: Just in brief, what do you think are the priorities for improvement in the process and what are the opportunities in Case company to improve upon.

Jordan: Yeah I guess, it related to getting on in at an early stages. We got this launch list and we are talking about, we are ticking all the boxes but are we really asking the right questions, for example have actually validated and was there an acceptance criteria agreed on what basis this is going to be signed off. As its stands we ticking because we want to be seen that we are meeting deadlines and we need to get something out there today, because this was agreed. We tent accept this because we try to be flexible or agile for better word. And in reality I do not believe that it should work this way, I think there is a room for an improvement. As far I can see is that as we develop and grow these things that we have swept under the cover doesn't actually get fixed and than it come a point were operationally we are struggling to deliver, which means that affects our quality and the time to market for other products. So it means we need to look closer what the acceptance criteria for success is and how we launch it and make sure it gets commercialised as early as possible just to eco James thoughts on Sales performance. Another thing is also creating behaviours that encourages being disciplined and more methodical.

Billy: You know one thing we have not mentioned is launch , its been big help but at the end day it's the product manager who is required to managed that and it takes a lot of energy and time. so we need to create a system that accommodates for everyone to provide their input in a very methodical and automated way.

Which leads to other point that we have talked about validations. We are doing better job, gong broadly, talking to many different client on regular basis, to understand their pain points, eventually those will be the people we will want to work with, for something that may have along start date but for something like beta.

Jordan: Yes, I think that beta is getting better, but in terms of getting thumbs up from customers at the early stages of development has become very critical in this process. Also having more frequest product releases it gives us opportunity to test more and phase out the product to customers. Nd making more things better and more accessible to customers is working out a lot better two. This in tunr allows as to make change were needed early in the process oppose to when the product has been already built and a lot of hours put in to find its not what they expected or does not do what it says on the box.

Billy: Just thinking about the technology world where things get launch realised on daily basis as an example mentioned China were they seem to be up to the curve all the time. What we could do to improve our product launch process to speed the way we deliver and commercialise our products to market.

Dilly: For me all comes back to project manager, you need a conductor, you need somebody who is picking up everything and see how and where this can take us. Is running behind the product manager is the sweeper is handing off to people in an appropriate time, is watching for risks, and is able to call out when we are following behind and how that can potentially going to impact the direction of the product though out of the process and not just at the end. I think that a very critical part.

Jordan: Yes I would like to support that as well, we need someone who can join everything together and is able to identify and mitigate risk from the beginning or at least in early stages of the product design/ development perspective. Because its very hard to pull everything together in a timely and adequate fashion when the water has already spilled. You not just loose time but also potential market share, you may compromise on quality. So we need someone who is not doing it but still has view of the varies moving pieces and can spot when things need at happen d it what fashion. Its almost like having a confirmation manager, who checks in on the various points and make sure that the point has been complete as per the acceptance criteria.

Dilly: It not necessary like a confirmation manager. A good technical project manager, will understand what has to happen, will be looking for gatch ya's, will be asking a lot of questions, will be understanding what going on, and than will be making sure, that everybody is in the spot were they needed to be. And that everybody has what they have and need what and when they needed. If you thing about testing for instance. There are pareler parts to get a testing done. One of the first things you do in testing is so what is that. Have they got the stuff they needed in the first place, okay great you go and make sure these people got what they need so that when david come and delivers what he was supposed to do is ready also at the same time, rather just assuming that stuff is going to happen in its own. Which is how we currently implement things. No offense to anybody, but that is not how a professional organisation works.

Billy: So like right now, if product wants to find, or query the market or understand the pain point in particular area, the onuses is really on them to figure out to whom they need to talk to. With a project manager, that would get facilitated as well, so that product manager don't have to busy themselves, figuring out who are the best people to talk to, they can just go and talk to Pm and he will be able to come back and say here what you need and these are the people you need to talk to.

Dilly: The product manager would say to project manager – we need to go do this, the project manager go off to cs and say give us a list of blab la blaa… and than would liase that back.

Billy: The product manger will say I want talk to 3-5 people with knowledge in this area…

Jordan: I guess with your launch list, we already prompting these questions and sort of following this process in somewhat way. It does heads up to everybody, but I guess the timing when we actually refer to this process is late; we should be really starting a lot sooner and asking a lot more questions. So it's important that it gets overseen from end to end.

Linda: There is one last point I would like to bring into your research. One very interesting thing that happened before the AYZ product launch; I remember that we had our normal weekly call on the Tuesday before launch and everyone seemed great and all happy and then on Thursday, Mr. Gary opened the call saying ‘Operations aren’t happy with the quality of the data, they’re not ready to go live and here are the three things’ and Mr. Mark opened by saying, ‘We found poor big thing’, which means that we’re not ready to go live today and I never got to the bottom of it, but I guess my first reaction was that I was so surprised that the communication has fallen down and I never worked out how it did break down. I wasn’t provided with the information beforehand and I do not know whether other people knew or not but that is definitely a prime example of where the communication failed and I don’t how or why and I don’t necessarily know; I think we had the right steps in place for that not to happen but it did. So, yes, that is definitely one to highlight.

From my perspective, you know when you were talking about testing and having a proper process and structure around testing and I think that’s what happened. We didn’t actually allow enough time for testing and then there was a lot of manual intervention and by the time they realised that there were issues with that and I think we were already at the ‘Go, no Go’ meeting and I think there were a couple of things

Dilly: We had data flow issue more than anything to do with the launch in general itself because we still need to do a lot of manual testing and checking even though we already have an awful lot of automated process because the data comes from different sources, they still need to do manual checking to ensure that it does pull in the way that they expect it. And, I think the team did not get an opportunity to do this well in advance so the testing wasn’t available for them well in advance for them to do that and I think that is where the communications was not anyone's fault in particular or reflection on anyone particular.

Linda: One thing to look into then is that; I'm not sure how the user stories are written here but the 'By the Book' way of writing user stories is by including 'user acceptance criteria' and so really, if operations are a huge customer of the product, I think they should be writing or at least reviewing 'acceptance' criteria so in that example, it would have said something like, 'the data arrives every day before six a.m.'. And so, then; let's assume our testing process was really left informal; when they tested it and the data didn't arrive, then, this test should have 'failed'. If we are not writing 'acceptance criteria'; if we are just basically saying to Operations, 'You need to test it' and their saying, 'I'm not happy' but someone else is saying, 'Well, we never agreed to do that', then that is where it gets a bit sticky because you don't have that informal contract to fall back on and say, 'well this is what I asked for in the first place and I don't have it' and therefore it has 'failed'.

Dilly: Yes, we have a lot room to develop here – coming back to my point of the need of a formal governance structure. A central touch point.

Linda: Again, in other places that I have worked; the user stories have been written in a really specific format and the development team build to that and test to that and therefore, if something then fails testing because you have written something in a explicit way and it hasn't been built; then it goes back to the development team. And if you've failed something because you've forgotten to write [strongly emphasised] something and they use the story but you just realise you wanted it, that won't go back to the development team, it needs to be added to the story set. There is quite a strict way of basically noticing whether something is a defect or it is a change request. And, I wonder in this example, whether Operations even get a look into writing the story at all. It sounds like it's all done by products completely separately. and 'do they have the opportunity to say, No, I don't agree with this, I need this?' or is it more like 'For Your Information [FYI], here it is if you want to have a look at it'.

Moderator: That is all from me today and I would like to thank you all for your time today.