



About the Author

Walt Denny is the president of Walt Denny, Inc., an advertising/public relations firm that focuses primarily on home products clients such as Whirlpool Corp., KitchenAid, Amerock Corp., and L.E. Johnson Products, Inc. Walt Denny, Inc., The Home Products Agency, was established in 1989. For more information visit www.waltdenny.com.



Launching a New Product

Surefire Strategy and Timing is Required for a Smooth Lift-Off

United States consumers will be drinking approximately 6,784 million gallons of bottled water annually by 2004, according to the International Bottled Water Association's projections, making bottled water second only to soft drinks in volume sold. The skyrocketing demand for such a simple product is a market phenomenon that few experts in the water filtration

an integrated launch plan include market and competitive analyses (e.g., focus groups and other forms of intelligence gathering), public relations (PR) strategy, marketing planning, advertising campaigns and market timing considerations. Like many successful companies rolling out products, Coca-Cola clearly defined Dasani's target markets, the best

seminars, also can contribute to a successful, high-profile launch. In addition, for every major product launch, creating and distributing a comprehensive press kit, which includes a company backgrounder, product press releases and other relevant materials, to the media will help get the word out to the right people.

market in innovative ways to help speed up the process. For instance, when Dupont developed Tyvec, a unique paper with breathable properties, they weren't sure how to demonstrate its value to the market or how well it would be received by the building industry. During the energy crisis of the late 1970s, they began wrapping houses with it—the rest is history.

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business could ever have anticipated. It seems that a new or "improved" brand of bottled water is launched every other week, making consumers' choices almost mind-boggling. But in a market that appears saturated with so many bottled water brands all promising similar benefits, how do companies keep making a splash with new products? It isn't rocket science, but how and when you launch a new product is key. It's one of the most effective ways of capturing the media's attention—and if done right, it can be a company's ticket to success.

strategies for reaching them and mapped out a timeline and overall objectives.

Companies launching new products also need a marketing strategy that encompasses product distribution channels, pricing, promotions, marketing budgets and measurable sales goals. Conducting press tours, pitching stories to editors, scheduling speaking opportunities and even offering product

Understanding your market's "adoption curve" (the phases a market undergoes to adopt a new product) and your industry's "clock speed" or evolution rate also is critical to product launch planning. If research reveals that it takes a consumer just a month or less to switch to a new bottled water brand if they like the new product's image, a company can expect to see increased marketshare very quickly. But while the bottled water industry boasts a fast adoption curve and clock speed, an industry such as building/construction moves a bit more slowly, making it even more critical to demonstrate the value of a new product to the

There is no question that launching a new product requires significant time and dedicated resources. However, teaming up with an experienced public relations/advertising agency can help make it a hitch-free process. The right agency can work with your in-house team to create a launch plan that will help your new product take off at warp speed and follow a smooth path to success. **WQP**

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In a highly competitive market, Coca-Cola North America successfully introduced its popular Dasani brand of bottled water in 1999 by perfecting a healthy product image and leveraging its existing distribution channels, which not only ensured a smooth launch but accelerated growth of the overall bottled water market. The company came out with a "Simplify Wellness" slogan and program for Dasani, which included sponsoring health-related segments on NBC's *Today Show* and the Discovery Channel. Though Coca-Cola's Dasani was a late market entry, it swiftly shot to the number-two spot in bottled water brands.

While the pressures to launch a new product can be intense in any industry, doing it without the appropriate planning and the right timeline easily can cause a new product to flop. Among the key factors in any company's successful roll-out of a new product is an integrated launch plan. The basic components of