

How to launch a first-of-its-kind consumer product

The process of launching a D2C product can be challenging, especially when you're building something genuinely brand new. You're trying to educate people, whilst building trust, whilst converting sales.

Temps de lecture : minute

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I understand the challenges better than most. My experience building Béa Fertility's first *at-home fertility treatment* over the last two years has shown me that the process isn't always plain sailing, but it is rewarding when you get it right.

To help others embarking on a similar process, I've pulled together some of the key things I wish I'd known when starting out.

Set realistic timelines

People often assume that once you have “done the hard part” and developed the concept for a product, you have reached the home stretch of the design journey. This is rarely the case when you're designing something that is the first of its kind. You don't have any knowledge of other products that you can learn from as a starting point, so the development and testing stages will take longer. This is what we soon realised when we set out to build the Béa applicator: it took us 2 years to launch, much longer than we had initially anticipated.

The experience taught me that it is very likely that you will encounter unexpected hurdles. It may be that you have to navigate additional,

complex regulations, or you may struggle with supply chain issues or existing data gaps. Setting realistic timelines and building a financial buffer into projections can help to prepare for these unforeseen events.

View familiarity as an asset

Words like “innovation” and “originality” get thrown about a lot in the startup space. However, it’s important not to overlook the value of familiarity when designing a brand new product for a consumer audience.

A new product can be intimidating, especially when it’s health-related. So designing a product that has recognisable features can help customers feel more comfortable. But familiarity doesn’t just have to mean copying an existing design. The way that someone is meant to hold a product or even the colours and shapes used on a device can put users at ease.

These familiar design elements will often make the product feel more intuitive to use, too. That is why we opted to design the cervical cap on the Béa device to look like a menstrual cup.

Hire in-house experts

Designing something new means you can’t stand on the shoulders of previous designs. But you can think laterally and draw inspiration from the wider industry. Hiring in-house experts will allow you to draw from industry wisdom, and make better-informed choices. Staff experts will also be able to help you navigate complex regulatory hoops with confidence and know when it is right to push back (or not) against regulators’ claims about what is feasible.



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Start real-world testing ASAP

Exhaustive knowledge and attention to the smallest details are part and parcel of launching a new product. But it can also make it easy to lose sight of the wider picture. Starting real-world testing as early as possible can help you take a step back and get a sense of how users will respond to your product in reality.

When you put the product into the hands of users, it often becomes clear that they care very little about some of the details that you spent so much time fussing over. It is also likely that there will be things that they are concerned about that you would not have foreseen.

For example, real-world testing made us redesign the funnel on the top of

our applicator. We opted for a big, bright orange design to make it clearer to users that it needed to be removed before insertion. This is because, despite this being laid out in the instructions, testers weren't doing so. Starting real-world testing early allowed us to rethink the device to make it more user-friendly.

There is no denying that launching an innovative product can be difficult. Particularly because, when there is no clear blueprint to follow, it can be hard to know where to start. But leaning on in-house expertise, learning from real-world testing and factoring in enough time and budget to allow for unexpected setbacks can help. It will put you in the best possible position to navigate the journey to product launch and disrupt your chosen industry.

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