

1 – Idea Generation

Sometimes described as the 'fuzzy front end' of the design process, coming up with an original idea need not just be a case of random inspiration. Good designers need to think about what already works, and what can practically be achieved by making small changes to existing designs. You need to know what works before you can change it, so plenty of research into design history and a current product line will always be useful when trying to innovate. This process should also be collaborative if working as part of an agency.

2 – Understanding a Market

A new product needs to be tailored to a strong understanding of a particular market. Research processes like focus groups and breaking down a larger market into segments will make it easier to pinpoint general areas of consumer taste, and how they might react to potential new products. This information can also be a good way to raise financing from quantitative data.

3 – Getting Rights

It is essential that any new product is registered with the inventor, and that this registration extends to all aspects of unique design and functionality. Failure to do so can result in intellectual property theft, so make sure that you check patents databases before proceeding with an idea.

4 – Refining a Prototype

Getting a new product design right means refining a prototype until it is as close as possible to its main concept. Taking the time to get a product design right before launch will save on any later problems that might lead to a recall.

5 – User Experience

A new product will need to be placed into situations where it can be tested out in real life situations. As with market research, setting up trials for a newly created product will allow you to decide if anything needs to be altered or refined before a final launch. Data sheets and manuals will also have to be produced in order to make a user experience test work.

6 – Manufacturing and Distribution

Decisions have to be made over whether a commissioned product will be created locally, or manufactured overseas in places like China. The manufacturing costs are often much cheaper overseas, but does mean that you have to rely on outsourcing one of the most important final stages of your product.

7 – Marketing a Product

Making the most of the commercial value of a product means having a clear understanding of its brand identity, and the kind of values that are expected to be expressed to consumers. This decision can be made in terms of an anticipated audience, as well as how marketing campaigns will emphasize the unique appeals of a product, and how it will be integrated into social situations.