

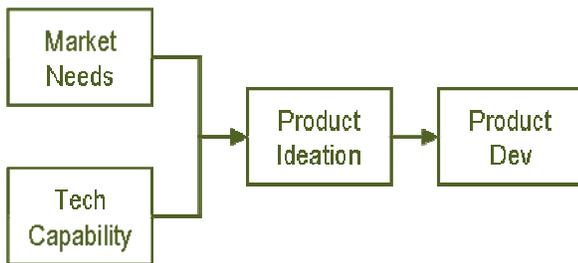
# synthesis 360

Increasing market success of new developments

## Product Needs Analysis – Part 1

*A systematic approach to identifying functional needs*

Innovation should begin with good quality information. One key factor in product success is how well it meets the needs. Early steps in product realization are critical because they can set the course. Begin with good information before moving to idea generation. Good information provides the basis for reliable results.



*Figure 1: Market needs and technical capability act as inputs for product ideation and definition.*

The first and simplest step is to connect with different organizational functions within a company. This helps quickly synthesize a 360° view. Most companies have easily accessible internal knowledge of the markets, customers and the competition. But it does take effort to explicitly go out and tap into the multiple perspectives.

Representatives from the functions listed below should be interviewed. A current, related product can be used as a starting point for discussion in some cases (for instance with service & support team). Otherwise, just start with the nature of the product and market to focus the discussion. Give participants a heads-up and they will tend to come prepared, sometimes with detailed notes and documents.

**Service & Support** : Ask about common reasons for customers calls, biggest complaints, requests, types/categories of customers encountered, ways in which the current/related product is being used in practice, connectivity or compatibility needs.

**Sales & Dealers** : Ask about competitive situation in the marketplace, unique selling points for us and for competitors, new trends in industry practices, special needs for distribution channels.

**Overseas Offices/Dealers** : Ask about differences in global markets, different standards, languages, compliance needs, local product service approach.

**Engineering** : Technology landscape and emerging trends, cost-performance tradeoffs, development speed tradeoffs, team's preferences, patented or patentable capability that could be leveraged

**Marketing** : Attractive market segments, market needs, user types, use cases, pain points, market trends and growth rates, channel needs, promotion mechanisms used.

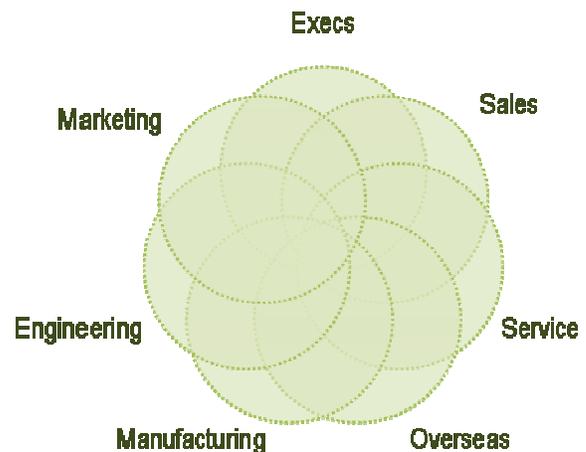
**Manufacturing** : Current issues faced in production, capabilities in-house, external partners in use, things to watch for in designing for manufacturability

**Executives** : Ask about strategic direction, benchmarks for project success, acceptable risk boundaries, investment metrics needed for project evaluation.

Taking advantage of the unique vantage points that each person has, is a very simple and effective way to look at the issue from multiple perspectives.

Condense your interview notes into a snapshot with categorized needs for product success.

The next part of this article will cover interaction with end-users and customers using what's been learned so far as a starting point.



*Figure 2 : Connect with organizational functions to synthesize a broader view on product needs by accessing internal knowledge. Next, plan direct work with end-users.*