



Leading Product Development: The Senior Manager's Guide to Creating and Shaping

Steven C. Wheelwright

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In their groundbreaking book *Revolutionizing Product Development*, Steven C. Wheelwright and Kim B. Clark demonstrated how project leaders for product development could apply new innovations to bring products to market at breakneck speed. Now, in their new work, they address the general manager's role in leading product development efforts -- at the functional, unit, group, and corporate levels.

Up to now, senior managers have merely approved or rejected proposals at the beginning of a project and rushed in at the end to resolve problems. This traditional approach to product development no longer works, the authors contend. A fundamental shift in the role of senior management is taking place: the entire spectrum of new product development is now the responsibility of the general manager -- from pre-project planning to completion. Wheelwright and Clark draw on their combined consulting experience and numerous examples -- such as Kodak, Honda, Hewlett-Packard, and Gillette -- to explain how this new role can be successfully executed in today's competitive arena.

The authors show how the margin for error in new product development has become razor thin. Pre-project planning, they show, takes the guesswork out of development so that projects run smoothly from start to finish. Second, they describe how to choose a set of projects that match a company's specific strategic objectives, resources, and "organizational horsepower" -- enabling the development of consistently successful products and capabilities over time. Finally, they reveal how to create a plan for action: how to determine project sequence, what measurements and incentives are crucial, and, most important, how to capture project learning and integrate it back into the ongoing stream of product development.

Wheelwright and Clark conclude that the opportunity for rapid, significant development lies in managerial leadership of pre-project planning and commitment to improvement at every step of the product's life cycle. They provide managers with the tools needed to master these processes, making this book necessary reading for every manager who wants the upper hand in bringing timely, efficient, high-quality new products to market.

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