Auditing Results After the Launch

Executive Summary

1. The post-launch audit, conducted by an impartial auditor, examines the effectiveness of launch activities and Launch Plans.

2. The win–loss audit examines the reasons for winning or losing individual sales, in an effort to isolate and correct systemic problems.

3. Both types of audits are only as good as the team's willingness to implement changes that mitigate the problems found during these audits.

Whether you're launching a new product or releasing an update, the assumptions that took root in the product strategy, assessed in the planning phases, and developed, are brought to life. You'll find that some things work well, and some things don't go according to plan. What you don't want to do is to be caught off-guard; you want your product to be successful. There are two types of audits (or look-backs) that could be helpful:

- A *post-launch audit* examines the performance of every business function that committed to support the product launch. At a minimum, it reviews the market window and timing relative to the window, executive sponsorship and support, synchronization between the Business Case and the launch plan, preparation of sales and marketing material, sales training, operational system readiness, and launch metrics. Like any financial or operational audit, it should have an impartial auditor. The audit is a root-cause analysis that should result in action-based recommendations, some of which should be acted on immediately, especially when reputations are at stake.

- Another useful form of post-launch review is a *win–loss audit*, which seeks to figure out why the company won or lost a competitive bid for business. The audit is both internal, a review of what led up to the sale, including identification of the prospect, qualification, and the level of sales and other organizational interaction in support of the sales effort itself, and external, which involves customer interviews and debriefings.

Regardless of audit type, or whatever term you choose to use, it's an important practice to learn what works, what doesn't, and how to adjust as your products move through chosen markets.