



Alexandra Egan

Product Launch Case Study

Product: Gen. 2 Hybrid E-Wand
Time Frame: 1.5 Years
Launch Date: May 2021
Sales Platforms: myeward.com and Amazon

Product Description: The Gen. 2 Hybrid E-Wand is the newest generation E-Wand product for slatted blind motorization. The E-Wand retrofits onto existing horizontal or vertical slatted blinds to motorize the tilt. This new version adds Zigbee communication to the E-Wand in addition to the existing 433.92 FM communication on the first generation E-Wands. This means this new version can communicate with the existing E-Wands and remotes in the field, but adds integration capabilities such as app control, voice control, and other third party integrations.

Development: During the development phase, marketing led the team of mechanical, electrical, and software engineers in making product aesthetic and functionality decisions. As a first generation product already was in production, the Gen. 2 Hybrid E-Wand only required minor mechanical updates to the internal plastics for an easier assembly process. The main enhancement of this second generation product was the addition of the Zigbee chip, which allows the device to integrate into larger systems.

After mechanical changes were approved during this development phase the information was sent to our China-based suppliers for them to quote tooling and part cost. Similarly, when the board design was created and altered, the drawings were sent to our US and China based suppliers for quote.

Challenges: This development of the new board design and software took the bulk of time. During this process we overcame several challenges, including the following:

1) The redirecting of company assets to other projects was a large challenge to overcome during the development phase. We did successfully overcome this issue by compromising time allotments with the engineering director and company owner.

2) Like most other tech companies, we experienced logistical delays due to COVID-19. Many of our necessary board components were extremely challenging to find due to them being in high demand across industries. This challenge was overcome by diversifying our supply chain and working in tandem with US based suppliers to purchase components when they became available versus waiting for production.

End of Development: After approximately one year of circuit board development (testing, redesign, and re-testing), software creation from scratch (for both the E-Wand code itself as well as drivers for third party integrators), and minor mechanical changes (adding in standoffs to allow for an easier assembly) we had functional, pre-production units ready for beta testing.

Pre-Launch: During the pre-launch phase, extensive in house and beta testing is conducted to determine any potential flaws or issues in the product mechanical, board, or software design. Through beta testing we are able to iterate the product and send OTA updates to units in the field based on what we learn from feedback from users and our own product monitoring.

Beta testing was conducted in two phases: the first phase placed units into homes of employees and close friends, then in the second phase units were sent out to people unaffiliated with the company (tech journalists, potential customers, etc). Prior to the second phase of beta testing, instruction and label creation is drafted so in-the-field users not only beta test the product, but also the instructions.

During the beginning of pre-launch, components (plastics and boards) were ordered in bulk from our China and US based suppliers.

Also during the beginning of pre-launch we sent units to our FCC testing facility to get FCC approval of the product, allowing it to be sold throughout North America.

Challenges: Overcome during the pre-launch phase include the following challenges:

1) General communication of installation and programming processes is always a challenge when communicating from internal to external audiences. This challenge was overcome by iterating the instruction manual based on feedback from a diverse group of individuals ranging from engineers to elderly beta testers.

2) Time is always scarce after the initial development when ramping up for a product launch, and making sure we beta testing is thorough is a significant challenge. We overcame this issue by beta testing in phases to make certain issues were tackled before sending units to non-company-affiliated beta testers. This two-phase process allowed us to maximize our efficiency while beta testing.

End of Pre-Launch: As launch grew closer we began developing the content of our online listings, including creating the copy and images for both myewand.com and our Amazon pages. In addition to these listings, we also completed packaging designs for our SKUs, generated launch marketing communication strategy, and solidified our manufacturing processes.

Pre-Launch: At launch, we execute our launch marketing strategy, which included targeted social ads for Facebook and Instagram, email blasts to individuals who have over the years expressed interest in an integrateable version of the E-Wand, and Amazon based advertising tying the Gen. 2 version to our Gen. 1 version.

Challenges: Overcome during the launch phase include the following challenges:

1) Amazon and Google algorithms both include time as a factor in getting shown on their platforms so it is challenging to organically show up as the first listing immediately. To combat this we temporarily left our Gen. 1 listings up and created those listing as keywords on Google Adwords as well as on the Amazon platform so when that listing showed up due to its prevalence on the platforms the new units would also show up.

2) Customer service experiences challenges at launch as those agents now have to determine if customers have a Gen. 1 or Gen. 2 version of the E-Wand. Understanding this, we created special physical features on the Gen. 2 version to assist customers in identifying which version they have. These features include a blue O-Ring at the battery cap as well as a small sticker on the back of the E-Wand.

Launch Success: Due to extensive planning and rigorous execution of strategy, launch was successful. We measured launch success by several factors such as the following:

1) We saw more traffic moving away from our Gen. 1 listings towards our Gen. 2 listings based on our keyword and PPC management.

2) We saw a 1% purchase rate from our email campaign, meaning 1% of those who received the initial email purchased from our website within 24 hours.

3) We saw approximately a 400% increase in traffic to our sales platform based on our social media ads which we were able to directly tie to sales of these newly launched units.

Predictions: In the coming year we expect to see a 20% increase in overall sales based on the launch of this new version that includes highly sought-after features in a retrofit blind motorization device.



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