

Using Technology Development (TD) to Unleash Your NPD

by Michael Glessner

With contributions from [Joe Dury](#)

I recently spent the day with a company whose R&D leadership was voicing concerns about their new product development (NPD) performance. Too often, projects missed scheduled gate review dates. Project teams and their executive sponsors placed the blame on a number of factors, from poor cross-functional communication to difficulty predicting needs and requirements of later phases. This result disappointed R&D management and frustrated individual contributors involved in these NPD projects - all of whom wondered how to improve things next time.

After a probing conversation with the R&D leadership team, we uncovered a key contributor to their poor performance: misdirecting technology development (TD) projects into the NPD process.

TD is typically a new-to-the-world technical challenge with a truly unknown outcome. These TD projects are fundamentally about managing uncertainty (see "[Managing Uncertainty of Technology Development](#)") rather than risk, and when these projects enter the tightly constrained NPD process, they often fail to meet time commitments. Managing these efforts in a rapid learning environment, with principle investigators systematically learning, offers the most direct path to shareholder value creation.

If you are dissatisfied with your organization's NPD performance, I strongly recommend a series of conversations with your project managers to identify elements of NPD projects today that require TD. If you are unclear how to choose the TD path, then evaluating a [roadmapping methodology](#) may help drive this activity.

In closing, rework your NPD portfolio and migrate the appropriate projects into a TD process that is designed to foster rapid learning in an R&D environment and is guided by technology roadmapping. Doing this, your teams will focus their NPD design resources on completing the remaining product developments with available technologies, develop a much more reliable NPD process, create visibility of ongoing TD work and boost morale within R&D.

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