

CPA



THE ASSOCIATION FOR
CONTRACT PACKAGERS & MANUFACTURERS

Why Product Launches Go Sideways

Lessons from 30 Years of Manufacturing
Projects

June 2026

contractpackaging.org

Service, Solutions, Sustainability

What the CPA offers today!

- The voice and source for those looking for Contract Packaging and Manufacturing resources since 1992
- Leader in increasing the knowledge and expertise within the contract packaging industry and their customers
- Encourage the effective use of contract packaging services via innovation and flexibility
- Increase the industry profile, capabilities, innovation of its members



MORE Leading CP/CMs are CPA Members

- **MORE RFQ**



**OVER 90
RFQ / MONTH
2018 Avg**

- **MORE growth**



**11.9% CAGR
5-year**

- **MORE networking**
opportunities with
hundreds of industry
executives



**UP TO TEN
EVENTS
per year**

- **MORE education and training**
opportunities for
your entire team





Dr. Bryan Griffen, CPC
President
Griffen Executive Solutions

What we'll cover today

- **Why Product Launches Matter**

Understanding the business impact of successful and unsuccessful launches

- **Why Launches Go Sideways**

The most common causes of delays, cost overruns, and customer frustration

- **What Successful Organizations Do Differently**

Practical lessons from three decades of manufacturing projects

- **Key Takeaways You Can Apply Immediately**

Simple actions to improve launch success and reduce risk

Goal: Help brands, contract manufacturers, and contract packagers improve communication, accountability, execution, and launch performance.

A career spent in manufacturing

30+ years in manufacturing



Consumer Packaged Goods



OEMs & Equipment Suppliers



System Integrators



Manufacturing Leadership



Industry Associations

I've been on every side of the table

- Former Global Head of Electrical & Automation Engineering, Nestlé
- Former Managing Director, PMMI OpX Leadership Network
- Executive Director, OMAC
- Director, CPA Brand Leadership Forum
- Hundreds of projects, startups, and product launches

The lessons I'll share today come from successes, failures, and everything in between.

Why product launches matter

A product launch is more than just making a new product



Every product launch impacts far more than the product itself.



A successful launch can:

- ✓ Accelerate revenue growth
- ✓ Strengthen customer relationships
- ✓ Improve market position
- ✓ Create future business opportunities



A poor launch can:

- ✗ Delay revenue
- ✗ Increase costs
- ✗ Damage customer confidence
- ✗ Strain relationships across the supply chain

A successful launch creates value across the entire supply chain.
A struggling launch creates challenges for everyone involved.

The real cost of a bad launch



The Real Cost of a Bad Launch



What People Measure:

- ✓ Project budget variance
- ✓ Startup delays
- ✓ Additional labor
- ✓ Expedited shipping



What They Often Miss:

- ✗ Lost sales opportunities
- ✗ Customer confidence
- ✗ Team morale
- ✗ Future business opportunities
- ✗ Management distraction
- ✗ Organizational credibility

Most organizations measure the cost of the delay.
Few measure the cost of everything the delay creates.

The problem usually isn't the technology



What People See

(The Symptoms)



Equipment Problems



Material Issues



Low Throughput



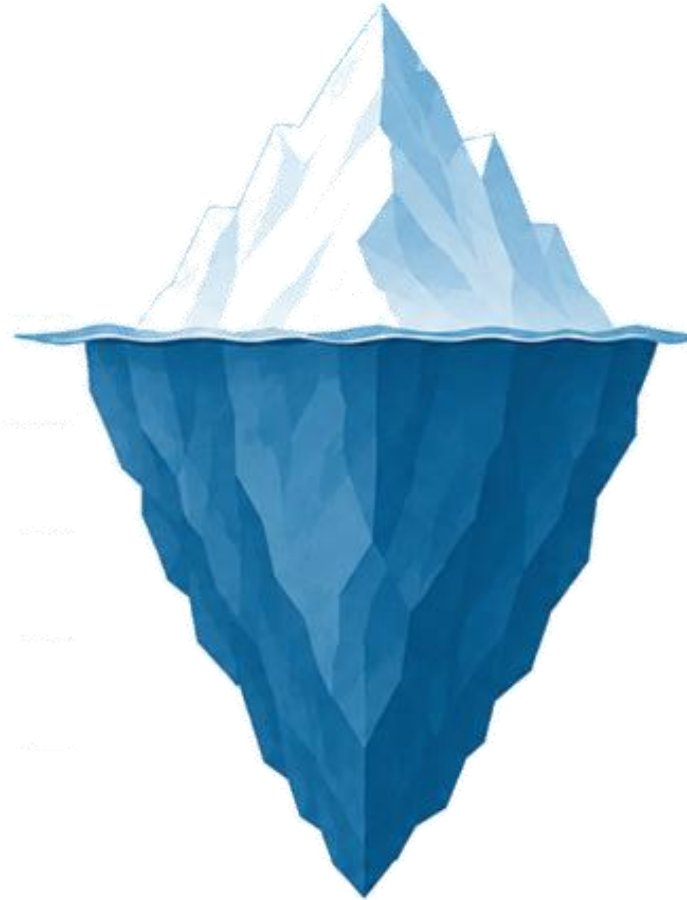
Quality Problems



Missed Schedules



Cost Overruns



What Actually Caused Them

(The Root Causes)



Unverified Assumptions



Poor Communication



Unclear Ownership



Unmanaged Risks



Misaligned Expectations



Missing Stakeholders

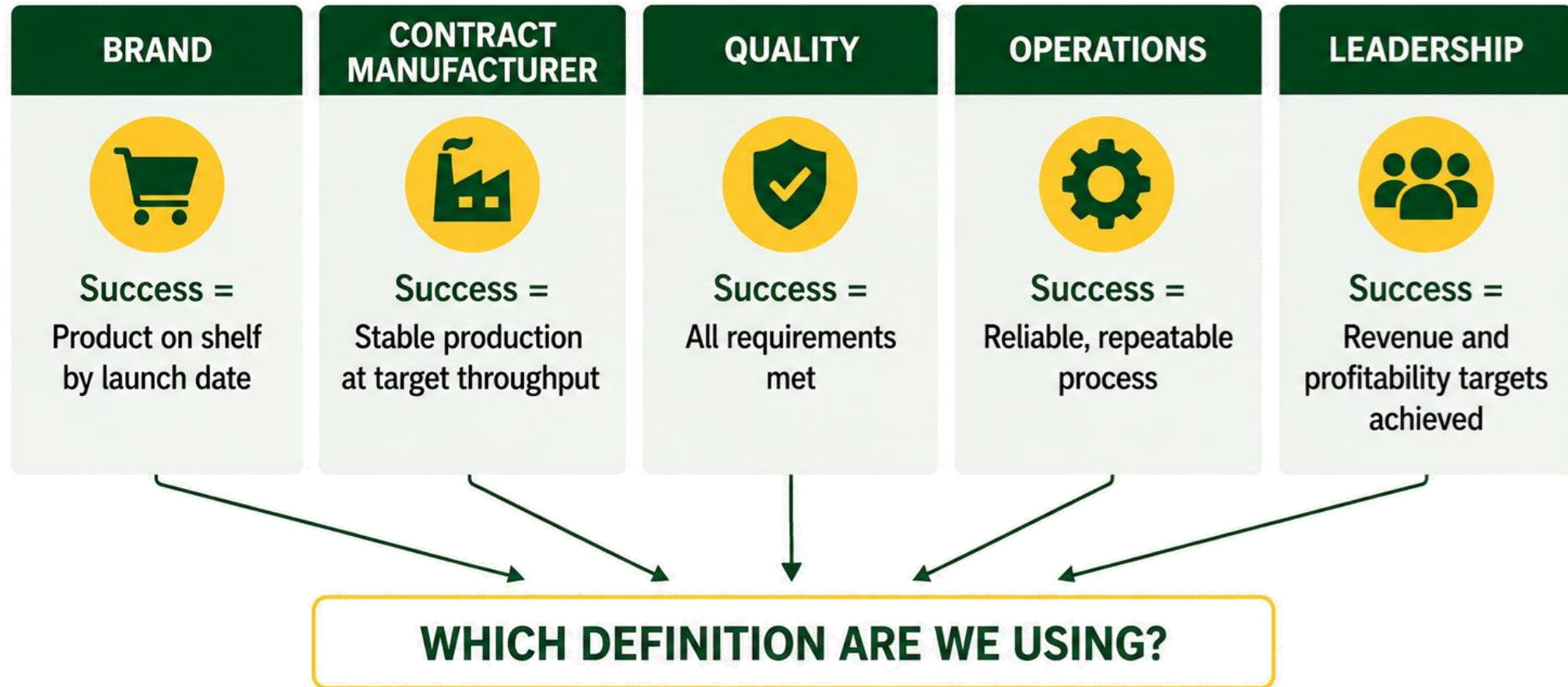
The equipment problem, quality issue, or schedule delay is often the symptom. The real problem usually started months earlier.

Why launches go sideways

The seven most common causes that product launches fail

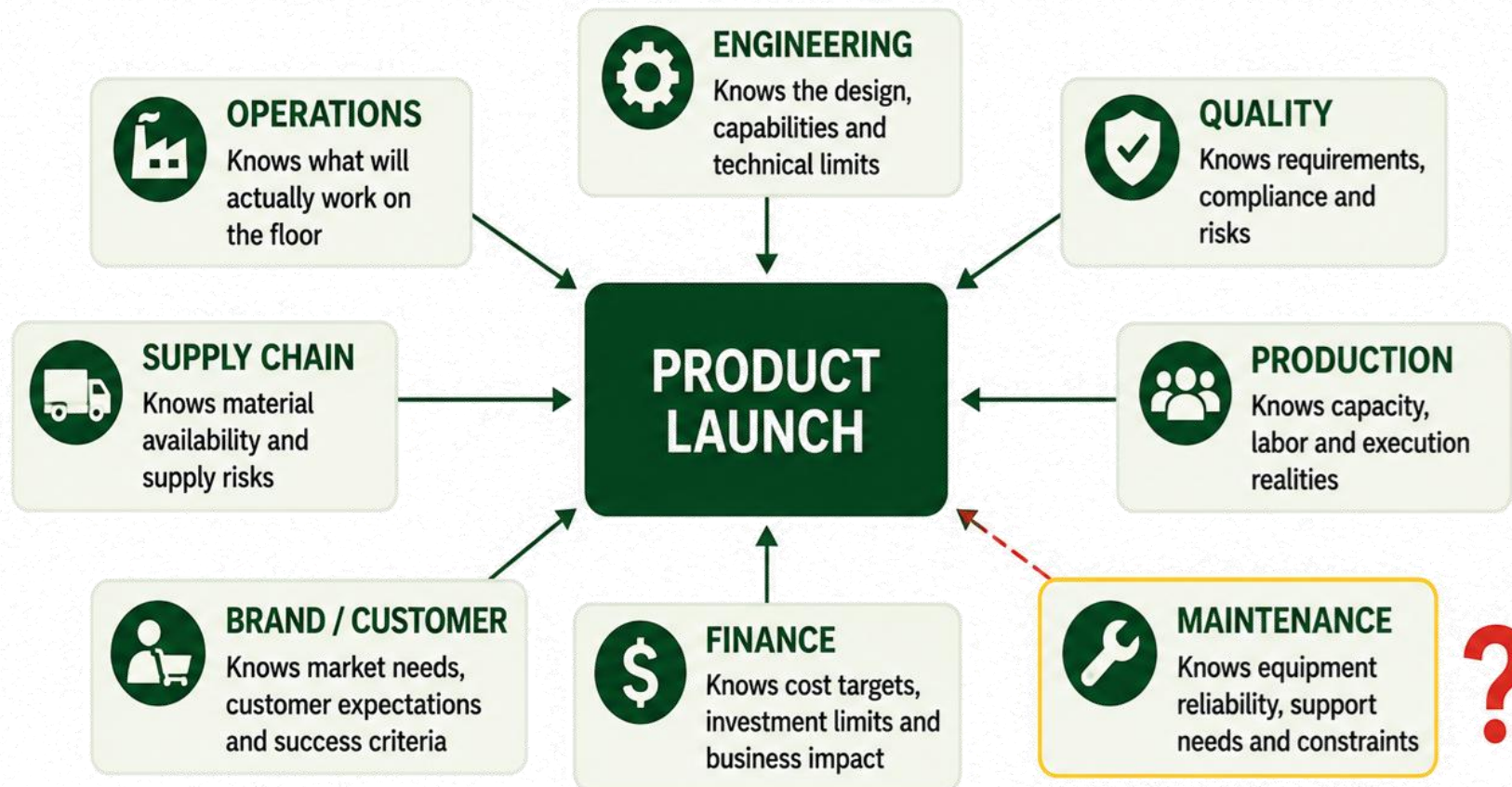
1. Success was never clearly defined
2. The right people weren't involved
3. Early assumptions replaced facts
4. Nobody owned the handoffs
5. Risks were identified too late
6. Scope changed without consequences
7. Activity replaced communication

Cause #1: Success was never clearly defined



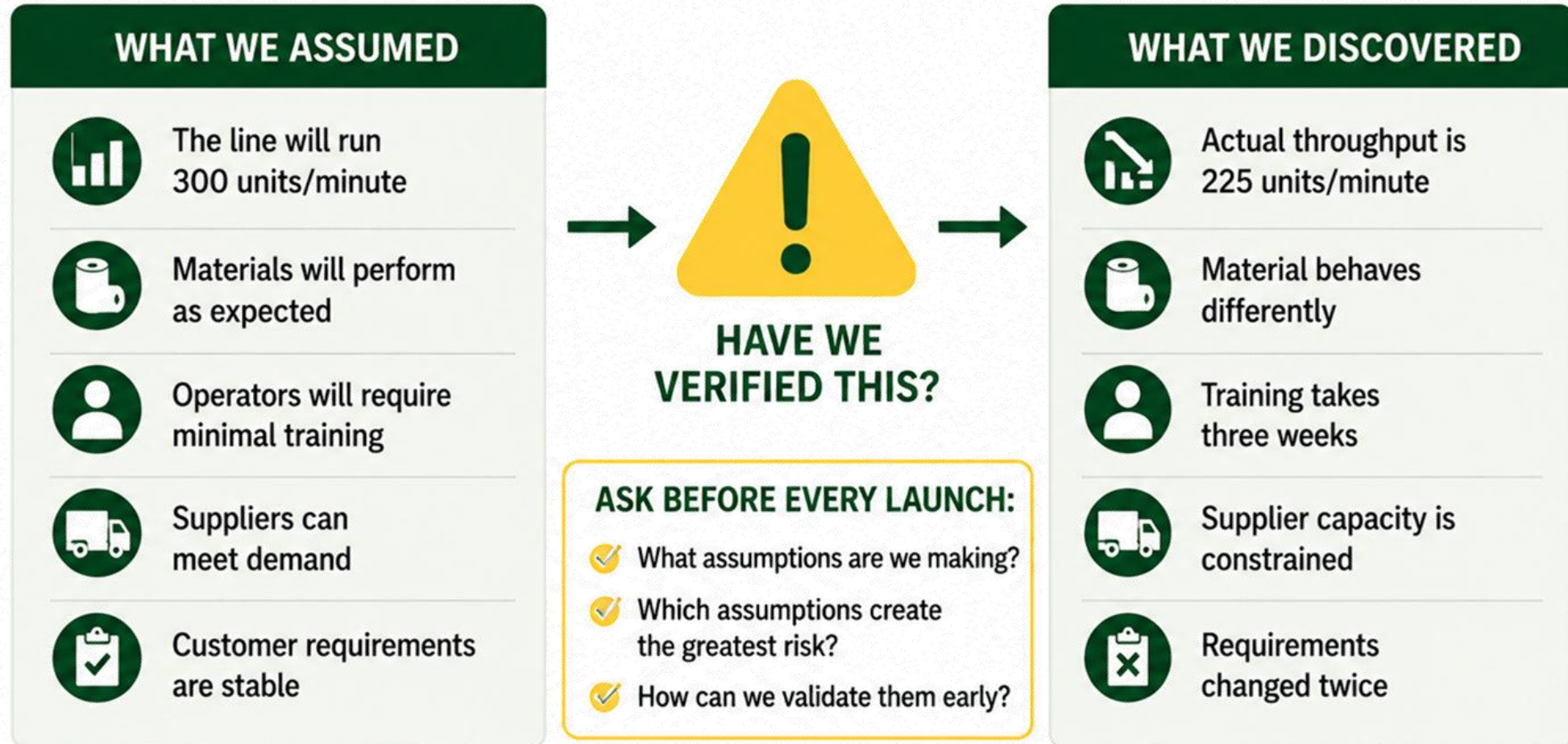
 If different stakeholders have different definitions of success, someone will inevitably be disappointed.

Cause #2: The right people weren't involved early



A launch can survive extra stakeholders.
It rarely survives missing critical stakeholders.

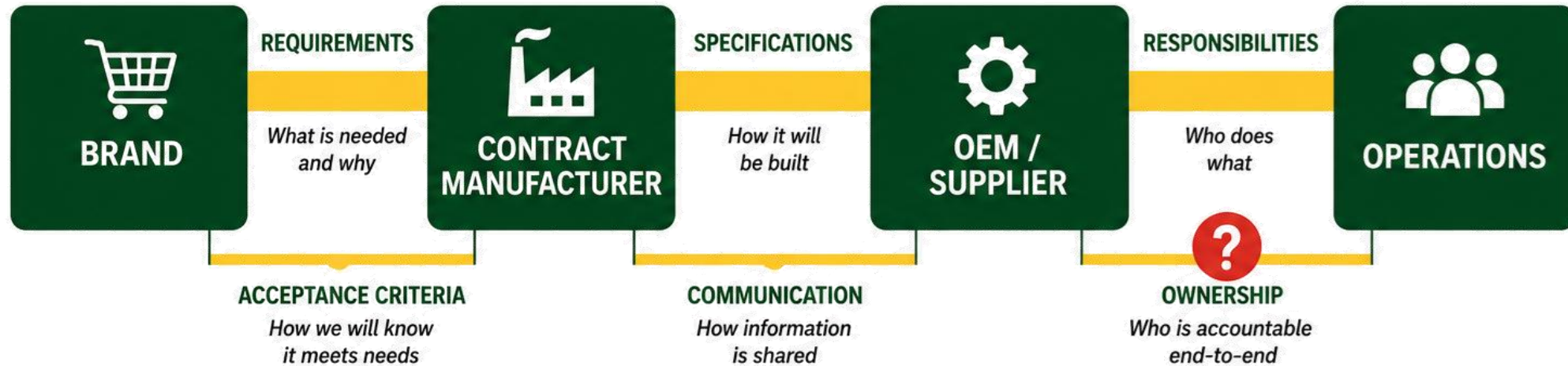
Cause #3: Assumptions replace facts



Assumptions are not the problem. Unverified assumptions are.

Cause #4: Nobody owned the handoffs

Most launch failures don't occur within organizations.
They occur between organizations.



COMMON SYMPTOMS

- "I thought they were handling that."
- "Nobody told us."
- "We assumed that was included."
- "That's not our responsibility."
- "We never discussed that."



BEFORE EVERY LAUNCH ASK:

- ✓ Who owns this handoff?
- ✓ What information must be transferred?
- ✓ How will we confirm understanding?
- ✓ What happens if assumptions differ?



THE RESULT

- Misaligned expectations
- Rework and delays
- Additional costs
- Frustration and blame
- Customer dissatisfaction



Projects are managed by organizations.
Launches succeed or fail at the interfaces between them.

Cause #5: Risks were identified too late

Every launch contains risk. Successful organizations identify risks before they become problems. Struggling organizations identify risks after they become problems.



ASK BEFORE EVERY LAUNCH:

- ✓ What could derail us?
- ✓ How likely is it?
- ✓ What would be the impact?
- ✓ What will we do if it happens?



Hope is not a risk management strategy.

Cause #6: Scope changed w/o consequences

Change is not the problem.
Pretending change has no impact is the problem.



! Every change is free to request. None are free to implement.

Cause #7: Activity replaced communication

Being busy is not the same thing as being aligned.

EVERYONE IS BUSY

Lots of activity. Different directions.
Not enough alignment.



EVERYONE IS ALIGNED

Clear communication. Shared direction.
One team, moving toward success.



BUSY
≠
ALIGNED

ASK BEFORE EVERY LAUNCH REVIEW:



What has changed?



What decisions are needed?



What assumptions are being challenged?



Who needs to know?



Are we still aligned?



Activity creates motion. Communication creates alignment.

What successful organizations do differently

Characteristics of successful launches

Successful launches are rarely the result of luck.
They are usually the result of discipline, alignment, and proactive communication.






SUCCESS IS BUILT INTENTIONALLY



Each discipline strengthens the foundation and increases the probability of launch success.



THE RESULT?

-  Fewer surprises.
-  Lower risk.
-  Better on-time performance.
-  Stronger teamwork and trust.
-  Higher quality launch outcomes.



Successful launches don't eliminate uncertainty. They manage it better.

Five questions every launch team should ask

Better questions early lead to better launches.

PART 1: ASK THE RIGHT QUESTIONS


LAUNCH READINESS QUESTIONS

-  What does success look like?
-  What assumptions have we verified?
-  Who owns the handoffs?
-  What could derail us?
-  How will decisions be made?

ASKING
BETTER
QUESTIONS
PREVENTS
BIGGER
PROBLEMS

PART 2: ANSWERING THE SEVEN CAUSES

COMMON LAUNCH FAILURES ADDRESSED

1		Success Was Never Clearly Defined	→	<i>What does success look like?</i>
2		The Right People Weren't Involved Early	→	<i>How will decisions be made?</i>
3		Assumptions Replaced Facts	→	<i>What assumptions have we verified?</i>
4		Nobody Owned the Handoffs	→	<i>Who owns the handoffs?</i>
5		Risks Were Identified Too Late	→	<i>What could derail us?</i>
6		Scope Changed Without Consequences	→	<i>How will decisions be made?</i>
7		Activity Replaced Communication	→	<i>All five questions drive communication and alignment</i>



Better questions early prevent bigger problems later.

The launch readiness framework

Before launching a product, evaluate readiness across the entire system, not just the equipment.

1. READINESS GATES: DON'T MOVE FORWARD UNTIL EACH GATE IS CLEARED

1		PEOPLE READY? Are operators trained and staffing plans in place?	PASS
2		EQUIPMENT READY? Has performance been validated at target conditions?	PASS
3		MATERIALS READY? Are materials available, qualified, and supplier-ready?	MITIGATION REQUIRED
4		QUALITY READY? Have specifications and acceptance criteria been approved?	PASS
5		PROCESS READY? Are SOPs, workflows, and escalation paths defined?	PASS
6		CUSTOMER READY? Are expectations, timing, and success criteria aligned?	NOT READY

LAUNCH DECISION

PROCEED

PROCEED WITH MITIGATION PLAN

DELAY LAUNCH

2. READINESS DASHBOARD: GET A CLEAR VIEW OF OVERALL READINESS

READINESS AREA	KEY QUESTION	STATUS
People	Are operators trained and staffing plans in place?	READY
Equipment	Has performance been validated at target conditions?	READY
Materials	Are materials available, qualified, and supplier-ready?	AT RISK
Quality	Have specifications and acceptance criteria been approved?	READY
Process	Are SOPs, workflows, and escalation paths defined?	READY
Customer	Are expectations, timing, and success criteria aligned?	NOT READY

OVERALL READINESS SCORE

67%

LAUNCH RECOMMENDATION

PROCEED WITH MITIGATION PLAN

Address items marked "At Risk" and "Not Ready" before final launch decision.

A launch is only as ready as its **weakest** readiness category.

What it comes down to...

Successful launches are not primarily about technology.

They are about alignment, communication, ownership, and execution.



LAUNCH SUCCESS



Build these disciplines.

Improve alignment.

Reduce surprises.

Increase the probability of launch success.



Great launches are rarely the result of luck. **They are the result of discipline, alignment, and execution.**

QUESTIONS & DISCUSSION

Let's discuss how these lessons apply to your launches.



LAUNCH PLAN

- Success Defined
- Assumptions Verified
- Handoffs Owned
- Risks Managed
- Decisions Clear



Thank You!

I appreciate your time and participation.

Bryan T. Griffen

Griffen Executive Solutions

 bryan@griffenexecutivesolutions.com

 [linkedin.com/in/bryantgriffen](https://www.linkedin.com/in/bryantgriffen)



Better questions. Stronger alignment. More successful launches.

CPA



THE ASSOCIATION FOR
CONTRACT PACKAGERS & MANUFACTURERS

Thank You

contractpackaging.org