

The logo for 3Minds, featuring the word '3MINDS' in a stylized, bold, sans-serif font. The '3' is significantly larger than the other characters. The text is white and set against a dark blue, ribbon-like background that curves upwards from the left.

Developing
your
business,
by design.

1. Select the Right Team and the Right Specification

The greatest risk in new product development is in selecting the right team to perform all of the specialist tasks involved from conceptual design through development and tooling to manufacture. Inevitably some of these team members will be in-house and some external. You can mitigate the risk of external members by taking references, evaluating recent work and ensuring that their commercial position is sound not forgetting of course your own instincts as to whether they are people you can work with. Having selected them, ensure you get maximum value by getting them involved from the start and using their experience to help you avoid expensive errors.

The product specification should be seen as your extra man on the team and it is crucial to developing the right product. Getting it right depends on your team evaluating the problem at hand and giving effective input. This is why your development team should include people from marketing, design, engineering, manufacturing, quality, service, finance, legal and of course a good project manager to ensure conformance to the plan.

3. Prototype, Prototype, Prototype...

Prototypes whether handmade or rapid, complete or sectional, visual or functional are and always will be necessary to the design professional as a means to identify or clarify problems. The information gleaned from having real parts in your hand as a means to resolving these problems is second to none.

Computer Aided Design may have helped to speed up the design process as much more information can be gained and passed around your team at an earlier stage in the design cycle. However this should not be seen as a substitute for prototypes or a shortcut to successful development. To develop products with only one prototype iteration would be foolish but to begin manufacture without any is an entirely reckless path and could be commercial suicide!

I cannot emphasise enough that if you want to mitigate risk to your project you must build prototyping into your budget and schedule. This approach will ensure that not only the best product comes out of the process but that it will be the most cost effective route in the long run.

3. Be Realistic about Costs and Timescales

There is no denying, developing products is a major investment, so to mitigate the risk of pouring your money into a 'White Elephant' you need to ensure the project and the costs are broken down into phases. Each phase must have a realistic goal and a measure to ensure further monies are not committed until each phase is successfully completed. For example, there's no point in having functional prototypes made unless you can test the functionality of the product in either a real environment or at least a realistic simulation of it.

The timescale of any project will of course vary considerably depending on its complexity. The most common complaint you will hear from any development team is that the customer is being unrealistic about timescales or that s/he still wants it delivered at point 'x' even though it seems to take three parts of the available time to get an order raised!

What is at issue here of course is that the customer usually has a specific event in mind at which to launch the new product. If you download our 'Design Cycle' diagram you will see there's a lot to do to get to that point and a good project manager will allow for a good deal of contingency as inevitable delays will be incurred.

The secret to mitigating the risk of running out of time is good planning and good communication. It is critical not to rush the last phases and to launch an unfinished product, which would most likely damage your brand and certainly cost you financially. We would be pleased to advise you on the lead times for your project and to project manage your development if required.

For more information on 3Minds design services please call us on 0845 680 1024.

