

# Product Development Cycle by Kevin W. Hoffman

---

This document provides an overview of the type of product development cycle that I have led in the past and emphasizes the team's focus at each stage of the process.

## **Week 1: A Good First Slice**

On day one of a new cycle, the team receives a carefully planned pitch that has already been reviewed and approved by stakeholders. I'm heavily involved in aligning the team on what we're building and answering any questions they may have based on the pitch. During the first week of the cycle, I emphasize completion of a good "first slice" so that we end the week with a functional prototype and a better understanding of the scope and challenges that lie ahead.

## **Weeks 2-4: Deep Work**

The team transitions into deep work mode. At this point, everyone should have a clear idea of their responsibilities for the rest of the cycle. I still bring the team together for a couple of all-hands meetings each week, but for the most part I encourage meetings as needed between the developers, designers, and management to work out the details of the execution.

*Note: In my experience, the team becomes less dependent on the PM in the middle of a cycle, so this is a good time to interface with customers, review feature requests, and begin planning for the next cycle.*

## **Week 5: Testing & QA**

Alongside stakeholders, I begin alpha testing the current build. In the absence of a dedicated QA team, I lead the QA process and loop in the Support and Customer Success teams for assistance. Having fresh eyes on the product at this point results in a lot of feedback, which is why it's important to start this process in Week 5. Automated testing plays a crucial role in reducing the need for manual QA when it comes to concerns like WordPress and PHP version stability.

## **Week 6: Preparing for Launch**

The dev team responds to feedback and bugs discovered during QA, and I work with the Lead Developer and other stakeholders to prepare for launch. This includes alignment with marketing and support so everyone understands what's changing and when.

## **Cooldown**

While the six-week cycle is highly structured, the two-week cooldown serves to address unexpected concerns like those nagging bugs that are critical but maybe not so big as to deserve their own cycle. It also provides time to review pitches with management and align the focus of the next cycle.