

How to Commit to Launch Dates the Right Way (And 1 Mistake to Avoid)

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SUMMARY

Effort and time estimation in project management is inherently imprecise, and it's crucial for teams to acknowledge this reality to manage expectations effectively. The speaker emphasizes the importance of understanding that no template or tool can provide perfect estimates, and suggests a dual-date approach to improve communication and accountability.

- *Estimation is never perfect; teams should accept this reality.*
- *There is often a disconnect between project managers (PMs) and engineering managers regarding expectation management.*
- *PMs face pressure from executives to provide firm dates, leading to unrealistic expectations.*
- *A dual-date system is proposed: a "committed date" for external communication and a more aggressive "target date" for internal use.*
- *The target date allows teams to work towards an ambitious goal without the fear of repercussions for missing it.*
- *This approach helps clarify responsibilities and reduces blame when timelines are not met.*
- *Acknowledging the imprecision of project timelines can lead to healthier team dynamics and better outcomes.*

[Music] effort and time estimation it's never going to be perfect it's never going to be precise does your team have that understanding do you all understand don't expect oh actually the entire world is missing some spreadsheet or template around exactly how you list out the tasks and how you do scoping and how you do inter dependency mapping and all of that and voila this will no longer be a problem you might have a PhD from MIT

in math or whatever else no you are not going to be able to create a template or a spreadsheet that solves the scoping issue it is impossible it is impossible okay so that is the reality the question is is everybody on the same page on that reality and that is where there is this shared delusion the PMS know this the engineering manager of course knows this the designers sometimes if their early career they might not know this but

whatever the case may be we all try to portray that yeah of course these dates are set in stone and of course this estimate needs to be bulletproof etc etc if you're smart enough to get hired by a good company you know that there is never a correct answer so it's about just clarifying that it's about just being clear yeah there's never a correct answer and these estimates are just that they're estimates usually the engineering manager is trying to educate

everyone on this but the PMS don't want to listen why I'm not blaming PMS the PMS don't want to listen

because they're getting pushed on the dates by the CEO so they need to provide something the right approach to this type of situation is this is the situation of managing expectations so how do you do that the best tool I found a tool I learned at stripe I didn't come up with it somebody else did but I thought this was

brilliant basically it's the idea of having two dates let's just talk about estimation in terms of dates most teams have one date which is this is the launch date at stripe at some point after we had a lot of problems with all this estimation and setting expectations for sales and for the go to market teams who were like wait why isn't here we prepared all this and now the product is late oh let's do a post mortem

and all that nonsense waste of time okay here's what we're going to do we're going to have two different dates one date is called a committed date and it was in our launch Cal the other date you can call it the target date so Target date and committed date Target date is internal to your team it's part of the inner world now you can publish it if you want but it's your internal Target date that date keep it fairly

aggressive the Insight here is that the committed date can be the more conservative date so anytime you have an estimate usually your engineering countabout will say well it can take between four and 6 months or four and 6 weeks so your target is likely 4 weeks but your committed is maybe seven weeks you add a buffer to it and you tell everybody that the target is our internal Target and nobody gets blamed nobody gets fired nobody gets demoted

nobody gets a bad rating because you did not hit the target date the point though is that the committed date is what the go to market teams go by is what the sales team goes by and if they're going to communicate to the customer then maybe there's a process to do so you don't just get to communicate even the committed date externally but if there is a necessity to do it then there's a process to do so that is a tool that

I've actually found to be very useful the reason it works in practice is because it accepts that this is an imprecise science instead of banging your head against the wall the wall is not going to get damaged it's only your head right so that's what I would recommend [Music] you [Music]