

YOUR FIRST PRODUCT

*How to Leverage the Power of the Internet to Create and
Sell Your Own Physical Products*



Your First Product – Cheat Sheet

Creating a physical product is one of the best ways to increase profit from a website or to create a simple, self-sustaining business. A product is something that anyone can appreciate and this gives you a much wider audience than you would be able to get for a digital product such as an ebook, or a service such as consultancy or web design. If you have a well-designed phone case, then your target demographic is *anyone* with that phone – and the value you're offering is incredibly clear and simple to communicate.

With all that in mind then, how do you go about creating your first product? Happily, it is a very simple and straightforward process thanks to the tools provided by the modern web. The only challenge? How many people don't *know* about those tools or resources.

Read on and we'll see the precise steps you need to take in order to get your first product to market...

The Idea

The first and most important thing you need to do is to come up with your idea. So how do you do that? To begin with, you need to make something that you personally can appreciate. The common piece of advice here is to 'scratch your own itch' – so try and think about what would make *your* life easier and then go with that.

You also need to make sure that the idea is viable though and this is where 'validating' comes in. Find some way to test that people would actually be willing to pay for your product and ideally, that they'd pay your asking price!

Finally, think about how you'll approach the design. The design is what will take your concept and make it an idea for a product.

The CAD File

This leads us to create a 3D model. This model is what will define the shape of your product and key details such as the thickness of certain materials, or the angles that you're using.

To create a CAD file, you just need a piece of CAD software. CAD stands for 'Computer Aided Design' and you can get some very accomplished examples of this completely for free. Blender is one very good free tool for making 3D models and there are plenty of instructions online.

Another option is to crowdsource the creation of your CAD file. This means that you'll ask the web to come up with suggestions and you'll only pay for the solution that you like. You can get complete 3D models for as little as \$7 this way. One such site is 'CAD Crowd' another is 'Crowd Spring'.

If you want to add electronics to your device, then you'll either need to design them with another piece of 3D modelling software (such as Cadsoft Eagle) or you'll need to crowdsource this too. Or alternatively, you can use something like a Raspberry Pi to provide the 'brains' for your device.

Prototyping

A prototype is incredibly useful for you to test your product, to demonstrate it when trying to raise funds and later for communicating with your manufacturer and making sure they know precisely what you're looking for.

A prototype is simply a cheaply made version of your product that isn't mass produced yet but is functionally similar. You can prototype easily these days using 3D printing, either by buying your own 3D printer from a company like Makerbot, or by using an online 3D printing service such as Shapeways. To use Shapeways, simply save your 3D model as an STL file and upload it to the site and you'll later be sent your prototype in the material of your choosing! You can then wire any electronic components yourself.

Manufacturing

Now all that's left to do is to find a manufacturer so that you can have your product mass produced affordably. There are lots of sites that list manufacturers and a great example is Makers Row. Look on [here](#) and try emailing a few in order to get some quotes. This way you can compare prices and deals – don't be tempted to go with the first company that accepts your proposal!

When you do, you're going to need your BOM and/or electrical BOM. BOM stands for 'Bill Of Materials' and is simply a list of things you're going to need – quantities of materials, components, screws, etc. Think of this like the first page of the instructions that comes with IKEA flat pack furniture. When creating the electrical BOM make sure to include part numbers for the components where possible.

You'll also need an MOQ – Minimum Order of Quantity. This means how many units you're going to be ordering to start with. This is important not only to get an exact quote but also so that the manufacturer knows which processes and methods to use; some methods work better for short order runs and others work better for larger runs.

Financing

Finally, you need to finance your product in order to get it made. That MOQ is going to mean that you're now ordering several hundred or several thousand items and this can get very expensive!

So to get the money you need you can either:

- Put up the cash yourself
- Take out a loan
- Look for an investor
- Crowdfund

Crowdfunding means that you're getting money from the general public who want to see your product made. The objective is that your item is so exciting that they are willing to foot the bill just to see it become a reality.

Generally though, you'll also offer a reward of some kind for different tiers of funding. And often, this essentially amounts to pre-ordering. That's a perfect system though, as it allows you to submit your MOQ, knowing precisely how much profit you can expect to make.

Note that your prototype will come in handy here, as you'll be showing your product off in the video on your project page to try and get more people to believe in the idea and the concept.