



White paper

Parallel lines

Before creating multiple product lines

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Scoutwest, Inc.

Parallel lines

If you've ever browsed a Dell computer catalog or its web site, you'll be amazed at the number of different computer configurations you can buy. To complicate matters, it seems that the product lines change every time the catalog comes out. It's nearly impossible to keep up with. Big companies can do that because they have armies of project managers performing endless experiments on their product lines to optimize quarterly revenue. Don't try this at home!

If you are a small product-based company, resist the temptation to expand your product line. Of course you'll have plenty of customers who'll ask for a "lite version", and an "enterprise version", and a "multi-colored version", and a "glow-in-the-dark version", etc. Don't go there until you are really ready. Product lines have built-in inefficiencies that you'll have to be prepared for. A one-product company that wants to jump to multiple products, or an expanded product line should be prepared.

The first thing you'll discover is a reduction in focus. Instead of spending all your resources on your one product, you'll now need to split your time and money on multiple projects. Development will slow down and you'll find that you forget small details of one product while working on the other. The downtime can sometimes rejuvenate you, but you'll pay for it when you come up to speed. The context switching time while coming back up to speed is a loss of efficiency and represents an indirect loss of revenue.

Don't expect to double your income because you have two products. You won't see significant revenue on either product until it truly meets customer needs, and hits a sweet spot with them. You'll also spend more money advertising and selling the two products. You may find that your profit is higher, and aggravation is lower with a single product.

About Us

Scoutwest, Inc. develops and publishes project management and time tracking products for consulting, manufacturing, government, and general business applications.

Thousands of small to large businesses, in dozens of countries worldwide, trust their mission critical business processes to Scoutwest products. Standard Time® and Standard Issue® work together to offer well-rounded project management solutions.

We specialize in packaged software for timesheets, project management, time tracking, defect tracking, and issue tracking. Standard Time is a web-based timesheet that also runs on Windows, Palm OS, and Pocket PC. It can be used for client billing and task management. Standard Issue is used for bug tracking and general issue tracking.

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