

The Product Life Cycle

Every product moves through four stages. The leadership priorities that create advantage in one stage become liabilities in the next — so the job is to recognize where you are and act accordingly.



Stage Comparison

	Introduction	Growth	Maturity	Decline
Primary Goal	Validate	Scale	Optimize	Decide
Customers	Early adopters	Rapid adoption	Loyal customer base	Shrinking demand
Revenue	Low	Growing quickly	Stable	Declining
Engineering	Build core features	Scale infrastructure	Reliability & efficiency	Maintenance only
Sales	Find a repeatable process	Expand channels	Defend market share	Focus on profitable customers
Marketing	Build awareness	Accelerate acquisition	Differentiate	Reposition or reduce spend
Product	Learn	Expand	Refine	Simplify or sunset
Leadership Question	<i>Are we solving a real problem?</i>	<i>Can we grow without breaking?</i>	<i>How do we stay stable?</i>	<i>Should we reinvest, reinvent, or retire?</i>