**Platform Concepts**

**AT A GLANCE**

**FOCUS**: A specialized consultancy that helps corporations define and build next generation products, systems, and services.

**CLIENTS**: Leading corporations in computer hardware and software, storage, medical equipment, industrial equipment, and financial services.

**INTELLECTUAL ASSETS**:

Marc H. Meyer: Harvard AB, MIT MSc., MIT PhD

John Friar: Harvard AB, Harvard MBA, MIT PhD

Alvin Lehnerd: Ohio University BSE, George Washington MSME

**ENGAGEMENT STRUCTURE**: Daily time charges and expenses charged on a monthly basis against a phased project plan and budget. Time spent in travel to the West Coast, Europe, and Asia billed at the standard daily rate.

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**OUR FOCUS**

**Platform Concepts** is a consultancy that helps corporations create and execute growth strategies with next generation products, systems, and services. Our goal is to help firms renew core product lines and build businesses in new markets.

To achieve these ends, we help managers develop the essential frameworks and strategies for market segmentation, product line development, organization and process design. We integrate the development of brands and market concepts with new products and shared subsystem platforms.

We have developed new product and service strategies over the past five years with corporations that include Sun Microsystems, Intel, IBM, EMC, Medtronics, DuPont, and Masterfoods.

Our team comprises academic consultants who have also run business organizations. We coach, teach, monitor, and motivate.

We chose clients carefully. They must be committed to forming multifunctional teams and empowering them to own and implement business plans.

Our job is to insure that these teams translate well-considered growth strategies into money-making products, systems, and services.

**MANAGING PARTNERS**

**Marc H. Meyer**: Professor of Management at Northeastern University. Director of the High Technology MBA, EMC MBA and the Mathworks Innovation Education. Widely published and frequent speaker on managing the development and renewal of products, systems, and services. Successful software entrepreneur in embedded systems, database, and risk management applications. Author of The Power of Product Platforms.

**John H. Friar**: An expert in defining market strategies in technology intensive industries. Executive Professor and Director of the Center for Technological Entrepreneurship at Northeastern University's College of Business Administration. Vice President of Marketing at NA Phillips, medical imaging. Board member of several software businesses.

**Alvin P. Lehnerd**: An expert in latent needs research and design for manufacturability. Vice President of Manufacturing and Vice President of New Business and New Ventures for Black & Decker, as President at Sunbeam Appliance Company, and Vice President of Product Development at Steelcase. Co-author of The Power of Product Platforms.
**PHASE I: MARKET SEGMENTATION**

**Innovation Seminar:** Brainstorming session to consider and apply traditional and nontraditional growth strategies to your company. As part of this half-day seminar, we look at external company examples for growth and renewal.

**Multifunctional Team Formation:** Executives form marketing, engineering, & production managers to run with the growth initiative, and we become part of that team.

**Field Research Design:** Execution of new field-based market research, focusing on user needs, competitive benchmarking in terms of function and price (for products as well as services), as well as channel assessment.

**Sales Manager Interviews:** Intensive discussions with key sales managers working with the company on market drivers, customer buying behaviors, competitive threats, and product and service deficiencies.

**Deep dives with lead users:** Field visits to a small number of advanced users, mining latent needs within an overall business decision-making or operations model that we develop with the client. Includes competitive benchmarking from the user's perspective.

**Consolidation of Information:** Integration of all market research into consistent "market templates" that serve as the foundation for creating new product and service strategy.

**PHASE II: PRODUCT & SERVICE STRATEGY**

**Assign Segment Teams:** Assignment of multifunctional teams (technology, marketing, and production) focused on specific market segments (segment "owners"), and then working closely with them to define the distinctive product and service mix required for each target market segment.

**Define Activity Sets:** Development of engineering, marketing, and production activity sets required to bring the proposed offerings to market. We work closely with the teams on staging activities.

**Review/Create Branding:** Develop specific branding campaigns and go-to-market strategies best suited for the proposed offerings. This requires working with internal or external marketing and promotion groups.

**Create Financial Models:** Develop financial models (pro forma P&L's and a capital budget for required investments). We also explore new, alternative business models.

**Define Common Platforms:** Each segment team presents its proposal to the collective group. We then harmonize and integrate these plans, seeking the development of common technology and service platforms.

**Consolidation into a Global Plan:** Integration and presentation of a final new product and service development plan to senior management.

**PHASE III: ORGANIZATION & PROCESSES**

**The Challenge:** Corporations often find that their organizations impede effective innovation and marketing of new products and services. We address this by defining the organizational structures and management processes needed to drive growth strategies. These structures include:

**Business Development Teams:** Teams that own specific segments of business and be responsible for market research, product/prototype development, and go-to-market strategies. Many corporations already have such teams in place. For those that don't, we develop, propose, and refine an organizational structure that aligns with target market segments.

**Application Engineering Teams:** Teams that are responsible for building specific products, systems, and services. We help define rules by which these teams must reuse & share common subsystems and components.

**Platform Teams:** Teams chartered to build and sustain common subsystem platforms shared across different product lines. We help develop technology roadmaps as a multi-generational cascade of functions and features.

**Process Engineering:** We also examine new product planning and control processes and metrics and tailor a calendar cycle-driven process to integrate market requirements and development milestones between all teams.