



Wii U

Case analysis

Here is how **this product didn't work**



Meet The Team



Vannessa Wong



Huong Pham



Bella Besuud



Willy Swenson



Maïté Sadeh



Isabella Chen



Jordan Levine-Schenk

Overview



The Wii U was first developed by **Nintendo**, a leading global video game company, and was **released in 2012**. Despite its ambitious features and Nintendo's reputation, the Wii U faced **slow consumer adoption and mixed reception** due to limited third-party support and confusion surrounding its concept.



A product designed for success –

The Wii U was designed as a **hybrid gaming console**, featuring a unique GamePad controller with a built-in touchscreen that allowed for both traditional gaming and innovative second-screen experiences. The console enabled users to enjoy a more immersive gaming experience, with multiplayer and asymmetric gameplay using both the GamePad and the TV screen.



Timeline

November 18, 2012

Wii U was launched as the first Nintendo HD gaming console after the highly successful Wii console.



July 2013

Wii U experienced poor sales and performance due to the confusion over its design and lack of third-party support.

November 2013

The PS4 was released on November 15 and the Xbox released one week later, with both consoles having stronger hardware capabilities

March 17, 2015

Nintendo announced they were working on a new console, codenamed "NX" which would later be the Nintendo Switch

Timeline

October 2016

The Nintendo Switch is officially introduced, signaling the end of major focus on the Wii U.



November 2016

Nintendo stopped the production of the Wii U in Japan, signaling the beginning of its phase-out.

January 31, 2017

All Wii U hardware production was discontinued globally, selling just over 13.5 million units in total.



March 3, 2017

Nintendo Switch was released and Nintendo officially stopped supporting the Wii U shortly after.

Why do you think Xbox ONE and PS4 performed better than Wii U?



Group Activity (5 minutes)

Discuss: What are some ways that Wii U could be improved on?



Agenda

We will explore potential issues that can lead to product failure and provide project management solutions relevant to each stage of the product management lifecycle.

1 Unclear mission

Stage 1: **Conception & Ideation**

2 Lack of buy in from stakeholders

Stage 2: **Design & Planning**

3 Bad timing to market

Stage 3: **Launch or Execution**



Stage 1: Conception & Ideation

01

Unclear Mission

Wii U (Nintendo's version)

Stage 1: Conception & Ideation

Nintendo's Mission Statement

"Wii U is a home video game console from Nintendo that's brimming with games and experiences you can enjoy alone or with friends and family. It comes with a **unique controller that redefines the dynamic of playing games together**: the Wii U GamePad."

[Source: Nintendo](#)



N64



Gamecube



Wii

Wii U (Users' version)

Stage 1: Conception & Ideation

Some thoughts from post-launch surveys...

"I thought the Wii U was an accessory to my Wii rather than its own separate console."

"The console is running on last-gen specs with the only difference from previous platforms, where being portable is no longer a benefit we could talk about."

*"The system is great. **Everything around it suuuuuuucked.** So much untapped potential."*

*"Half-baked attempt to modernize the Wii after Nintendo **skipped a hardware generation** with a game library that doesn't compensate for its expensive price."*

The problem:

The name “Wii U” didn’t satisfactorily differentiate it from its predecessor, the Wii, so many consumers **misunderstood the Wii U as an accessory or minor upgrade to the Wii, rather than a completely new console.**

Stage 1: Conception & Ideation



The company's mission statement does not align with the public's perception of the product. Nintendo cannot effectively market and sell a product if customers don't understand its purpose.



"I feel like **people never really understood the concept behind Wii U and what we were trying to do**. I think the *assumption* is we were trying to create a game machine and a tablet and really what we were *trying to do* was create a game system that gave you tablet-like functionality for controlling that system and give you two screens that would allow different people in the living room to play in different ways."

—Shigeru Miyamoto, designer at Nintendo

Source: [interview with Fortune](#)

Our solution:

Stage 1: Conception & Ideation

Ensure mission statement is clearly **identifiable** and **understandable** not only to the **consumers** intending to purchase but also to **supporter companies**. Understand **WHY** we are making the product and **IF** target audience is interested through clear objectives, purposes and overall project goals. We should ensure that people understand what the mission is on all fronts, from all users.

ORIGINAL MISSION STATEMENT

"Wii U is a home video game console from Nintendo that's brimming with games and experiences you can enjoy **alone or with friends and family**. It comes with a **unique controller that redefines** the dynamic of playing games together: the Wii U GamePad."



EDITED MISSION STATEMENT

"The mission of the Wii U is to provide a platform to allow **anybody** to play games **together, regardless of controller preference**. The innovative dual-screen setup **enables different play styles in one device**, with a library of diverse games and experiences."

Wii U's successor, the Nintendo Switch, was a runaway success:

"Ultimately, the Nintendo Switch was everything players wanted the Wii U to be: a truly portable device that could also seamlessly connect to a television. There was no confusion to be had; the Switch's tablet-like controller is the console."

Source: Polygon

**Wii U
13.56M units**

**Switch
143.3M units**

Difference can cause changes that are almost **10x** in magnitude

To put into perspective, Nintendo sold 14.86 million Switch units in just 10 months—more units than the Wii U ever sold over its entire five-year run!

"Projects fail because they don't take time to ensure they've developed a proper definition of the problem being solved – so we must incorporate a human centered approach."

Source: PMBOK



Stage 2: **Definition & Planning**

02

Lack of Buy In

The problem:

Companies and third-party developers were **not motivated to produce games for a console with a small install base and a close up hand interface**, which significantly departs from the familiar click-remote controller type of the PS4, Xbox, and others that they were more familiar with.



Think of the difference between redesigning an iPhone app for an iPad v.s an Apple Watch!



Install base size comparison
(XBOX one, PS4, Wii U)

Controller design over the years (left: XBOX, right: PlayStation)

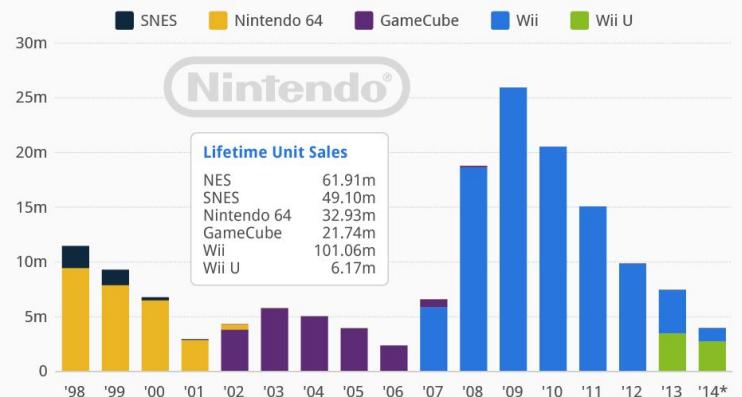
The problem: (cont'd)

Though released earlier than their competitors Playstation and Xbox, Nintendo didn't have the same high-level capacity for game development in Wii U hardware which led to a lack of investors. Overall, **It was hard to get investors and developers to create games for a console already tanking in sales within <1 year.**

Referring back to the principles of Product Management, there was a **lack of understanding regarding the product and its competitors**. These issues are evident in the **definition and planning phase** with scope defining, feasibility analysis, and insufficient risk mitigation strategies.

Wii U on Track to Become Nintendo's Worst Selling Console

Nintendo's home video game console sales (in million units)



Source: Nintendo

Our solution:

Stage 2: **Definition & Planning**

Understand & Communicate Scope

- Convince stakeholders that the product is worth investing.
- Understanding the current and future state of the market.

Conduct Competitive Analysis & Feasibility Study

- Create a clear plan outlining team responsibilities to assess product feasibility.
- Visualize exactly how we can be a competitive product within the time we have.

Have a risk management plan

- Acknowledge, approach and mitigate risks in the product life cycle would help look out for conflicts.
- Stop problems from snowballing and having issues at the end after investment.



Stage 3: **Launch or Execution**

03

Timing to Market

The problem:

When the Wii U was released, the Xbox One and PS4 were slated to release about one year later, with significantly more powerful hardware. Nintendo's decision to **rush the Wii U's release ahead of competitors resulted in decreased R&D investment**, leading to a product that falls short of customers quality expectations.

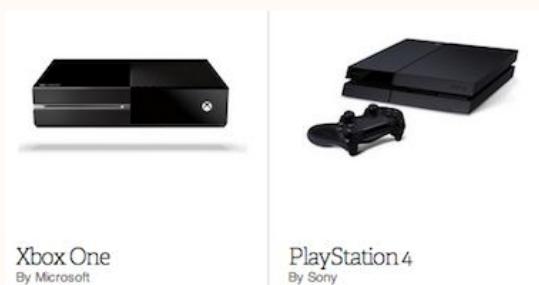
- Consumers chose to **pass on the Wii U in favor of more technologically advanced alternatives**.
- **Lack of early adopters for the Wii U** made it challenging for others to commit to the purchase.



Wii U

Xbox ONE, PS4

CPU: 1.24GHz	CPU: 1.75 + 1.6 GHz
RAM: 2GB	RAM: 8GB
Storage: 8-32GB	Storage: 500GB



Our solution:

Planning



Conduct a feasibility study that considers all aspect of a product prior to investment in research and development. This helps determine whether a project is viable and worth pursuing.

- **Identifies potential risks and challenges** early on, allowing for better planning and prevention.
- **Competitive analysis** to take into account when competitors are launching their products, their strengths and weaknesses..

Execution



Aligning the product's specifications with market expectations is essential for success. If a product cannot meet the demands of its intended audience, it **risks alienating both users and partners**.

The Wii U's hardware couldn't support AAA or graphically intensive games, leading to inferior performance when such titles were released. It also failed to meet the standards of its generation, which discouraged developers from creating games for it due to the high demand for other platforms.



So what can we learn from Wii U's failure?

Lessons Learned

1

Ensure that customers understand the product

- Name products to fit branding but still differentiate from current offerings

- Help potential customers better understand what the new product is offering through advertisements

2

Conduct a comprehensive feasibility study

- Plan product launches with competitor product releases in mind

- Conducting a feasibility study could help avoid competitor overlap: similar products with stronger hardware being released around the same time

3

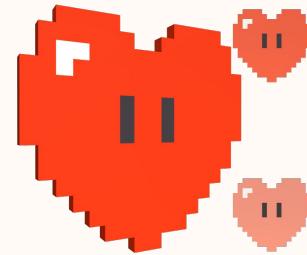
Engage stakeholders to measure interest and respond to feedback

- If there was more stakeholder interest to create more games for the Wii U, it may have had more success

- Utilize stakeholder interest and user feedback to tailor the create a product that will have higher adoption



Do you have any questions?



Thanks!

Sources

Slideshow template: [LeadFunnel from Slidesgo](#)

Images

- [Wii devices graphics \(1\), \(2\), \(3\)](#)
- [Controllers design through history](#)
- [Nintendo's game systems](#)
- [Wii U hardware comparison](#)
- [Wii launch photos](#)
- [Switch launch photo with Fallon](#)

Articles

- [Fortune interview with Nintendo designer](#)
- [PMBOK guide \(INFO 4125 class material\)](#)
- [Polygon article on Nintendo Switch success](#)