



THE **PH Top 5** **Playbook**

A 30-Day Launch System for Indie Hackers

30-DAY

Timeline

5 MODULES

System

SWIPE FILES

Included

2025 DATA

Current

Based on analysis of 100+ successful Product Hunt launches (2024-2025)

Updated for PH's Featured/All tab system and current algorithm

v2.0 | 2025 EDITION

Table of Contents

Before You Start	How Product Hunt Actually Works in 2025
Module 1	The 30-Day Countdown Timeline
Module 2	The Asset Optimization Checklist
Module 3	Copy-Paste Swipe Files (7 Templates)
Module 4	Launch Day Hour-by-Hour Playbook
Module 5	Post-Launch Capitalization System
Appendix A	Day-of-Week Strategy Matrix
Appendix B	The Featured Criteria Cheat Sheet
Appendix C	Community Warm-Up Playbook

Before You Start

How Product Hunt Actually Works in 2025

Product Hunt changed fundamentally in January 2024. If you're following advice from 2022 or earlier, you're operating on outdated information that could actively hurt your launch. Here's what you need to know.

The Featured vs. All Tab System

Product Hunt now has two tabs: **Featured** and **All**. The PH team manually curates which products appear on the Featured tab (the homepage default). Only about 10% of daily launches get Featured. If your product is not Featured, it's effectively invisible: it won't appear on the homepage, the mobile app, or in the daily newsletter. All of your preparation and network activation only benefits Product Hunt's traffic if you're stuck in the All tab.

Critical: The Featuring Gate

This is the single most important thing to understand: Getting Featured is the gatekeeper. Your upvote count, ranking position, and preparation quality are irrelevant if you're not Featured. Every module in this playbook is designed to maximize your chances of getting Featured first, then ranking within it.

PH's Four Featuring Criteria

Product Hunt's team evaluates submissions on four factors. You don't need to ace all four, but you need to spike in at least one or two:

Criteria	What It Means	How to Signal It
Useful	How practical and beneficial is the product?	Clear value prop, solves a real problem, working product (not
Novel	How innovative or unique is the approach?	Unique angle, not a clone, fresh take on a known problem
High Craft	How well-designed and polished?	Clean UI, smooth UX, attention to detail in assets
Creative	How fun, engaging, or imaginative?	Personality in copy, memorable branding, delightful touches

The Algorithm Mechanics

Once Featured, ranking is determined by a weighted algorithm. While the exact formula is proprietary, analysis of hundreds of launches reveals these ranking signals:

- **Upvote velocity in the first 4 hours** — First-hour upvotes carry roughly 4x the weight of later ones. This is why timing your supporter waves matters enormously.
- **Comments > upvotes for ranking** — A product with 300 upvotes and active discussions will consistently outrank one with 500 upvotes and zero comments. Meaningful engagement signals genuine interest.

- **Account quality matters dramatically** — Upvotes from established accounts with activity history carry far more weight than votes from fresh accounts. Some sources report 10x weighting for accounts with long streaks.
- **Click-through to your site** — People actually visiting your product URL signals real interest.
- **Reply speed on comments** — Each unanswered comment reportedly costs ranking positions after hour three. Respond to everything, quickly and substantively.

Realistic Expectations (Based on 2024-2025 Data)

Scenario	Visitors	Signups	Upvotes
Featured, Top 5	5,000 - 40,000	50 - 500	200 - 1,500
Featured, #6-10	1,000 - 5,000	10 - 150	100 - 300
Not Featured	100 - 500	1 - 15	10 - 80

Conversion rates from PH traffic typically run 1-3%. The real value is the DR 91 backlink, the badge social proof, and the warm leads in comments. Treat PH as a credibility and awareness play, not your primary growth channel.

Hunters in 2025: The Truth

Product Hunt confirmed they stopped sending follower notifications for hunted products years ago. Self-hunting is perfectly fine and carries no penalty. That said, a small number of 'superuser' hunters can auto-feature one product per day, bypassing the curation process entirely. If you connect with one organically, great. But do not pay for hunters, and do not make finding one your primary strategy. Focus your energy on building genuine community support.

Time Investment Reality Check

Successful launchers report investing **50-120 hours** of total preparation. This playbook compresses that into a structured 30-day system so nothing falls through the cracks. If you're launching in less than 2 weeks, skip to Module 2 and work backwards.

MODULE 1

The 30-Day Countdown Timeline

Your day-by-day execution roadmap

Don't launch tomorrow. Give yourself a 30-day runway to build momentum, warm up the community, and create assets that actually convert. Each phase has a specific purpose.

PHASE 1: Foundation (Days 30 - 21)

Goal: Get your product launch-ready and start building your support network.

HIGH Finalize your core loop

Ensure onboarding is frictionless. PH traffic bounces in under 30 seconds if they can't figure out the value. Test with 3-5 people who've never seen your product. If they can't explain what it does after 30 seconds, simplify.

HIGH Create a Coming Soon / Ship page on Product Hunt

PH has a native 'Ship' feature for pre-launch pages. Use it to collect early interest and notify followers on launch day. Share this page in your communities to start building a subscriber base.

HIGH Build a launch-specific email list

Add a banner to your site: 'We're launching on Product Hunt soon. Get [X]% off on launch day.' Aim for 200-400 engaged subscribers from established PH accounts. Quality trumps quantity by a massive margin.

HIGH Start engaging on Product Hunt daily

Comment on products you genuinely find interesting. Upvote launches. Join Discussions threads. The algorithm favors engagement from established accounts. New accounts that only show up to vote are flagged. Do this for at least 2-3 weeks before launch.

MED Research your launch day competition

Check the PH homepage for your target date. If a major product or tech giant is launching, move your date. Also check if there's a seasonal event (WWDC, Google I/O) that could dominate attention.

LOW Identify potential Hunter (optional)

If you know a respected PH community member in your niche, reach out with the Swipe File in Module 3. Self-hunting is fine. Do not pay for hunters. Do not stress about this.

PHASE 2: Asset Creation (Days 20 - 8)

Goal: Create every asset you'll need so launch day is pure execution.

HIGH Design the Thumbnail (240 x 240px)

MUST be an animated GIF. This is non-negotiable — GIFs increase click-through rate significantly. Must be legible at 40x40px. High contrast against white background. Keep animation under 3 seconds and under 3MB.

-
- HIGH Design the Gallery (1270 x 760px, 3-5 images)**

Image 1: UI Hero Shot with your Big Value Prop in under 5 words. Image 2: The main feature/solution in action. Image 3: Social proof, integrations, or testimonials. Image 4: Pricing or special PH discount code. Each file under 2MB.
 - HIGH Record the Demo Video (under 2 minutes)**

Show the 'Aha!' moment in the first 15 seconds. Authentic screen recordings with founder narration outperform polished agency videos. Upload to YouTube. Note: all top-7 products in 2025 analyses had demo videos, but authenticity beats production value every time.
 - HIGH Write the Tagline (under 60 characters)**

Format: [Product] — [Verb] [Outcome] for [Audience]. Bad: 'Revolutionize your workflow.' Good: 'Automate freelance tax calculations in 30 seconds.' No buzzwords (AI, Web3, Synergy) unless they're genuinely core to the product.
 - MED Write the Description (under 260 characters)**

Expand on the tagline. Who is it for, what does it do, why now. Clear and specific beats clever.
 - HIGH Draft the Maker Comment (use Swipe File in Module 3)**

This is your first impression. Write it before launch day. Include: who you are, the problem, the solution (3 bullet points), a special PH offer, and 2 specific questions to invite discussion.
 - LOW Send Hunter Outreach (if applicable, use Swipe File)**

Send to 3 potential hunters on Day 20. Include a 30-second Loom demo. Keep it short — they're busy.
 - HIGH Prepare all outreach messages**

Draft your launch day email, Twitter thread, LinkedIn post, and DMs to your inner circle. Have them ready to copy-paste. You will not have time to write these on launch day.

PHASE 3: Final Polish & Network Activation (Days 7 - 1)

Goal: Lock in the launch schedule, warm up your supporters, and eliminate last-minute chaos.

HIGH **Schedule the launch for 12:01 AM Pacific Time**

This gives you the full 24-hour cycle. PH resets at midnight PT every day. Set the timezone to PST in your submission, not your local time.

HIGH **Choose your launch day strategically**

See Appendix A for the full strategy matrix. Quick rule: if you have a community, launch Tue-Thu for max traffic. If you have zero audience, launch Thu-Fri for lower competition. Avoid holidays and major tech events.

HIGH **Warm up your network (Days 7-3)**

DM 20-50 friends, creators, and community members. Don't say 'please upvote.' Say: 'I'm launching on [day]. I'd love your honest feedback and a comment if you find it interesting.' Ask them to engage at specific times to help maintain velocity throughout the day.

HIGH **Ask supporters to warm up their PH accounts (Day 7)**

Send a pre-launch email asking your list to spend 2 minutes on PH: upvote a few products, leave a comment. The algorithm heavily discounts votes from dormant or brand-new accounts.

MED **Stress-test your product**

Run a basic load test. PH traffic spikes can bring 1,000+ concurrent users. A 500 error on launch day is a death sentence for conversions.

MED **Verify all links, assets, and checkout flow**

Click every link. Test your discount code. Make sure your onboarding works on mobile. Check your analytics tracking is firing correctly for PH referral traffic.

MED **Prepare a PH-exclusive offer**

Lifetime deals, extended trials, or significant discounts (30-50% off) for PH community. Create a dedicated promo code. This gives people a reason to engage beyond curiosity.

MODULE 2

The Asset Optimization Checklist

Verify every element before you hit Schedule

1. The Tagline — The most important copy you'll write

- Under 60 characters (hard limit)
- States exactly what the product does in plain language
- Benefit-driven, not feature-driven
- Excludes buzzwords (AI, Web3, Synergy, Revolutionary) unless absolutely core
- Would make sense to someone who has never heard of your product
- Follows the formula: [Product] — [Verb] [Outcome] for [Audience]

Examples

- Bad:** 'Revolutionize your workflow with next-gen AI synergy'
- Good:** 'Automate your freelance tax calculations in 30 seconds'
- Good:** 'Screen recordings that edit themselves'
- Good:** 'Notion templates for startup fundraising'

2. The Description — Your 260-character elevator pitch

- Under 260 characters
- Expands on the tagline with who it's for and why now
- Includes one concrete metric or proof point if possible
- No jargon that your target user wouldn't immediately understand

3. The Thumbnail — Your hook in the feed

- 240 x 240px, animated GIF format (non-negotiable for CTR)
- Under 3MB file size
- Animation loop is under 3 seconds
- Legible when scaled down to 40 x 40px (test this)
- High contrast against white background
- Shows the product, not just a logo
- No text smaller than 24pt in the animation

4. The Gallery — Your visual pitch deck

- 1270 x 760px for each image, each under 2MB
- 3-5 images (sweet spot is 4)
- Image 1: UI Hero Shot + Big Value Proposition (under 5 words of text overlay)
- Image 2: Main feature or core workflow in action
- Image 3: Social proof, integrations, or customer quotes
- Image 4: Pricing or special PH discount with promo code
- YouTube video included (appears first if present, so make it count)
- Consistent visual style across all images

5. The Maker Profile — Your credibility signal

- Profile photo is a real, friendly headshot (not a logo)
- Bio explains who you are and what you're building
- Twitter/X and LinkedIn links are filled in
- You have some PH activity history (comments, upvotes on other products)
- All team members are added as Makers with complete profiles

MODULE 3

Copy-Paste Swipe Files

7 battle-tested templates — customize and send

SWIPE 1: Hunter Outreach Email

Send to 3 potential hunters on Day 20. Keep it short. They're busy.

Subject: Quick question re: hunting [Product Name] on PH

Hi [Hunter Name],

I love the products you hunt, especially [mention a recent product they hunted].

I'm launching [Product Name] in a few weeks. It's a [one sentence: what it does + who it's for].

Given your interest in [niche], I think your audience would love it. Would you be open to hunting it? I have all the assets, maker comment, and copy ready to go – you'd just need to click submit.

Here's a 30-second Loom demo: [Link]

Let me know if you're open to it!

Best, [Your Name]

SWIPE 2: The Maker Comment

Post the second your product goes live. This sets the tone for all discussion.

Hi Product Hunt! I'm [Your Name], the maker of [Product Name].

The Problem: I built this because I was frustrated by [core pain point]. I was spending hours doing [X] when it should take seconds.

The Solution: [Product Name] solves this by:

- [Key Benefit 1 – specific and measurable]
- [Key Benefit 2 – specific and measurable]
- [Key Benefit 3 – specific and measurable]

Special Offer: To celebrate our launch, I'm offering the PH community [X]% off for the next 48 hours using the code PHLAUNCH.

I'll be here all day answering questions. I'd especially love your feedback on:

1. [Specific question about your onboarding/UX]
2. [Specific question about pricing or a feature]

Let me know what you think below!

SWIPE 3: Launch Day Newsletter Blast

Send to your existing list at 8:00 AM PST on launch day.

Subject: We're live on Product Hunt! (And a gift for you)

Hi everyone,

Big news today – [Product Name] is officially live on Product Hunt!

We've spent the last [time period] building this to help you [core benefit].

If you have a moment today, I'd massively appreciate your support. You can check out our launch page, watch the new demo video, and join the discussion here:

[Link to PH Post]

Product Hunt values authentic engagement, so if you have feedback or questions, please leave a comment on the page – it genuinely helps us improve and it helps our visibility in the rankings.

Thanks for being part of the journey.

- [Your Name]

SWIPE 4: Inner Circle DM (Wave 1 — 12:01 AM)

Send to 15-20 close friends and mentors immediately at launch.

Hey [Name]! We just went live on Product Hunt:
[Link]

If you have 2 minutes, I'd love your honest feedback – a comment on the page about what you think of the [specific feature/positioning] would mean the world. Early comments help set the tone for the whole day.

No pressure at all. Thanks for always having my back!

SWIPE 5: Community Post (Slack/Discord — 10 AM)

Post ONLY in communities where you're an active, contributing member.

Hey everyone! Wanted to share something I've been working on – [Product Name] just launched on Product Hunt today.

It's a [one sentence description]. I built it because [brief origin story].

I'd love this community's feedback on [specific aspect]. The PH page is here if you want to check it out and weigh in: [Link]

Happy to answer any questions here too!

SWIPE 6: Twitter/X Launch Thread

Post at 12:15 AM PST. Tag your hunter (if applicable) and @ProductHunt.

Tweet 1 (Hook):

Don't let 6 months of coding die on Page 3 of Product Hunt.
Today we launched [Product Name] – [one-line value prop].
Here's the story behind it (and what we learned building it):

Tweet 2 (Problem):

The problem: [Pain point your audience relates to].
I tried [existing solutions] but they all [specific shortcoming].
So I built [Product Name].

Tweet 3 (Solution):

What it does:

- [Feature 1 → Benefit]
- [Feature 2 → Benefit]
- [Feature 3 → Benefit]

Tweet 4 (Social proof / traction):

[Any early traction, beta users, or results]

Tweet 5 (CTA):

We're live on Product Hunt today. If you've ever struggled with [problem], I'd love your feedback:

[PH Link]

PH community members get [X]% off with code PHLAUNCH.

SWIPE 7: LinkedIn Launch Post

Post at 8:00 AM EST for max visibility. Tag 3-5 relevant connections.

I've been building [Product Name] for the last [time period].

Today it's live on Product Hunt.

The short version: [One paragraph about the problem you solve and for whom].

If you're a [target audience] and have 2 minutes, I'd genuinely appreciate your feedback on the Product Hunt page: [Link]

And if this isn't relevant to you, a share to someone who might benefit would mean a lot.

Thank you to everyone who helped get this here. You know who you are.

MODULE 4

Launch Day Hour-by-Hour Playbook

From 12:01 AM to 11:59 PM — every move, every minute

Mindset: This Is a Work Day

Launch day is not a celebration. It's a 24-hour live event that you need to staff and execute. The algorithm rewards sustained velocity, not a single spike. Plan your day in 3 waves to maintain momentum across time zones.

12:01 AM

WAVE 1

LAUNCH GOES LIVE

Your product appears on PH. Post your Maker Comment immediately (have it pre-written and ready to paste). This is the most important comment on your entire page.

12:15 AM

Post Twitter/X launch thread

Use Swipe File 6. Tag @ProductHunt and your hunter. Pin the thread to your profile.

12:30 AM

Send Wave 1 DMs

Message your inner circle of 15-20 people (Swipe File 4). These are close friends and mentors who will leave genuine comments immediately. Early comments are disproportionately valuable.

1:00 AM

First check-in

Are you Featured? Check the Featured tab vs. All tab. If Featured, proceed with the plan. If not, you can still execute but calibrate expectations accordingly.

6:00 AM

WAVE 2

Monitor and reply

Reply to every comment that's come in overnight. Thoughtful, substantive replies — not just 'Thanks!' Each unanswered comment costs ranking positions after hour 3.

8:00 AM

Send email newsletter blast

Use Swipe File 3. This is your largest audience activation. Ask for feedback and comments, not upvotes.

8:30 AM

Post LinkedIn launch post

Use Swipe File 7. LinkedIn peaks at 8-10 AM EST. Tag relevant connections.

10:00 AM

Post in communities

Use Swipe File 5. Only in Slack/Discord communities where you're an active member. Use the 'feedback' angle, never the 'vote for me' angle.

12:00 PM

WAVE 3

The Mid-Day Push

Reply to EVERY new comment on your PH page. Post a mid-day update tweet with your current ranking. This sustains velocity through the critical afternoon hours.

2:00 PM

Wave 3 activation

Send a gentle reminder to supporters who haven't engaged yet. 'Hey, if you haven't had a chance to check it out, we're at #[X] right now. Would love your thoughts: [link]'

4:00 PM

Final push

Update Twitter/LinkedIn with your current ranking. If you're in striking distance of Top 5, this is the time for one final push to your network.

6:00-11 PM

Wind down + reply

Continue replying to every comment. The algorithm still counts engagement. Thank everyone who supported you. Take a screenshot of your final ranking.

What NOT To Do (Instant Demotion)

- **Never** ask for upvotes directly. PH's algorithm penalizes this and they monitor Twitter for it.
- **Never** share a direct link to the upvote button. Share the product page URL only.
- **Never** send mass emails saying 'please upvote.' Ask for 'feedback and comments.'
- **Never** create fake accounts or buy votes. PH detects sudden spikes from low-karma accounts and buries the listing.

MODULE 5

Post-Launch Capitalization System

Hitting Top 5 is vanity. MRR is sanity.

Most founders celebrate on launch day and then do nothing. The 48 hours after your launch are where the actual business value is created. Here's your post-launch system:

Hours 25-48: Immediate Follow-Up

Add the 'Featured on Product Hunt' badge to your website

Embed it in your footer. Research shows a 17% lift in signups from this badge alone. It's permanent, free social proof.

Export and organize your commenter list

Every person who commented on your launch is a warm lead. Find them on Twitter/LinkedIn. Send a personal thank-you message and offer a personalized demo or onboarding call.

Send a follow-up email to new signups

Within 24 hours: 'Thanks for checking us out on Product Hunt! Here's a 20% lifetime code as a thank you: [CODE]. Reply to this email and tell me what you're building — I'd love to help.'

Cross-post to Hacker News

If you surpassed 100 upvotes, HN loves PH success stories. Post as 'Show HN' with your product, not as a PH link.

Week 1: Content Repurposing

Write a 'How We Launched' case study

Turn your launch stats and journey into a detailed blog post or Twitter thread. Include real numbers: upvotes, visitors, signups, conversion rate. The indie hacker community loves transparency and it positions you as a credible maker.

Post on IndieHackers

Write a long-form post with your launch story, lessons learned, and actual metrics. Link back to your product. This community is highly engaged with launch post-mortems.

Create a 'Build in Public' Twitter/X thread

Day-by-day breakdown of what you did, what worked, what didn't. Tag other makers and founders. This content gets massive engagement and bookmarks.

Week 2-4: Conversion Engine

Set up a 3-email drip for PH signups

Email 1 (Day 1): Welcome + quick-start guide + PH discount code. Email 2 (Day 3): 'Have you tried [core feature]? Here's how [customer] uses it to [outcome].' Email 3 (Day 7): 'Your trial is halfway done. Book a 15-min call and I'll show you [advanced feature].'

Retarget PH referral traffic

Set up a custom audience in your ad platform for visitors from producthunt.com. Even \$5/day in retargeting can recapture visitors who didn't convert on day one.

Plan your re-launch strategy

You can launch again on PH with a major update (2.0, new platform, significant new feature). Some products launch 2-3 times successfully. Start planning what your next launch-worthy milestone will be.

Appendix A: Day-of-Week Strategy Matrix

Picking the right day is one of the highest-leverage decisions you'll make. There is no universally 'best' day — it depends on your audience size and goals.

Day	Traffic	Competition	Newsletter?	Best For
Monday	High	High	Yes (Tue AM)	Product of the Week contenders
Tuesday	Highest	Highest	Yes (Wed AM)	Teams with large audiences
Wednesday	High	High	Yes (Thu AM)	Strong community launches
Thursday	Medium	Medium	Yes (Fri AM)	Balanced risk/reward
Friday	Low-Med	Low	No	Zero-audience, ranking focus
Saturday	Low	Very Low	No	Easy #1, but low total traffic
Sunday	Lowest	Lowest	Yes (Mon AM)	Social proof + Mon newsletter

Decision framework: If you have 200+ engaged supporters from established PH accounts, launch Tuesday-Thursday. If you have fewer than 50 supporters or zero audience, launch Thursday-Friday or Sunday. Also check the first vs. second half of the month — the first two weeks tend to have more launches and stiffer competition.

Appendix B: The Featured Criteria Cheat Sheet

Product Hunt's team manually reviews every submission. There is no transparent formula — this is intentional curation, not algorithmic selection. But based on analysis of hundreds of launches, here's what consistently gets Featured vs. what doesn't:

Gets Featured:

- ✓ Working product that users can try immediately (not a waitlist or 'coming soon')
- ✓ Clear, specific value proposition — you can explain what it does in one sentence
- ✓ High-craft design — clean UI, polished assets, attention to detail
- ✓ Novel approach — not an obvious clone of an existing popular product
- ✓ Complete PH listing — all fields filled, gallery images, demo video, maker comment ready

Gets Buried in All Tab:

-
- ✗ Waitlist-only or thin 'info' launches with nothing to try
 - ✗ Generic or vague value proposition ('AI-powered everything')
 - ✗ Obvious clones of popular products with no differentiation
 - ✗ Incomplete listing — missing gallery images, no description, no maker comment
 - ✗ Low-quality assets — blurry screenshots, no demo video, stock photos
 - ✗ Products that violate PH guidelines (not digital, not currently available)

Appendix C: Community Warm-Up Playbook

The algorithm heavily weights engagement from established, active PH accounts. Here's your 3-week community warm-up system to build genuine relationships and account credibility before launch day.

Week 1: Become a Contributor

- Upvote 3-5 products daily that genuinely interest you
- Leave 2-3 thoughtful comments on launches in your niche (not 'Cool product!' — real feedback)
- Join 1-2 Product Hunt Discussion threads and contribute meaningfully
- Follow 10-15 makers and hunters in your space

Week 2: Build Relationships

- Continue daily engagement (upvotes + comments)
- DM 3-5 makers whose products you genuinely admire — give specific feedback, no asks
- Participate in or host a Twitter Space about your niche topic
- Share interesting PH launches on your Twitter/LinkedIn with your own commentary
- Start your Ship / Coming Soon page and share the link in relevant communities

Week 3: Activate Your Network

- Send a pre-launch email to your list asking them to create/warm up their PH accounts
- DM your 20-50 closest supporters with your launch date and time
- Assign supporters to specific time slots (Wave 1: midnight, Wave 2: 8 AM, Wave 3: 2 PM)
- Send each supporter a brief about what kind of comment would be most helpful
- Do a final dry run: verify all links, assets, promo codes, and your Maker Comment draft

That's the complete system. Every checklist, every template, every timing decision has been refined based on real launch data from 2024-2025.

The founders who succeed on Product Hunt treat it as a 30-day campaign, not a single day. They invest the hours in community building, create assets that signal high craft, and execute launch day like a live event with planned waves.

Remember: Product Hunt is a credibility and awareness play, not your entire growth strategy. The badge, the backlink, the warm leads in comments, and the content you repurpose afterward — that's where the compounding value lives.

This playbook is based on publicly available data, case studies, and Product Hunt's own published guidelines. Product Hunt's algorithm and featuring criteria may change. Always check PH's official help center for the latest guidelines before launching.

Not affiliated with Product Hunt. All trademarks belong to their respective owners.

Now go launch.