MODULE 3 · SESSION 3

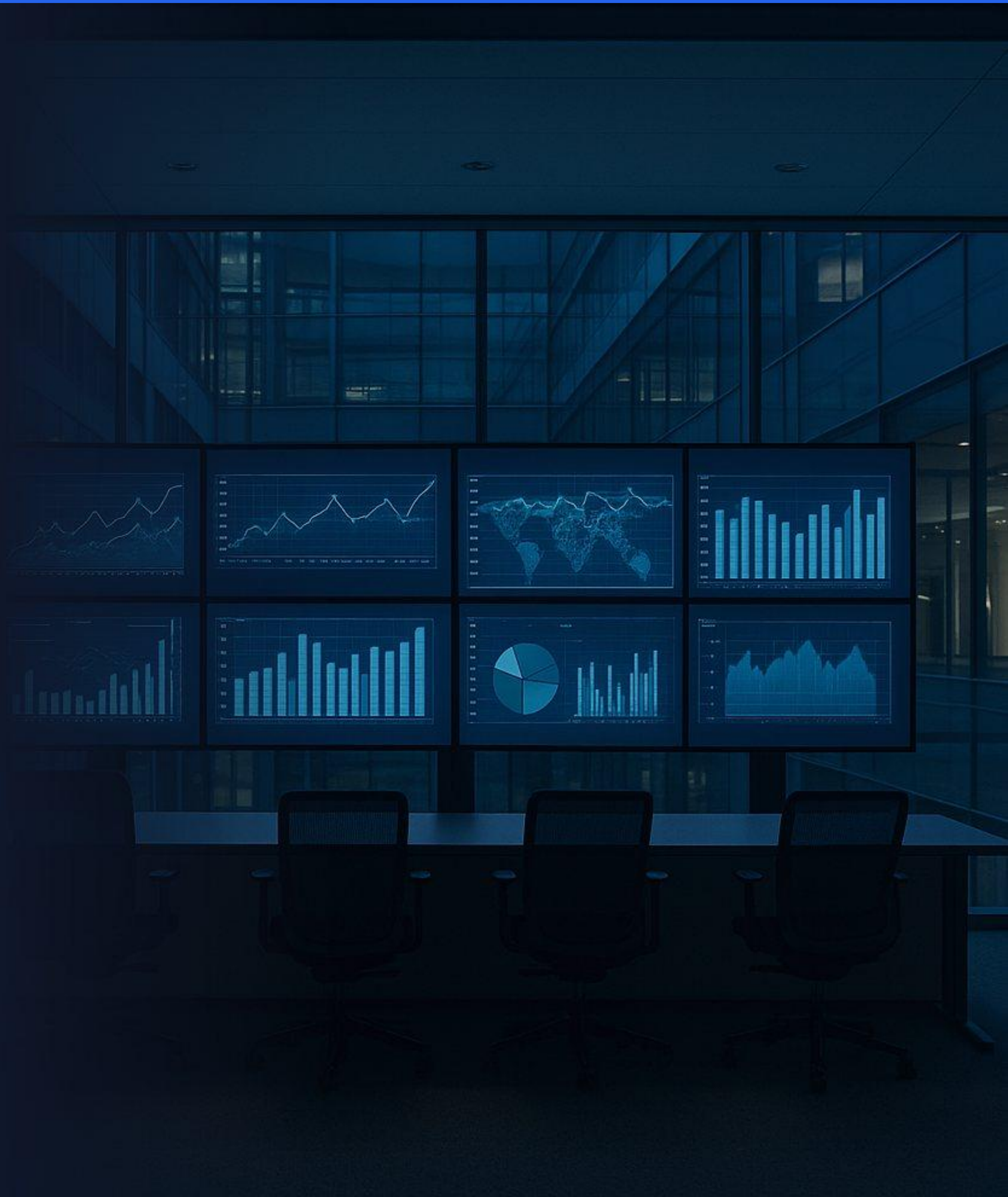
Launch Through Channels, Delivery, and Support

How to activate a distribution channel and run the delivery and support operation that has to stand behind it.

Theory session

Beginner

Running case: ClinicFlow



ORIENTATION

Where this session sits

The final session turns a closed deal into a delivered, supported product

MODULE 1
Product Build and Validation

MODULE 2
MVP Economics and Measurement

MODULE 3
Sales Launch and Operations

SESSIONS IN THIS MODULE

3.1 Design a Repeatable Sales Process
Stages, entry criteria, owners and exit conditions

3.2 Practice Conversations Across Buying Moments
Discovery, demonstration, objections and commitment

3.3 **Launch Through Channels, Delivery, and Support** — YOU ARE HERE
Activating a channel and running the operation behind it

SESSION OUTCOMES

What this session explains

The operation that has to exist before a launch is real

01 **A launch is a commitment, not an announcement**

The date you go live is the date the obligations start.

02 **Channels are relationships with economics**

Each one has its own margin, effort and control trade-off.

03 **Delivery is measured in time to value**

Not in whether the product was handed over.

04 **Support design is a product decision**

What you promise determines what you must staff.

DEFINITION

What launching actually means

The distinction that keeps launches from failing operationally

WORKING DEFINITION

A launch is the point at which you begin making promises you must keep — about availability, delivery time and response to problems — to customers you did not personally recruit.

1

It is operational, not promotional

The announcement is the easy part. The commitments behind it are what has to be staffed.

2

It is irreversible in practice

You can withdraw a feature. You cannot withdraw the expectation you created.

3

It is staged by choice

Soft, limited and full launches exist so that the obligations arrive in a size you can meet.

Four ways a product reaches a customer

Each trades margin against reach and control

1

Direct

You sell and deliver yourself. Highest margin, highest control, and it scales only as fast as you can hire.

2

Partner or reseller

Someone else sells into a relationship they already have. Faster reach, lower margin, and you lose sight of the customer.

3

Marketplace or platform

Distribution through an existing venue. Fast, and the venue owns the relationship and the rules.

4

Self-serve

The customer buys without a conversation. Cheapest per sale; requires a product that explains itself entirely.

5

Integration partner

Your product reaches customers inside a system they already use. Zocdoc's programme is this category.

CHOOSING EARLY

One channel, properly

A first product served well through one channel beats a presence in four. Each channel is a separate operation to run.

Making partner readiness legible

Zocdoc's three tiers turned a technical estate into a commercial ladder

THE PROGRESSION

Basic:
acceptable calendar integration

Complete:
full calendar integration, wider scheduling reach

Advanced:
full requirements, all Practice Solutions features

WHY TIERS WORK

A tier system does three things at once: it tells a partner where they stand, what the next level is worth, and what they must do to reach it. That is a roadmap you do not have to manage.

What a channel costs you

The margin given away is usually not the largest cost

VISIBLE

Margin and fees

WHAT IT IS

Reseller discount, marketplace commission, referral fee.

WHY IT IS ACCEPTABLE

It buys reach you could not build at that speed yourself.

HOW TO JUDGE IT

Against your own cost of acquiring the same customer directly.

HIDDEN

Distance from the customer

WHAT IT IS

You no longer hear the objections, the misunderstandings or the reasons for churn.

WHY IT MATTERS

The discovery loop from Course 1 goes quiet exactly when you most need it.

THE MITIGATION

Negotiate for direct access to end-customer feedback as part of the agreement.

THE THIRD COST

Channel conflict is the third cost: when two routes reach the same buyer at different prices, the cheaper one wins and the relationship suffers. Decide the boundaries in advance.

Six things that must exist before launch day

Each one is someone's job, with a name against it

DELIVERY	Can a new customer get from purchase to first value without you personally?
SUPPORT	Who answers, within what time, on which channel?
DOCUMENTATION	Can they answer their own first three questions?
BILLING	Can you take money, invoice, refund and cancel cleanly?
MONITORING	Will you know it is broken before the customer tells you?
ROLLBACK	If this goes badly, what exactly do you do?

THE USUAL GAP

Support staffing

Launch volume arrives in days. Hiring takes weeks. Decide the response promise you can actually keep.

THE TEST

Remove yourself

If any row requires the founder personally, the launch is not ready — it is a pilot.

Onboarding is measured in time to first value

Not in whether the handover meeting happened

THE PATH THAT MATTERS

Purchase: the commitment is made → Setup: configuration and data in place → First value: the product does something useful → Habit: used without being prompted

THE MEASURE TO INSTRUMENT

Measure the interval from purchase to first value, and treat it as a product metric. It predicts retention better than almost anything gathered at the point of sale.

Instrumented using the event plan from Session 2.3.

Designing support you can actually staff

Three tiers, with an explicit rule for what moves up

Tier	Handles	Answered by	Escalates when
Self-serve	Documented questions, setup, known issues.	Documentation and in-product help.	The answer is not documented.
First line	Account, configuration and usage questions.	Support or a trained generalist.	It needs a product change or a data fix.
Escalation	Defects, data problems, outages.	Engineering, on a rota.	It breaches the response promise, or affects several customers.

TREAT ESCALATIONS AS A BACKLOG

Every escalation is a missing document, a missing feature or a missing check. Review them monthly and the volume falls.

Three sizes of launch

Choose the one whose obligations you can meet this month

SOFT LAUNCH

A handful of customers you selected, who know they are early. Obligations are light and negotiable.

STAGED LAUNCH

One channel, one segment or one region at a time. Volume arrives in portions you can absorb.

FULL LAUNCH

Open to everyone, announced publicly. Every promise is now live, to people you have never met.

WHAT EACH STAGE SHOULD PROVE BEFORE THE NEXT

Stage	Move on when
Soft → staged	Customers reach first value without founder intervention, and support volume per customer is known.
Staged → full	Support load per customer is stable or falling, and the response promise has been met for a full cycle.

Three launches that create problems they cannot absorb

Each goes well on the day and badly in the following weeks

The announcement launch

Looks like Marketing is ready; delivery is not.

Why it fails Demand arrives against an operation that cannot serve it, and the first impression is spent.

Fix Launch readiness is the six rows, not the campaign.

The unstaffed promise

Looks like A published response time nobody is rostered to meet.

Why it fails A missed commitment costs more trust than a modest one would have.

Fix Promise what your current rota can deliver; improve it before improving the promise.

The four-channel launch

Looks like Direct, partner, marketplace and self-serve at once.

Why it fails Each is a separate operation; none gets enough attention to work.

Fix One channel, run properly, until it is repeatable.

CASE STUDY

Zocdoc

A partner programme that turned 175 technical connections into a channel with a shared language.

CASE STUDY · ZOCDOC

Making connectivity legible

Structure turned an integration estate into a channel

BEFORE THE PROGRAMME

Connections without structure

THE ESTATE

Over 175 calendar integrations built with EHRs, practice management systems and custom solutions.

THE PROBLEM

No way to distinguish an acceptable calendar connection from a complete one.

THE CONSEQUENCE

Technical depth existed but could not be described, compared, or sold against.

AFTER THE PROGRAMME

Three tiers

BASIC

An acceptable calendar integration that enables online scheduling.

COMPLETE

Full calendar integration, supporting scheduling through search, websites or the Marketplace.

ADVANCED

Full requirements met, unlocking all Zocdoc Practice Solutions features. Two partners named at launch.

READING THE CASE

The launch did not add connectivity. It made existing connectivity legible — so partners could see where they stood and what moving up would give them.

Announced 5 March 2024; drawn from the session case pack.

APPLICATION

Bringing the theory to ClinicFlow

A launch plan with the obligations written down

Element	What you decide	ClinicFlow example
Channel	One, chosen for this stage.	Direct to practices of 3–15 clinicians; partners deferred.
Stage	Soft, staged or full.	Staged: one city, six practices, one month.
Time to first value	The target, and how it is measured.	Under five working days from signature to first auto-filled cancellation.
Support promise	What your rota can actually keep.	First response within four working hours, 08:00–18:00 weekdays.
Escalation path	Named people, on a rota.	Support → implementation lead → engineering on call.
Rollback	The specific action if it goes badly.	Revert to read-only scheduling within one hour; clinics keep their existing system live throughout.

WHAT COMES NEXT

That last row is what makes a staged launch safe: the customer never loses the capability they had before you arrived.

SUMMARY

What to carry out of this session

1. **A launch begins your obligations.**
   The announcement is easy; the promises behind it are what must be staffed.

2. **Run one channel properly.**
   Each channel is a separate operation, with its own margin, effort and loss of customer contact.

3. **Make partner readiness legible.**
   Zocdoc's tiers told partners where they stood and what the next level was worth.

4. **Measure time to first value.**
   It predicts retention far better than anything collected at the point of sale.

5. **Promise only what the rota can keep.**
   A missed commitment costs more trust than a modest one would have.

FURTHER READING

Sources for this session

Primary references behind each concept

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