



Sharp Thinking

The Four Stages of a Successful Commercial Packaging Project



A successful drug launch relies on a well-planned and executed commercial packaging strategy. The process, which is ideally started during the late stages of a clinical trial, involves four main phases lead by a dedicated project manager to guide the process.

Here's a breakdown of the four phases of commercial packaging projects, along with their typical timelines and key activities:

1 Initiation

Timeline: 1–3 weeks



This phase focuses on onboarding and defining the project's scope. A project charter is created and reviewed by all key stakeholders to ensure everyone has a clear understanding of the purpose, objectives, and plan. A project manager assembles a cross-functional team and identifies any potential risks at this early stage.

2 Planning

Timeline: 1–3 weeks



The planning phase begins with a kick-off meeting where the project charter is reviewed in detail. The project timeline is further defined, including specific milestone goals and a critical path. During this phase, the project manager addresses uncertainties and offers guidance while documenting and evaluating risk levels, and developing mitigation plans if needed.

3 Execution

Timeline: 6–52+ weeks



This is the most time-consuming phase and involves a wide range of activities, from reviewing and approving component specifications to material management and the actual packaging execution. The timeline for this phase can vary significantly based on the complexity of the packaging requirements, such as the need for new equipment or tooling.

4 Close-out

Timeline: 1–3 weeks



After the packaging run is complete and the drug product is on its way to patients, this final phase ensures a smooth transition to ongoing production. Activities include inventory disposition, a “lessons learned” meeting, and a formal hand-off to the ongoing order management team. A comprehensive checklist is used to prevent interruptions to commercial delivery.

Ready to ensure your drug launch is a success?

[Download our whitepaper](#) to learn more about the commercial packaging process or [visit our website](#) to learn more about our packaging solutions.

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