

Given the current climate, most expectations throughout any business are tempered. Cautious optimism is the term most often used to describe expectations. It's a way of maintaining political correctness, in a sense, without jeopardizing credibility. After all the economy isn't offering the ideal conditions for consumer confidence or spending, which can make the task at hand seem a bit more daunting than usual for companies. New product introductions are often delivered with excitement and optimism and until the consumer has an opportunity to weigh in on the topic will it determine whether that level requires an adjustment. For PING, its recent introduction of the S56 couldn't have been scripted any better at the professional level.

Last week, it recorded its fifth worldwide victory (in seven weeks) at the Wyndham Championship. Since its introduction on the various tours around the world, more than 20 players have already switched to the new irons. In five of the last six PGA Tour events, it has been PING's most-used model, which is a remarkable accomplishment in its own right. Perhaps Louis Oosthuizen's win at last month's British Open didn't hurt.

"The S56 iron is off to a remarkable start," said PING Chairman & CEO John Solheim. "To have this many wins, including a major championship, so soon after its introduction is the ultimate in product validation. It has really caught on with the players and continues to do so as other players witness the success it's having. We're seeing a steady transition to the S56 irons from a lot of players around the world."

Regardless of the industry or company, until a new product is introduced to the consumer, no one truly knows (good or bad) what the commercial fate will be. The absolute determination comes down to consumer validation, which is determined by committing after tax dollars (especially in this environment) to the product. For PING, its S56 appears to have plenty of momentum on its side as it makes its debut at golf shops worldwide in mid-September. The verdict at the highest level of professional golf is clearly better than anyone inside or outside the company could have anticipated and now it's a matter of what the consumer thinks.