Lithium

# Online Business Communities

## Launching a Customer Community: Step By Step Process

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# Overview

The Launch of a Lithium-powered Business Community is a standard process. The primary engineering activities are Branding, SSO (Single Sign On, i.e. Registration Integration), Engineering Customizations, and Preview. The primary Community Management activities are Community Structuring, Pre-Launch and Launch Marketing, Process Analysis, and Training. We can deploy a fully integrated community customized for your needs in 45 to 60 days  or less.

## Pre-execution Planning

Before the contract is signed, we will send you a form that identifies all the Lithium members in the launch effort, along with their contact information and their roles. We will ask you to fill the same form for your side, so that we can quickly launch the engineering and community implementation plan. We will schedule our first post-execution meeting, the Scoping Meeting once these forms are completed.

## Scoping Meeting

Shortly after contract execution (within seven calendar days), we will schedule a Scoping Meeting, which all the team participants on both sides will attend. In this meeting, we will discuss or identify:

- the business goals of the community, its target users, and its scenarios of use

- a high level structuring of what the community will be

- the Branding and UI needs along with a draft iteration schedule

- the SSO issues, the Work Breakdown Structure (WBS) for the deployment of Lithium's LockSmith SSO solution, and the roles played by either side for engineering development and testing.

- The scope of other engineering customizations.

The Scoping Meeting is the start of several parallel activities: branding, engineering (UI, SSO, customizations), and community planning gather separate teams working in parallel and sometimes together.

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# Engineering Activities

## Branding

Based on our first discussion, our branding engineers will propose graphical proto-types ("comps") to your branding team and will iterate their designs based on your feedback. Once a design is agreed upon, our Front End engineers will implement it and provide you with a community alpha that you can exercise. If it is satisfactory, we will be ready to deploy a preview to your users that can be used to validate the community design.

## SSO

The deployment of Lithium's LockSmith is a simple process. You need to decide if you want us to implement the few lines of code needed on your side or if you want your engineers to do so. Because it is not always easy to obtain engineering band-width on your side, we recommend that you let us do the implementation (it will actu-ally take less engineering and calendar time that way in our experience) on your side, then schedule some testing time. Once SSO has been testing between your servers and ours, we are ready for deployment.

## Engineering Customizations

You do not need any other customization but you may want some. At the Scoping Meeting, we will have discussed practical scoping for these customizations. You will need to give us a detailed SOW within seven calendar days of the Scoping Meeting. The detail needs to be granular enough for us to be able to assemble a WBS and schedule based on it, which we will return to you within seven calendar days.

## Preview

If your customizations are limited and you do not need a database migration, all re-quirements needed for a preview will be accomplished between 35 and 45 days after execution. The next 10 to 15 days are preview days to validate your community with your advanced users – or maybe all your users. Preview does not need full comple-tion of SSO.

# Community Management Activities

If your team is leading these activities, if you want us to do so we will organize a half-day consulting session (no fee) where you describe your business goals. We will advise you on what possible programs and structures may be preferred for your directions. We will then have a consulting meeting every 2 weeks (no fee) to keep giving you feedback on your implementation.

If you want us to plan you launch for you but not execute it, we will be driving the schedule and proposing strategies and tactics that you may or may not adopt, and let you drive the implementation.

If you want us to plan and execute your launch, we will drive the schedule, propose the choices that need to be made, and, upon your decision, execute them.

## Community Structuring

The team needs to determine which specific community activities and programs will be supported in order to fulfill business goals. Once these are identified, the community can be structured in functional areas - for instance, different forum categories. The technologies that will be used can be selected - for instance, Instant Messaging, chat forums, ratings. These deliverables are needed by the engineering team for implementation.

The team then needs to decide what programs to use to influence business goals - rankings, roles, permissions, management sharing with expert users… Last, but not least, it needs to determine what code of conduct the community will carry. This code of conduct and its enforcement will be a critical part of dealing with incidents after launch.

## Pre-Launch and Launch Marketing

To ensure a healthy launch for your company you want to be able to quickly reach critical mass for your community users. To that purpose, it is important to start marketing your community to your users before its launch. The channels that are available to you for reaching your users will determine your pre-launch and launch marketing strategy. Pre-launch marketing is essential to your business community success.

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## Community Process Analysis

The implementation of Community Structuring needs real time processes defined to ensure the health of your business community. Some processes that need definition include new users welcome, ranking changes, moderation practices, the use of volunteer moderators, permissions, co-opting of expert users, daily sweeps, dealing with flames, abuse, spamming, negative input etc. These community processes can be set up before preview, and validated during the preview.

## Training

Lithium will schedule one training day (no fee) for your administrators, community managers and moderators before preview starts.

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# Launch and Post Launch

Once the preview is complete, it is time to launch. The engineering implementations are validated, the community marketing programs are in full swing, and the community processes have been tested. The launch is executed upon your trigger. We discontinue review meetings 2 weeks after launch, and have a "last" advisory meeting (no fee) 90 days after launch, where we "rate" your community and suggest to you what you might want to do to make it even better.

By then your community will be healthy and prosperous. We will always be available to you as a source of advice whenever you have concerns. Our record of accomplishment spans 90,000 communities on our technology, and we will always be ready to help you with what our experience suggests. You will not be charged for occasional phone meetings when advice is needed – we want you to be successful!

If you do want us to keep on advising you on a regular basis, you can ask for our monitoring service, which provides for a limited number of hours every month where we keep on monitoring your community and provide you with a review meeting per month and a monthly report that lists issues, stats and suggestions.

If you want us to plan and manage your communities for the long term, you can ask for our resident manager program, and we will assign you with a permanent community manager. The community manager will manage your community programs, track their success in fulfilling business goals, oversee your daily community processes, propose new programs when needed and oversee their execution. She will also propose scenarios for new technologies provided by Lithium as they are delivered to you in our regular upgrade process.

# Time Line

This time line assumes good collaboration and availability from your team. It also assumes limited engineering customizations and no database migration.

- Before contract execution (CE):

    1.  Identify team members and contact info

    2.  Pre-schedule scoping meeting

- CE

- CE + 7 = scoping meeting

- CE + 14 = engineering SOW, community structuring draft

- CE + 21 = project WBS and schedule, branding comps complete, marketing plan complete

- CE + 30 = provisioning complete, community structuring complete

- CE + 35 = implementation complete, process analysis complete

- CE + 40 = training complete

- CE + 45 = testing complete, launch preview

- CE + 60 = preview complete, launch business community

- CE + 75 = launch review meeting

- CE + 150 = 90 day review meeting