

LaunchDarkly ➔

Elevate product experiences with precise targeting

How to serve software features tailored to any audience without burdening engineers.

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Targeting isn't optional

In today's digital landscape, delivering personalized product experiences to customers is essential for businesses to thrive and stay relevant. According to a 2021 [McKinsey report](#), companies that excel at personalization generate 40% more revenue than those that do not. What's more, a 2022 [Salesforce report](#) found that over half (56%) of customers now expect personalized experiences consistently.

Market pressure, indeed, compels businesses to personalize their software offerings. But personalization is only one branch of a broader category of "targeted" product experiences. The latter includes releasing new features to specific audience segments, running beta tests with select users, granting access to functionality based on certain user attributes, and other forms of controlling who or what gets which experience when. To prevail, businesses need to target in this more holistic way.

Unfortunately, building such targeting capabilities into one's software requires heavy development work. As a result, many organizations fail to target, leading to:

- ❏ Lower customer satisfaction
- ❏ Increased customer churn
- ❏ Wasted development effort
- ❏ Missed opportunities for new revenue streams
- ❏ Loss of market share



Fortunately, LaunchDarkly gives development and business teams the ability to serve features and experiences tailored to any audience without the prohibitive engineering burden. In this guide, we'll explore how you can use LaunchDarkly to target based on anything you know about your audience, test features with a subset of users rather than the entire userbase, and give business teams more control over targeting to the benefit of customers.

Who is this content for?

This guide is intended for software development and product management leaders, as well as executives responsible for software or digital experiences.



Top 3 barriers to delivering targeted experiences

A targeted experience involves tailoring software services and products to the precise requirements of individual users and audience segments. In the following sections, we'll examine the challenges organizations face with targeting and how they negatively impact the business.

01

For developers, the struggle is real

Every business has its own unique targeting requirements. An insurance company may need to show an employment verification form in their web portal to members in New York to comply with federal regulations. A cash app may need to offer personalized discounts on their new virtual credit card based on users' demographic data. Or an automaker may need to release a new feature only to internal developers for testing. Supporting targeted experiences that perfectly match the needs of a given business can be extremely complex.

Developers must write heaps of custom code. They must design a flexible architecture and ensure consistent experiences across different platforms such as web, mobile, gaming consoles, and more. They may also need to integrate the targeting solution with third-party customer data platforms. That's the kind of overhead required to support basic use cases involving a single targeting attribute, let alone ones with multiple attributes and layers of complexity.

With all these complexities, most organizations struggle to target with precision and scale, resulting in unhappy customers, decreased competitive advantage, and missed revenue opportunities.

02

Dev and product teams can't test new features with ease

Without the proper targeting capabilities, product delivery teams are often forced to release new features to their entire userbase all at once—a risky move. They can't progressively deliver features. Neither can they safely test code in a confined production environment. Nor can they vet new features with a subset of users first.



The inability to employ those targeting patterns hurts businesses. If they can't gradually release features to customer segments, they will incur a great deal of risk. If they can't safely test in production with specific internal developers, they'll fail to catch bugs early. And if they can't beta test, they'll miss out on valuable user feedback that could reveal product issues and enable them to refine their offering before a wider release.

In the end, the inability to conduct targeted tests on a subset of users impedes business growth and success.

03

Business teams don't get to control customer experiences

Even if you feel you can justify the pain and expense of building targeting in-house, you're still left with another problem: your developers have to manage targeting for the whole business. Why?

Typically, only developers know how to use a homegrown targeting solution, as it doesn't come with a user-friendly interface and is thus inaccessible to non-developers (e.g., product managers). What's more, in-house solutions lack granular user permissions. Targeting workflows affect production systems. As such, only specific people should have the ability to control those workflows. Without proper controls in place, developers have no choice but to manage all the targeting workflows themselves.

So not only are your developers forced to bear yet another burden, but also your business teams—those who know customers best—are not the ones managing customer experiences. Business stakeholders are best equipped to deliver personalized, contextually-relevant experiences to customers. When they lack the ability to control such experiences, it puts the business at a competitive disadvantage.



We've covered challenges most businesses face with creating and delivering targeted experiences and how it negatively impacts the overall business. Now let's take a look at how LaunchDarkly simplifies and scales the targeting process so that businesses can deliver customized experiences easily and safely.

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The tension between a "one-size fits all" and "fully customizable" product experience is one that makes or breaks many software companies. While the generic approach scales easily, it is only sufficient to sell to smaller customers. The highly customizable approach unlocks large enterprise opportunities, but requires upfront investment while adding friction and long-term maintenance costs. Feature management resolves this tension and makes it possible to scale customization without prohibitive overhead.

Timothy Cook

Product Manager, LaunchDarkly



How LaunchDarkly can help

Robust targeting engine vs. lightweight targeting tools

Many personalization tools offer superficial, front-end customization in terms of appearance, layout, and content. But they don't address the comprehensive depth required for personalization done at the core of a service or set of services.

LaunchDarkly, on the other hand, provides a secure targeting engine that covers the full-stack (server-side and client-side) on a large scale. It delivers personalized, functional product experiences, in which entire applications and all their services are seamlessly coordinated.

In the following sections, we'll explore how LaunchDarkly's targeting engine and feature flags address the three main barriers to delivering targeted experiences.

Feature flags

Feature flags are conditional statements (e.g., if-else) that allow developers to deploy features to a production environment without making them visible to end-users. That is, they decouple *deploy* from *release*. With feature flags and targeting in LaunchDarkly, you can release software changes to specific users, segments, devices, applications, platforms, and so on in a live production environment. This reduces risk when releasing. And it gives you the control to deliver personalized software experiences.



01

Target based on anything you know about your audience

LaunchDarkly allows you to target based on anything you know about your audience. And when we say “anything”, we really mean *anything*. This, in turn, enables you to govern critical parts of user experiences, tailoring them to each audience segment and adapting them to changing conditions—without requiring custom code.

Target on your terms

LaunchDarkly allows businesses to personalize user experiences based on any attribute or combination of attributes with context-aware targeting. [Custom contexts](#) in LaunchDarkly enable you to define and target against any and all details about users, applications, or other facets of your business.

You can build targeting rules, segments, and experiments using your application’s data model, ensuring seamless integration with your existing infrastructure. Moreover, LaunchDarkly supports infinite contexts and attributes—i.e., targeting objects—across different applications and services, allowing you to customize without limits. By using a single flag to target multiple context kinds (e.g., device type, geolocation, user demographic data, operating system, etc.), LaunchDarkly streamlines the targeting process and minimizes technical debt.

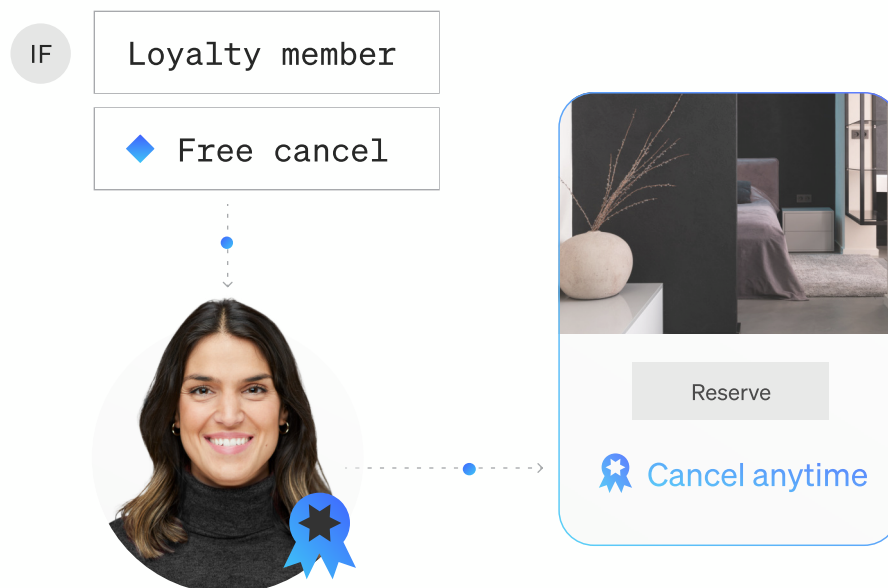
When targeting perfectly reflects your business language and data model, teams make smarter decisions about how they release and customize features. Customers get personalized experiences, leading to higher engagement, retention, and revenue.



Automate feature entitlements

Businesses leveraging LaunchDarkly can grant the right users access to the right features based on customer tier (e.g., Premium v. Basic v. Free), local regulations, account-specific parameters, and more. One way to accomplish this is by creating dynamic targeting groups using [LaunchDarkly's segments](#), which are reusable across flags to ensure consistent entitlement management at scale.

Here's how one LaunchDarkly customer, a software corporation with over 200K customers, uses our targeting capabilities for plan management. If a new customer signs up for their premium subscription, a flag will automatically give that customer access to all the appropriate enterprise features while barring non-enterprise customers. In another more advanced case, the company has VIP-status customers that receive custom features that are not available to the rest of their customer base. Supporting these custom feature access scenarios is arduous and time-consuming from an engineering perspective. But with LaunchDarkly, they're able to implement these exceptions quickly and effortlessly without shipping any code changes.

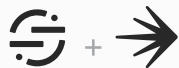


Securely leverage predefined user groups

With LaunchDarkly, businesses are able to target segments through integrations with customer data platforms (CDPs) like [Segment](#) and [Amplitude](#).

These integrations provide businesses an easy way to combine LaunchDarkly's data with real-time data from their CDP. In doing so, you gain a unified and comprehensive view of user behavior and preferences, empowering businesses to create highly targeted user segments, personalize experiences, and enhance feature releases. This also means you don't need to recreate user segments from scratch over and over again. You can target pre-existing segments quickly and easily.

EXAMPLE



Using Segment with LaunchDarkly to deliver enterprise offerings

In following these simple steps, you can enable the right enterprise features for your enterprise customers in a streamlined way. Rather than re-creating a separate copy of the enterprise audience segment in LaunchDarkly, you can sync the canonical audience data from Segment.

- Integrate your Segment account with LaunchDarkly.
- Identify the audience in Segment that includes enterprise customers and sync it to LaunchDarkly for precise targeting.
- Create feature flags in LaunchDarkly to control the enterprise features you want to enable.
- Configure the feature flags to target the synced enterprise user segment.

02

Test features with a subset of users

LaunchDarkly enables businesses to vet features with small audiences in production before releasing to an entire userbase. Easily control who gets which features when for faster feedback and a shorter time-to-value.

Progressively deliver

LaunchDarkly allows businesses to safely roll experiences out to specific segments and environments in production. You can start small and catch problems early with real data.

LaunchDarkly provides a safe, controlled, and incremental approach to feature releases. Such an approach gives developers the safeguards and control to move faster. With feature flags, developers can enable or disable specific features for targeted user segments in real-time—that is, without having to push code through your deployment pipeline. You can progressively expose new features to a subset of users while closely monitoring the impact on production systems and the user experience.

Progressive delivery lets you limit the blast radius of issues that may occur in your application. Limiting the blast radius is one way that developers can “safely” test code in a live production environment. Again, the advantage of [testing in production](#) is that, compared to artificial pre-production testing, it gives you a much better idea of how a software change will impact operational health.

Through enabling progressive delivery, LaunchDarkly ensures your release process aligns with what’s best for customers and the business.

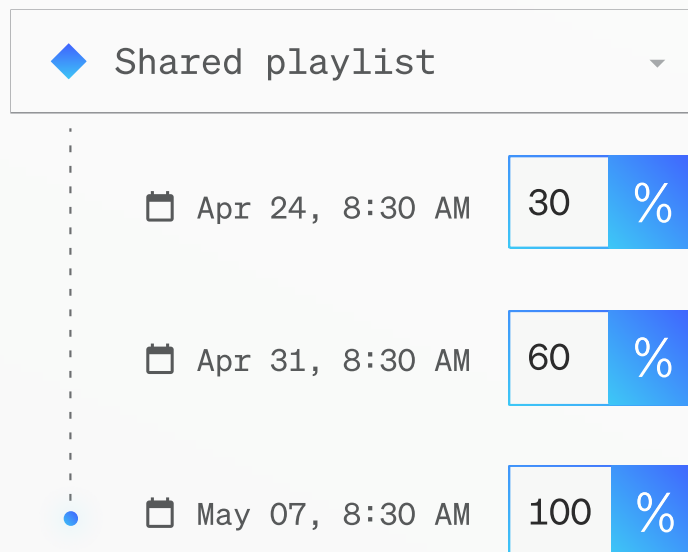


EXAMPLE

Progressive rollout

First, roll a feature out to a small group of internal testers (canary group) in production. Once the feature passes this gate, expand the rollout to a small group of beta testers. After this gate, expand to iOS devices in North America, then to Android devices in North America, and so on until you've released to all the intended users and devices. You can do all this with feature flags and targeting in LaunchDarkly.

Progressive rollout



Easily run beta tests

With LaunchDarkly, you can quickly search and add users to beta and early access groups, allowing you to iterate based on early feedback to deliver better software.

LaunchDarkly makes it easy to test different variations of a feature or compare multiple versions with beta groups in a realistic production setting. Beta testing enables continuous improvements as product managers can receive early feedback, identify issues, and refine features before a full release. This leads to a better product experience and higher customer engagement in the end.

For example, product managers at [Seesaw](#), a learning platform used by over 10 million teachers, students, and family members in more than 130 countries, used LaunchDarkly to beta test a new lesson library product offering with specific customers. They iterated on feedback they received from beta users and optimized the new features accordingly. Emily Voigtlander, a Product Manager at Seesaw, said the lesson library was the “most rapidly and widely adopted feature” since the release of the original Seesaw platform. Typically, it would take nearly a year for a teacher (customer) to adopt a new Seesaw feature. But the lesson library was adopted “much, much faster than that”.

Unlock percentage rollouts

LaunchDarkly allows you to gradually roll features out to small cohorts representing a random sampling of customers. With these [percentage rollouts](#), you control the percentage of users who have access to a feature at a given time.

Businesses will often use targeting and percentage rollouts in tandem. By combining the two practices, businesses strategically introduce new products or features to the right audience while mitigating risks and maximizing the chances of success. It enables iterative improvements, personalized marketing, and data-driven decisions for better overall outcomes.



For example, a business may want to roll out a feature to Safari web browsers first before releasing to other devices. They'll want to gradually release to the Safari segment, and will start by rolling out to a random 10% of users in the Safari segment, then expand to 25%, and so on. This gives businesses the opportunity to address any issues that may arise before expanding access to the feature to a wider group of users.

SERVE

a percentage rollout ▼

50

%

◆ true

50

%

◆ false

Context kind

Attribute

BY

user ▼

key ▼





+ Add Individual targets

03

Let business teams control targeting

Targeting functionality to specific audiences typically requires developers to write and deploy code. LaunchDarkly changes that. With LaunchDarkly, non-developers can manage targeting workflows, resulting in greater customer satisfaction, engagement, and conversions.

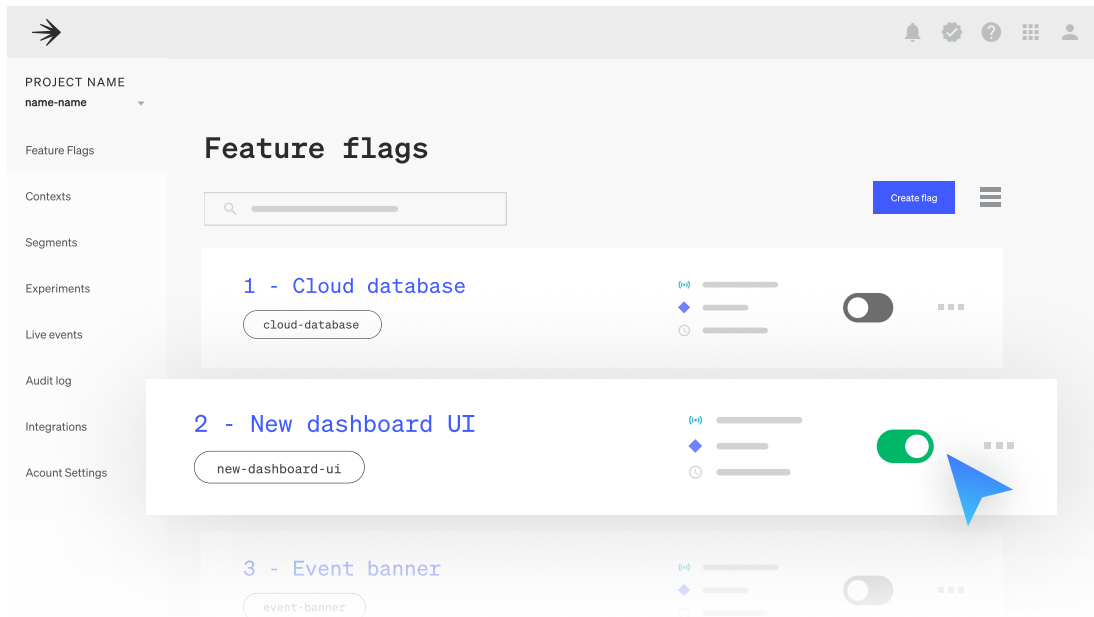
Point and click

LaunchDarkly provides an intuitive UI along with guardrails to help business stakeholders define audiences, add users to prebuilt segments, and manage releases.

When engineers build a homegrown targeting solution, they typically don't include an intuitive UI, as it requires even more development work. Without a user-friendly interface, non-developers can't interact with the system and are thereby excluded from the targeting process.

LaunchDarkly, on the other hand, provides a user-friendly interface to enable developers *and* non-developers to manage targeting. By involving business stakeholders in the targeting process, you free up valuable engineering time for higher-value development projects. This increases efficiency and creates a more collaborative targeting process that scales across the business. Giving business stakeholders more control over targeting also allows them to incorporate their knowledge of customers into the release process, resulting in a better product experience for those customers.





Control access across your organization

LaunchDarkly allows you to only give specific people access to production. And it can automatically require and enforce [change approvals](#).

LaunchDarkly's [custom role-based access controls \(RBAC\)](#) give engineering teams the confidence to allow certain business stakeholders to have more control over targeting. Engineers and the business don't want just anyone to target and touch production systems—only specific, trusted, vetted people. By leveraging RBAC in LaunchDarkly, everyone can rest assured that the right people have the necessary privileges to safely manage and influence production environments.

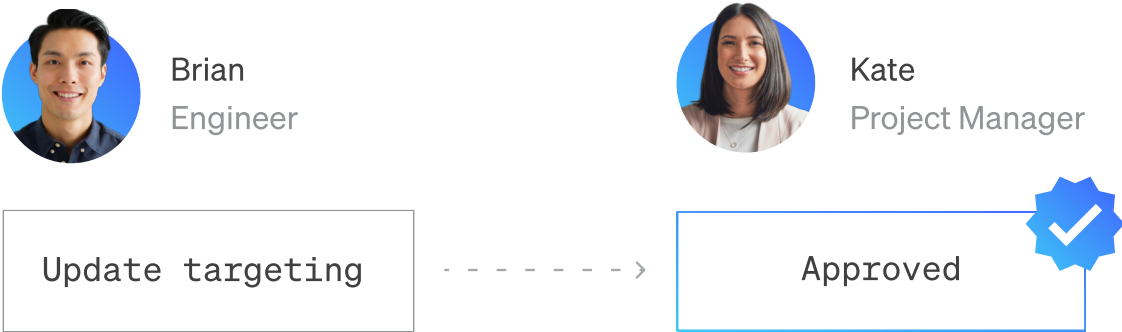
Engineers can define custom roles and permissions tailored to their team's specific needs, ensuring that each team member has the appropriate level of access to manage and configure feature flags, user segments, and other aspects of feature flag management. With custom RBAC, businesses gain enhanced security, collaboration, and alignment with their internal workflows and processes.

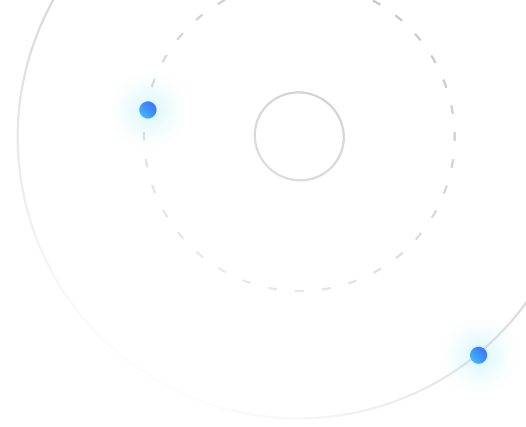


Integrate with dev workflows

LaunchDarkly enables development and business teams to share a single process in a unified platform. LaunchDarkly bridges the gap between engineers and non-engineers in the following way. First, it integrates with engineers' existing tech stack. With [25+ SDKs](#) and over [55 integrations](#) across popular developer, operations, and data analytics tools, LaunchDarkly fits seamlessly into your existing technology infrastructure and workflows. Second, it is user-friendly-enough for product managers, release managers, and other non-engineers to confidently use the platform.

LaunchDarkly streamlines workflows and facilitates collaboration across the entire product delivery team, all of which results in a better customer experience. Building a comparable in-house targeting solution is challenging and time-consuming. It requires significant development effort, maintenance, and ongoing support. Maintaining a homegrown solution requires bug fixes, updates, and compatibility with other tools in the software delivery lifecycle. Addressing scalability, performance, and security aspects of a homegrown solution adds even more complexity, requiring careful coordination and specialization. But with LaunchDarkly, you get all the benefits without the homegrown headaches.





4 targeting use cases to elevate your business

LaunchDarkly's targeting engine unlocks several use cases that drive business growth. Below, we've summarized some of the main use cases that we've covered throughout this guide.

1. Progressive delivery

Introduce new functionality to a select group of users or environments instead of deploying it to all users simultaneously. By starting small and collecting real data, businesses can detect and address issues early on, minimizing risks as they expand the rollout.

2. Early access and beta testing

Empower business stakeholders, such as product managers, to effortlessly create beta segments and test new features with these segments. By incorporating valuable customer feedback at an early stage, businesses can enhance product quality and elevate the overall customer experience.



3. Entitlements

Grant users access to specific features based on variables like subscription tier (Premium vs. Basic), location-specific regulations, or other account-specific variables. This enhances operational efficiency and delivers a seamless customer experience.

4. Personalization

Take customer experiences to new heights by tailoring product experiences to individual user behavior, demographic data, or other custom attributes. By providing personalized experiences, businesses can dramatically improve customer satisfaction.

Now that we understand how LaunchDarkly enables businesses to control and scale targeted experiences, let's see how this looks in the real world.





Customer success stories

See how two leading organizations used LaunchDarkly to deliver targeted experiences to their customers and drive positive business results.



Hulu personalizes entertainment for 39M users

Challenge

Previously, Hulu, a major streaming service majority-owned by Disney, would schedule big releases at midnight and lacked fine-grained targeting capabilities. This made it challenging to deliver the right experiences to the right audiences. At one point, Hulu needed to launch a major UI update. And they needed to ship different versions of the UI based on device type and app version, something they couldn't do effectively at the time.

Solution

Hulu used LaunchDarkly to smoothly and swiftly release their huge UI redesign to 39 million users across the globe. They progressively rolled it out over a short period of time, targeting based on device type and app version. Bear in mind, they were targeting several different device types—iOS, Xbox One, web browser, etc. And they had 30+ different app versions for their millions of customers. That's a lot of complexity. But with LaunchDarkly's targeting engine, they delivered those experiences instantly, consistently, and globally. And they didn't have to do it in the middle of the night.



Results

Hulu reduced the complexity and resource requirements for their development team when delivering targeted experiences. They improved developer productivity significantly and have since been able to “do more with less”. And they’ve improved the customer experience through personalization, which has a positive impact on revenue.

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We had six clients with multiple versions in multiple states of implementation and experiments running all at the same time. This is gonna be really hard, right? No. [With LaunchDarkly] We were able to use five rules with five segments configured using custom attributes from our servers to target all the rules in the right places at the right time.

Dominic Hopton
Client Architect, Hulu



Read: [Full Hulu case study](#)





Admiral Insurance provides targeted customer journeys for multiple brands

Challenge

Admiral Insurance has multiple brands, each of which caters to specific types of customers. They needed a better way to personalize customer journeys by these sub-brands. Separately, in the past, they only deployed twice per month and had lead times of around one month. This slow and manual approach to software releases hindered their ability to provide timely updates and improvements to their customers.

Solution

With LaunchDarkly, Admiral is able to deliver personalized product experiences to their customers based on the user information provided on the back-end. Admiral can now trigger specific customer journeys that meet the exact needs of customers across each sub-brand. These changes have bolstered their product offerings and laid the foundation for delivering personalized experiences to their customers in the future.



Results

After implementing LaunchDarkly, Admiral saw a substantial increase in their deployment frequency, now able to handle eight or more deployments a month. This improvement also resulted in a drastic reduction in lead time, down to just one week. Furthermore, their development teams report better work happiness thanks to their reduction of writing custom code. Lastly, Admiral has improved the customer experience significantly.

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LaunchDarkly allows us to create targeted personalized experiences for our customers without requiring custom code.

Enrique Vicent Moratalla

Senior Software Developer, Admiral



Read: [Full Admiral case study](#)



Get started

Are you ready to serve features and experiences tailored to any customer segment without the prohibitive engineering burden? To target based on anything you know about your audience, test software changes with a subset of users, and give business teams more control over targeting to the benefit of customers? If so, then request a customized, personally-guided demo below.

[Get a demo](#)

