

Liferay User Group Guide

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What is a Liferay User Group?

The Liferay community is made up of thousands of individuals who share a common thread: to support and grow the Liferay mission of an open source, developer friendly, enterprise class web interaction framework. [Liferay User Groups](#) exist to provide local, "last kilometer" support and collaboration of smaller collections of community members that have an even more focused set of commonality amongst them (such as geography, a common industry, or virtually any other specific common trait). Especially for those working in small companies, or are remote, user groups are great ways to interact with others on specific topics regarding Liferay and its underlying technology, and learn from each other in ways normally not associated with very large communities.

In addition to Liferay learning, user groups can drive the use and understanding of ancillary technologies commonly used in and around Liferay, especially when those technologies are commonly used within the groups (either voluntarily or by de facto standard).

What Makes a Good User Group

Starting a new user group is the easy part. Keeping content fresh and members interested is much, much harder. There are many ideas on running user groups found on the web. Below are some tips on creating and maintaining a successful User Group.

- Start with a small set of core members who have the desire to create and maintain the group. Ideally, this would be 2-3 people at most.
- The initial organizers should have strong interpersonal relationship skills. Getting to know the future members of the group on a personal level is very important for the ongoing health of the group. Even if you cannot meet in person, your online presence and the level of activity will attract members that might otherwise not participate.
- Keep the content of the group fresh, and continually ensure that members are kept abreast of upcoming activities, new members that recently joined, and new resources available to the group.
- Host local events where people can get together to socialize, exchange ideas, and build working relationships.
- Attend 3rd-party conferences and other local meetups as a group. Make tee shirts and represent your interesting user group!

- Make members proud to declare themselves as part of your group (see below for ideas for finding your identity).

There are many other tips and tricks you can find on the web. Do a search and find out what has made successful groups successful. If you have any questions, feel free to ask community@liferay.com or post up your questions on the group forum.

Starting a new User Group

If you are interested in starting a new user group, follow these steps:

1. Identify at least 2 founders (one of which must not be a Liferay Inc. employee or employed by an officially recognized Partner company)
2. Send email to community@liferay.com with your proposed user group name and list of founders.
3. A new user group site at <http://liferay.com/community/user-groups> will be established with your list of founders, title, and an appropriate logo similar to other groups (see “Available Resources on liferay.com” below for details)

Finding and Attracting New Members

Once your user group is up and running, the founders’ first job will be to attract new members. Here are some ideas for finding new membership:

Look for existing local user groups related to Liferay or web technology. Here are a few popular directories to help:

- [Java User Groups](#) (JUGs)
- [Meetup.com](#) (search your local area)
- [Linux User Groups](#)
- [Yahoo! User Groups](#)
- [Google Groups](#)
- [Ubuntu User Groups](#)
- Other groups related to Liferay, such as [Python](#), CMS, [JavaScript](#), Databases (e.g. [MongoDB](#)), and others

For the above groups, look for upcoming local events for which you can attend. When you attend, don’t just waltz in and declare that your group is now alive and everyone should join. Get to know the technologies being discussed, and get to know the people and their backgrounds. Also, contact the users of the group(s) ahead of time and see if there’s a possibility of some joint activities, or potentially sponsorship opportunities. You may even be able to “trade speaking slots” for your first event. Most user groups struggle with maintaining an active roster, so they are always looking for new ideas on how to drive participation. You can offer your services for

this purpose.

Attend industry trade shows and other larger-scale events. Most events related to open source have cheaper options for attendance, for example an “Expo Pass” is generally cheap, vs. a “Full Pass” (allowing entrance into sessions). Since your main purpose will be to meet and greet, the Expo Hall is usually the best place to do this. Seek out booths of related technology, and talk to the staff present about the local area, and what they are doing in terms of local groups.

Be sure to tell new and potential members the benefits of local Liferay User Groups. Aside from attending events and meeting new people, there are other benefits of “Going Local”:

- Career Networking
- Local Recognition
- Maintaining connection to wider Liferay Community
- Learn new skills

Your First Event

As in many areas of life, first impressions are very important, so you want to make sure your first event is successful. In general, Liferay User Groups are meant to center around the people and the technology, and not be a “hard sell” or “lead generation” opportunity. Potential User Group members can smell a sales pitch a few kilometers away, so don’t make that the focus of your event. Of course, you can’t prevent it, nor do you want to, but you want to avoid large scale selling presentations.

Venue

Usually, for each meeting, look for a room/class/restaurant/bar/public space where one would be comfortable speaking without much noise. Depending on the estimated number of attendants, the space could be ranging from small (for 5 persons) to a big space (for 25 - 35 persons). You may also consider yours (or other members’) places of business, which you can often use for free. Also, look for local libraries or community colleges which often have empty rooms that can be reserved for little to no cost.

Equipment

Look for places where you can have a screen and a projector, so that you can demo new features, give presentations, show public web sites built on Liferay, etc. A Wi-Fi connection and a blackboard/whiteboard are also a good idea, but not mandatory!

Agenda

Start with a presentation of each person in the group (who are you? what do you do? why Liferay?) and then start a brainstorm of topics to be treated (each person proposes a topic and everybody votes for it: the most voted topics are the ones that are going to be treated in the

meeting). That way, if anybody has an interesting idea to talk about, they can receive the votes of the attendants and present the topic.

Of course, this is totally flexible and open to modifications: this is how successful groups have worked, just a recommendation, but feel free to do whatever you want. Liferay SWAG (Pens, thumbdrives, etc) are also a big hit. Contact your local Liferay office to see if they have any to donate.

Presentation Templates

Liferay maintains a [User Group Presentation Template](#) (look for the link on the right). This can be used by all user groups when giving presentations. The template is compatible with Microsoft PowerPoint, Apache OpenOffice, and The Document Foundation's LibreOffice.

Advertising

Advertise on:

- The User Group's homepage and calendar
- Twitter
- LinkedIn
- Facebook
- Google+
- [Liferay Forums](#)
- local meetups from [meetup.com](#)
- Local [Java User Groups](#) / other open source user groups (e.g. mailing lists, forums, etc)
- Local "professional" networking groups of people in this industry
- Other Locale-specific popular social networking and developer websites

No matter how awesome your event might be, it won't be anything without attendees, so be sure to heavily advertise before the event. If feasible, record significant parts of the event (such as presentations such as this one from the UK User Group), and post them afterward, giving you another opportunity to attract new members to the group and attendees for future events.

Sponsors

It's great to have events, but there is generally some kind of cost, whether it's rental of venue or equipment, or food and drinks, or giveaways. Sponsors can help offset those costs, even if it's a small amount (such as USD 50 for cookies). Of course, some sponsors may want something in return, just be sure to balance the need for sponsorship with the desire to not turn the event into a big, commercial/selling feeling.

After the Event

Be sure to recognize those who contributed to the event (such as speakers, sponsors, etc). If able, record some of the content and post it to social networking sites, giving you another opportunity to attract potential members for future events. Also, if possible, set up a regular

schedule for events (some might be “bigger” or more successful, but the regularity is what’s important). This way, after each event, you can let people know when the next will be.

Staying Successful

Regular events are key to keeping people interested. Select a good mix of topics and venues, especially if your group spans a large area. For example, the Spain and India User Groups have both successfully had multiple events in different cities throughout the country, with local members organizing the event. You as a founder do not necessarily need to attend every single event, if travel or time constraints prohibit it. Just as in open source, recognizing and empowering local leaders can really contribute to the overall success of the group.

Be sure to heavily advertise before, during, and after the event. People who are considering joining will often look for past history to see what the “flavor” of the group is. Each group is different, and each culture and expectations is different.

Regularly keep the user group page(s) up to date and add new content (or start a blog), and post technical and non-technical content, especially content that relates to the local area (e.g. announcements of industry events, trade group meetups, or other locally relevant news).

Be sure to monitor your user group forum and respond to questions or commentary on the group. Active founders show the group that it has a healthy future, and will help keep people engaged.

Finding Your Identity

Another excellent way to stay successful is to find an identity for the group, and make members proud to be called a member of your group. For example, hold a tee shirt design contest for the group, and distribute the winning design to members (tee shirts are a great giveaway for any event).

Also, Twitter is very popular, and one great way to build identity is to establish a Twitter account and/or choose a good hashtag and regularly post using it. For example, the [India User Group](#) has established the [#LIUG](#) hashtag. It’s important for the hashtag to be unique, so that searches do not come up with unrelated tweets.

Another way to engage members outside of regular meetings is to tap into the developers of the group. Get together, and brainstorm a couple of ideas for Apps to be developed by the group. Developing and publishing an App to the Liferay Marketplace lets the entire community know that your group is willing to go the extra step to help its members learn more about Liferay. The apps do not have to be mind-blowing, even simple Apps (such as the [Netherland User Group’s Translations App](#)) can go a long way toward establishing your group’s identity.

Available Resources on liferay.com

The Liferay Community actively maintains user groups at <http://liferay.com/community/user-groups>. Each group is initially given a set of pages for maintaining content, consisting of:

- **Home page** - this is a wiki page that is editable by the whole group. Your page will start out with a template of content, but you should elect someone to maintain the page, and modify the default content to have your own content. Typical content placed here includes introductory information, a list of upcoming events, and other important details. The page also has a "Members List" on the right side, showing Founders and members. All founders should have the ability to add and remove people from the roster. To add someone, click the "+" button next to the area in which you wish to add them, then type in their email address or liferay.com screen name. To remove someone, just click the "-" button next to their name.
- **Calendar** - This is a team calendar on which you can place events of interest to the group, allowing them to see and subscribe for notifications. All members should have 'write' access to it.
- **Forum** - A new forum subcategory will be created for the group, accessed via the "Forum" tab at the top of the site. Typical subcategories also created include an "Activities and Events" subcategory to house conversations regarding events. Feel free to create more subcategories if you wish. When your group is first started, it's usually a good idea to do an "introduction" post to the forum, and lay out any ground rules you may wish. Also, generating buzz via twitter, facebook, and other social media can help drive membership and interest.
- **Member Map** - Accessed using the "Map" link - this shows bubbles for each member (founders are in blue). Clicking on a marker reveals the member's name, job title, and location. For members that have not updated their profile with their address, it chooses a random location near the center of the group, if the group is geographical in nature. Click the Profile link to update your address. Do not worry, the bubbles only use your City, so if you put your home address, there will not be a bubble directly on your home (unless you live at the geographic center of your city). You can also enter a business address. If you update your profile picture, it will also show in the bubble, giving a more personal feel to the group members. All members should be encouraged to update their profile with at least a picture and location.

User Group Policies

Founder Requirements

To reduce the amount of potential conflicts of interest, each user group must be founded and maintained by at least 2 individuals, 1 of which must not be employed by or have a direct affiliation with a Liferay Partner company. In addition, there must be at least one founder employed by, or affiliated with, a company different from all other founders. This ensures a little "check and balance" of group leadership. Existing groups with a sole founder (or multiple co-founders from the same company) will be given 6 months to find a suitable co-founder to represent the group.

Activity Requirements

In the interest of keeping interest in user groups high, it is important that all user groups maintain some amount of activity. Groups that have not had any reasonable activity for 12 months will be subject to disbandment, or re-assignment to a different set of founders.

Liferay Trademark and Logo Usage

The Liferay trademark and logo was developed for the Liferay Community to foster the use of Liferay products and services as well as to protect the quality and mindshare associated with Liferay by individuals who are a part of the community. Usage of the logo is governed by Liferay's Trademark and Logo Usage Policy. The good news is that, for user groups whose purpose is to foster the growth of the Liferay Community, contribute back, and have no commercial intent, the logos and trademarks can be used for website banners, events, etc, as long as you follow the Liferay Trademark/Logo Usage Guidelines.

Additionally, if you wish for Liferay to create a logo for you, please contact community@liferay.com.