TIP SHEET

Tips for Implementing Luminate Online Into Your Technology Stack

BY CARL DIESING, Managing Director, DNL OmniMedia

Blackbaud Luminate Online® is an online fundraising tool for nonprofits that makes engaging with your donors and raising money effortless.

With a wide range of features including online fundraising, eCommerce, event planning, email communications, and advocacy campaign management tools, Luminate Online is one of the top marketing solutions for nonprofits. Additionally, Luminate Online's high level of customizability makes it an opportune tool for organizations looking for a solution that can be tailored to their exact needs.

However, before your organization can leverage Luminate Online to its full potential, you will need to complete the implementation process. In this guide, we'll explore six tips for nonprofits looking to integrate Luminate Online into their organization's technology stack.

1 Assess online add-ons.

Before getting started with Luminate Online, your nonprofit's first step should be to evaluate your current technology. Use this as an opportunity to determine if online add-ons, such as Luminate CMS, Blackbaud Merchant Services™, and custom Luminate Online apps would also be appropriate investments.

Here is a quick overview of these add-ons and why a nonprofit may consider integrating them into their technology stack:

- **Luminate CMS.** Nonprofits can use Luminate CMS to build professional websites that will easily integrate with Luminate Online's core features.

- **Blackbaud Merchant Services.** Blackbaud Merchant Services is a PCI-compliant payment processing platform that allows your nonprofit's supporters to donate via credit card, ACH payments, and mobile payments.

- **Custom Luminate Online apps.** Developers have created custom apps for Luminate Online that can significantly expand its functionalities. For example, nonprofits can invest in custom apps that allow them to use Luminate Online to embed surveys into their websites, improve the online donation process, and even create membership management tools.

When assessing your technology, be aware of which solutions will integrate with Luminate Online. If a tool you are currently using is not compatible with Luminate Online, it may be necessary to invest in an add-on. For example, if your nonprofit needs a new payment processor, it may be wise to invest in Blackbaud Merchant Services.

2 Determine how Luminate Online fits into your strategy.

Luminate Online is a useful, highly customizable tool for nonprofits that are using fragmented solutions or have simply outgrown their current tools. However, it is also a major investment and nonprofits should have a plan for how Luminate Online will help them reach their goals.

Prior to your integration, develop a strategy for how you will use Luminate Online and consider what customizations your organization may need. Start by assessing your current practices for using your communication and fundraising tools. Determine where you are succeeding, what could be improved, and if those improvements could be made with a new software solution.

To help analyze your current strategy and develop a new one, it may be worthwhile to seek an external, professional opinion from a nonprofit technology consultant who is familiar with Luminate Online.

3 Budget for software and support.

Nonprofits implementing Luminate Online may initially only create a budget and timeline based on researching and purchasing the software. However, you should consider the cost of additional support, as well.

When setting your budget, take into account additional necessary expenses such as training, consulting services, and developer fees for customizing your platform. Specifically, while Luminate Online is a valuable tool within itself, nonprofits should treat customization as a necessity, rather than an optional part of the implementation process.

If your organization will need ongoing support, consider investing in a support package that provides you with extra consultation hours in case issues arise. In some cases, it may even be worthwhile to purchase a package that promises quick support response times, which can help resolve emergencies that may otherwise hinder your nonprofit's ability to stick to your implementation timeline.

2 Invest in staff training.

Any platform, Luminate Online included, will require time for team members to familiarize themselves with its various features. This can potentially lead to initial user errors or a productivity slowdown if additional support and training measures are not taken.

Nonprofits can train their staff by either partnering with Blackbaud's training team or a third-party consultant. When investing in training, start by determining which team members will need to receive that training and how core tasks will be handled while training is in progress.

4 Hire a developer to customize your solution.

One of the major benefits of Luminate Online is its customizability. Of course, to make the most of that customizability, nonprofits will need to partner with a developer to configure their system.

Customization is nearly endless within Luminate Online with the help of a developer. For example, core features such as member centers and email series are customizations that many nonprofits will want to invest in. Essentially, while Luminate Online does have out-of-the-box features, customizing your software is what makes the system user-friendly and ensures it's being used to its full potential.

Ensure your organization partners with a consulting firm that specializes in Blackbaud products. Then, work alongside them to personalize your Luminate Online platform to fit the strategy that your nonprofit developed previously in the implementation process.

5 Prepare to migrate your data.

Changing systems requires a data migration, which can be a common pain point among organizations implementing Luminate Online and other similar solutions.

As part of the implementation process, take the time to clean your databases before migrating information to Luminate Online. This includes taking measures such as removing duplicated and outdated information.

To start your migration process you'll need to determine what tools you'll need and who will be responsible for overseeing the migration process. The individual you appoint as your migration manager will own various aspects of the migration, such as communicating with a consulting service if one was hired to help and ensuring the process sticks to its intended timeline.

Carl Diesing, Managing Director

Carl co-founded DNL OmniMedia in 2006 and has grown the team to accommodate clients with on-going web development projects. Together DNL OmniMedia has worked with over 100 organizations to assist them with accomplishing their online goals. As Managing Director of DNL OmniMedia, Carl works with nonprofits and their technology to foster fundraising, create awareness, cure disease, and solve social issues. Carl lives in the Hudson Valley with his wife Sarah and their two children Charlie and Evelyn.

About Blackbaud

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