



**Leading High Impact Launches:** *Strategies for mastering Critical Engineering Rollouts*

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# 'Critical' Launch



- Large scale user and revenue impact
- High visibility
- Huge cross functional effort



*...Launch captain to your rescue!*





# Launch Captain - Responsibilities

- Ensure launch readiness and smooth execution.
- Be a focal point of communication for all cross functional partners and leadership.



# Launch Captain - Eligibility

- Clearly understands the product feature, the business impact and the engineering systems involved.
- Able to visualize the launch to identify the expected trends, the unexpected failures/risks.
- Leads the cross functional team towards a common goal of smooth execution.

# 3 Pillars of Captaincy



- ❖ Strategy
  - Draft a launch plan.
  - Identify the expected and unexpected trends.
  - Identify potential risks and mitigations.
  - Review functional and operational readiness.

# 3 Pillars of Captaincy



- ❖ Collaboration
  - Work with diverse cross functional teams for readiness on multiple fronts.
  - Identify key stakeholders and their roles to support the launch.
  
- ❖ Communication
  - Be the focal point for communication
  - Moderate the launch room meetings

## Pre launch - Action Items







# Review functional readiness - Action Items



Weeks leading to the launch, ensure the launch is on track.

- Run weekly readiness checks
- Clearly identify the steps to unblock

# Review operational readiness - Action Items



- **Launch Accountability Matrix** - Key engineering and product stakeholders who would be the point of contact to indicate the health and readiness of their respective systems/domains.
- Identify key metrics, expected trends
- Create launch dashboards - Include a high level view and troubleshooting views.



# Review launch logistics

## **Launch runbook**

- Definitive guide, Source of truth for executing the launch.
- All the pre launch preparation and work is captured in this launch runbook.
- Includes sequence of steps needed to execute the launch.



# Review launch logistics

## Pre-Launch Briefing

- Review runbook with all cross-functional teams.
- Ensure alignment and a shared understanding of the overall sequence, as well as individual roles and responsibilities.

## Launch logistics

- Setup calendar invites for launch day and post launch check-ins.
- Clearly mark individuals who are required and share the metrics that they will be responsible for.



# Launch runbook

Single source of truth for managing the launch.

- Overview of the feature
- Teams involved and their primary point of contacts.
- Launch Accountability Matrix
- Pre-launch checklist
  - Go/no go from all stakeholders including product, engineering and other cross functional teams
  - Configurations to be enabled
  - Pre scaling systems
  - Notify all teams before starting the launch
- Launch day
  - Launch strategy - Phased/Incremental rollout
  - Sequence of steps
    - A validation is defined for each step to confirm if the step was successful.
  - Monitoring dashboards
- Mitigation/rollback scenarios
  - Scenario -> Mitigation / Rollback action
- Master list of configuration that needs to be enabled
- Post launch
  - Launch check-ins to capture metrics
    - Section to capture metrics from each system
  - Issues under investigation
  - Tech debt and learnings.

# Launch day - Game Plan



- Use the runbook to guide the team for all the launch proceedings.
- Lead the launch room with clarity and empower the group to voice their concern/opinions while ensuring the launch stays on track.

# Launch day - Monitoring



- Early phase monitoring (low traffic)
  - Spot check and record specific success, failure instances (user id etc) for verification.
  - Report success, failures metrics across all components.
  - Compute success, failure rates to have baseline.



# Launch Day - Troubleshooting Issues

- ❑ Involve all relevant stakeholders to provide their respective insights and metrics.
- ❑ Understand and clearly communicate the impact to the extended team and key stakeholders to empower them to make informed decisions

💡 Tip: For issues that require more in depth analysis, lead the smaller group into a separate war room to allow room for focused discussions.





# Concluding Launch Day

- ❑ Share end of day launch status update with metrics.
- ❑ Drive clarity and alignment on the support model in case any issues arise post-launch.
- ❑ Thank the team for all their efforts and remind them to rest and recover!



# Post Launch

- Adjust monitoring
  - Once the launch is stable, let the automated alerts take over and scale down on real time/active monitoring.
- Shift the team's focus towards
  - Tuning pageable and email alerts
  - Following up on any critical or major issues
- Initiate retrospectives to gather feedback and learnings for future



# Thank you!

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