



## Replacing an entire engineering team to launch an MVP

### Description

#### What is Prox?

Prox is marketplace where experts (supply-side) can set a price for a virtual meeting and knowledge seekers (demand-side) can book time directly on their calendar.

I worked at Prox as Head of Product and worked directly with CEO on the product vision and managed our Kanban process for releasing product features. We met regularly with our early-adopters for feedback to develop our roadmap and go-to-market strategy.

#### The First Challenge: Launch an MVP

When I joined, the product had a lot of technical issues that made it difficult to onboard and retain users. A major challenge was having an outsourced, overseas development agency. This situation created communication issues from both language and time difference, features were slow to release, and the product was generally unstable due to a poor UX such as slow loading times.

It was so embarrassing that the sales and support team members decided to refer to the product as a private beta to retain the users they had signed up as company ambassadors with equity shares.

#### The Issues

I started by reviewing the codebase thanks to my technical background from years of programming JavaScript apps using Firebase as a backend, which is what they were using. I wanted to answer the question: *Are the engineers building the wrong product or building the product wrong?*

I started by assigning a couple tickets to myself for the next sprint to better understand why the product was experiencing issues. It became clear after my first pull request that this overseas engineering team did not have a good workflow, but that is something that can be fixed with change management.

The real aha moment came from seeing the deployment process and database management. Firebase is not a great solution for many types of projects, but it should be for a startup of this size. After a few chats with the lead developer, it became clear they had never used Firebase before but decided to because the client (us) had mentioned it as a way to keep costs down. Which goes back to language issues and a common problem with agencies in general, their success is measured in customer

happiness.

### **How We Solved to Launch an MVP**

I met with the CEO to review our options financially since we were still pre-seed at this point and even I was working on only sweat-equity. An overseas engineering team using Firebase is not uncommon in these situations, but clearly untenable. But it is also common to land a CTO or VP of Engineering at a startup by offering equity, which is what we did!

We reviewed a few candidates, and made a decision to bring on a very experienced senior engineer who expressed interest in taking equity as compensation.

### **Result**

After 6 weeks of many nights and weekends since team members were working on sweat-equity, we refactored the application and launched an MVP.

This resulted in getting fully funded with a seed round to bring on both myself and the engineer full time, as well as provide a budget to hire on 2 additional engineers. We continued working with the early-adopters and collecting data from their sessions to build our roadmap.

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## Prox Product/Engineering Roadmap



This team was able to ship features 10x faster than the outsourced agency. This transition to in-house engineering also allowed us to support the scale of hundreds of new signups month-over-month. We also established a Kanban based agile process with this in-house engineering team.

Now that we were signing up many more users and increasing our MAUs, we started receiving more ideas and feedback. So I implemented a RICE scoring system for prioritization, where we weighed the impact against the effort.

Project	Overview	Usage Imp
Events Usage Reporting	Proximals can see usage	★★★★
Event Status Management	Events can be rescheduled, cancelled, duplicated or unpublished	★★★★
Discount Code Improvements	Global Discounts, Events, 1:1 possible refactoring	★★★★
Seeker Onboarding	Profile and activate new Seekers	★★★★
User Chat	Users can contact each other	★★★★
Text Notifications	Collect cell number during Onboarding; Send notifications via text	★★★★
Follow Experts	Seekers receive updates about Pros; Pros increase their audience	★★★★
Pro Payouts	Calculating earnings; Collecting info; Automating payouts; Reporting	★★★★
Pro Dashboard	In-App reporting for Pros	★★★★
Pro Custom Notifications	Pros can customize notifications	★★★★
Marketplace Seeding	Growth hacky things	★★★
Recurring Events	Courses, series, bundles and subscriptions	★★★
Event Feedback	User submitted ratings and reviews; Listed and reported publicly	★★★
Prox Orgs	Associations and groups can list and manage Pros	★★★
Events Discovery	People can find events easily	★★★★
Experts Discovery	People can find experts easily	★★★★
Improve Feedback	Make it easier to leave feedback and rate sessions. Display ratings and feedback	★★★

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## Summary

I really enjoyed the experience of working at a startup that had to fight for every scrap we could get. I learned a lot about the venture capital process, working as the head of product management, but also myself. I really learned that my experience from marketing and engineering have set me up to understand the needs of product management.

## Category

1. Product Manager
2. Uncategorized

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