

Information Architecture Exploration for LithTech

*Exploring Two Site Architectures;
Includes the Selected Site Architecture*

7 September 2000 ■ Version 1.1

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Document Summary

This is a managed document, and thus, any revisions made should be noted in the following table.

<i>Date Revised</i>	<i>Revised By</i>	<i>Revision Summary</i>
30 August 2000	Tiffany Adamowski / tiffanya@saltmine.com Liz Sanocki / lizs@saltmine.com	Version 1.0: Document creation and information architecture; usability review
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08 September 2000	Shannon Van Duzer / shannonv@saltmine.com	Version 1.1: Deliver to LithTech

By signing below, we represent that we have read, fully understand, and accept the terms of this document. Any changes to the terms in this document must be submitted via the Change Request Form, reviewed and agreed upon by both parties, and attached to this document. We also understand that subsequent changes to this document may directly impact projected schedule and budget estimates.

LithTech

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Information Architecture

Selecting the Content Architecture for Your Site

The purpose of this document is to present two models for structuring the content architecture of the LithTech online presence. Each option provides a unique approach to the site's structure while housing the same core content.

Determining this core architecture is critical as it provides the foundation for all design and content development, sets the stage for the overall user experience, and carries long-term effects in the maintenance and growth of the site.

Methodology

In the following pages, Saltmine provides the following:

- An overview of each option with a site map, which indicates how the content could be named and organized within each top-level area
- A list of pros and cons for each option

Both options address the goals, requirements, and audience identified by LithTech and Saltmine at the meeting held on August 25, 2000 (meeting participants included: Phil Honeywell, Shannon Van Duzer, David Kopetzky, Regan Hagar, and Tiffany Adamowski). Additional requirements for the LithTech site design can be found in the Project Charter and Creative Brief.

Next Steps

This exercise is a critical step in the content and design process. Selection of an information architecture approach will allow us to:

- Finalize the site map
- Develop the design motifs

And, selection of an information architecture approach will help LithTech:

- Identify the context of every individual feature and piece of content
- Track content development and file organization based on the site map

Option 1: Enhanced

The Enhanced architectural option organizes the site into main content groupings, giving no content area more emphasis than the other options. This option is based on the preliminary navigation (site) map provided by LithTech, dated v.1.1 July 11, 2000. It includes the original top-level section labels and the sub-areas have been enhanced.

Site Map

Figure 1 shows a high-level outline of how the site content would be organized within the Enhanced architectural option.

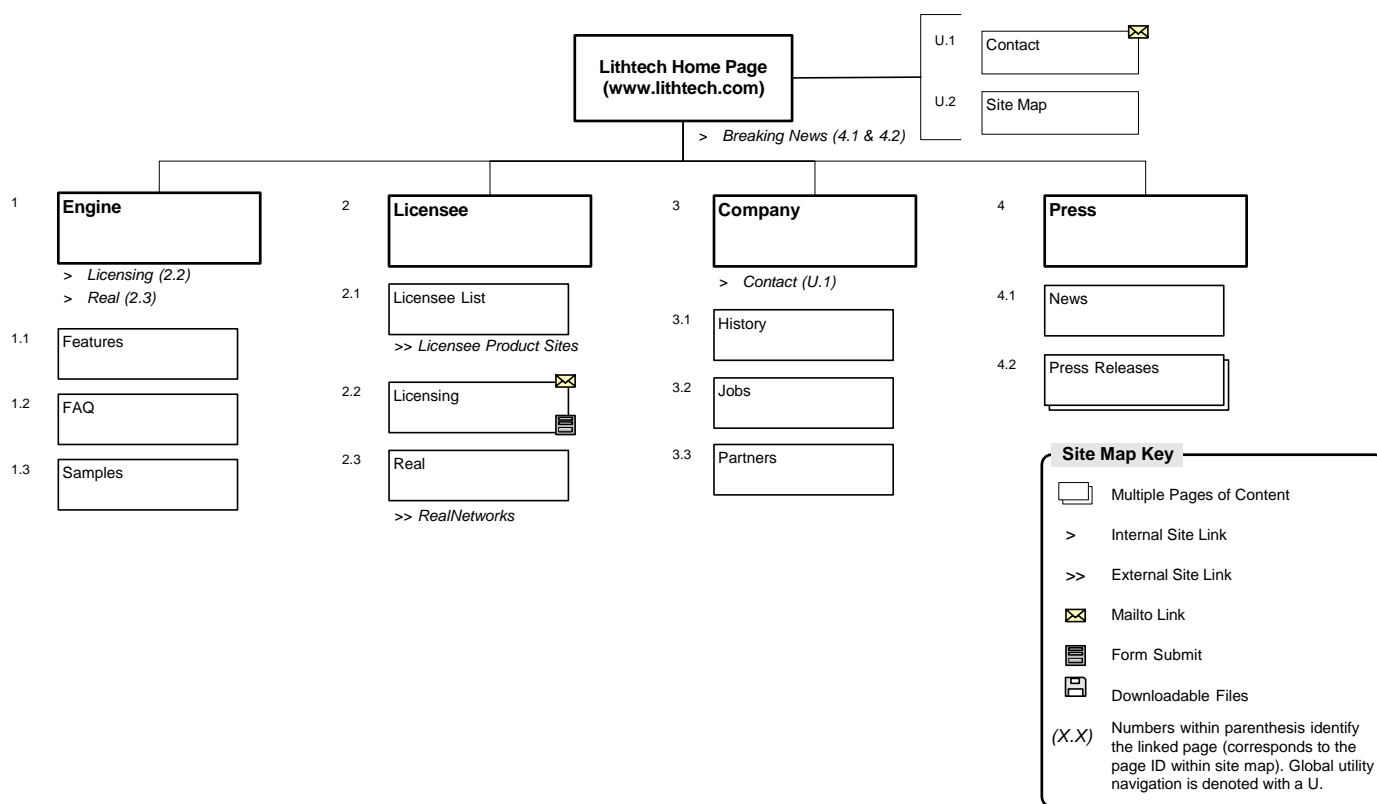


Figure 1. Site Map, Option 1: Enhanced

Overview

Site visitors enter the site and go directly to the main home page. The home page includes information on who and what LithTech is, breaking news, and visuals. The breaking news is short news briefs, or teasers, that link to full articles (sub-pages within the Press Release or News areas).

The four areas of main navigation ensure that all top-level areas are treated equally and are kept within easy reach of the site visitors. Utility navigation is present on all pages of the site to enable easy access to company contact and site information. Note that the site map could be replaced by search capability (i.e., a Search page) if LithTech builds such capability.

Pros & Cons

This section describes the pros and cons of Option 1: Enhanced information architecture exploration.

Pros

- The overall structure allows easy access to all areas.
- The user choices are limited and labels are fairly straightforward.

Cons

- The overall structure does not facilitate the most common audience, making it less user friendly. That is, the following audiences are implied:
 - Engine — developers only
 - Company — investors and general public
 - Licensee — for those already licensed
 - Press — members of the media
- The structure may not scale well if one section grows disproportionately to the others, causing information to become buried within the site.
- Describing who LithTech is and how this relates to the audience via extensive content on the home page may distract the site visitor and potentially put them off from exploring areas that typically contain such text, e.g., the Company section. Thus, the content should be kept short and act as a ‘teaser’ to the site visitor.
- It is unclear as to the type of information contained on the Real page. The site visitor may think, “Real Licensing, Real Engine, etc.” — which it is not. Since it is a collaboration (or partnership) with RealNetworks, name the page as such (e.g., Collaboration, Partnerships) and allow for site growth (as other collaborations are established).

Option 2: Customer Focused

Option 2: Customer Focus organizes the site into main content groupings, providing clear, concise navigation for LithTech's primary target audiences — game developers, publishers, and creators of interactive 3D environments.

Site Map

Figure 2 shows a high-level outline of how the site content would be organized within the Option 2: Customer Focused architectural option.

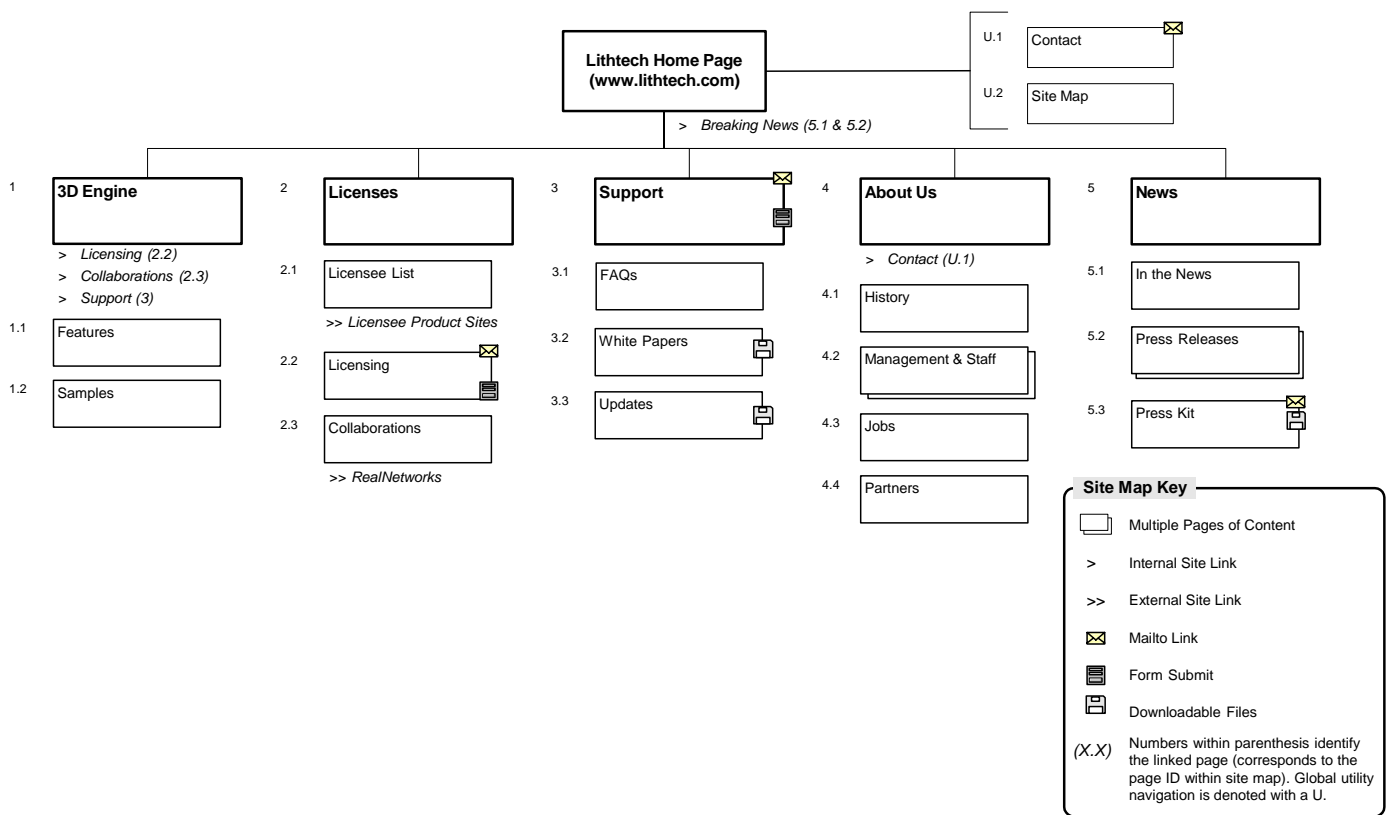


Figure 2. Site Map, Option 2: Customer Focused

Overview

Site visitors enter the site and go directly to the main home page, which includes high-level visual and textual messaging (who and what is LithTech) and short news briefs, or teasers, that link to full articles (sub-pages within the Press Release and News areas).

The five areas of main navigation ensure that all top-level areas are treated equally and are kept within easy reach of the site visitors. Utility navigation is present on all pages of the site to enable easy access to company contact and site information. Note that the site map could be replaced by search capability (i.e., a Search page) if LithTech builds such capability.

Pros & Cons

This section describes the pros and cons of Option 2: Customer Focus information architecture exploration.

Pros

- The content is organized intuitively for the target audiences; thus, presenting LithTech as an audience-oriented company.
- The navigation is clear and streamlined, making the site structure easier to interpret and remember.
- FAQs (previously in the Engine section) have been moved to the support area. Frequently asked questions relating to the functionality of the product are addressed in the features area or, potentially, in a downloadable brochure.
- The Engine section is clearly referring to LithTech's 3D Engine.
- The News section (formerly called Press) unmistakably contains all types of news about LithTech and its technologies, including press releases, links to published news and product reviews, and news about its licensed products, partners, and collaborations.
- It is clear that the About Us section (formerly called Company) provides information about LithTech, the company, for all audiences.
- The addition of a Support section shows that LithTech provides timely, strong support of its product (an excellent selling point). Contents of this section could include:
 - Technical support e-mail address for general questions, comments, and feedback
 - Form for receiving detailed information when users experience problems or have questions; this enables LithTech to clearly identify and receive necessary information for troubleshooting problems
 - Frequently asked questions (FAQs)
 - White papers, in either HTML or Adobe® Portable Document Format (PDF) files
 - Downloadable files such as updates, add-ons, etc.

Cons

- Support information relates to the 3D Engine section. While this makes the information in both sections more discoverable, keeping them as separate sections makes the site scalable.
- The navigation scheme is slightly targeted toward developers because of the addition of the Support section at the top level.

Selected Architecture

This section presents the final information architecture, selected by Phil Honeywell at the September 7th information architecture review meeting with Shannon Van Duzer, Regan Hagar, and Tiffany Adamowski. The selected architecture is a streamlined version of Option 2. Instead of including a separate Support section, links to the LithTech Developer Support site (a.k.a. "LT Dev") are included.

Site Map

Figure 3 shows a high-level outline of how the site content will be organized within final LithTech Web site.

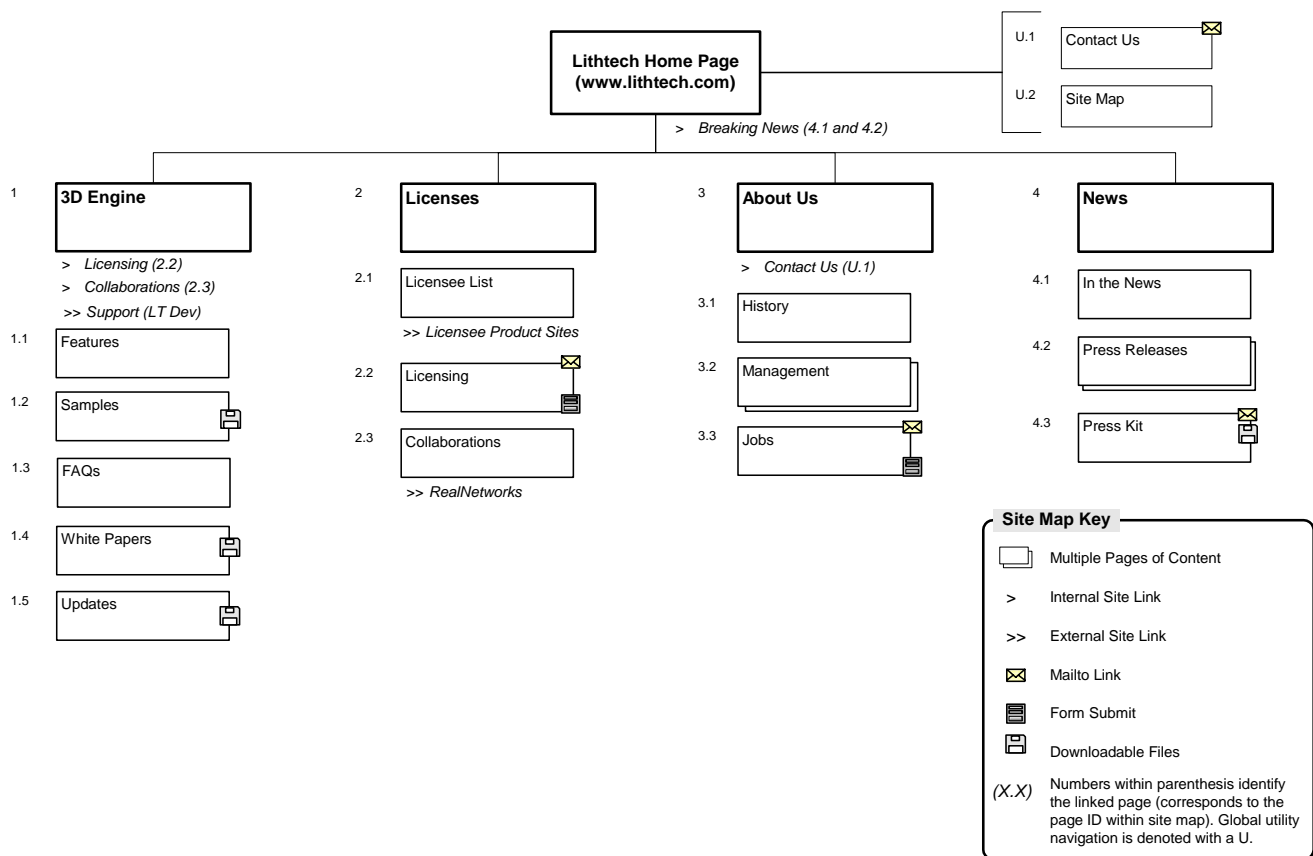


Figure 3. Site Map, Selected Architecture

Content Overview

The four areas of main navigation ensure that all top-level areas are treated equally and are kept within easy reach of the site visitors. Content represented in each area of the site architecture is described below. Internal links display in the same browser window; external links display in a new window.

Home Page — Site visitors enter the site and go directly to the main home page, which includes high-level visual and textual messaging (who and what is LithTech) and short news briefs, or teasers, that link to full articles (sub-pages within the areas: 4.2, In the News and 4.3, Press Release).

- U.1 **Contact Us** — A link to this page is present on all pages of the site to enable easy access to company contact information, including e-mail contacts.
- U.2 **Site Map** — A link to this page is present on all pages of the site to help the site visitor quickly locate information within the site. Note that the site map could be replaced by search capability (i.e., a Search page) if LithTech builds such capability.
- 1 **3D Engine** — High-level product overview, with links to content that is contained within this section. Also includes links to Licensing (2.2), Collaborations (2.3), and an external link to LT Dev (support).
 - 1.1 **Features** — Describes the product highlights and technology while keeping in mind the target audience (see Project Charter — not just game developers, but also other 3D environment developers, e.g., military, industry, etc.). Also includes a link to the downloadable product fact sheet (see 4.3).
 - 1.2 **Samples** — The high-quality support offered via LithTech’s documentation as well as the cool environments that can be created are showcased on this page, including examples of user interfaces created with LithTech’s 3D Engine, streaming video from the LithTech sales video, and an example of product documentation (in PDF format).
 - 1.3 **FAQs** — General product FAQs (support FAQs can be obtained from LT Dev); we recommend that a link to LT Dev exist on this page for those looking for technical support FAQs.
 - 1.4 **White Papers** — While none exist at this time, this area is kept on the site map for future growth and to show the site’s scalability. This page would potentially include downloadable white papers (in PDF format) or HTML-based white papers that are tailored toward ‘lite users.’ A link to LT Dev would exist on this page for those looking for extremely technical white papers.
 - 1.5 **Updates** — Includes plans for the next version of the 3D Engine; it could also provide access to downloadable add-on or update files for ‘lite users.’ A link to LT Dev would exist on this page for technical updates that require a licensed version.
- 2 **Licenses** — Provides an overview of the licensing program for the 3D Engine; this page includes links to sub-pages in this section as appropriate. Also could include a link to LT Dev for those looking for technical support.
 - 2.1 **Licensee List** — A complete list of LithTech licensees, including links to their sites and graphical examples. This page could include short testimonials from each licensee or a single sidebar testimonial (see *Testimonials* on page 3).
 - 2.2 **Licensing** — A form to obtain information on how to obtain a licensed version or demo copy of the 3D Engine. Also includes an e-mail address for inquiries not fitting into the standard form.

- 2.3 **Collaborations** — This label for this page is dependent on the appropriate term used by LithTech (i.e., Partners or Partnerships may be more appropriate). It includes an overview of collaborations with other companies and links to the partner companies' sites. Currently LithTech has one collaboration with RealNetworks, which will be featured on this page.
- 3 **About Us** — This is the LithTech company overview and includes links to sub-pages in this section as appropriate.
 - 3.1 **History** — The history of LithTech, including major milestones.
 - 3.2 **Management** — Short bios of LithTech's management (e.g., CEO, President, etc.).
 - 3.3 **Jobs** — Currently the LithTech site has a myriad of e-mail addresses to which job seekers submit their résumés. In the future, this could potentially be a form to which job seekers could submit their résumé — either via an upload tool (Word .doc) or copy/paste text into a text field and a drop-down menu would identify the position or department to which they are applying. Upon submission, this information would be e-mailed to a single address (e.g., jobs@Lithtech.com) and be filtered via subject line (as specified by the drop-down menu).
- 4 **News** — This page could include “spotlight” news items and links to the full articles (for an example of a nicely done news page, see <http://www.icge.com/news/>).
 - 4.1 **In the News** — Contains a subject line and links to published news and reviews of LithTech and licensed products. Saltmine recommends that within each area (e.g., LithTech, licensed product, etc.) that the news items be listed by date, each item linked by its name, and a short descriptive line (e.g., the first two text lines from the news article).
 - 4.2 **Press Releases** — Provides links to current and archived press releases that LithTech has created about its products and the company itself. Saltmine recommends that the releases be listed by date, each release is linked by its name, and a short descriptive line (e.g., the first two text lines from the release) is included.
 - 4.3 **Press Kit** — Includes downloadable company and product fact sheets, and contact information for the media, including an e-mail address, contact names, etc.

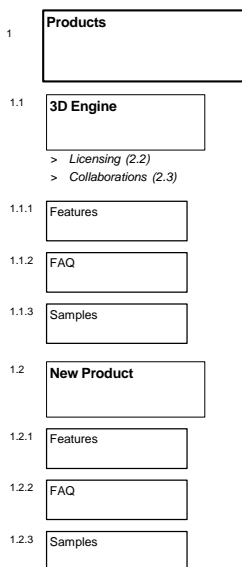
Appendix: Considerations

This appendix contains information that should be considered when evaluating and selecting a site map for the LithTech Web site.

Scalability

In the future, if LithTech offered other products, the 3D Engine section could be replaced with a Products section that included 3D Engine as a sub-section. At that time, the Licenses section could also be a sub-section of the Products section. Regular site visitors could find such a change abrupt. Thus, it may be worthwhile to immediately implement fully scalable navigation at the initial site launch, i.e., combining these areas to show:

Scaling the products area, example 1:



Scaling the products area, example 2:

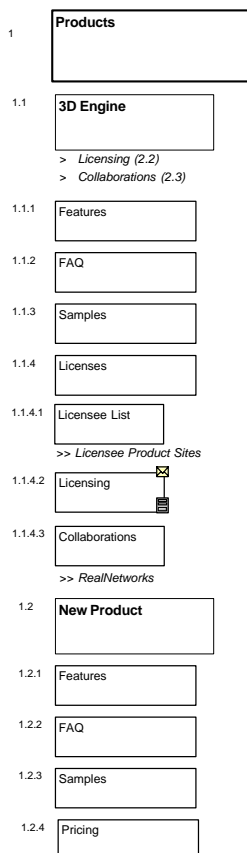


Figure 4. Scaling the Products Section

Because Saltmine is unaware of any future products to be released by LithTech, we are presenting this in the appendix for consideration instead of within actual recommended information architecture options.

In Example 1, the Licensing section remains as-is in the information architecture. The 3D Engine section becomes a sub-section to a new section, Products. The product sub-sections contain links exist to the Licensing and Support sections.

In Example 2, the Licensing section becomes a sub-section to the product to which it applies, in this case, 3D Engine. Thus, should new products be sold (as opposed to licensed), pricing could be included within their respective sections. Each product would contain a link to the Support section.

User Communication

LithTech identified a possible future need for communication between users of their 3D Engine. On their sister site, lith.com, and other Monolith product sites this idea has been expressed through user forums. Because of the high number of youthful comments (e.g., “this game rocks”), LithTech has noted that they will not be using a forum on the site. Other options could include a moderated, subscription-based e-mail listserv (such as those that Digital Origin uses for its products — www.digitalorigin.com/Subscribe/Mailings.html).

Should such a means of user communication be added to the site, Saltmine recommends that it either live within the Support section or in its own section (e.g., top-level Forum section).

Testimonials

On the preliminary site map provided by LithTech, testimonials were included as a page within the Licensee section. Phil Honeywell noted at the August 25, 2000 meeting with Saltmine that this page has been eliminated from the current site plan.

Should testimonials be included in the site, Saltmine recommends them to be included in one of the following manners:

- Short testimonials within sidebar areas of relevant content pages, for example:

<p>Lorem Ipsum Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipiscing elit, set eiusmod tempor incididunt et labore et dolore magna aliquam.</p> <p>Ut enim ad minim veniam, quis nostrud exerc. Irure dolor in reprehend incididunt ut labore et dolore magna aliqua.</p>	<p>"Which 3D game engine meets your needs? If you want high-quality, lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, then Lithtech is the engine to use." —Sid Johnson, <i>Game Developer Magazine</i>, October 2000</p>	Example of a testimonial in a sidebar.
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- Testimonials grouped on a separate page within the Company section.

Note: A good example of testimonials used on a company site can be found at: <http://www.benchmark.com/experience/index.html>.