

UNDP COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE PLAYBOOK

Interactive pdf



April 2025



Why this Playbook

This playbook was created to help policy teams design, launch, and manage issue-based networks effectively. It provides a strategic framework to clarify the communities' purpose, audience, and role within the UNDP knowledge ecosystem. It offers practical engagement strategies to foster collaboration and sustain participation. To ensure impact, it also includes a user experience and evaluation approach with key metrics and guidance for measuring success. Designed to be visual and easy to navigate, this playbook serves as a go-to resource for building and strengthening communities, with additional tools, good practices, and support from community managers and regional teams.

Investing in Knowledge to Drive Impact

The next generation of UNDP's Communities of Practice (CoPs) is more than just a network, it's a dynamic ecosystem of thematic experts and practitioners tackling global development challenges together. Our approach to knowledge is networked by design, leveraging digital tools, data insights, and people-powered collaboration to ensure that solutions evolve at the speed and scale of change.

To maximize impact, our knowledge strategy is built around three core pillars:

- Connecting experts and practitioners across regions and disciplines.
- Empowering teams with the right knowledge at the right time.
- Informing policies and programs with evidence-based insights.

Why Develop an IBN (Impact-Based Network)?

Traditional knowledge-sharing models often struggle to translate engagement into real-world policy and program impact. An Impact-Based Network (IBN) approach ensures that knowledge is not just exchanged but actively co-created, tested, and applied to drive measurable development outcomes. By structuring knowledge flows around real policy needs, cross-functional collaboration, and digital enablement, IBN strengthens the bridge between insights and action, making UNDP's investments in knowledge more agile, actionable, and aligned with global development priorities.

2025 Targets: Driving Engagement & Application

Building a culture of collaboration and knowledge-sharing is essential for achieving UNDP's strategic objectives. By 2025, 70% of UNDP's Policy and Program staff should be engaged in corporate networks, an increase from 49% in 2024. Additionally, 80% of staff should be applying knowledge generated through networks and communities in their policies and programs. To achieve these goals, knowledge management must be results-driven, and learning communities must align with the strategic direction of the organization.

See next  "How-To" sheet for hands-on guidance • page 6

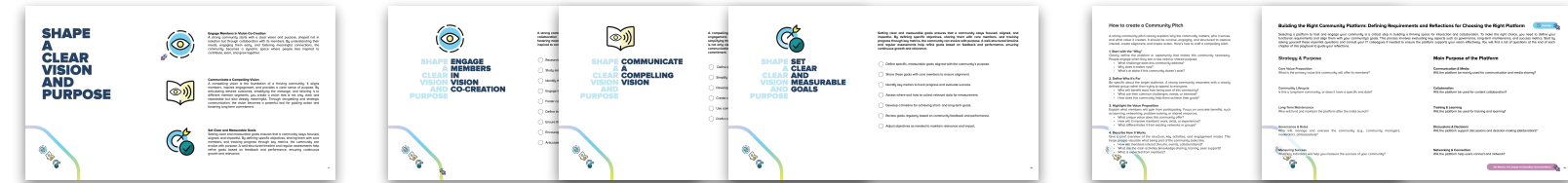


How to read the playbook

This playbook is designed to help you navigate the key areas of work that thriving communities focus on. It's structured into eight chapters, each offering practical guidance based on real-world experiences.

Each chapter includes:

- ➡ Three concrete actions to implement,
- 📖 A deep-dive “How-To” sheet for hands-on guidance,
- 📄 A curated list of questions to consider when selecting a platform.

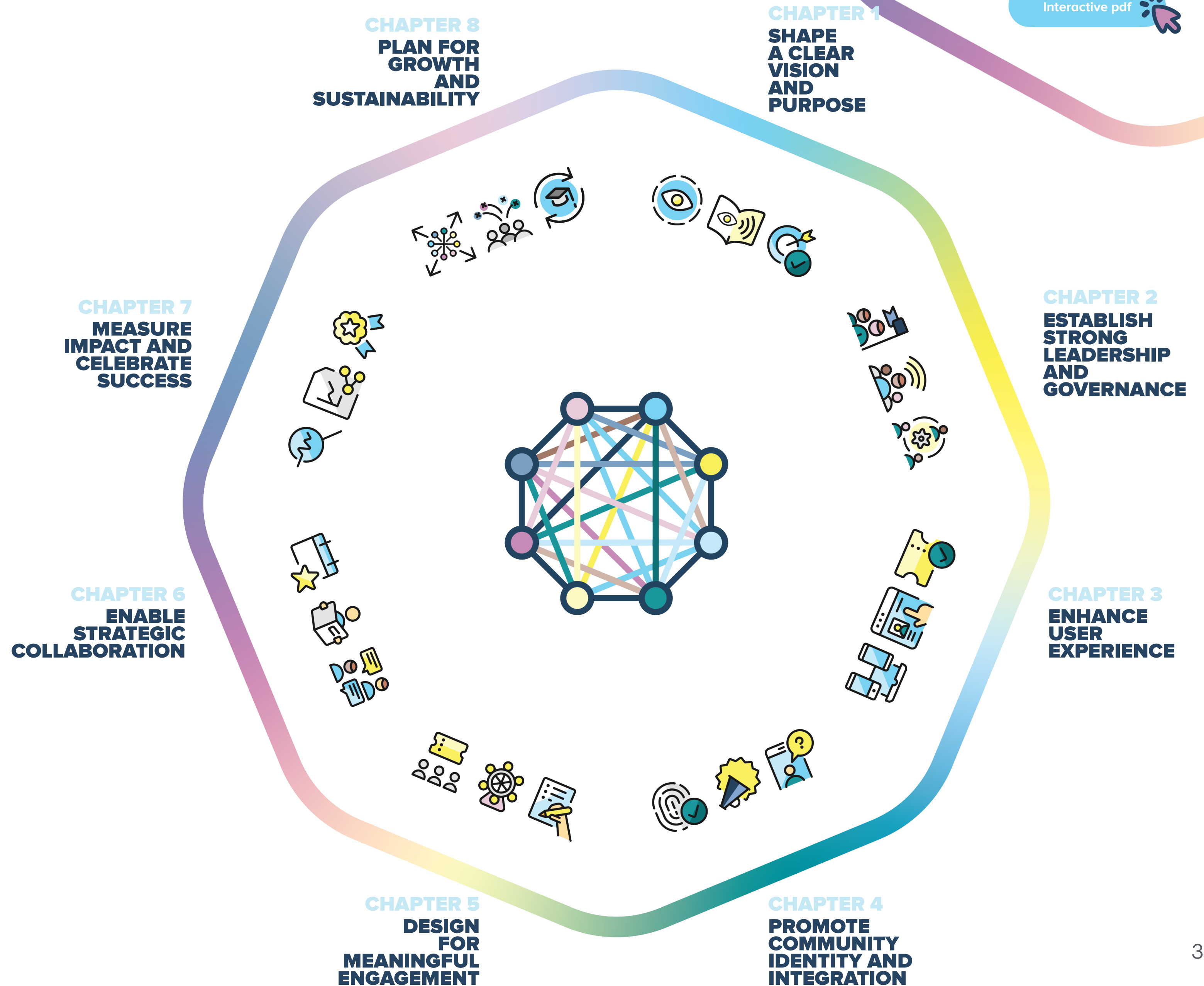









Chapter 3 goes further into platform selection, featuring an interactive sheet that lets you jump between different platform insights.

The dedicated platform sheets provide essential discussion points for your core team. Plus, at the end of the playbook, you'll find additional recommendations on Microsoft Teams, Microsoft Viva Engage, and SparkBlue to support your decision-making.







Enjoy the journey!

Interactive pdf









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How to Start: Building a Community with Impact

A successful community starts with a clear vision, but execution should begin on a small, manageable scale. Rather than launching with a large audience, it's more effective to build momentum gradually by engaging a core group of committed members. This approach allows for early successes that demonstrate value, foster organic growth, and create a strong foundation before expanding further.

Defining the purpose and audience is essential. A community that tries to serve everyone risks becoming unfocused and ineffective. Understanding the core problem it aims to solve, identifying the members who will benefit the most, and aligning with their motivations ensures that participation is meaningful. A strong community resonates with its members by addressing their needs and creating an environment where they feel both valued and empowered.

Engagement strategies should be shaped by the emotional and psychological drivers of the community. If recognition is a key motivator, offering opportunities for peer acknowledgment and expertise sharing can strengthen participation. If competition and achievement drive engagement, structured challenges or milestones can create a sense of progress and accomplishment. If collaboration is central, fostering co-creation and shared learning ensures that the community remains dynamic and valuable.

Sustained knowledge sharing is critical to a thriving community. This means shifting from passive content consumption to active knowledge exchange, where insights are co-created and applied in real-world contexts. Encouraging continuous dialogue, integrating learning into everyday workflows, and creating mechanisms for feedback and adaptation all contribute to a culture where knowledge is not just stored but actively used.

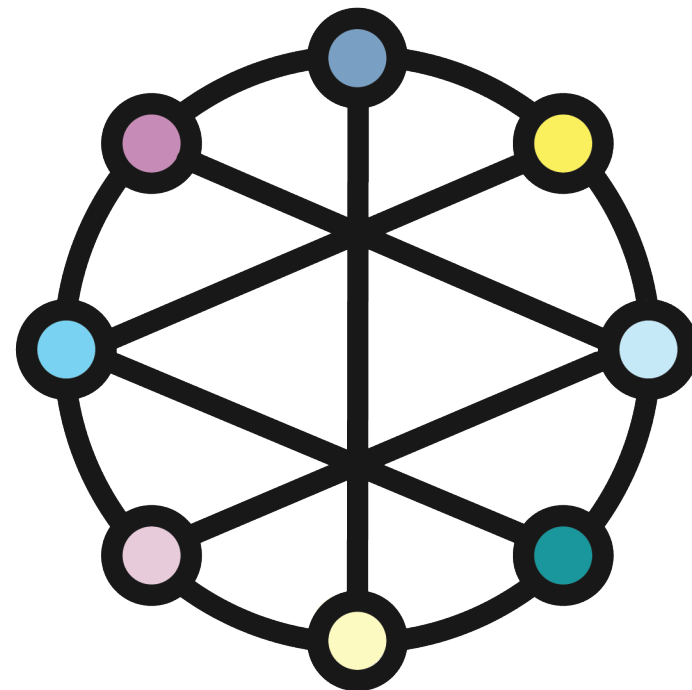
Rather than being built around rigid structures, communities should evolve based on the needs and contributions of their members. A flexible, adaptive approach allows for iterative growth, ensuring the community remains relevant and impactful over time. By starting small, aligning with strategic goals, fostering meaningful participation, and embedding knowledge-sharing behaviors, a community can develop organically into a space that drives engagement, collaboration, and long-term impact.

See next  "How-To" sheet for hands-on guidance • page 7

Networks vs. Communities

People often confuse networks and communities, but while both connect individuals, they serve different purposes. A network is about relationships and information flow. It helps people connect, share resources, and stay informed without necessarily engaging in deep collaboration. A professional network like LinkedIn allows members to exchange insights, but it doesn't inherently create shared learning or long-term engagement.

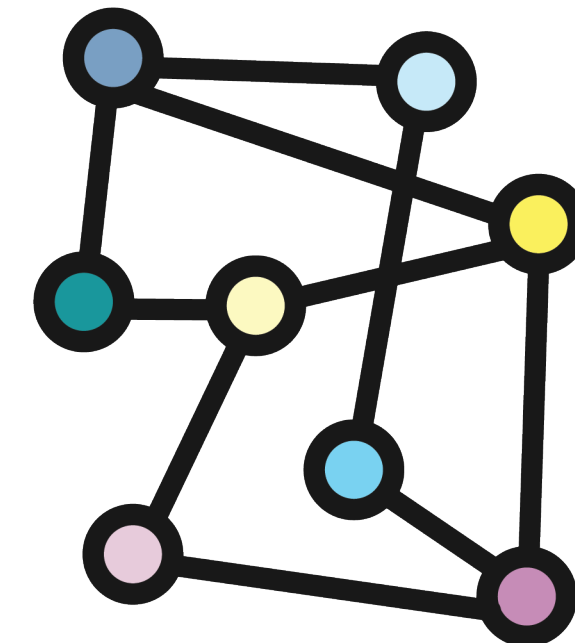
A **community**, particularly a Community of Practice (CoP), is about learning, collaboration, and shared growth. It brings people together around a common passion or practice, fostering deeper relationships, collective knowledge-building, and a sense of belonging. In a community, members contribute to a shared purpose, develop skills over time, and form an identity beyond simple connections.



A Community of Practice (CoP), is about shared learning, collaboration, and identity. Members contribute, evolve, and co-create knowledge over time.

For those managing a **network**, the focus is on enabling connections, facilitating introductions, curating content, and organizing events that keep engagement active. Success is measured by reach and interaction, not necessarily by depth. In contrast, managing a community requires nurturing shared experiences, encouraging participation, and fostering trust. Success here is defined by engagement quality, knowledge exchange, and collective impact.

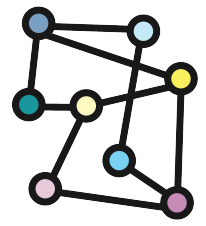
Ultimately, the question is: Do you want to connect people, or do you want them to learn and grow together? If your goal is simply access to information, a network may be enough. But if the objective is building knowledge, fostering collaboration, and driving meaningful change, investing in a community is the way forward.



A network is primarily about connections and information flow. It links individuals, but they don't necessarily build or learn together.

The **Issue-Based Networks** of UNDP can function either as networks, facilitating connections and information sharing, or as communities, fostering collaborative learning and the development of shared practices, depending on their objectives and purpose.

See next  "How-To" sheet for hands-on guidance • page 14



Building and Sustaining a Thriving Network

Essential Steps to Launch a Network and Grow a Community of Practice

Interactive pdf



SHAPE A CLEAR VISION AND PURPOSE



ESTABLISH STRONG LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE



ENHANCE USER EXPERIENCE



PROMOTE COMMUNITY IDENTITY AND INTEGRATION



DESIGN FOR MEANINGFUL ENGAGEMENT



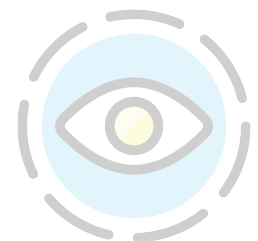
ENABLE STRATEGIC COLLABORATION



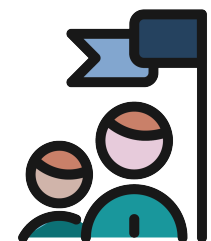
MEASURE IMPACT AND CELEBRATE SUCCESS



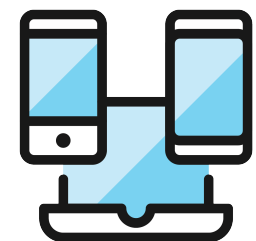
PLAN FOR GROWTH AND SUSTAINABILITY



Engage Members in Vision Co-Creation



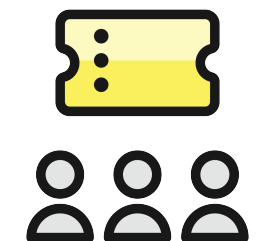
Secure Leadership Sponsorship



Select the Right Platform



Build a Strong Community Identity



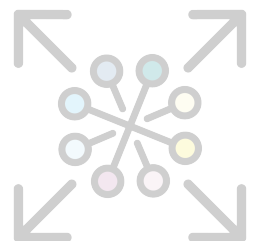
Launch with High-Engagement Events



Create Diverse Engagement Opportunities



Track Community Health



Plan for Gradual Growth



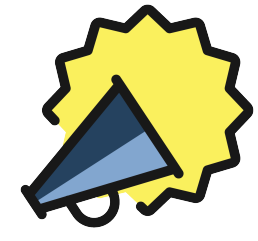
Communicate a Compelling Vision



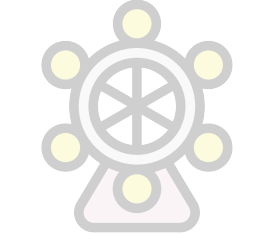
Establish a Strong Core Team



Set Up the Platform for User Needs



Expand Networks and Partnerships



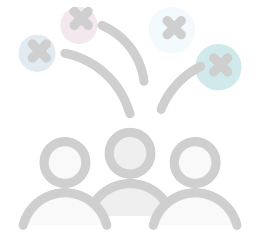
Plan for (Daily) Engagement



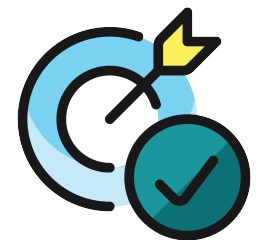
Foster Cross-Functional Cooperation



Share Progress with Stakeholders



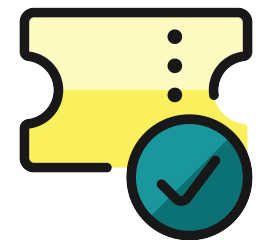
Nurture Team Competencies



Set Clear and Measurable Goals



Develop Your Own Governance Guidelines



Create a Smooth and Engaging Onboarding Process



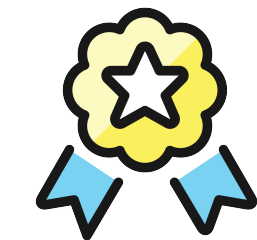
Support and Empower Members



Encourage Content from Members



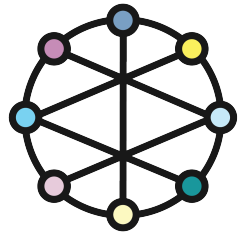
Facilitate Collaborative Content Creation



Celebrate Member Contributions



Foster Continuous Learning



Building and Sustaining a Thriving Community of Practice

Key areas to Design, Launch, and Nurture an Impactful Community of Practice

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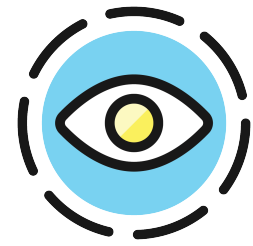
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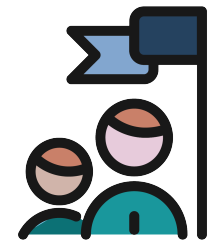
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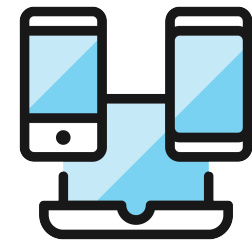
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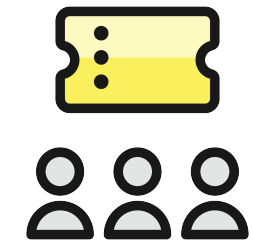
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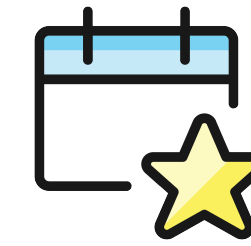
Select the Right Platform



Build a Strong Community Identity



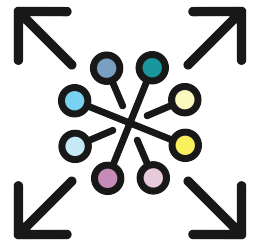
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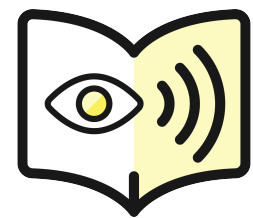
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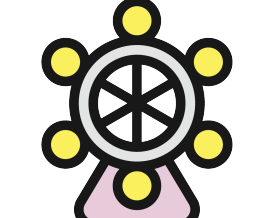
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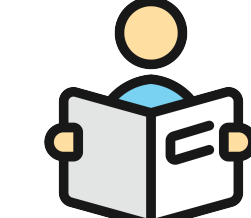
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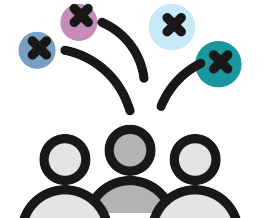
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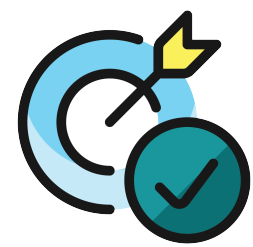
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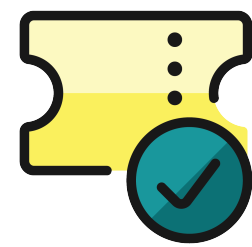
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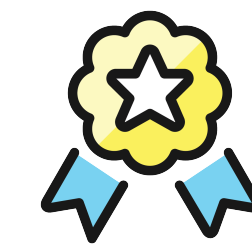
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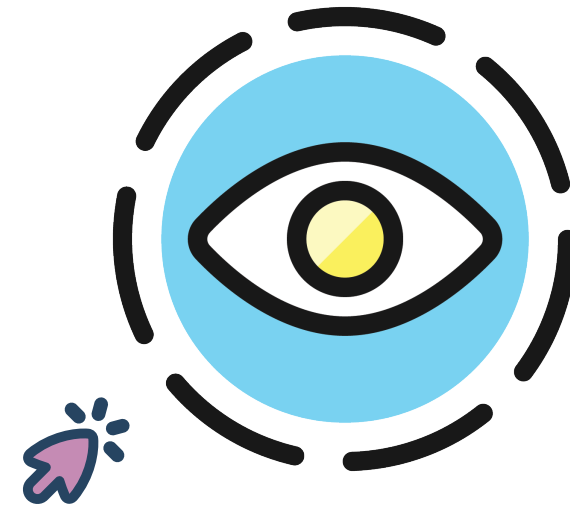
Celebrate Member Contributions



Foster Continuous Learning

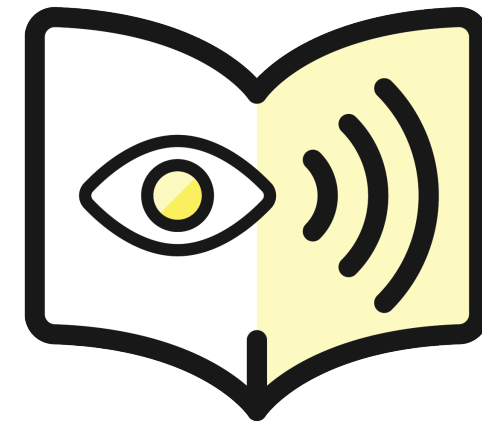
CHAPTER 1

SHAPE A CLEAR VISION AND PURPOSE



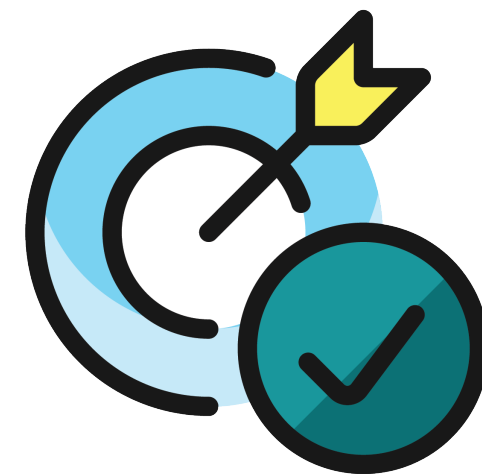
Engage Members in Vision Co-Creation

A strong community starts with a clear vision and purpose, shaped not in isolation but through collaboration with its members. By understanding their needs, engaging them early, and fostering meaningful connections, the community becomes a dynamic space where people feel inspired to contribute, learn, and grow together.



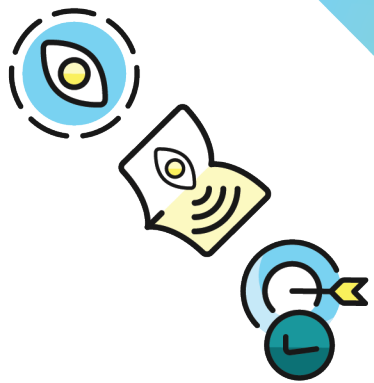
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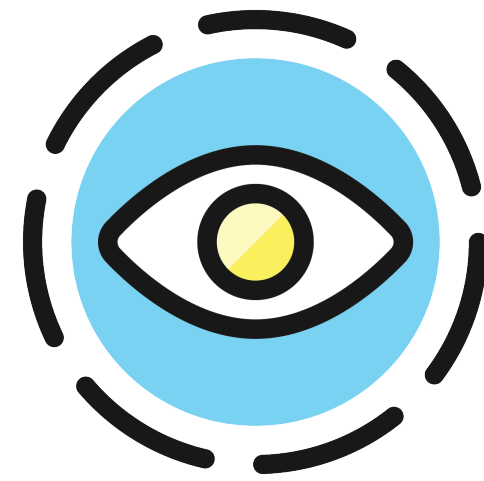
A compelling vision is the foundation of a thriving community. It aligns members, inspires engagement, and provides a clear sense of purpose. By articulating desired outcomes, simplifying the message, and tailoring it to different member segments, you create a vision that is not only clear and repeatable but also deeply meaningful. Through storytelling and strategic communication, the vision becomes a powerful tool for guiding action and fostering long-term commitment.



Set Clear and Measurable Goals

Setting clear and measurable goals ensures that a community stays focused, aligned, and impactful. By defining specific objectives, sharing them with core members, and tracking progress through key metrics, the community can evolve with purpose. A well-structured timeline and regular assessments help refine goals based on feedback and performance, ensuring continuous growth and relevance.

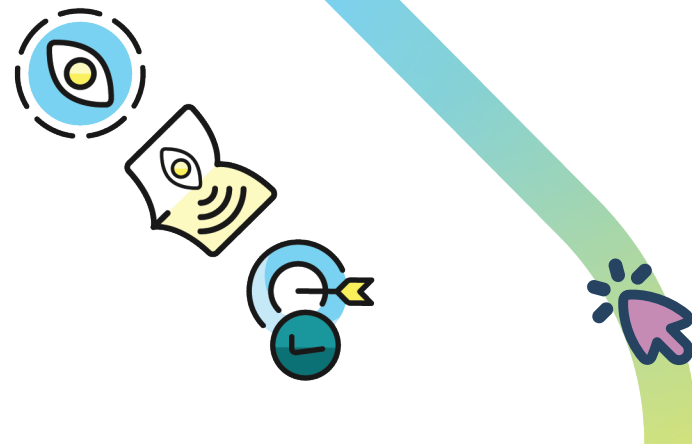




SHAPE **ENGAGE**
A **MEMBERS**
CLEAR **IN**
VISION **VISION**
AND **CO-CREATION**
PURPOSE

A strong community starts with a clear vision and purpose, shaped not in isolation but through collaboration with its members. By understanding their needs, engaging them early, and fostering meaningful connections, the community becomes a dynamic space where people feel inspired to contribute, learn, and grow together.

- Research member needs and expectations.
- Study existing communities for insights and good practices.
- Identify the target audience with clarity.
- Engage initial members through personal outreach.
- Foster connections by initiating meaningful conversations.
- Define the community's purpose.
- Ensure the vision reflects member input and remains adaptable.
- Encourage early engagement by stimulating interest and enthusiasm.
- Articulate the community's value to inspire participation.



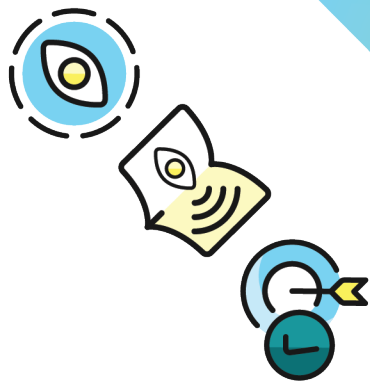


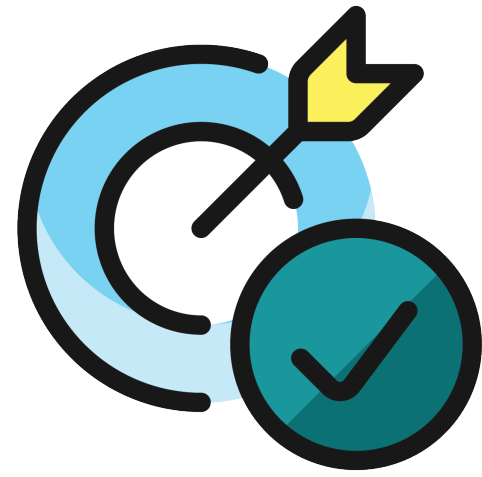
SHAPE COMMUNICATE A A CLEAR COMPELLING VISION VISION AND PURPOSE

A compelling vision is the foundation of a thriving community. It aligns members, inspires engagement, and provides a clear sense of purpose. By articulating desired outcomes, simplifying the message, and tailoring it to different member segments, you create a vision that is not only clear and repeatable but also deeply meaningful. Through storytelling and strategic communication, the vision becomes a powerful tool for guiding action and fostering long-term commitment.

- Define the desired outcomes for the community.
- Simplify the vision to make it clear and repeatable.
- Develop personas and value propositions for different member segments.
- Create concise goal and purpose statements for alignment.
- Use compelling storytelling to communicate the vision effectively.
- Draft a clear, actionable strategy document to guide implementation.

See also [How to create a Community Pitch](#) • page 14





SHAPE A CLEAR VISION AND PURPOSE

SET A CLEAR AND MEASURABLE GOALS

Setting clear and measurable goals ensures that a community stays focused, aligned, and impactful. By defining specific objectives, sharing them with core members, and tracking progress through key metrics, the community can evolve with purpose. A well-structured timeline and regular assessments help refine goals based on feedback and performance, ensuring continuous growth and relevance.

- Define specific, measurable goals aligned with the community's purpose.
- Share these goals with core members to ensure alignment.
- Identify key metrics to track progress and evaluate success.
- Assess where and how to collect relevant data for measurement.
- Develop a timeline for achieving short- and long-term goals.
- Review goals regularly based on community feedback and performance.
- Adjust objectives as needed to maintain relevance and impact.

See also Measure Impact and Celebrate Success • page 48





How to create a Community Pitch

A strong community pitch clearly explains why the community matters, who it serves, and what value it creates. It should be concise, engaging, and structured to capture interest, create alignment, and inspire action. Here's how to craft a compelling pitch:

1. Start with the “Why”

Clearly define the problem or opportunity that makes this community necessary. People engage when they see a real need or shared purpose.

- What challenge does this community address?
- Why does it matter now?
- What's at stake if this community doesn't exist?

2. Define Who It's For

Be specific about the target audience. A strong community resonates with a clearly defined group rather than trying to appeal to everyone.

- Who will benefit most from being part of this community?
- What are their common challenges, needs, or interests?
- How does this community help them achieve their goals?

3. Highlight the Value Proposition

Explain what members will gain from participating. Focus on concrete benefits, such as learning, networking, problem-solving, or shared resources.

- What unique value does this community offer?
- How will it improve members' work, skills, or experiences?
- What differentiates it from existing networks or groups?

4. Describe How It Works

Give a brief overview of the structure, key activities, and engagement model. This helps people visualize what being part of the community looks like.

- How will members interact (forums, events, collaborations)?
- What are the main activities (knowledge-sharing, training, peer support)?
- What is expected from members?

5. End with a Call to Action

Make it clear what people should do next, whether it's joining, signing up for an event, or connecting with you for more details. Keep it simple and actionable.

This approach to crafting a community pitch is based on a combination of good practices from community-building frameworks, strategic communication principles, and real-world experience in digital engagement. Here are the key sources that influence this method: Community of Practice Theory (Etienne Wenger), Value Proposition Design (Alexander Osterwalder), Narrative & Storytelling Techniques (Donald Miller – Building a StoryBrand), Marketing & Engagement Models, Practical Experience & Iterative Testing.



Choosing the Right Community Platform: Defining Requirements and Reflections for Choosing the Right Platform

Overview



Selecting a platform to host and engage your community is a critical step in building a thriving space for interaction and collaboration. To make the right choice, you need to define your functional requirements and align them with your community's goals. This process involves evaluating key aspects such as governance, long-term maintenance, and success metrics. Start by asking yourself these essential questions and consult your IT colleagues if needed to ensure the platform supports your vision effectively. You will find a list of questions at the end of each chapter of this playbook to guide your reflections.

Strategy & Purpose

Core Value Proposition

What is the primary value this community will offer its members?

Community Lifecycle

Is this a long-term community, or does it have a specific end date?

Long-Term Maintenance

Who will fund and maintain the platform after the initial launch?

Governance & Roles

Who will manage and oversee the community (e.g., community managers, moderators, ambassadors)?

Measuring Success

What key indicators will help you measure the success of your community?

See Mteams, Viva Engage and SparkBlue recommendations • page 63

Main Purpose of the Platform

Communication & Media

Will the platform be mainly used for communication and media sharing?

Collaboration

Will the platform be used for content collaboration?

Training & Learning

Will the platform be used for training and learning?

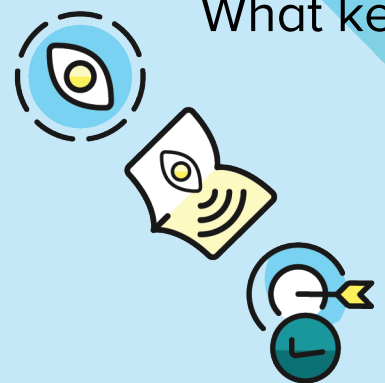
Discussions & Decisions

Will the platform support discussions and decision-making (deliberation)?

Networking & Connection

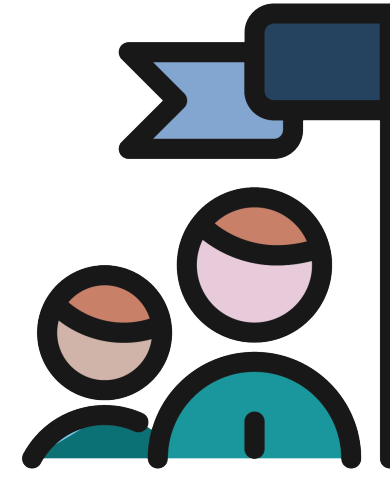
Will the platform help users connect and network?

See next  curated list of questions to consider when selecting a platform • page 21



CHAPTER 2

ESTABLISH STRONG LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE



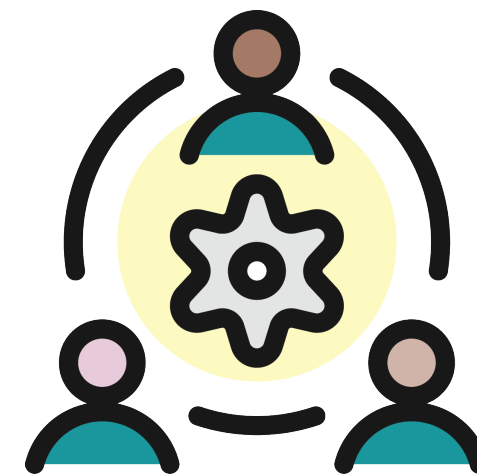
Secure Leadership Sponsorship

Strong leadership and governance are essential for a thriving community. Securing leadership sponsorship ensures visibility, credibility, and long-term support. Leaders must be more than just endorsers; they should actively participate, align community goals with organizational priorities, and model engagement. By fostering trust, and clearly communicating the community's value, leadership can play a pivotal role in sustaining and scaling community efforts.



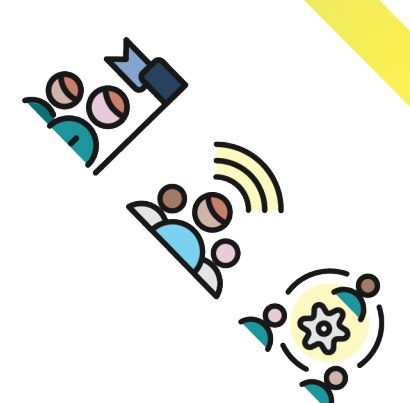
Establish A Strong Core Team

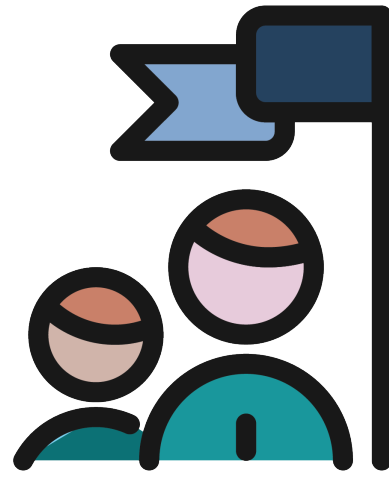
A strong core team is the backbone of a successful community. Clearly defining roles, responsibilities, and expectations ensures smooth coordination and sustained engagement. By recruiting diverse leaders, developing a shared mandate, and establishing an advisory group, the team can drive strategic direction and foster long-term growth. Setting clear time commitments helps maintain accountability and ensures members contribute effectively to the community's success.



Develop Your Own Governance Guidelines

Clear governance guidelines create a safe, inclusive, and well-structured community. Establishing norms and behavior expectations early helps set the tone for engagement. Involving members in co-creating these guidelines fosters a sense of ownership and accountability. By sharing clear examples, promoting inclusivity, and regularly refining the framework, governance remains relevant and effective in supporting the community's growth and collaboration.



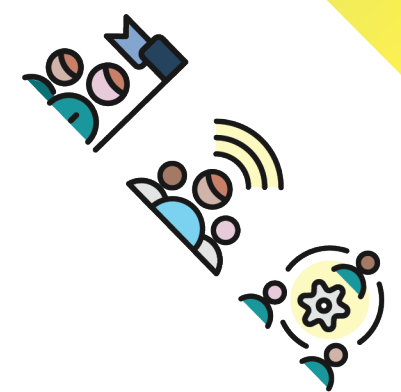


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ESTABLISH STRONG LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE

SECURE LEADERSHIP SPONSORSHIP

- Engage leaders as active sponsors and visible advocates.
- Align community goals with organizational priorities to secure support.
- Ensure leaders demonstrate commitment through participation.
- Train leaders on expected behavior and engagement in the community.
- Communicate the value of the community to leadership.
- Build trust and credibility with leadership for long-term involvement.





A strong core team is the backbone of a successful community. Clearly defining roles, responsibilities, and expectations ensures smooth coordination and sustained engagement. By recruiting diverse leaders, developing a shared mandate, and establishing an advisory group, the team can drive strategic direction and foster long-term growth. Setting clear time commitments helps maintain accountability and ensures members contribute effectively to the community's success.

ESTABLISH STRONG LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE

ESTABLISH A STRONG CORE TEAM

- Identify key roles such as moderators and founding members.
- Assign responsibilities to ensure balanced leadership.
- Recruit volunteers to diversify leadership and perspectives.
- Define the structure, roles, and responsibilities clearly.
- Develop a shared mandate to guide the core team's efforts.
- Create an advisory group for ongoing strategic guidance.
- Clarify time commitments and expected duration for roles.





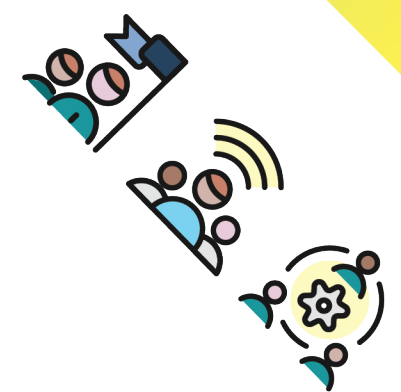
ESTABLISH STRONG LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE

DEVELOP YOUR OWN GOVERNANCE GUIDELINES

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- Define clear community norms, boundaries, and behavior expectations.
- Involve early members in co-creating the guidelines to foster ownership.
- Illustrate acceptable and unacceptable behaviors with concrete examples.
- Ensure guidelines promote inclusivity, respect, and collaboration.
- Review and update governance structures based on community feedback.

See also [Create A Smooth and Engaging Onboarding Process](#) • page 25





Share a Code of Conduct

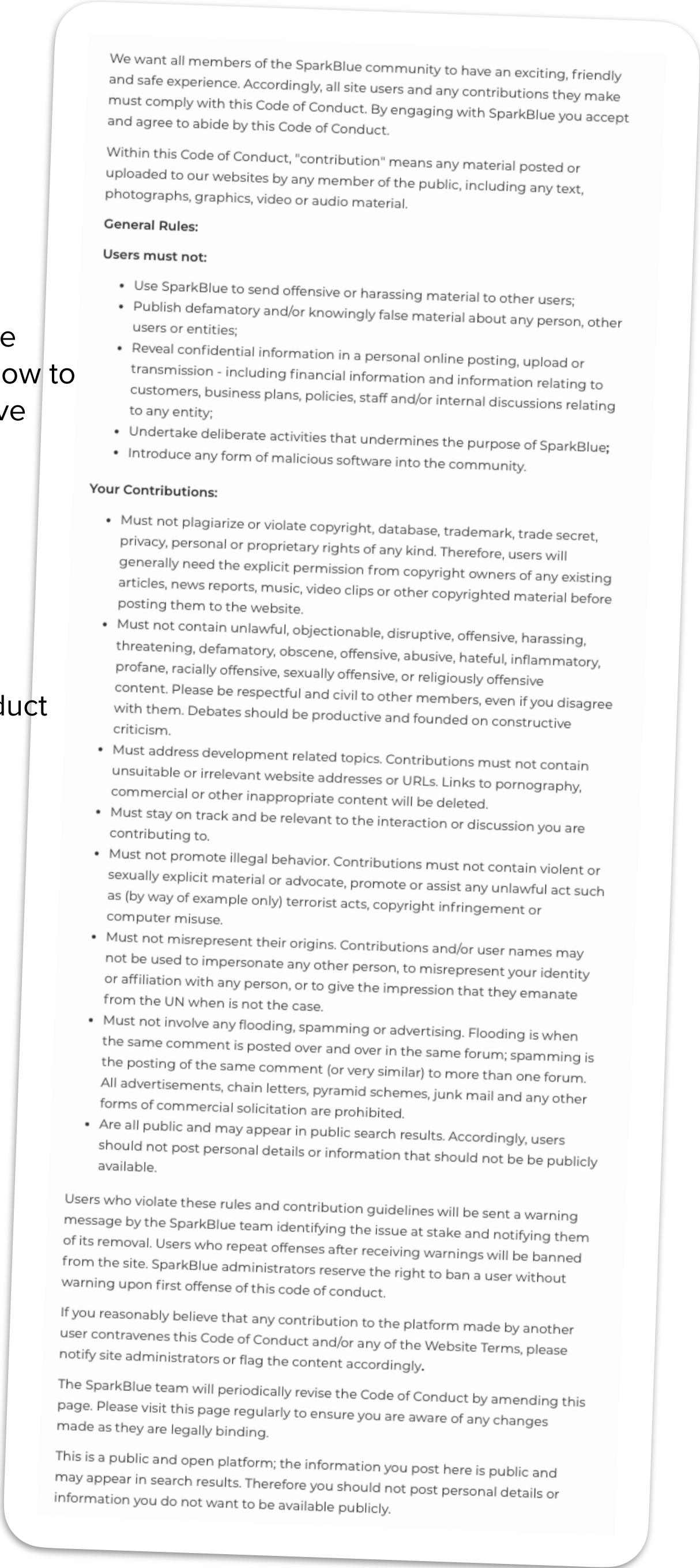
Welcome to our community! We are dedicated to fostering a welcoming, respectful, and inclusive environment where everyone can participate, contribute, and grow. These guidelines outline the expected behavior, unacceptable conduct, and how to report concerns to ensure a safe and collaborative space for all members.
(...)

See also

<https://www.sparkblue.org/sparkblue-how-to>

and read the complete version here

<https://www.sparkblue.org/basic-page/code-conduct>



Short Community Guidelines Example

Welcome! This community is a space to learn, collaborate, and grow. To keep it valuable for everyone, we ask you to follow these simple guidelines.

Be Respectful & Inclusive

- Treat everyone with kindness & professionalism.
- Debate ideas, not people. No personal attacks, hate speech, or discrimination.
- Welcome new members and encourage diverse perspectives.

Engage with Purpose

- Share insights, experiences, and thoughtful questions.
- Offer support and give more than you take.
- Avoid spam, excessive self-promotion, or off-topic discussions.

Communicate Clearly & Authentically

- Be constructive, concise, and professional.
- Use generative AI responsibly: always add your own insights and experiences.
- Authenticity matters: share your unique perspective, not just AI-generated text.
- Assume good intent: tone can be tricky online!

Protect Privacy & Confidentiality

- Don't share private discussions or sensitive information without permission.
- Respect intellectual property. Give credit where it's due.

Keep the Space Safe & Positive

- If you see a problem, report it. Moderators are here to help.
- Violating guidelines may lead to content removal or loss of access.
- Support a culture of learning, not judgment.

By participating, you agree to uphold these principles.
Let's make this an inspiring place for everyone!
Let's build something great together!

See next "How-To" sheet for hands-on guidance • page 32





Choosing the Right Community Platform: Defining Legal, Ethical, and Compliance Requirements for Your Platform



Ensuring that your platform meets legal, ethical, and compliance requirements is essential for creating a safe, inclusive, and sustainable community. Key considerations include accessibility compliance, user data ownership, and content licensing to protect members and ensure responsible content sharing. It is also crucial to define community guidelines and moderation policies while addressing sensitive data handling requirements. Reflect on these aspects early in the process to align your platform with legal standards and organizational values. You will find a list of guiding questions at the end of each chapter of this playbook.

Accessibility Compliance

Does the platform need to follow WCAG (Web Content Accessibility Guidelines) accessibility standards for inclusivity?

Content Licensing

Will there be copyright considerations for shared content (e.g., Creative Commons, proprietary content)?

User Data Ownership

Who owns user-generated content? How will user privacy be protected?

Community Guidelines & Policies

Will there be clear terms of use and moderation policies?

Sensitive data

Do you need to handle sensitive- non classified (SNC) data on your platform?

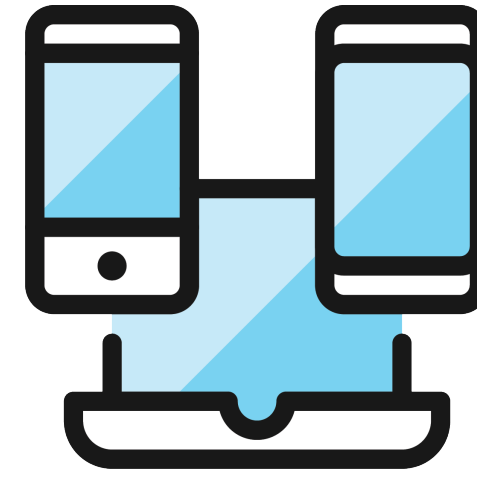
See Mteams, Viva Engage and SparkBlue recommendations • page 64

See next  curated list of questions to consider when selecting a platform • page 27



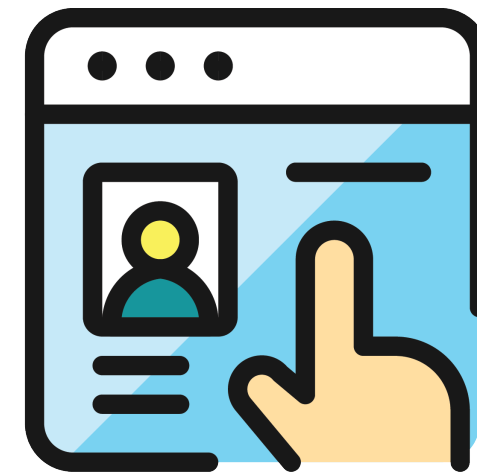
CHAPTER 3

ENHANCE USER EXPERIENCE



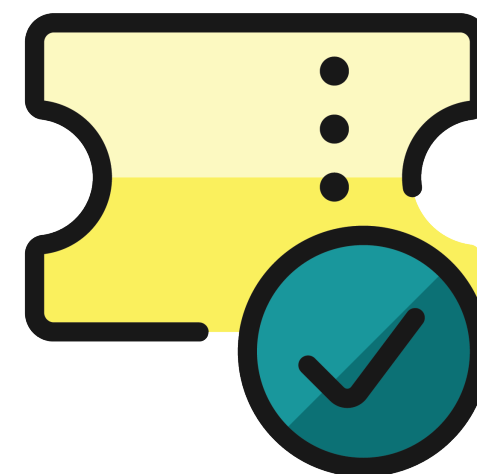
Select the Right Platform

A seamless user experience is key to driving engagement and retention in a community. Choosing the right platform means understanding member needs, prioritizing essential features, and ensuring accessibility. A user-friendly and adaptable platform enhances interaction and fosters participation. Testing with a pilot group before a full launch helps refine the experience and ensures the platform meets community expectations effectively.



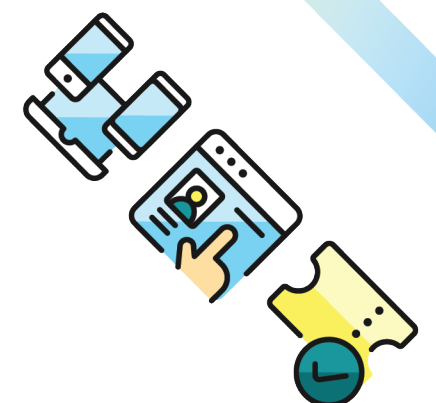
Set Up the Platform for User Needs

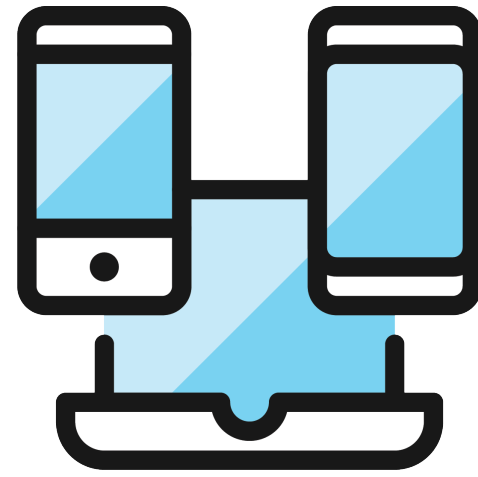
Setting up a platform that meets user needs ensures a smooth and engaging community experience. Aligning the platform with the community's identity, customizing key features, and optimizing usability create a seamless interaction space. Testing with pilot users helps refine the setup, while providing training and onboarding resources ensures members can navigate and engage effectively from the start.



Create a Smooth and Engaging Onboarding Process

A smooth onboarding process sets the foundation for strong member engagement and retention. Personalizing the welcome experience, providing clear guidance, and offering helpful resources make it easy for new members to integrate into the community. By sharing etiquette, tutorials, and ongoing support, you ensure that every member feels informed, confident, and motivated to contribute from the start.

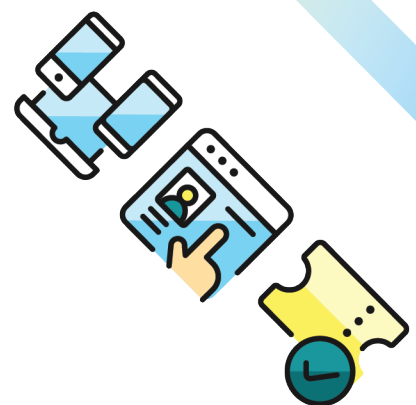




ENHANCE USER EXPERIENCE SELECT THE RIGHT PLATFORM

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- Identify member needs to determine required platform features and functionality.
- Select a user-friendly and self-sufficient platform.
- Prioritize essential features and avoid unnecessary complexity.
- Ensure accessibility and adaptability for different member preferences.
- Test the platform with a pilot group to gather feedback before full launch.



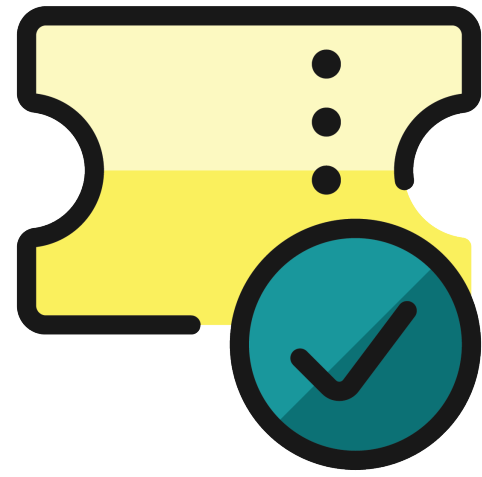


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- Align the platform with the community's visual identity and branding.
- Customize platform features to match user needs and preferences.
- Test the platform with pilot users and gather feedback for improvements.
- Optimize usability and functionality for a seamless experience.
- Provide training and onboarding resources for effective adoption.



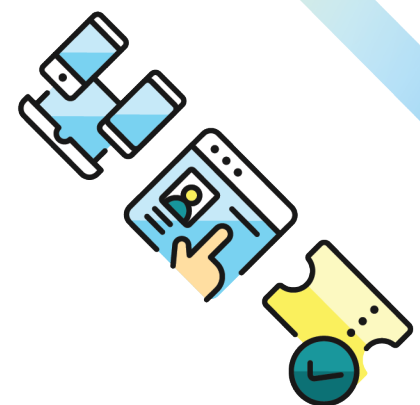


ENHANCE USER EXPERIENCE CREATE A SMOOTH AND ENGAGING ONBOARDING PROCESS

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- Personalize welcome messages to create a warm first impression.
- Define who your community members are (Personas) and tailor engagement strategies accordingly.
- Guide new members on how to navigate the platform and contribute.
- Share community etiquette and guidelines for clear expectations.
- Offer tutorials and resources to help members get started.
- Follow up with new members to provide support and encourage engagement.

See also [Develop Your Own Governance Guidelines](#) • page 19

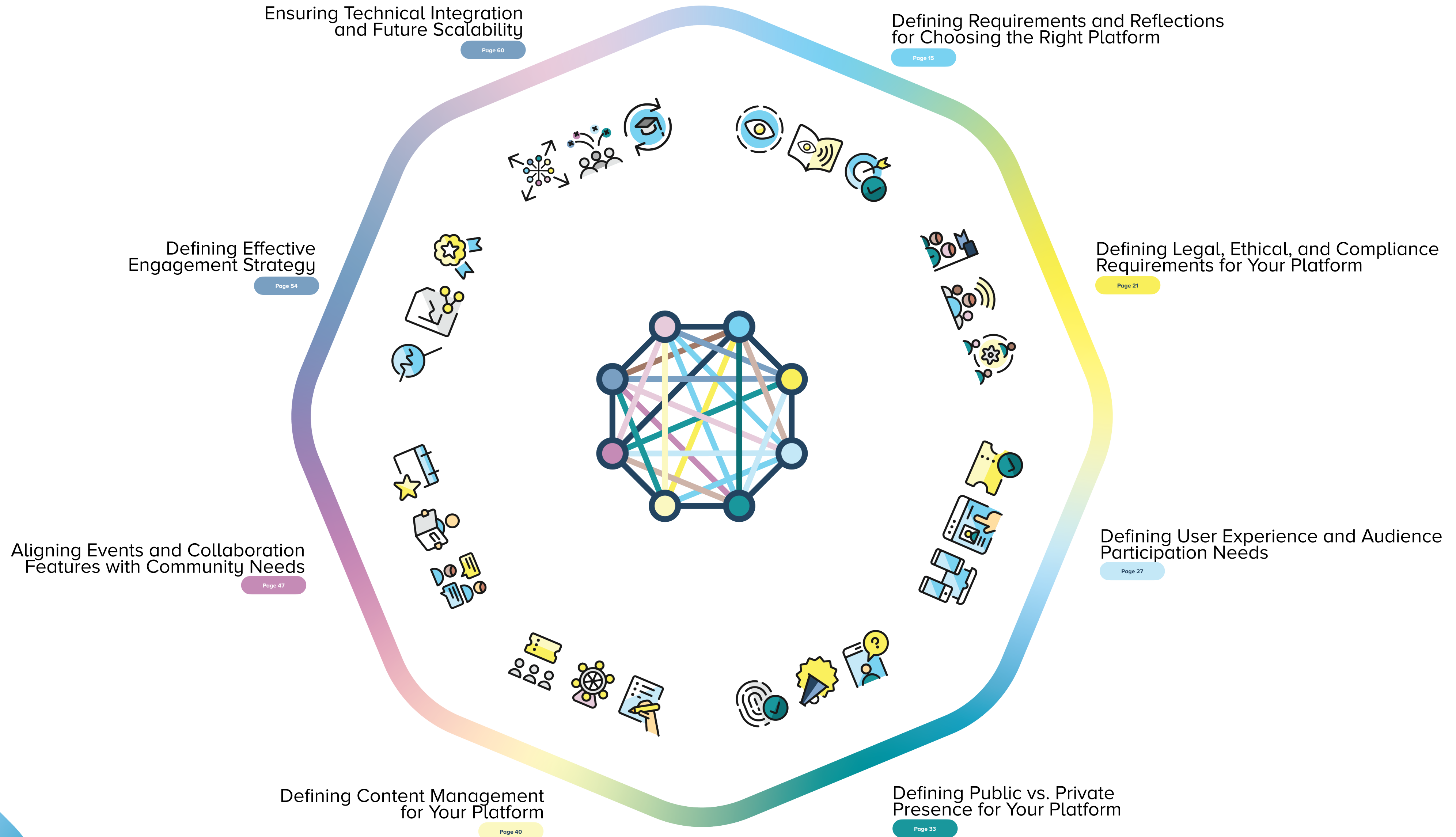




Choosing the Right Community Platform

Key questions to describe the functional requirements

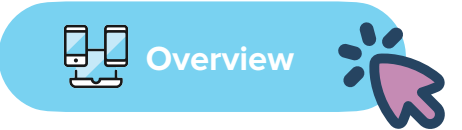
Interactive pdf



See general Mteams, Viva Engage and SparkBlue recommendations • page 71



Choosing the Right Community Platform: Defining User Experience and Audience Participation Needs



A well-designed platform should offer a seamless user experience while catering to the specific needs of its target audience. Consider factors such as mobile accessibility, notifications, multilingual support, and user onboarding to enhance usability. Understanding user needs, digital literacy levels, and participation types helps tailor engagement strategies. Additionally, defining the balance between private and public discussions ensures the platform meets both accessibility and security expectations. You will find a list of guiding questions at the end of each chapter of this playbook.

User Experience

Mobile Access

Does the platform have a mobile version?

Notifications

Can the platform send notifications (e.g., via email)?

Multilingual Support

Does the platform support multiple languages?

User Onboarding

Is the process for new users to join and use the platform simple?



See Mteams, Viva Engage and SparkBlue recommendations • page 65

Audience & Participation

Further clarifying target users

User Needs & Behaviors

What key challenges do your target users face that this platform can help solve?

User Skills & Digital Literacy

What is the expected technical skill level of users? Will they need training or onboarding?

Levels of Participation

Will there be different levels of access (e.g., passive readers, active contributors, superusers)?

Private vs. Public Discussions

Will there be private areas or invitation-only groups, or will all discussions be open?

See next  curated list of questions to consider when selecting a platform • page 33

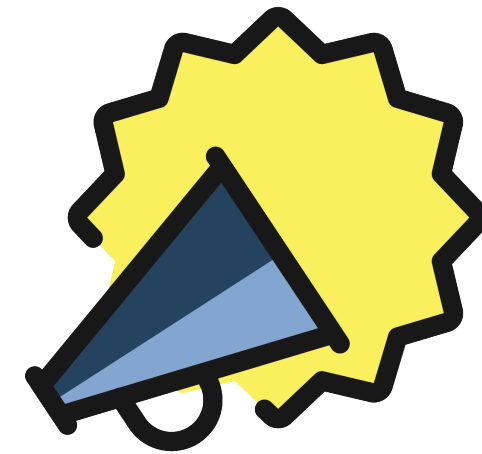
CHAPTER 4

PROMOTE COMMUNITY IDENTITY AND INTEGRATION



Build a Strong Community Identity

A strong community identity fosters a sense of belonging, purpose, and engagement. By clarifying the community's purpose, defining shared values, and developing a distinct brand, you create a foundation that members can connect with. Engaging stakeholders for input and ensuring the identity aligns with member expectations strengthens commitment and reinforces the unique value the community offers.



Expand Networks and Partnerships

Expanding networks and partnerships strengthens a community's reach, influence, and sustainability. By leveraging existing connections, forming strategic partnerships, and using diverse communication channels, you can attract new members and create meaningful collaborations. Encouraging members to bring in their networks and maintaining ongoing visibility ensures steady growth while reinforcing engagement and shared purpose.



Support and Empower Members

Empowering members starts with ensuring they can fully navigate and utilize the platform's features. Providing resources for cooperation, promoting peer-driven engagement, and maintaining accessibility enhance participation. Encouraging members to invite others expands the network, while recognizing contributions fosters motivation. Regularly gathering feedback and iterating on support strategies ensures the community remains responsive to evolving needs.





PROMOTE COMMUNITY IDENTITY AND INTEGRATION

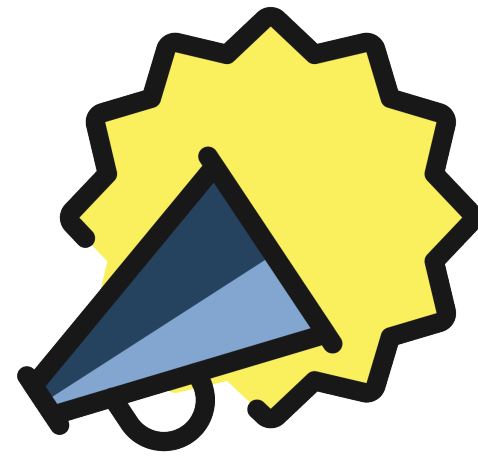
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- Clarify the community's purpose, shared values, and success metrics.
- Develop a distinct and meaningful brand identity.
- Highlight the community's unique value proposition.
- Engage members and stakeholders to gather diverse insights.
- Ensure the identity resonates with members and fosters belonging.

See also Shape a Clear Vision and Purpose • page 10





PROMOTE COMMUNITY IDENTITY AND INTEGRATION

EXPAND NETWORKS AND PARTNERSHIPS

Expanding networks and partnerships strengthens a community's reach, influence, and sustainability. By leveraging existing connections, forming strategic partnerships, and using diverse communication channels, you can attract new members and create meaningful collaborations. Encouraging members to bring in their networks and maintaining ongoing visibility ensures steady growth while reinforcing engagement and shared purpose.

- Leverage personal and professional networks to attract members.
- Build partnerships to achieve shared goals and expand reach.
- Use diverse communication channels to promote the community.
- Encourage members to invite others from their networks.
- Develop a strategy to maintain ongoing visibility and engagement.





PROMOTE COMMUNITY IDENTITY AND INTEGRATION

SUPPORT AND EMPOWER MEMBERS

Empowering members starts with ensuring they can fully navigate and utilize the platform's features. Providing resources for cooperation, promoting peer-driven engagement, and maintaining accessibility enhance participation. Encouraging members to invite others expands the network, while recognizing contributions fosters motivation. Regularly gathering feedback and iterating on support strategies ensures the community remains responsive to evolving needs.

- Help members fully utilize the platform's features.
- Provide resources to support member-led initiatives.
- Encourage and help members to promote the community to their peers.
- Ensure accessibility and mobility in all community activities.
- Recognize and celebrate member contributions regularly.
- Gather feedback to identify evolving needs.
- Iterate on support strategies to improve the member experience.

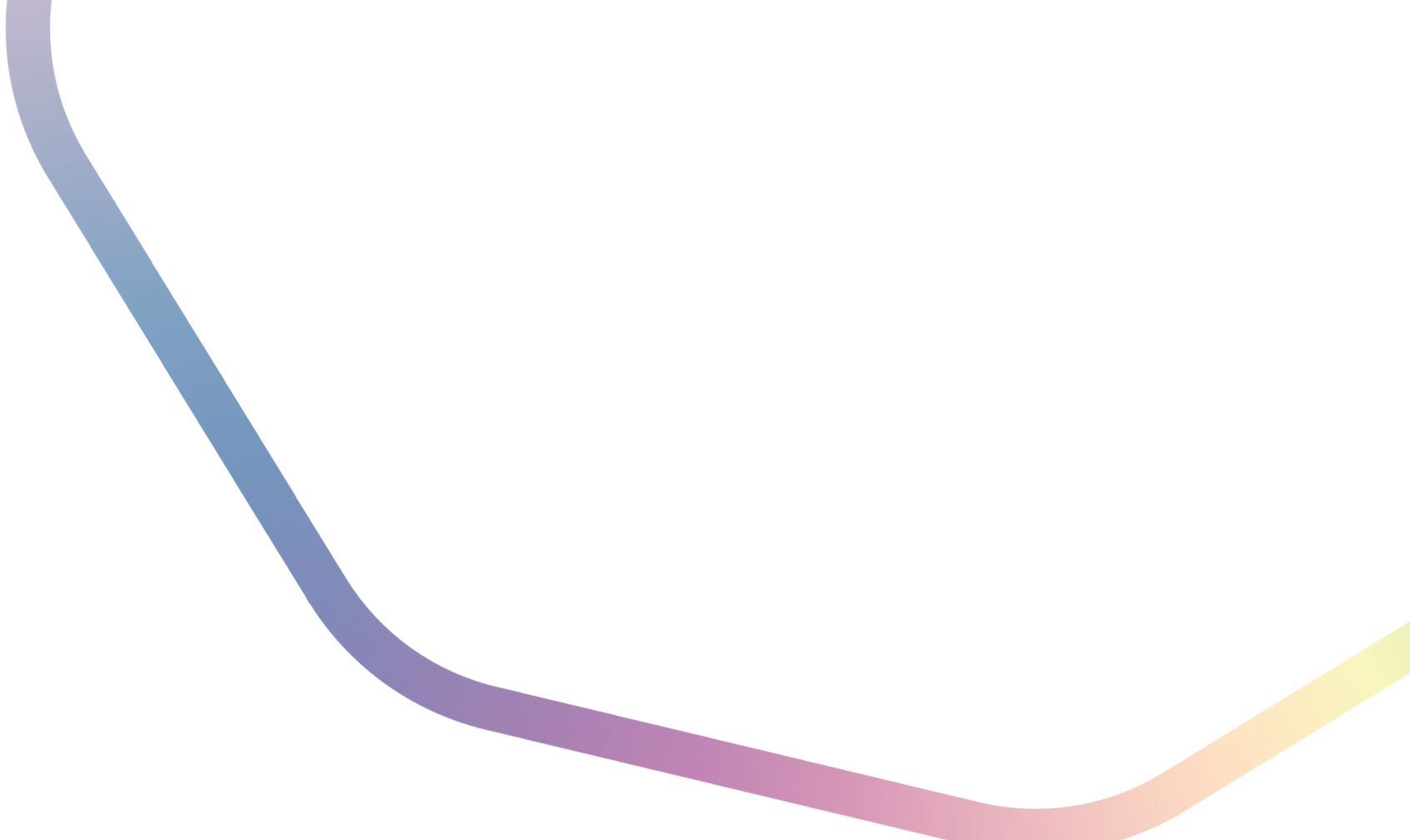
See also [Create A Smooth and Engaging Onboarding Process](#) • page 25





UNDP identity and branding guidelines

Lighthouse



See next  “How-To” sheet for hands-on guidance • page 38



Choosing the Right Community Platform: Defining Public vs. Private Presence for Your Platform

When designing your community platform, it is essential to clarify its visibility, accessibility, and integration with external channels. Decide whether the platform should include public-facing content or remain private for members only. Consider registration settings, SEO optimization, and social media integration to enhance discoverability. Additionally, aligning the platform with branding and communication strategies ensures consistency with your organization’s broader goals. You will find a list of guiding questions at the end of each chapter of this playbook.

Public Visibility

Should the platform also serve as an external-facing website with public content?

Social Media Integration

Will content be shareable on social media? Does it need embedded feeds?

Registration

Is your community platform visible and open for registration for an external audience?

Branding Alignment

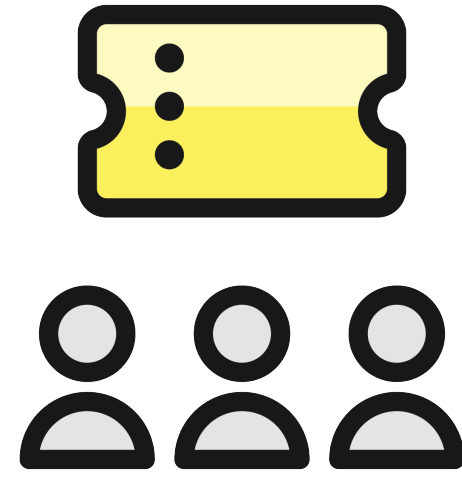
Does the platform need to align with your organization’s broader communications strategy?

SEO & Discoverability

Does the platform need to be optimized for search engines (SEO) to attract new members?

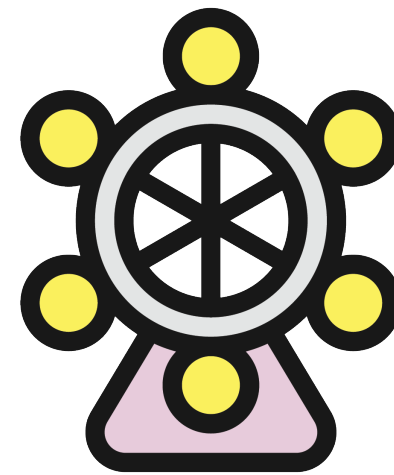
CHAPTER 5

DESIGN FOR MEANINGFUL ENGAGEMENT



Launch with High-Engagement Events

Launching with high-engagement events sets the tone for an active and connected community. Designing interactive, member-led activities fosters collaboration and creates a sense of ownership. Starting with small, manageable initiatives helps build momentum, while empowering early members encourages wider participation. A well-structured plan for sustained engagement, combined with continuous feedback, ensures that events remain impactful and aligned with community needs.



Plan for (Daily) Engagement

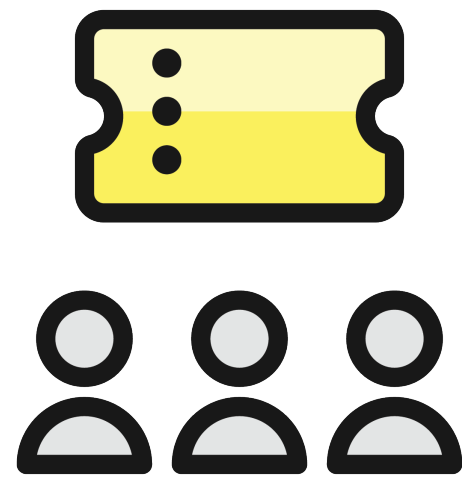
Sustaining a vibrant community requires daily engagement strategies that keep members active and connected. A structured content calendar ensures consistency, while informal interactions help build trust. Planning diverse events with clear calls to action keeps participation dynamic. A beta launch allows for testing and feedback, while ongoing analysis helps refine engagement efforts for long-term success.



Encourage Content from Members

Encouraging member-generated content strengthens engagement and builds a sense of ownership within the community. Starting with low-effort participation opportunities helps members get involved, while gradually introducing higher-effort activities fosters deeper contribution. Providing resources and templates supports content creation, and recognizing contributions keeps motivation high. Ensuring an inclusive environment encourages diverse voices and sustained participation.



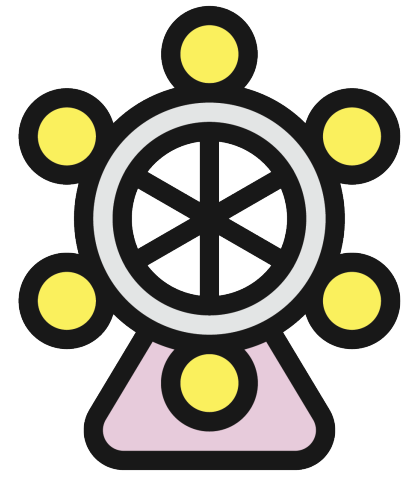


DESIGN LAUNCH FOR WITH MEANINGFUL HIGH- ENGAGEMENT ENGAGEMENT EVENTS

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- Design interactive, member-led events to foster collaboration.
- Start with small, manageable initiatives to build momentum.
- Empower early members to lead activities and inspire others.
- Develop a plan for sustained engagement throughout the year.
- Collect feedback to refine the event strategy over time.

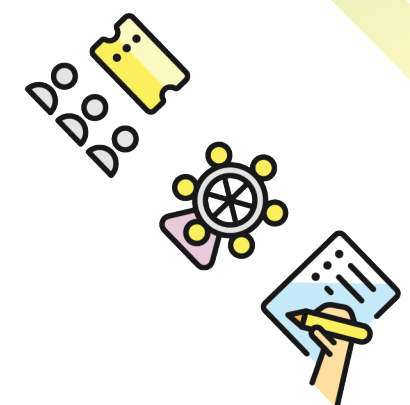




DESIGN PLAN FOR FOR MEANINGFUL DAILY ENGAGEMENT ENGAGEMENT

Sustaining a vibrant community requires daily engagement strategies that keep members active and connected. A structured content calendar ensures consistency, while informal interactions help build trust. Planning diverse events with clear calls to action keeps participation dynamic. A beta launch allows for testing and feedback, while ongoing analysis helps refine engagement efforts for long-term success.

- Create a content calendar to maintain consistent engagement.
- Facilitate informal interactions to strengthen relationships and trust.
- Plan diverse events with clear calls to action.
- Conduct a beta launch to gather feedback and refine strategies.
- Analyze engagement data to improve future initiatives.
- Create progression levels (a member pathway approach, e.g., from passive member, engaged contributor, and community leader).
- Diversify Recognition & Rewards and move beyond badges and shoutouts to personalized benefits (e.g., priority access to resources, exclusive roundtables).

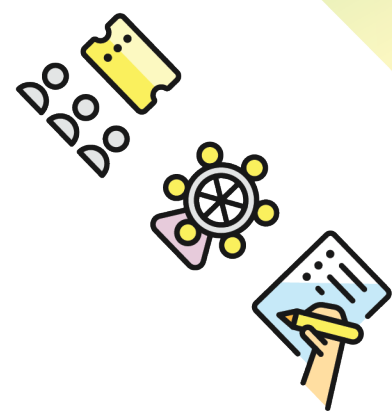




DESIGN ENCOURAGE FOR CONTENT MEANINGFUL FROM ENGAGEMENT MEMBERS

Encouraging member-generated content strengthens engagement and builds a sense of ownership within the community. Starting with low-effort participation opportunities helps members get involved, while gradually introducing higher-effort activities fosters deeper contribution. Providing resources and templates supports content creation, and recognizing contributions keeps motivation high. Ensuring an inclusive environment encourages diverse voices and sustained participation.

- Start with simple, low-effort participation opportunities.
- Introduce higher-effort activities like hosting events gradually.
- Provide templates, tutorials, and resources to support content creation.
- Recognize and amplify member contributions to boost motivation.
- Foster an inclusive environment that values diverse voices.





Encouraging Content Contributions as a Systemic Process in Community Building

A Community of Practice (CoP) thrives on active participation. Without member contributions, a community is static, relying only on a few voices. To be impactful, a CoP must create a continuous flow of ideas where members feel encouraged to contribute. This playbook exists to guide practitioners in designing systems that make participation natural, rewarding, and sustainable.

Contributions are not random events. They emerge from a structured environment where members feel connected, valued, and empowered. To achieve this, content contributions must be integrated into the core strategy of community building.

How to Start: Building a Community with Impact

Content does not emerge in a vacuum. A CoP must begin with clear foundations before expecting meaningful contributions. Building a community with impact starts by defining why the community exists and ensuring that members see value in participating.

At first, participation may be limited. A small group of committed members must set the tone. These early contributors act as catalysts, demonstrating how content can be shared and refined over time. Instead of forcing contributions, the focus should be on creating conditions that make sharing easy and valuable.

Networks vs. Communities

A network connects people, but a community engages them. In a network, interactions are often transactional. In a CoP, knowledge is co-created. Contributions are not just about exchanging information but about building collective intelligence.

Encouraging content from members means shifting from passive consumption to active participation. This transition happens when members see the CoP as a shared space where their insights matter. They need to know that their contributions are not just heard but also influence the direction of the community.

Building and Sustaining a Thriving Community of Practice

A thriving CoP creates loops of engagement. Contributions generate responses, responses lead to discussions, and discussions inspire new contributions. The process is self-reinforcing when properly designed.

For this to work, content contributions must be embedded into community rituals. Whether through structured discussions, knowledge-sharing sessions, or content challenges, members must have clear opportunities to contribute.

Essential Steps to Launch and Grow a Community of Practice

Encouraging contributions starts from the moment a CoP is launched. Early members need clear guidance on how to engage. If participation feels unclear or risky, members will hesitate. The launch phase should set expectations for how content flows.

Facilitators play a crucial role in modeling participation. Their role is not just to provide content but to highlight and elevate member contributions. Simple actions like featuring insightful posts, summarizing key discussions, or inviting members to share their experiences reinforce the habit of contribution.

Shape a Clear Vision and Purpose

A CoP without a clear purpose struggles to engage contributors. Members need to understand why their contributions matter. A well-defined purpose guides content by ensuring discussions remain relevant.

A strong vision aligns with the interests and motivations of members. If the purpose resonates, members will see personal and professional value in participating. Contributions should feel like an investment, not an obligation.

Establish Strong Leadership and Governance

Leadership does not mean controlling content. It means facilitating participation. Leaders should focus on removing barriers to contribution and creating incentives for engagement.

Governance structures should encourage diverse contributions. Some members prefer writing, others prefer speaking, while some contribute through visuals or interactive discussions. A CoP must accommodate multiple formats to ensure inclusivity.

Leaders must also address engagement imbalances. In many communities, a small percentage of members drive most contributions. While natural, this can discourage new voices. Leadership should actively invite underrepresented members to participate.

See next  “How-To” sheet for hands-on guidance • page 39

Enhance User Experience

If contributing feels difficult, members will disengage. User experience plays a crucial role in removing friction. Platforms should be intuitive, content should be easy to find, and submission processes should be simplified.

A good experience also means receiving feedback. When members contribute, they should see immediate responses. Engagement should feel interactive, not like submitting content into a void.

Promote Community Identity and Integration

Contributions increase when members feel a sense of belonging. Identity is not just about branding, it's about creating a shared culture. A strong identity makes participation feel natural and expected.

Integration is key. Content from members should not sit in isolation. It should be woven into discussions, learning resources, and community decisions. If contributions visibly shape the community, participation becomes a source of influence.

Design for Meaningful Engagement

Engagement is not about volume, it's about value. A flood of low-quality contributions can harm the community more than help it. Contributions should be curated and contextualized to ensure relevance.

Designing for meaningful engagement means structuring how content flows. Regular discussion prompts, expert Q&As, and storytelling formats help members contribute with confidence.

Enable Strategic Collaboration

A CoP is more than a content-sharing space, it's a space for co-creation. Encouraging contributions should not be limited to sharing knowledge but also building on each other's insights.

Collaboration increases when members work toward a common goal. Co-creation projects, hackathons, and knowledge-building exercises give members a reason to contribute beyond individual recognition.

Measure Impact and Celebrate Success

Members contribute when they see that their input matters. If contributions disappear into an archive, motivation declines. CoPs must measure impact and showcase success.

Highlighting contributions in community reports, newsletters, or leadership discussions reinforces their value. Recognition systems should reward consistency and spotlight meaningful contributions.

Measuring impact also means analyzing engagement patterns. What types of content generate the most discussion? Which members are emerging as key contributors? These insights help refine engagement strategies.

Plan for Growth and Sustainability

Encouraging content is not a one-time effort, it must evolve as the CoP matures. Over time, new members join, engagement patterns shift, and expectations change. A sustainable system adapts to these changes.

To sustain contributions, CoPs should create pathways for long-term participation. This includes mentorship models, leadership opportunities, and evolving content formats. A CoP that grows with its members remains relevant and engaging.

Conclusion

Encouraging content from members is not about asking people to contribute, it's about designing an environment where contribution happens naturally. This requires a systemic approach that integrates engagement loops into the core structure of the community.

When contributions are valued, recognized, and built upon, a CoP becomes a self-sustaining ecosystem. The key is not just generating content but creating a cycle where content fuels deeper engagement.

This playbook provides the foundation. The challenge is not just to build communities but to sustain them through meaningful participation. A thriving CoP is one where members do not just consume content, they create, shape, and own it.





Choosing the Right Community Platform: Defining Content Management for Your Platform



Effective content management is essential for keeping your community engaged and organized. Consider whether users can contribute content or if it will be curated by admins. Determine the types of engagement features needed, such as discussions, blogs, or events. Ensure the platform supports diverse content formats and allows for categorization through user-generated folksonomy or structured taxonomy. You will find a list of guiding questions at the end of each chapter of this playbook.

Crowdsourced Contributions

Can users contribute content, or will it only be curated by admins?

Folksonomy Support

Does the platform allow user-generated categorization (folksonomy)?

Engagement Features

Do you need different types of engagement content (e.g., polls, discussions, blogs, events)?

Taxonomy Management

Does the platform allow structured categorization (taxonomy)?

Content Formats

What types of content do you expect to be shared (e.g., text, videos, podcasts, webinars, reports)?

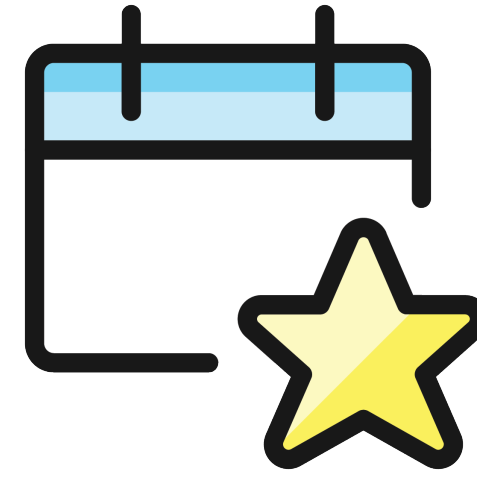
See Mteams, Viva Engage and SparkBlue recommendations • page 67

See next  curated list of questions to consider when selecting a platform • page 47



CHAPTER 6

ENABLE STRATEGIC COLLABORATION



Create Diverse Engagement Opportunities

Offering diverse engagement opportunities ensures that all members find ways to connect and contribute. Organizing casual gatherings fosters social bonds, while balancing in-person and online events increases accessibility. Encouraging members to lead activities strengthens ownership, and providing clear guidelines ensures event success. A mix of formal and informal interactions keeps engagement dynamic and inclusive.



Foster Cross-Functional Cooperation

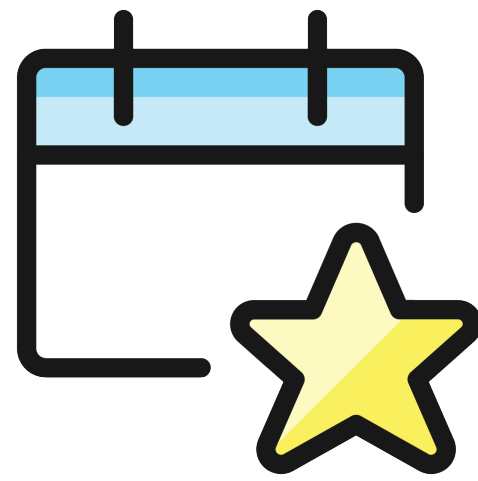
Fostering cross-functional cooperation strengthens collaboration and drives innovation within a community. Encouraging cooperation ensures alignment, while guest speakers bring fresh perspectives. Facilitating boundary-spanning activities helps build meaningful connections, and promoting shared goals aligns efforts across teams. Leveraging active members to drive collaboration further enhances engagement and long-term success.



Facilitate Collaborative Content Creation

Facilitating collaborative content creation strengthens engagement and fosters a sense of shared ownership. Building trust through connections and shared experiences creates a foundation for meaningful collaboration. Encouraging co-ownership, providing practical tools, and promoting inclusive yet targeted spaces help members contribute effectively. Recognizing collaborative successes ensures motivation and long-term participation.





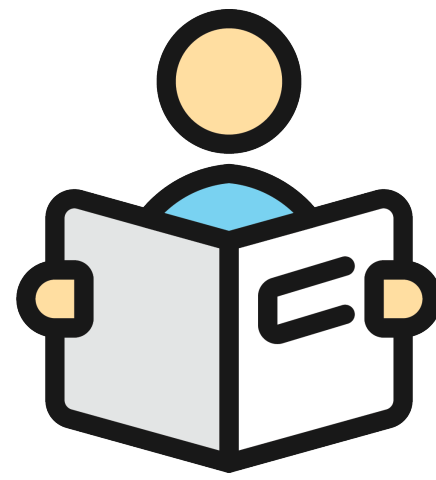
ENABLE STRATEGIC COLLABORATION

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- Organize casual gatherings to foster social connections.
- Balance in-person and online events to accommodate all members.
- Empower members to lead and participate in events.
- Provide clear guidelines to ensure event success.
- Develop a mix of formal and informal interactions for engagement.





ENABLE STRATEGIC COLLABORATION

FOSTER CROSS-FUNCTIONAL COOPERATION

Fostering cross-functional cooperation strengthens collaboration and drives innovation within a community. Encouraging cooperation ensures alignment, while guest speakers bring fresh perspectives. Facilitating boundary-spanning activities helps build meaningful connections, and promoting shared goals aligns efforts across teams. Leveraging active members to drive collaboration further enhances engagement and long-term success.

- Encourage cooperation between initiatives and departments.
- Host guest speakers to inspire fresh perspectives.
- Facilitate boundary-spanning activities to build connections.
- Promote shared goals to align efforts across teams.
- Leverage active members to drive collaborative success.





ENABLE STRATEGIC COLLABORATION

FACILITATE COLLABORATIVE CONTENT CREATION

Facilitating collaborative content creation strengthens engagement and fosters a sense of shared ownership. Building trust through connections and shared experiences creates a foundation for meaningful collaboration. Encouraging co-ownership, providing practical tools, and promoting inclusive yet targeted spaces help members contribute effectively. Recognizing collaborative successes ensures motivation and long-term participation.

- Build trust through personal connections and shared experiences.
- Encourage co-ownership of ideas, content, and decision-making.
- Provide practical templates and tools to facilitate collaboration.
- Promote inclusivity while offering targeted spaces for subgroups.
- Recognize and celebrate collaborative successes.





The Difference Between Cooperation, Coordination, and Collaboration in Communities of Practice

A Community Manager's role is to facilitate engagement effectively. Not all interactions are the same, some members just exchange knowledge (**cooperation**), others need alignment (**coordination**), and some want to co-create (**collaboration**).

To build a thriving and engaged Community of Practice (CoP), it's essential to understand the three different ways people work together:

Cooperation: Sharing knowledge and resources while pursuing individual goals.

Coordination: Aligning activities to improve efficiency and avoid duplication.

Collaboration: Actively working together toward a shared goal with joint ownership.

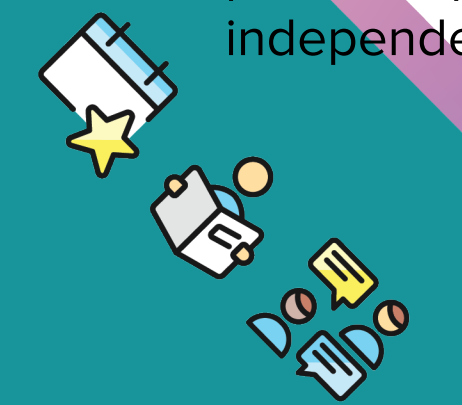
Each of these plays a role in a CoP, but the real impact happens when a community moves from cooperation to collaboration.

Cooperation: Sharing Knowledge, but Staying Independent

People share insights, experiences, or resources, but each person retains their own goals and works independently. In a network, for example, members share good practices on a discussion forum, but no collective project emerges. Similarly, a webinar series allows people to learn from each other, but they apply the insights individually in their own organizations.

Cooperation is about learning together, but not necessarily working together. It helps build networks and relationships by allowing members to exchange tips, tools, and case studies without requiring deeper engagement. This keeps the community light and flexible, making it easy for members to participate without long-term commitments.

To encourage cooperation, set up a Q&A section where members can exchange expertise and insights. Hosting "Show & Tell" sessions allows people to share personal projects and best practices, fostering knowledge-sharing while maintaining independence.



Coordination: Organizing Efforts for a Shared Process

Members align their actions, timing, or standards to work more efficiently, but they still work separately on their own tasks.

In a Community of Practice, for example, a group synchronizes its efforts to create a common event calendar, avoiding overlaps between initiatives. Likewise, different working groups use the same templates and guidelines, making it easier to integrate outputs across teams.

Coordination ensures smoother workflows by organizing efforts and aligning priorities, but it doesn't require deep collaboration. It helps structure community activities for better efficiency, ensuring consistency across different groups or projects. By providing a clear framework, coordination allows different teams to work in parallel while staying aligned with shared objectives.

To encourage coordination, communities can use shared tools like SparkBlue, Google Drive, or Miro for easy information access. Establishing standardized formats for reports, events, and documentation ensures uniformity, making it easier for teams to integrate their work. Regular check-ins help update progress, address potential misalignments, and keep efforts streamlined.

Collaboration: Co-Creating Something with Shared Ownership

Members actively co-create, make decisions together, and take joint responsibility for outcomes. In a Community of Practice members co-write a playbook for their field, each contributing insights and refining ideas together. Equally, a community co-develops a new tool or framework, testing and improving it collectively. Instead of just sharing insights, members design and execute a research project together.

Collaboration builds real engagement, impact, and a strong sense of community ownership. By working together toward shared goals, members drive innovation and deeper knowledge creation, contributing to meaningful outcomes. This process strengthens trust and long-term engagement, ensuring that the community remains sustainable and impactful over time. When members feel a sense of ownership, they are more invested in the community's success.

See next  "How-To" sheet for hands-on guidance • page 46

To encourage collaboration, communities can facilitate co-creation workshops where members actively build something together. Assigning joint leadership roles helps distribute responsibility and fosters a culture of shared ownership. Additionally, using collaborative decision-making methods, such as polls and consensus-building, ensures that all voices are heard, reinforcing inclusivity and commitment to common goals.

Why Understanding These Differences Matters

Each community member may have different expectations. Some prefer cooperation (just exchanging ideas), others want coordination (better alignment), and some seek collaboration (creating something new together).

To build an effective community, it's essential to match activities to the different needs of its members. Not everyone engages in the same way, some prefer to observe and learn, while others seek deeper involvement. Structuring activities to accommodate these differences ensures that all members find value in the community and stay engaged.

Observers benefit most from passive learning opportunities, where they can absorb knowledge without the pressure to participate actively. Webinars, discussion forums, and resource libraries provide valuable content that allows them to stay informed while deciding if and how they want to contribute in the future.

Active Participants engage through structured interactions that require their input but don't demand full ownership. Activities like peer reviews, feedback sessions, and shared templates encourage participation while keeping the commitment manageable. These opportunities help members transition from passive learning to active engagement.

Co-Creators and Facilitators seek higher involvement and leadership opportunities. **Co-Creators** contribute to meaningful projects, such as joint reports, co-writing, and designing new tools, while **Facilitators** take on leadership roles, guiding working groups, moderating discussions, and organizing events. Supporting these roles ensures a thriving community where members don't just consume information but also shape and sustain the community itself.

Action Tip

Before launching an activity, ask yourself:

- Does this require simple knowledge exchange (cooperation)?
- Does it need alignment of efforts (coordination)?
- Should we build something together (collaboration)?

A strong CoP blends all three but should prioritize collaboration where possible to create deeper engagement and lasting impact.



See next  "How-To" sheet for hands-on guidance • page 52



Choosing the Right Community Platform: Aligning Events and Collaboration Features with Community Needs



Choosing the right platform requires ensuring it supports live events, webinars, and collaboration tools that enhance community interaction. Consider whether the platform should include event registration and reminders to facilitate participation. Determine the need for collaborative document editing, whiteboarding, or co-creation tools to foster teamwork. Additionally, assess if task management features are required and whether users should have the option for anonymous participation. You will find a list of guiding questions at the end of each chapter of this playbook.

Live Events & Webinars

Does the platform need to support live discussions, webinars, or virtual summits?

Event Registration & Reminders

Should the platform include event registration and automated reminders?

Anonymous Participation

Do users need to be able to engage anonymously?

Collaboration Tools

Will users need tools for collaborative document editing, whiteboarding, or co-creation?

Task Management

Do users need task assignment or project management features?



See Mteams, Viva Engage and SparkBlue recommendations • page 68

See next  curated list of questions to consider when selecting a platform • page 54

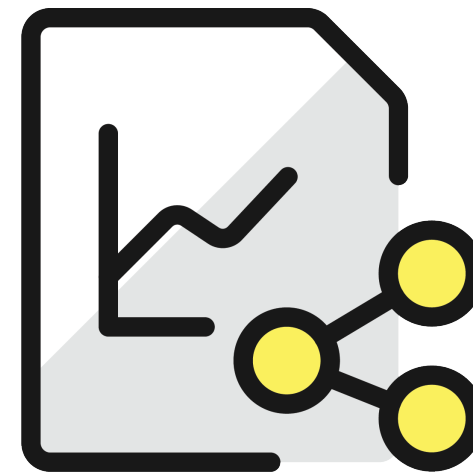
CHAPTER 7

MEASURE IMPACT AND CELEBRATE SUCCESS



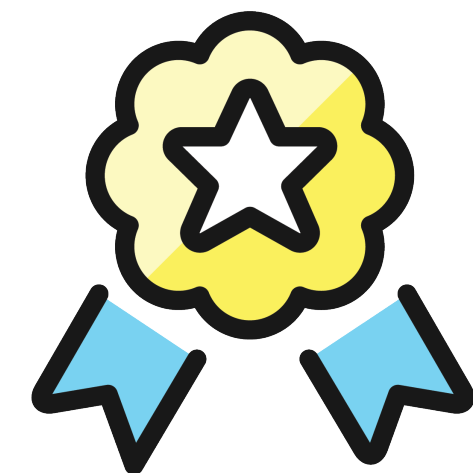
Track Community Health

Tracking community health ensures sustained engagement, growth, and alignment with member needs. Monitoring key metrics helps assess participation levels, while storytelling showcases real-world impact to reinforce value. Automating tracking processes streamlines data collection, ensuring insights remain actionable. Aligning metrics with goals and adjusting strategies based on data-driven insights keeps the community dynamic and continuously improving.



Share Progress with Stakeholders

Keeping stakeholders informed about community progress ensures continued support and alignment with organizational priorities. Providing regular updates on achievements and challenges builds transparency, while showcasing realized value through examples reinforces impact. Using feedback loops helps maintain strategic alignment, and emphasizing quality interactions highlights meaningful engagement. Sharing success stories demonstrates long-term value and sustains momentum.



Celebrate Member Contributions

Recognizing member contributions fosters engagement, motivation, and long-term commitment. Personalized acknowledgment of milestones, publicly highlighting achievements, and empowering active members through ambassador programs strengthen community bonds. Offering non-monetary rewards like badges or shout-outs adds value, while sharing inspiring stories encourages continued participation. A structured recognition approach ensures members feel valued and motivated to contribute.

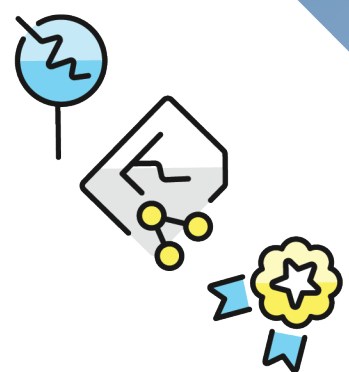


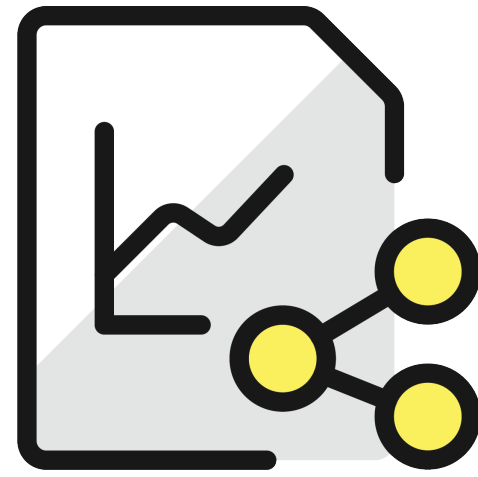


**MEASURE TRACK
IMPACT COMMUNITY
AND HEALTH
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- Monitor engagement, growth, and member satisfaction.
- Monitor Community Sentiment Analysis, how members perceive value.
- Use storytelling to highlight the community's real-world impact.
- Automate processes for tracking participation and contributions.
- Align metrics with organizational goals and member needs.
- Adjust strategies based on insights from tracked data.

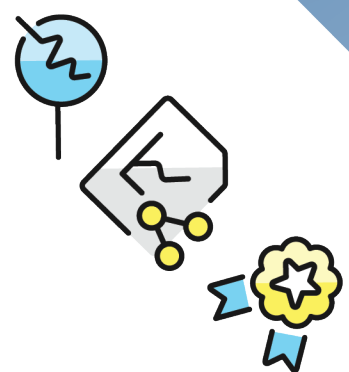


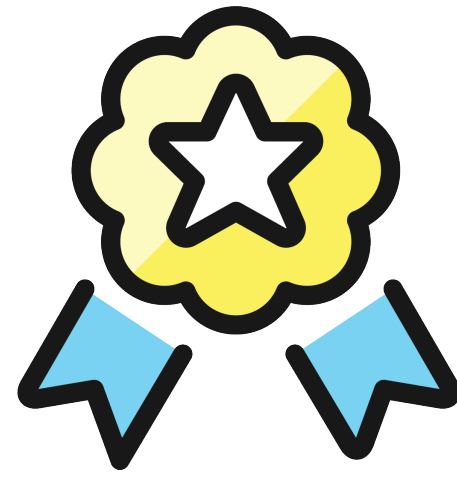


**MEASURE
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- Provide regular updates on community achievements and challenges.
- Highlight immediate, applied, and realized value through examples.
- Use feedback loops to ensure alignment with sponsor priorities.
- Focus on quality interactions and meaningful engagement.
- Showcase success stories to demonstrate long-term impact.
- Add Knowledge Application Metrics to track community knowledge used externally.
- Introduce Real-World Impact Stories with case studies of members applying CoP insights.

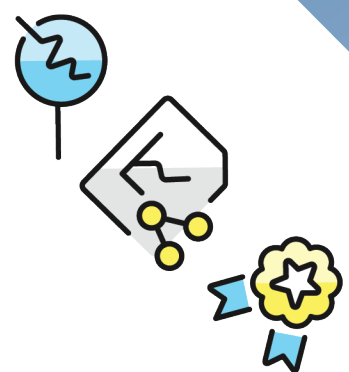




MEASURE **CELEBRATE** IMPACT **MEMBER** AND **CONTRIBUTIONS** **CELEBRATE** SUCCESS

Recognizing member contributions fosters engagement, motivation, and long-term commitment. Personalized acknowledgment of milestones, publicly highlighting achievements, and empowering active members through ambassador programs strengthen community bonds. Offering non-monetary rewards like badges or shout-outs adds value, while sharing inspiring stories encourages continued participation. A structured recognition approach ensures members feel valued and motivated to contribute.

- Recognize contributions with personalized messages and milestones.
- Highlight achievements through community channels.
- Develop an ambassador program to empower active members.
- Offer non-monetary rewards like badges or shout-outs.
- Share inspiring stories to motivate continued participation.





Example of evaluation criteria

By systematically measuring these aspects and effectively communicating them to your sponsor, you can clearly demonstrate the value your CoP brings to the organisation/ domain.

Growth Metrics (Early Stage)

Track the increase in membership and the frequency of interactions. Provide your sponsor with reports showing steady membership growth and active participation trends. Highlight how these early signs of engagement indicate a growing community foundation.

Impact Metrics (Mature Stage)

Assess how the CoP influences organisational (or the specific domain it focuses on) goals. Present case studies or examples where the CoP has directly contributed to achieving organisational objectives or innovations in the domain. Emphasise the CoP's evolving role from growth to delivering tangible organisational/ domain value.

Member Satisfaction

Conduct surveys to understand member satisfaction and collect stories of the CoP's impact. Synthesize survey results and include compelling member testimonials. Share these narratives to illustrate the CoP's positive impact on individual members and the organisation/ domain.

Qualitative Self-Assessment

Analyse participation levels and motivations within the CoP. Provide an analysis of the different levels of member engagement (personas) and explain how the CoP is meeting diverse member needs. Highlight how this engagement supports the organisation's/ domain's broader goals, such as skill development or innovation.

Active Participation

Track activity rates, participation frequency, and the distinction between core, regular, and passive members. Present detailed participation metrics, showing the proportion of highly engaged members versus passive ones. Explain how this engagement translates into organisational/ domain benefits, such as faster problem-solving or increased knowledge sharing.

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Tangible Contributions

Review the quality of content shared within the CoP. Showcase high-quality contributions like innovative solutions, good practices, and testimonials. Share examples of how these contributions have been applied within the organisation/ domain/ community, demonstrating the CoP's value in driving concrete outcomes.

Event Success

Track attendance, engagement, and follow-up actions from CoP events, gatherings and workshops. Provide metrics on event attendance and engagement levels, along with feedback from participants. Highlight how these events have led to meaningful outcomes, such as raising awareness, new collaborations or project ideas.

Effort vs. Impact Comparison

Compare the effort required to organise CoP events versus those outside the CoP, and measure the impact of each. Present a comparison showing that CoP events typically require less effort and yield higher engagement and better outcomes. Demonstrate how the CoP provides a ready-made, engaged audience that enhances the efficiency and effectiveness of events.

Good Practices

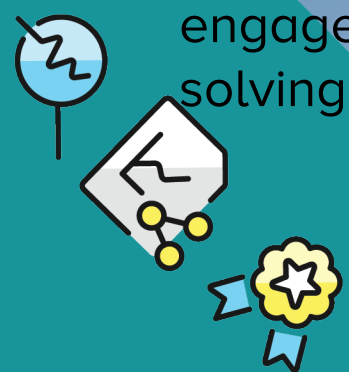
Document the sharing and adoption of good practices within the CoP. Provide examples of good practices that originated within the CoP and have been adopted across the organisation/ domain. Show how these practices have improved processes or outcomes, underscoring the CoP's role in driving organisational learning.

Community Influence

Monitor the CoP's visibility within and outside the organisation, and its influence on strategic decisions. Highlight instances where the CoP has been referenced in strategic documents or recognised by leadership. Demonstrate how the CoP's ideas have influenced key decisions, reinforcing its value as a strategic asset.

Ongoing Process

Continuously assess the CoP's performance using both quantitative and qualitative data. Regularly update your sponsor with reports that combine metrics and member feedback. Show how ongoing measurement is helping to refine the CoP's operations, ensuring it remains aligned with organisational/domain goals and continues to deliver value.





Metrics to capture

Every Month

Unique Visitors

Registered Community Members

Verified Community Members (with contribution rights)

Members who logged in

Contributing Members

Ratios

% Visitors who logged in

% Contributing Visitors

% Logged in and Contributing

% Contributing Verified Members

Average

Average New Verified Community Members/ Month

Average Unique Visitors/ Month

Average Unique Visitors/ Month via Social Media/ Month

Average Community Members who logged in/ Month

Average Contributing Members/ month

Cumulative

Community Members

Total Unique Active Members

Active Members are registered account that logged in to like on events/ topics/ posts/ discussions and/ or have a completed profile

Total Unique Contributing Members

Unique Contributing Members are registered accounts that created a topic or an event and/ or created a post, commented on topics, events or posts, and/or enrolled to an event

Page Views

Unique Page Views

Sessions

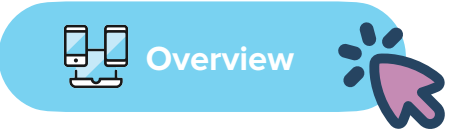
Average Session Time

Bounce Rate





Choosing the Right Community Platform: Defining an Effective Engagement Strategy



Sustaining engagement in a community requires a well-planned strategy that balances recurring and one-time interactions. Consider whether discussions should be actively facilitated or self-sustaining and determine the best approach to moderation. Using incentives, gamification, and content strategies can help drive long-term participation. Evaluate whether AI-driven recommendations or automated moderation can enhance interactions, and establish recognition and reward mechanisms to highlight member contributions. You will find a list of guiding questions at the end of each chapter of this playbook.

Recurring vs. One-Time Engagements

Will interactions be continuous, or will there be specific discussion periods?

Facilitated vs. Organic Interactions

Will discussions need active facilitation, or should they be self-sustaining? Will moderation rely on volunteers, external, staff, or a hybrid approach?

Engagement Strategy

How do you plan to sustain engagement over time (e.g., incentives, gamification, content strategy)?

Recognition & Rewards

How will engaged users be recognized (e.g., badges, leadership roles, certifications)?

AI & Automation

Should the platform support AI-driven recommendations or automated moderation?

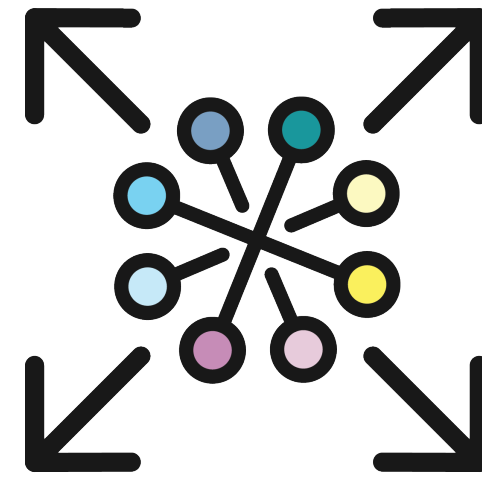


See Mteams, Viva Engage and SparkBlue recommendations • page 69

See next  curated list of questions to consider when selecting a platform • page 60

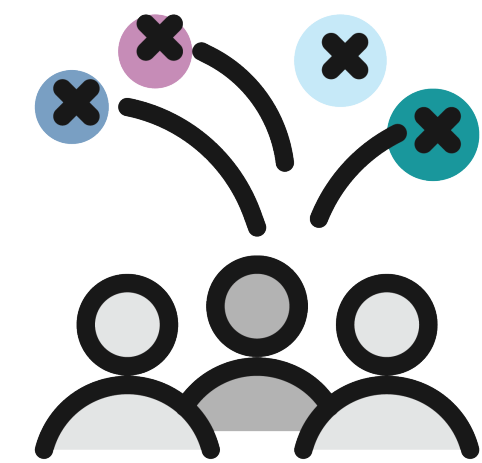
CHAPTER 8

PLAN FOR GROWTH AND SUSTAINABILITY



Plan for Gradual Growth

Gradual growth ensures a community remains sustainable, adaptable, and member-driven. Creating a scalable roadmap provides direction, while acting on member feedback helps refine strategies. Documenting good practices ensures consistency, and encouraging experimentation uncovers new opportunities for engagement. Nurturing super users as leaders strengthens the community's foundation and long-term success.



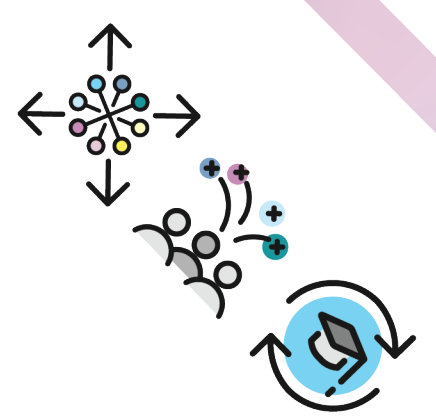
Nurture Team Competencies

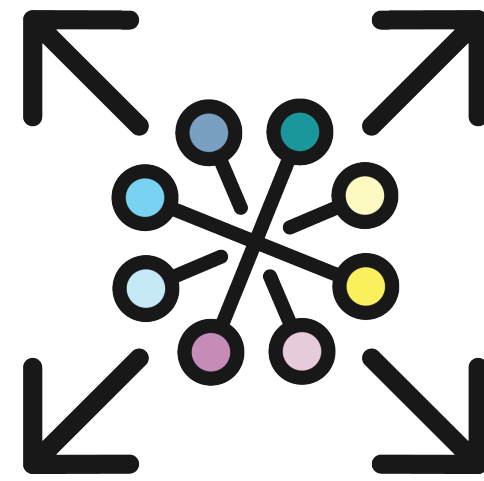
A skilled and adaptable team is essential for sustaining a thriving community. Building a complementary team with diverse capabilities ensures agility, while balancing autonomy with strategic alignment keeps efforts focused. Using phased development helps track progress, and investing in training and development strengthens competencies. Encouraging collaboration and knowledge-sharing fosters continuous learning and long-term success.



Foster Continuous Learning

Continuous learning keeps a community dynamic, relevant, and valuable to its members. Developing a structured content plan ensures ongoing engagement, while establishing rituals fosters consistent interaction. Offering certifications and peer support encourages skill development, and regularly updating resources keeps content fresh. Co-hosting collaborative events promotes shared learning and innovation, strengthening the community's long-term impact.



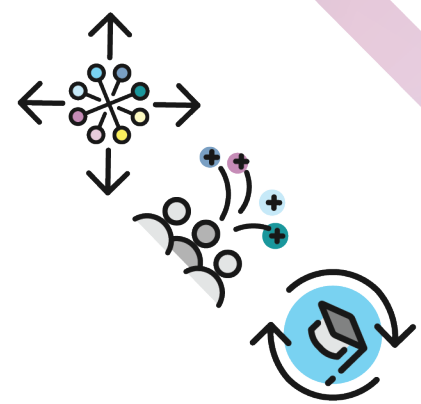


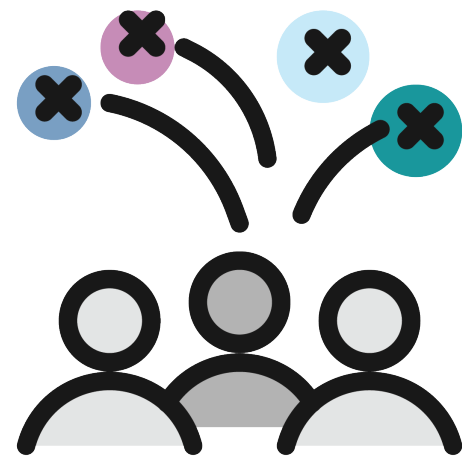
PLAN FOR GROWTH AND SUSTAINABILITY

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- Create a roadmap for gradual growth and scaling.
- Act on member feedback to refine strategies and adapt.
- Document good practices to ensure sustainability.
- Encourage experimentation to identify new opportunities.
- Nurture super users to take on leadership roles.
- Create a Succession Plan to ensure smooth leadership transitions and sustained engagement.



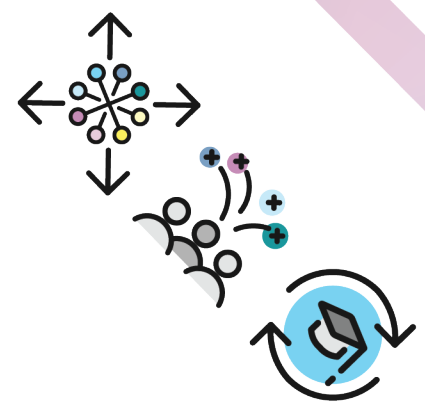


PLAN FOR GROWTH AND SUSTAINABILITY

NURTURE TEAM COMPETENCIES

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- Build a complementary team with agile skills and capabilities.
- Balance team autonomy with strategic alignment.
- Use phased development to track progress and maintain focus.
- Invest in training and development for team members.
- Promote collaboration and knowledge-sharing within the team.



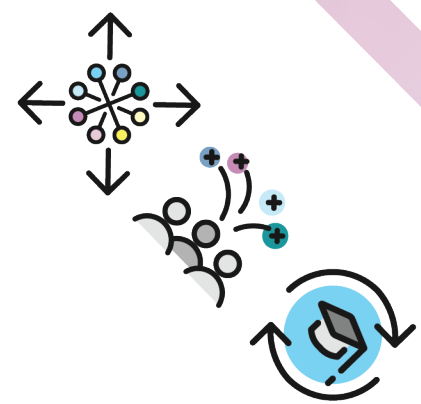


PLAN FOR GROWTH AND SUSTAINABILITY

FOSTER CONTINUOUS LEARNING

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- Develop a 90-day content plan for post-launch engagement.
- Establish rituals to create meaningful, recurring interactions.
- Offer certifications and peer support to foster growth.
- Regularly update resources to meet evolving member needs.
- Co-host events to encourage collaborative learning and innovation.





Core Team Competencies

<https://publications.jrc.ec.europa.eu/repository/handle/JRC138852> - Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International (CC BY 4.0)

Policy & Practice Implementation

Community Management

Engage diverse community members through various channels and techniques, enhancing participation and loyalty, while effectively managing diverse expectations and planning ecosystems.

Participatory Facilitation

Design and host participatory processes across varying spaces & find consensus and mediate conflicts within the community, ensuring a respectful and inclusive environment as well as driving action.

Integrated Policy Engagement

Translate community dynamics into policy-relevant artefacts and understand how various policies, actors, and levels of engagement impact community operations, identifying integration opportunities and challenges.

Organisational Leadership

Strategic Planning and Foresight

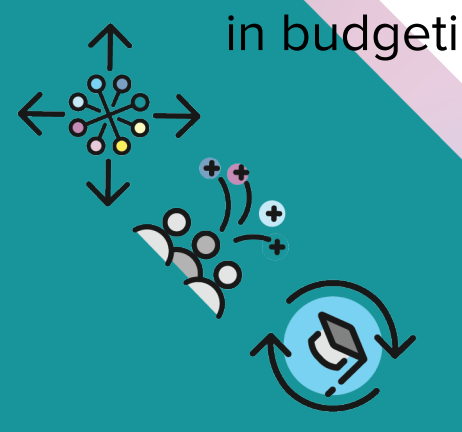
Develop long-term policy and science strategies that align with the community's goals and objectives.

Project Management

Oversee projects, manage timelines, and ensure milestones are met across different departments.

Human Resources and Finances

Manage staff, including recruitment, training, and development, combined with skills in budgeting and financial planning to ensure continued community uptake.



Relations and Content Management

Content Strategy and Editing

Plan and execute content strategies that engage the community and promote consistent interaction, supported by strong writing and editing skills to produce clear and compelling content based in knowledge management strategies.

Partners and Brand Management

Maintain and develop the community's brand identity and reputation, along with the ability to establish and curate relationships with external organizations, sponsors, and partners.

Multimedia Production

Produce video and audio material, run graphic design, and possibly design VR/AR content for more engaging experiences.

Platform Technologies

Analytics and Reporting

Use and visualise analytics tools to track engagement, growth, and effectiveness of marketing strategies.

Web Development and Support

Apply web design principles for creating intuitive, user-friendly interfaces, along with maintaining and troubleshooting the community platform to ensure it remains accessible and functions properly.

Data Management and Security

Manage data securely, including understanding GDPR, and implementing security protocols to protect community data.

See next  "How-To" sheet for hands-on guidance • page 61



Choosing the Right Community Platform: Ensuring Technical Integration and Future Scalability



Selecting a platform requires careful consideration of technical integration and long-term sustainability. Determine if Single Sign-On (SSO) authentication is needed to streamline access and whether the platform should integrate with other tools, such as CRM or analytics systems. Assess if open-source capabilities, custom APIs, or additional development features are necessary. Finally, ensure a long-term maintenance plan is in place for updates, security, and funding. You will find a list of guiding questions at the end of each chapter of this playbook.

Single Sign-On (SSO) & Authentication

Will the platform need to integrate with existing login systems (e.g., Microsoft, Google, institutional logins)?

APIs & Custom Development

Does the platform need to offer an API for custom integrations?

Integration with Other Tools

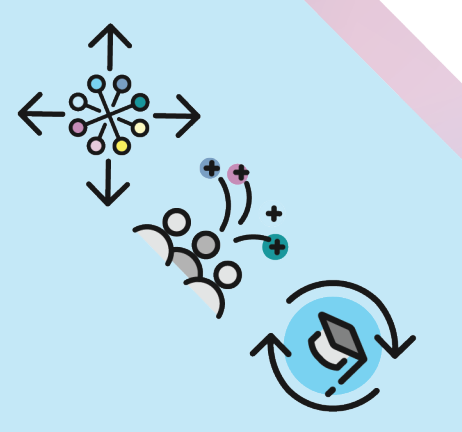
Does the platform need to connect with external systems (e.g., CRM, email marketing, analytics, LMS)?

Long-Term Sustainability

Is there a long-term maintenance plan for platform updates, security, and funding?

Open Source Requirement

Does the platform need to be open-source?





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What we've learned from them can be summarized as follows:

Knowledge Management and Accessibility

- Aligning definitions of community vs. network improves clarity and user motivation (goal). (Networks vs. Communities - 6)
- The platform's architecture impacts usability, affecting engagement and exploration. (Enhance User Experience - 22)
- Confusion in platform navigation makes it hard to find relevant communities. (Enhance User Experience - 22)
- SparkBlue, Viva Engage, and Microsoft Teams need clear roles to avoid confusion. (Building the Right Community Platform - 63)
- Knowledge management should be structured with better taxonomy, searchable profiles, and curated content. (Design for Meaningful Engagement - 34)
- Reading fatigue can be addressed with visuals, videos, and simpler formats. ((Enhance User Experience - 22)
- Community leaders and focal points improve regional knowledge sharing. (Establish Strong Leadership and Governance - 16)

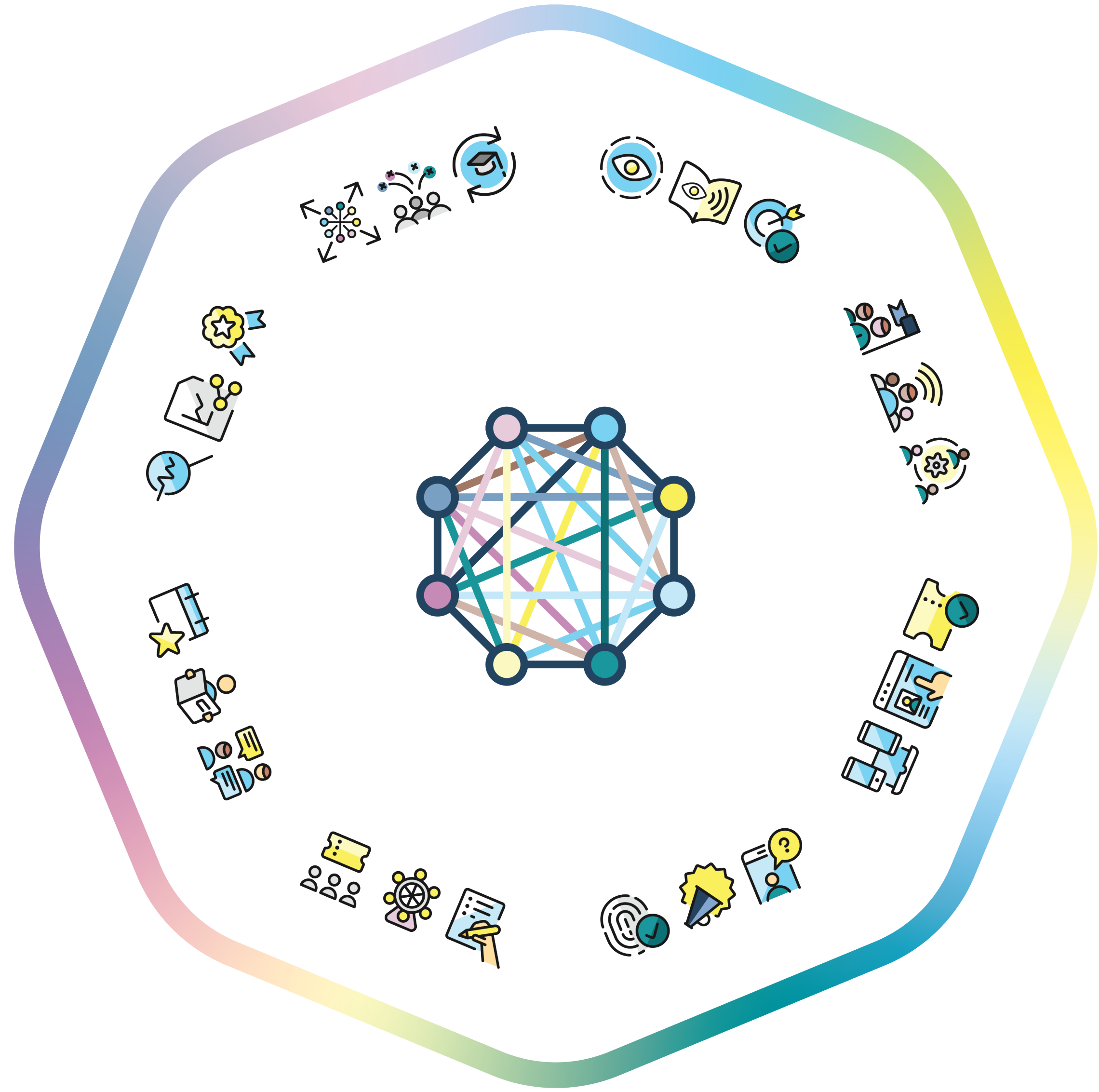
Community Engagement and Growth

- External consultations need better platform integration while maintaining UNDP's identity. (Promote Community Identity and Integration - 28)
- Online consultations face challenges like managing high volumes, ensuring meaningful participation, and avoiding self-promotion. (Design for Meaningful Engagement - 34)
- Ownership is key: regular online sessions and meaningful interactions strengthen community bonds. (Design for Meaningful Engagement - 34)
- Engagement takes time: ROI may be low at first but leads to long-term value and cost savings. (Plan for Growth and Sustainability - 55)
- A CRM system helps track engagement, re-engage members, and build connections. (Enable Strategic Collaboration - 41)
- Expert onboarding should involve profile verification, onboarding sessions, and clear instructions. (Enhance User Experience - 22)

Participation and Communication

- Members need a clear value proposition: they often say they "don't have time" when the benefits are unclear. (Shape a Clear Vision and Purpose - 10)
- Onboarding sessions should help new members update profiles, navigate the platform, and understand expectations. (Enhance User Experience - 22)
- Newsletters, mailing lists, and Medium blogs help sustain information flow. (Measure Impact and Celebrate Success - 48)
- Storytelling and impact stories increase community engagement and value perception. (Measure Impact and Celebrate Success - 48)
- Recognition programs (awards, highlights) motivate members to contribute and stay engaged. (Measure Impact and Celebrate Success - 48)
- In-person events, such as workshops and quarterly sessions, build trust and collaboration. (Design for Meaningful Engagement - 34)

See first  "How-To" sheet for hands-on guidance • page 2





Choosing the Right Community Platform: Defining Requirements and Reflections for Choosing the Right Platform



Selecting a platform to host and engage your community is a critical step in building a thriving space for interaction and collaboration. To make the right choice, you need to define your functional requirements and align them with your community's goals. This process involves evaluating key aspects such as governance, long-term maintenance, and success metrics. Start by asking yourself these essential questions and consult your IT colleagues if needed to ensure the platform supports your vision effectively. You will find a list of questions at the end of each chapter of this playbook to guide your reflections.

Community Platforms

	MTeams	Viva Engage	SparkBlue
Strategy & Purpose			
Core Value Proposition			
What is the primary value this community will offer its members?			
Community Lifecycle			
Is this a long-term community, or does it have a specific end date?			
Long-Term Maintenance			
Who will fund and maintain the platform after the initial launch?			
Governance & Roles			
Who will manage and oversee the community (e.g., community managers, moderators, ambassadors)?	Integrated with M365, team and channel management, fine-grained permissions, not well-suited for open communities. Strong for internal collaboration, but not optimized for external CoPs	Allows structuring groups with administrators and moderators, strong social engagement. Ideal for internal communities within a Microsoft ecosystem	Open-source, flexible role management, ambassador system, advanced moderation. More modular, suited for large and external communities
Measuring Success			
What key indicators will help you measure the success of your community?	Engagement is measured through collaboration metrics like meeting participation, document sharing, and chat activity.	Measures success via social engagement (post activity, reactions, group discussions).	Provides built-in analytics tracking user engagement, content performance, forum activity, event participation, and gamification impact (badges, leaderboards). Best for organizations focused on scalable community growth, structured discussions, and long-term retention.
Main Purpose of the Platform			
Communication & Media			
Will the platform be mainly used for communication and media sharing?	Real-time chat, video calls, file sharing, threaded discussions. Excellent for meetings and structured collaboration but less suited for broad media sharing.	Social feed, threaded conversations, media sharing (images, videos, files), interactive engagement (polls, reactions). Great for informal discussions, broad engagement, and company-wide communication.	Rich content sharing (videos, articles, discussions), multimedia-friendly, social interaction features. Best for structured content, storytelling, and multimedia-rich community engagement.
Collaboration			
Will the platform be used for content collaboration?	Strong document collaboration with deep Microsoft 365 integration (Word, Excel, SharePoint). Best for structured teamwork but less suited for open knowledge co-creation.	Enables discussions around shared content but lacks advanced document co-editing. Best for informal knowledge sharing and engagement rather than deep content collaboration.	Supports co-creation of content, structured discussions, and knowledge sharing. Best for collaborative knowledge management and long-form content creation.
Training & Learning			
Will the platform be used for training and learning?	Supports live training via video calls, integrates with Microsoft Learn and SharePoint for content storage. Best for structured training sessions and corporate learning programs.	Encourages peer learning, knowledge-sharing discussions, and informal Q&A. Best for social learning and internal knowledge exchange but lacks structured learning management features.	Offers dedicated learning modules, course creation, and knowledge-sharing spaces. Best for structured learning communities and blended learning experiences.
Discussions & Decisions			
Will the platform support discussions and decision-making (deliberation)?	Supports structured discussions through threaded conversations, meetings, and polls. Best for formal decision-making within teams but less suited for open, asynchronous deliberation.	Encourages broad discussions, feedback loops, and idea-sharing with polls and reactions. Best for informal deliberation and gathering diverse perspectives but lacks structured decision-making tools.	Supports structured discussions, voting mechanisms, and community-driven decision-making. Best for open deliberation, stakeholder engagement, and consensus-building.
Networking & Connection			
Will the platform help users connect and network?	Facilitates connections within structured teams through chat, meetings, and channels. Best for internal networking but limited for open or cross-organization networking.	Encourages broad networking through open discussions, groups, and social interactions. Best for informal connections and cross-departmental engagement.	Supports member profiles, interest-based groups, and networking features like direct messaging and discussions. Best for building structured communities and fostering meaningful professional connections.





Choosing the Right Community Platform: Defining Legal, Ethical, and Compliance Requirements for Your Platform



Ensuring that your platform meets legal, ethical, and compliance requirements is essential for creating a safe, inclusive, and sustainable community. Key considerations include accessibility compliance, user data ownership, and content licensing to protect members and ensure responsible content sharing. It is also crucial to define community guidelines and moderation policies while addressing sensitive data handling requirements. Reflect on these aspects early in the process to align your platform with legal standards and organizational values. You will find a list of guiding questions at the end of each chapter of this playbook.

Community Platforms

	MTeams	Viva Engage	SparkBlue
Accessibility Compliance			
Does the platform need to follow WCAG (Web Content Accessibility Guidelines) accessibility standards for inclusivity?	Compliant with WCAG standards, includes accessibility features like screen reader support, live captions, and keyboard navigation. Best for enterprises needing strong accessibility compliance.	Designed with accessibility in mind, supports WCAG guidelines but may have limitations in certain media-rich interactions. Best for social collaboration with basic accessibility needs.	Accessibility depends on implementation, but the platform can be customized for WCAG compliance. Best for organizations that need flexibility in meeting accessibility standards.
User Data Ownership			
Who owns user-generated content? How will user privacy be protected?	Content is owned by the organization that manages the Teams environment. Strong privacy controls with Microsoft compliance, data encryption, and enterprise-level security. Best for organizations that need full control over internal data.	Content is owned by the organization. Best for internal social networks with enterprise-level data protection.	Can be customized for GDPR compliance and user privacy preferences. Best for communities that require more control over content ownership and data governance.
Sensitive data			
Do you need to handle sensitive- non classified (SNC) data on your platform?	Supports SNC data with enterprise-grade security, encryption, compliance with GDPR, and Microsoft's data governance policies. Best for regulated environments needing secure collaboration.	Follows Microsoft security standards but is more open by nature. Privacy settings depend on enterprise configurations. Best for internal communities with moderate data sensitivity.	Can be configured for SNC data compliance. Best for organizations needing flexibility in data handling and governance.
Content Licensing			
Will there be copyright considerations for shared content (e.g., Creative Commons, proprietary content)?	Content ownership typically remains with the organization. Supports proprietary content sharing with controlled access, but no built-in support for Creative Commons licensing. Best for internal use where content remains company-owned.	Content is usually governed by the organization's policies. No built-in copyright enforcement but allows content guidelines to be defined. Best for informal content sharing within a company.	More flexible, allowing content to be shared under Creative Commons or proprietary licenses, depending on platform configuration. Best for open communities where content licensing needs to be explicitly managed.
Community Guidelines & Policies			
Will there be clear terms of use and moderation policies?	Governance is controlled by the organization, with policies enforced through Microsoft 365 compliance tools. Moderation is limited to admin roles within teams and channels. Best for structured, internal environments where policies are centrally managed.	Organizations can define community guidelines, but enforcement relies on admins and moderators. Limited automated moderation tools. Best for informal engagement where manual moderation is sufficient.	Highly customizable moderation settings, allowing user roles (admins, moderators, ambassadors) to enforce policies. Best for open or large communities needing structured content and behavior management.





Choosing the Right Community Platform: Defining User Experience and Audience Participation Needs

A well-designed platform should offer a seamless user experience while catering to the specific needs of its target audience. Consider factors such as mobile accessibility, notifications, multilingual support, and user onboarding to enhance usability. Understanding user needs, digital literacy levels, and participation types helps tailor engagement strategies. Additionally, defining the balance between private and public discussions ensures the platform meets both accessibility and security expectations. You will find a list of guiding questions at the end of each chapter of this playbook.

Community Platforms

	MTeams	Viva Engage	SparkBlue
User Experience			
Mobile Access			
Does the platform have a mobile version?	Fully functional mobile app (iOS & Android) with chat, meetings, file sharing, and collaboration features. Best for enterprise users needing seamless mobile integration.	Dedicated mobile app (iOS & Android) with social feed, messaging, and media sharing. Best for employees who engage in discussions and knowledge sharing on the go.	Mobile-responsive web platform. Best for communities that require flexible access but may need custom mobile app development.
Notifications			
Can the platform send notifications (e.g., via email)?	Sends real-time notifications via desktop, mobile, and email for messages, mentions, and activity updates. Best for instant communication and collaboration.	Provides in-app, mobile, and email notifications for group activity, mentions, and messages. Best for social engagement and staying informed within a community.	Supports customizable notifications via email, in-app alerts, and (depending on implementation) mobile push notifications. Best for community-driven engagement with tailored communication preferences.
Multilingual Support			
Does the platform support multiple languages?	Supports multiple languages with UI localization and real-time translation for messages and meetings. Best for global teams needing seamless multilingual collaboration.	UI available in multiple languages; automatic translation for posts and comments. Best for diverse organizations that need cross-language engagement.	Multilingual support. Best for customizable, community-driven multilingual experiences.
User Onboarding			
Is the process for new users to join and use the platform simple?	Seamless onboarding for Microsoft 365 users; integrates with organizational directories (Azure AD). Best for enterprises where users are already within the Microsoft ecosystem.	Uses Microsoft 365 authentication; simple sign-up for employees but limited for external users. Best for internal communities where users already have corporate accounts.	Onboarding process can be customized, supports both open and invite-based registration. Best for flexible community access, including public, private, and hybrid models.
Audience & Participation. Further clarifying target users			
User Needs & Behaviors			
What key challenges do your target users face that this platform can help solve?			
User Skills & Digital Literacy			
What is the expected technical skill level of users? Will they need training or onboarding?	Designed for business users; intuitive for those familiar with Microsoft 365 but may require training for advanced features. Best for structured organizations with IT support.	Simple social media-like interface, minimal technical skills required. Best for broad employee engagement with little to no onboarding needed.	User experience depends on customization; may require training for admins and moderators. Best for communities that need structured onboarding for knowledge-sharing features.
Levels of Participation			
Will there be different levels of access (e.g., passive readers, active contributors, superusers)?	Supports different roles: owners (admins), members (contributors), and guests (limited access). Best for structured collaboration with controlled permissions.	Users can be members, group admins, or network admins; no granular role customization. Best for broad engagement but with limited role flexibility.	Highly customizable roles (e.g., passive readers, contributors, moderators, superusers) with detailed permissions. Best for communities needing structured engagement levels and governance.
Private vs. Public Discussions			
Will there be private areas or invitation-only groups, or will all discussions be open?	Supports private channels, invitation-only teams, and guest access with Microsoft 365 permissions. Best for organizations needing strict access control.	Groups can be public or private, but fine-grained access control is limited. Best for internal social communities with some private spaces.	Highly customizable access levels, allowing public, private, and invitation-only groups. Best for communities requiring structured privacy settings and flexible group access.





Choosing the Right Community Platform: Defining Public vs. Private Presence for Your Platform

When designing your community platform, it is essential to clarify its visibility, accessibility, and integration with external channels. Decide whether the platform should include public-facing content or remain private for members only. Consider registration settings, SEO optimization, and social media integration to enhance discoverability. Additionally, aligning the platform with branding and communication strategies ensures consistency with your organization’s broader goals. You will find a list of guiding questions at the end of each chapter of this playbook.

Community Platforms

	MTeams	Viva Engage	SparkBlue
Public Visibility Should the platform also serve as an external-facing website with public content?	Not designed for external-facing content; primarily for internal collaboration. Best for private, organizational use.	Mostly internal, but external networks can be created with invited users. Best for employee communities, not public websites.	Can function as a public-facing website with open content and private areas. Best for communities that need both public engagement and private collaboration.
Registration Is your community platform visible and open for registration for an external audience?	Closed by default; only accessible to invited users within an organization or with guest access. Best for private, internal collaboration.	Mainly for internal use; external networks can be created, but open registration is limited. Best for enterprise communities with controlled external access.	Can be configured for open registration, allowing public users to join while maintaining private spaces. Best for hybrid communities that need both public engagement and private discussions.
SEO & Discoverability Does the platform need to be optimized for search engines (SEO) to attract new members?	Not designed for public visibility; content is private and not indexed by search engines. Best for internal collaboration, not external discovery.	Primarily internal, with no SEO optimization for public content. Best for closed enterprise communities.	Can be optimized for SEO, allowing public content to be indexed by search engines. Best for communities looking to attract new members and increase discoverability.
Social Media Integration Will content be shareable on social media? Does it need embedded feeds?	Not designed for social media sharing; content stays within the platform. Best for internal collaboration with limited external content distribution.	Internal social sharing only; no direct integration for public social media platforms. Best for employee engagement within an organization.	Supports social media sharing and embedding feeds from platforms like Twitter, LinkedIn, and Facebook. Best for communities wanting external visibility and engagement.
Branding Alignment Does the platform need to align with your organization's broader communications strategy?	Fully integrates with Microsoft 365 communication tools (Outlook, SharePoint, Viva). Best for structured, internal communication within an enterprise environment.	Supports broad employee engagement, integrates with Microsoft tools, and fosters knowledge sharing. Best for companies wanting to enhance internal communication and collaboration.	Can be customized to align with external and internal communication strategies, including branded messaging and public engagement. Best for organizations needing a flexible, community-driven approach.





Choosing the Right Community Platform: Defining Content Management for Your Platform

Effective content management is essential for keeping your community engaged and organized. Consider whether users can contribute content or if it will be curated by admins. Determine the types of engagement features needed, such as discussions, blogs, or events. Ensure the platform supports diverse content formats and allows for categorization through user-generated folksonomy or structured taxonomy. You will find a list of guiding questions at the end of each chapter of this playbook.

Community Platforms

	MTeams	Viva Engage	SparkBlue
Crowdsourced Contributions			
Can users contribute content, or will it only be curated by admins?	Users can contribute content within teams and channels, but admins control structure and permissions. Best for structured collaboration with controlled contributions.	Open content creation by all users, with moderation by admins. Best for broad engagement and peer-driven discussions.	Highly flexible; allows both user-generated content and admin-curated content with moderation controls. Best for a mix of open community contributions and structured curation.
Engagement Features			
Do you need different types of engagement content (e.g., polls, discussions, blogs, events)?	Supports chats, threaded discussions, file sharing, and live meetings; limited interactive content types like polls via add-ins. Best for structured collaboration but not diverse engagement.	Enables discussions, polls, Q&A, and some event capabilities; lacks structured blogging or advanced event management. Best for broad employee engagement and informal knowledge sharing.	Offers diverse content types, including discussions, blogs, polls, events, and multimedia sharing. Best for communities needing rich engagement and multiple interaction formats.
Content Formats			
What types of content do you expect to be shared (e.g., text, videos, podcasts, webinars, reports)?	Supports text, documents, images, and video calls. Best for structured file sharing and real-time collaboration but limited for content publishing.	Allows text posts, images, videos, and file attachments; limited support for structured reports or long-form content. Best for social sharing and discussions.	Supports text, images, videos, podcasts, reports, blogs, and webinars. Best for diverse content formats and structured knowledge sharing.
Folksonomy Support			
Does the platform allow user-generated categorization (folksonomy)?	No folksonomy support. Content is organized through structured folders, teams, and channels. No open tagging system for user-driven classification.	Basic tagging capabilities. Users can add hashtags to posts, but categorization is limited to groups and lacks a true folksonomy system.	No user-generated tagging. Tags and categories are predefined and managed by site administrators, ensuring structured content organization but restricting user-driven classification.
Taxonomy Management			
Does the platform allow structured categorization (taxonomy)?	Limited taxonomy support. Content is structured through teams, channels, and folders, but lacks a formal taxonomy for categorization beyond file organization.	Basic categorization. Groups and hashtags provide some organization, but no structured taxonomy for content classification.	Full taxonomy support. Administrators can create predefined categories and tags to classify content, ensuring structured organization and consistent labeling across the platform.





Choosing the Right Community Platform: Aligning Events and Collaboration Features with Community Needs



Choosing the right platform requires ensuring it supports live events, webinars, and collaboration tools that enhance community interaction. Consider whether the platform should include event registration and reminders to facilitate participation. Determine the need for collaborative document editing, whiteboarding, or co-creation tools to foster teamwork. Additionally, assess if task management features are required and whether users should have the option for anonymous participation. You will find a list of guiding questions at the end of each chapter of this playbook.

Community Platforms

	MTeams	Viva Engage	SparkBlue
Live Events & Webinars			
Does the platform need to support live discussions, webinars, or virtual summits?	Full support. Native live video, webinars, and large-scale virtual events with breakout rooms. Best for structured corporate meetings and interactive events.	Limited support. Live events are possible via Microsoft Teams integration, but not a core feature. Best for async discussions with occasional live events.	Moderate support. Requires third-party integrations for live discussions and webinars. Best for communities focused on async engagement but needing some live event capabilities.
Event Registration & Reminders			
Should the platform include event registration and automated reminders?	Full support. Integrated event scheduling with Outlook/Teams calendar invites and automated reminders. Best for structured corporate events and meetings.	Limited support. Events can be announced, but no built-in registration or automated reminders; relies on Microsoft Teams integration. Best for informal event sharing.	Moderate to full support (depending on setup). Includes event registration features with automated reminders, but customization depends on platform configuration. Best for community-driven event management.
Anonymous Participation			
Do users need to be able to engage anonymously?	No anonymous engagement. Users must be authenticated through Microsoft 365. Best for secure, enterprise environments with controlled user identities.	No full anonymity. Users are identified within the organization, but some content can be posted with limited visibility. Best for internal discussions with known participants.	Configurable. Depending on implementation, SparkBlue can allow anonymous posting or pseudonymous engagement. Best for communities needing flexible identity options.
Collaboration Tools			
Will users need tools for collaborative document editing, whiteboarding, or co-creation?	Full support. Native integration with Microsoft 365 (Word, Excel, PowerPoint, OneNote) for real-time editing and Microsoft Whiteboard for brainstorming. Best for structured collaboration.	Limited support. Allows file sharing and discussions, but lacks built-in document co-editing or whiteboarding tools. Best for social engagement with minimal collaboration features.	Moderate support. Some collaborative features available, but real-time editing or whiteboarding requires integration with third-party tools. Best for community-driven content sharing with external integrations.
Task Management			
Do users need task assignment or project management features?	Full support. Integrates with Microsoft Planner, To Do, and Project for task tracking, assignments, and team collaboration. Best for structured project management within organizations.	Limited support. Focuses on discussions and social engagement; no built-in task management but can integrate with Microsoft tools. Best for informal collaboration rather than structured task tracking.	Moderate support. Some workflow and task management capabilities exist, but advanced project management requires third-party integrations. Best for communities that need lightweight task tracking.





Choosing the Right Community Platform: Defining an Effective Engagement Strategy

Sustaining engagement in a community requires a well-planned strategy that balances recurring and one-time interactions. Consider whether discussions should be actively facilitated or self-sustaining and determine the best approach to moderation. Using incentives, gamification, and content strategies can help drive long-term participation. Evaluate whether AI-driven recommendations or automated moderation can enhance interactions, and establish recognition and reward mechanisms to highlight member contributions. You will find a list of guiding questions at the end of each chapter of this playbook.

Community Platforms

	MTeams	Viva Engage	SparkBlue
Recurring vs. One-Time Engagements Will interactions be continuous, or will there be specific discussion periods?	Continuous interactions. Supports ongoing discussions, real-time collaboration, and persistent chat threads. Best for teams that need always-on communication.	Primarily continuous but can support periodic discussions. Conversations remain open, but structured discussion periods require manual facilitation. Best for ongoing knowledge-sharing with occasional campaigns.	Flexible. Can support both continuous interactions and structured discussion periods through event-based forums or timed discussions. Best for communities that balance ongoing engagement with dedicated discussion phases.
Engagement Strategy How do you plan to sustain engagement over time (e.g., incentives, gamification, content strategy)?	Limited built-in engagement incentives. Engagement relies on structured collaboration, notifications, and integrations with Microsoft Viva for insights. Best for professional teams with a workflow-driven approach.	Moderate engagement tools. Supports social recognition, featured posts, and some gamification elements like reactions and badges. Best for fostering informal engagement within organizations.	Strong engagement features. Includes gamification (badges, points, leaderboards), content strategy tools (newsletters, notifications), and customizable engagement incentives. Best for long-term community-building with structured incentives.
AI & Automation Should the platform support AI-driven recommendations or automated moderation?	Limited AI-driven recommendations. Uses Microsoft Viva for insights but lacks built-in content recommendations. Moderation relies on admin settings and Microsoft compliance tools. Best for structured, admin-managed environments.	Basic AI-driven features. Can surface trending content and popular discussions but has limited automated moderation tools. Best for informal communities where admins handle moderation.	Flexible AI capabilities coming soon. Can support AI-driven content recommendations and automated moderation through custom configurations or integrations. Best for dynamic communities that need scalable content curation and moderation.
Facilitated vs. Organic Interactions Will discussions need active facilitation, or should they be self-sustaining? Will moderation rely on volunteers, external, staff, or a hybrid approach?	Admin-driven moderation. Discussions typically require active facilitation by team owners or managers. No built-in volunteer moderation. Best for structured, staff-led collaboration.	Semi-self-sustaining but admin-dependent. Groups can be managed by internal moderators, but discussions rely on organic engagement. Best for informal knowledge sharing with light facilitation.	Highly customizable. Can support self-sustaining discussions, volunteer moderators, and hybrid models. Includes tools for structured facilitation and moderation policies. Best for communities balancing open participation with guided discussions.
Recognition & Rewards How will engaged users be recognized (e.g., badges, leadership roles, certifications)?	Limited recognition features. Users can receive mentions, reactions, and acknowledgments but lacks built-in gamification or badges. Best for professional environments with informal recognition.	Moderate recognition features. Supports social recognition through reactions, featured posts, and Microsoft Praise (acknowledgment tool). Best for informal engagement and peer recognition.	Full gamification support. Includes badges, leadership roles, certifications, and leaderboards to encourage participation. Best for communities that want structured engagement incentives and progression paths.





Choosing the Right Community Platform: Ensuring Technical Integration and Future Scalability

Selecting a platform requires careful consideration of technical integration and long-term sustainability. Determine if Single Sign-On (SSO) authentication is needed to streamline access and whether the platform should integrate with other tools, such as CRM or analytics systems. Assess if open-source capabilities, custom APIs, or additional development features are necessary. Finally, ensure a long-term maintenance plan is in place for updates, security, and funding. You will find a list of guiding questions at the end of each chapter of this playbook.

Community Platforms

MTeams

Viva Engage

SparkBlue

Single Sign-On (SSO) & Authentication

Will the platform need to integrate with existing login systems (e.g., Microsoft, Google, institutional logins)? Full SSO integration with Microsoft 365. Uses Azure AD for authentication, supporting enterprise-level security. Best for organizations already using Microsoft tools.

Requires Microsoft 365 login. Fully integrated with Azure AD but does not support other external login providers. Best for internal communities within Microsoft ecosystems.

Flexible login options. Supports SSO integration with Microsoft, Google, and institutional logins (OAuth, LDAP, SAML). Best for multi-organization communities needing diverse authentication options.

Integration with Other Tools

Does the platform need to connect with external systems (e.g., CRM, email marketing, analytics, LMS)? Strong Microsoft ecosystem integration. Best for organizations using Microsoft tools but limited for external platforms.

Microsoft-native integrations. Best for internal knowledge sharing within Microsoft environments.

Highly flexible integrations. Best for communities requiring extensive third-party integrations.

Open Source Requirement

Does the platform need to be open-source? Proprietary. Closed-source, fully managed by Microsoft, with customization limited to API and Power Platform integrations. Best for enterprises needing a secure, managed environment.

Proprietary. Closed-source and tightly integrated into the Microsoft ecosystem, limiting deep customization. Best for organizations fully invested in Microsoft tools.

Open-source. Can be self-hosted or cloud-hosted, with full flexibility for customization and integrations. Best for organizations that want control over their platform and data.

APIs & Custom Development

Does the platform need to offer an API for custom integrations? Best for enterprises using Microsoft tools and custom app development.

Best for organizations primarily using Microsoft products.

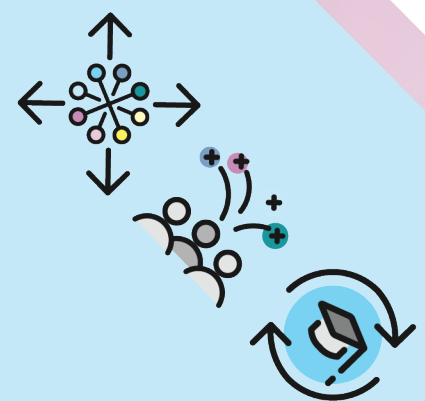
Best for communities needing high customization and external system connectivity.

Long-Term Sustainability

Is there a long-term maintenance plan for platform updates, security, and funding? Fully managed by Microsoft. Regular updates, security patches, and compliance with enterprise standards. Subscription-based funding model. Best for organizations needing a reliable, low-maintenance solution.

Managed by Microsoft. Security, compliance, and feature updates are handled by Microsoft. Included with Microsoft 365 licensing. Best for internal enterprise communities with minimal maintenance overhead.

Open-source model may require ongoing funding for hosting and development. Best for organizations that want full control but must plan for long-term sustainability.



Choosing the Right Community Platform: in a nutshell

Microsoft Teams is ideal for structured teamwork and corporate collaboration but not well-suited for open/ external CoPs.

Viva Engage is better for internal networking and engagement but lacks deep structured collaboration tools.

SparkBlue is the most flexible and open, best suited for CoPs needing external engagement, knowledge sharing, and governance customization.

If your goal is to support an externally engaged CoP, SparkBlue is the best fit.

However, if you need deep Microsoft integration, a combination of Teams & Viva Engage could work for internal networks.

Primary Use	Microsoft Teams	Viva Engage	SparkBlue
Best for	Team collaboration, meetings, file sharing	Enterprise-wide engagement, social feed	Open, flexible CoP engagement
Community Model	Structured teamwork, internal collaboration	Knowledge sharing, informal discussions	Public & private community collaboration
Integration	Private, team-based	Broad internal communities	Open, internal & external engagement
Content Sharing	Strong with Microsoft 365 (SharePoint, Outlook)	Microsoft 365, LinkedIn	Flexible, integrates with CRM & LMS
Collaboration	Files, chats, video calls	Posts, reactions, discussion threads	Articles, blogs, multimedia sharing
Security & Compliance	Real-time co-editing, structured discussions	Threaded discussions, peer engagement	Open knowledge-sharing, crowdsourcing
Engagement Features	Enterprise-grade security	Microsoft-controlled policies	Customizable, open-source flexibility
Public Accessibility	Meeting participation, structured chat	Social engagement, polls, badges	Gamification, open deliberation tools
	Closed, team-based	Limited external access	Public & private options available