



YOUR GUIDE TO BUILDING ENGAGING, COLLABORATIVE ONLINE COMMUNITIES

Part 1: How to build your community

Communities—online or in-person—should be welcoming, encouraging and supportive. They should focus on acceptance and belonging and, most importantly, be safe.

To create communities like this, we have to focus on the goals, functions and people communities serve. **You're here because you want to create a meaningful community.** You want to support a group of people in a way that encourages professional growth and fosters genuine connection.

Communities of Practice as a framework for online communities

When we refer to communities, we mean Communities of Practice (CoPs).

By definition, CoPs are made of a domain, a community and a practice. To build a purposeful community, the domain must extend beyond just liking the same thing or having similar tastes—there is a shared purpose or aspiration amongst the community. **For your community, consider:**

Who are the members of your community? (Currently and/or aspirationally)	What is the domain or interest of your community?	What is the shared practice or desired outcome amongst your community members?
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3 Steps to building your community

01. Consider your community member personas.

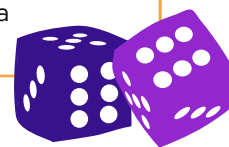
Your community is unique because of the members within it. Consider the unique needs and learning styles of your members so that you can design experiences that meet their preferred learning methods and challenges.



02. Establish goals for your community.

Do you want to increase brand awareness and grow a group of x company advocates? Maybe you want to engage existing product users and provide a space for collaboration and connection. Whatever the purpose of your community, establish clear, reasonable goals. Community goals can change over time, but it's important to set specific goals each quarter so that you are working toward a common purpose within the community. **Here are some ideas to get started:**

Goal	Key results	Timeline
Build and maintain relationships with existing product users.	Invite at least 20 members to the community and foster at least 5 introductions between community members.	Weeks 1-3
Inform overall organizational strategy, initiatives and practice.	Lead at least one learning experience for community members and send out a post-experience survey.	Weeks 4-5



03. Know your expectations as a community facilitator.

Community facilitators are the welcome committee of your community. Having structured facilitation practices sets the precedent that community members are supported. Commitment, contribution and impact are at the heart of community facilitation.

Facilitators cultivate commitment.

Committed community members energize your community and are motivated to stick with it. So how do you cultivate commitment? Encourage members to personalize their profile pages on your community platform so they can learn more about one another. Look for natural ways to start conversations and connect community members you recognize may have things in common. Provide opportunities for community members to engage in personal conversations around the domain.

Facilitators increase contribution.

An important first step in building meaningful connections is encouraging communication. Make it clear how members can engage and connect with one another within your community. Match contribution requests to community members' skills or interests so they feel seen and valued.

Facilitators amplify impact.

For community members to remain engaged, they must feel and value the impact of the community on their professional development journey. To amplify impact, provide access to expert-curated content that reflects the domain of your community. Set up opportunities for your community members to interact with content experts around your domain then guide reflective discussions for them. If you're a community looking to reach company advocates, host a Q&A session with a company executive. Community members will feel heard and learn more about your organization in the process.

Next steps:

Identify three to five personas most prevalent in your community (currently and/or aspirationally).

Write three goals for you community.

Templates for next steps attached.

Community member personas

Persona	Description

Community goal chart

Goal	Key results	Timeline