THE STATE OF
COMMUNITY
MANAGEMENT
2020

THE COMMUNITY
ROUNDTABLE

Changing the Way the World Works

community

communications

higher logic the **human-focused** engagement platform

About Our Partners

FEATURED

higher logic

The Higher Logic engagement platform delivers powerful online communities and communication tools to engage your users at every stage of their journey. With Higher Logic, you get a robust platform plus over a decade of experience in building sophisticated community engagement programs. We serve over 3,000 customers across 21 countries worldwide and support over 2.7 billion community interactions annually.

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PREMIUM

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Igloo is a leading provider of digital workplace solutions, helping companies move beyond traditional intranets to inspiring digital destinations that improve communication, knowledge sharing, collaboration, and culture. Igloo is 100% cloud-based, mobile-enabled, and integrates with the leading systems and enterprise apps your business relies on. Igloo provides a single-source-of-truth, enabling a more productive and engaged workforce.

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Khoros

Khoros is a global leader in customer engagement software, helping brands stay all-ways connected with their customers. Khoros Communities, one of three powerful Khoros solutions, gives brands an interactive platform that fosters peer-to-peer engagement to enhance the customer experience and improve support efficiency through self-service.

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Yammer is the social layer within Microsoft 365 that connects and engages people across the organization. Yammer uses communities and open conversation to power leadership engagement, corporate communications, and open knowledge sharing to drive organizational change.

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At Social Edge, we build beautiful online communities that empower our clients and their customers. From custom design and development to strategy, community management, and technical services, we have created 350+ communities for enterprise and SMB clients across all industry verticals.

Learn more: www.socialedge consulting.com

Vanilla

Vanilla provides a one-stop-shop solution that combines the power of customer community, Q&A, knowledge base, and ideation to help brands improve CX and brand loyalty while reducing costs.

Since 2009, Vanilla has helped hundreds of top brands provide a great community experience to millions of people around the globe.

Learn more: vanillaforums.com/en/

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CONCLUSION

Welcome to The State of Community Management 2020

2020 is the year of reinvention. Organizations were already concerned about adapting to the digital and knowledge economy. Those that invested in change are finding adaptation easier. Those that resisted change or stalled in making investments are experiencing a forced and rapid transformation.

Community approaches are critical in transforming how organizations work, manage, and lead. Strong community business and governance models harness the enormous untapped capacity in ecosystems by replacing hierarchical bottlenecks with shared purpose and trust. Instead of constraining productivity, organizations employing communities enable distributed leadership and promote self-directed management in both their employees and customers. Where executives once controlled information, we now see them inspiring, guiding, and negotiating boundary conditions. Instead of acting as a cage and constraining growth, this operational trellis unleashes individual and organizational potential.

"Communities Are Change Agents" was a key finding of this research in 2018 and we see this trend accelerating. Community programs are changing how organizations evolve. This year, we see community business models driving generative value by liberating potential from the constraints of centralized decision-making. This research data is an exciting milestone, but it is only seen in Advanced Community Programs. Many community programs are still struggling to articulate value, secure resources needed to build productive communities and optimize community management. This finding is both a challenge and an enormous opportunity during the current crisis.

The COVID-19 pandemic has, in fact, prompted many community programs to accelerate plans. However, plenty of programs and staff are still at risk, likely because many communities are not well-integrated into their organizations. Notably, members of TheCR Network feel far more energized and empowered to act than community professionals generally. This difference also hints at the impact of strategic community approaches versus reactive and tactical positioning.

In times of crisis, we are uniquely called on to focus on what matters. When our employees and customers feel seen and heard, they will move mountains to ensure the success of organizations that are meaningful to them. Like the person who only networks when looking for a job, those communities only offering transactional benefits are unlikely to inspire loyalty. Healthy communities have the resiliency, helping the organizations that support them to bounce back stronger than ever.

Rachel
Rachel Happe

Jim Storer
Jim Storer

Executive Summary

Communities change the way the world works. They are unrivaled in their ability to unlock human potential. Communities rapidly pair needs with support and expertise, allowing individuals to learn incrementally and iteratively. Communities remove bottlenecks inherent in hierarchies by making tacit knowledge and conversations transparent and accessible. This broad access to knowledge empowers and distributes leadership, allowing more individuals to seize and respond to opportunities. Executives shift their focus from making decisions to optimizing organizational culture and maximizing currently constrained human potential.

This year's research yielded a breakthrough in measuring community value and its generative business model. That value can now be represented in financial terms. This breakthrough revealed critical differences between the success of internal, employee-facing communities and external, customer-facing communities. This year, we explored each independently to increase relevance and tailor recommendations to each use case.

Key Findings

1. Advanced Communities Create Generative Value

Advanced communities generate outsized returns and return more value to each set of stakeholders than is invested. As these communities age, costs decline and returns increase, creating a self-propelling and generative business model.

2. External Communities Elevate the Customer Experience

External communities deliver value throughout the customer experience. External communities improve customer value by providing access to other customers, increasing trust, delivering solutions, and generating new ideas. External communities empower customers and contribute positive brand impact, all while improving profitability.

3. Internal Communities Reveal Untapped Potential

Internal communities have vast potential to transform organizations by changing how employees work and learn. The most successful Internal Communities deliver complex business objectives like culture change, communications, brand awareness, and productivity. However, tantalizing indications of potential with Internal Communities are squandered by underinvesting in community management, even though there is more invested per member than in External Communities.

Methodology

The data in this report were collected from 324 community programs between January and March 2020. Data from an additional 213 respondents were collected in April 2020 to provide additional context on the impact of the COVID-19 crisis on community programs.

Members of TheCR Network State of Community Management (SOCM) Working Group helped define the research scope, refine the research instrument, and prioritize the most meaningful data. This group's contributions improved the scope, delivery, and depth of the research.

Members of the State of Community Management 2020 Working Group

Jillian Bejtlich
BAE Systems

Alex Blanton
Microsoft

Claire Flanagan
Cloudera

Natasha Green
Anita Borg Institute

Dianne Kibbey
Premier Farnell/element 14

Tracy Maurer
Commvault

Prashant Pathak
Boston Consulting Group

Gali Kling Schneider
SAP

Research participants are solicited from The Community Roundtable's contact list, members, and clients. Because this is a self-selected group of respondents, the data may not reflect overall industry trends. It reveals what a portion of the community management space is experiencing and tends to represent more mature community programs.

Once collected, The Community Roundtable's research team cleans, segments, and analyzes the data. This year we segmented the data in the following ways to reveal additional insights:

Average Overall	average of all communities in the research
Advanced Overall	average of communities with strategies that are approved, operational, and measurable
External Average	average of customer- and market-facing communities
External Advanced	average of customer- and market-facing communities that have an approved, operational, and measurable strategy
Internal Average	average of employee-facing communities

Demographics

The State of Community Management 2020 research participants represent a wide range of community programs that include internal, employee-facing, community programs, and external, customer-facing programs. They represent different sizes, ages, industries, and use cases. To effectively analyze this diversity and identify insights, we segmented data based on some of these demographic differences.
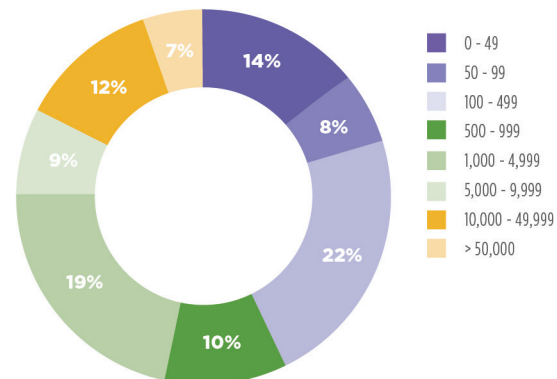
Industry

- High Tech / Telecom / Software — 43%
- Nonprofits — 15%
- Business / Legal / Professional Services — 8%
- Education — 7%
- Media / Entertainment / Publishing — 6%
- Health Care / Social Services — 6%
- Other — 5%
- Financial Services — 4%
- Manufacturing — 3%
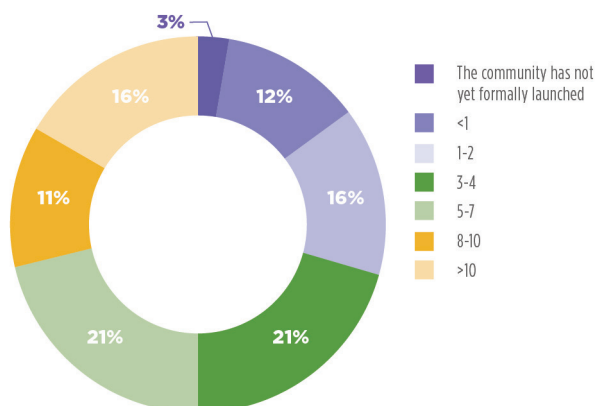- Government / Public Administration — 1%
- Retail
- Energy
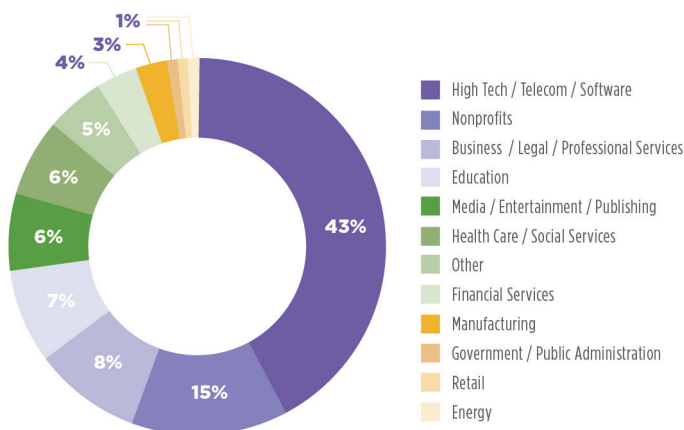
The industries represented in this year's research are relatively consistent with previous years. The technology, non-profit, and business services sectors are most prominent. Education is growing in its representation, while media/entertainment/publishing has decreased somewhat.

Organization Size

- 0 - 49 — 14%
- 50 - 99 — 8%
- 100 - 499 — 22%
- 500 - 999 — 10%
- 1,000 - 4,999 — 19%
- 5,000 - 9,999 — 9%
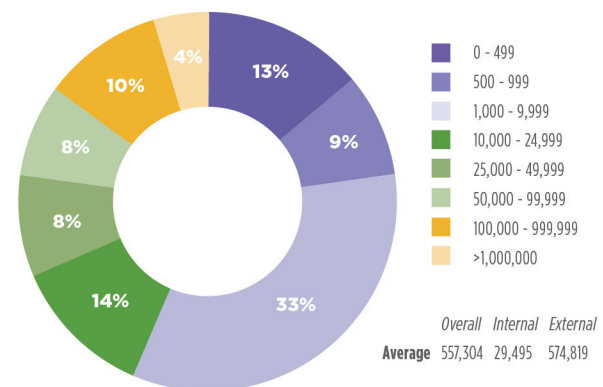- 10,000 - 49,999 — 12%
- > 50,000 — 7%

This year's research sample has fewer of the very largest organizations, and the average population of community programs may show less maturity as a result because those larger organizations tend to have more operational maturity generally. That operational maturity typically results in higher performance and has an impact on average performance as a result.

Community Age

- The community has not yet formally launched — 3%
- <1 — 12%
- 1-2 — 16%
- 3-4 — 21%
- 5-7 — 21%
- 8-10 — 11%
- >10 — 16%

As in prior years, this year's population represents a wide range of community ages. Community age, however, does not have a consistent correlation with maturity or performance. Older communities do tend to be, on average, larger than younger communities.

Community Membership

- 0 - 499 — 13%
- 500 - 999 — 9%
- 1,000 - 9,999 — 33%
- 10,000 - 24,999 — 14%
- 25,000 - 49,999 — 8%
- 50,000 - 99,999 — 8%
- 100,000 - 999,999 — 10%
- >1,000,000 — 4%

	Overall	Internal	External
Average	557,304	29,495	574,819

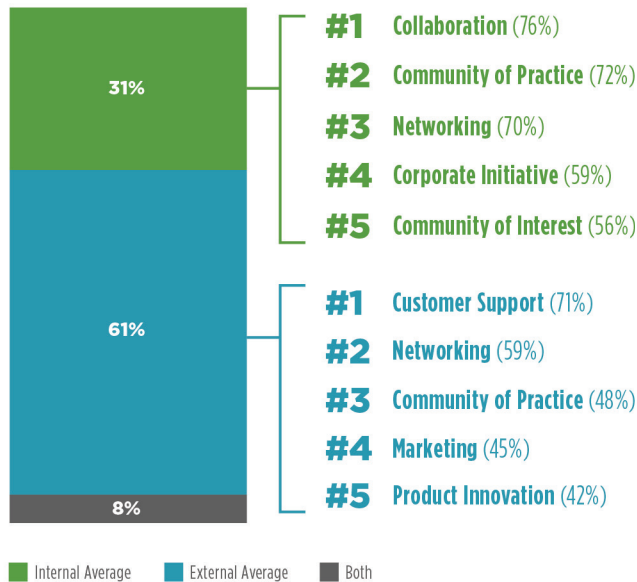*The average community size is consistent with previous years, with about 20% reporting below 500 members or above 1,000,000 members. Internal communities are significantly smaller – about 5% of external communities.*

Community Audience and Use Case

31%

- **#1** Collaboration (76%)
- **#2** Community of Practice (72%)
- **#3** Networking (70%)
- **#4** Corporate Initiative (59%)
- **#5** Community of Interest (56%)

61%

- **#1** Customer Support (71%)
- **#2** Networking (59%)
- **#3** Community of Practice (48%)
- **#4** Marketing (45%)
- **#5** Product Innovation (42%)

8%

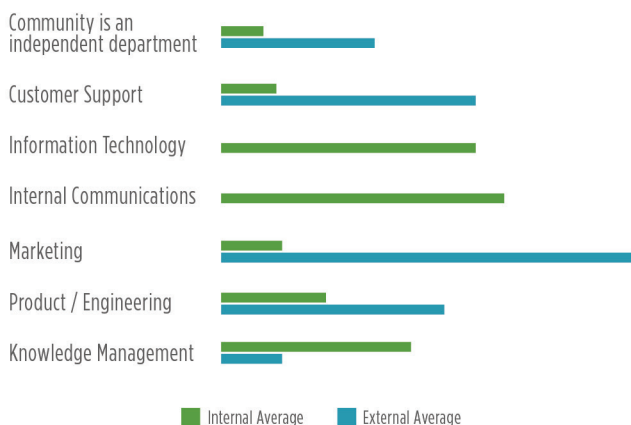■ Internal Average ■ External Average ■ Both

Like past years, this year's research sample includes a majority of external community programs, with internal and both splitting the difference. Internal and external community programs are more differentiated than in past years, and this is, potentially, why we are seeing fewer program teams managing both.

Primary Community Platforms

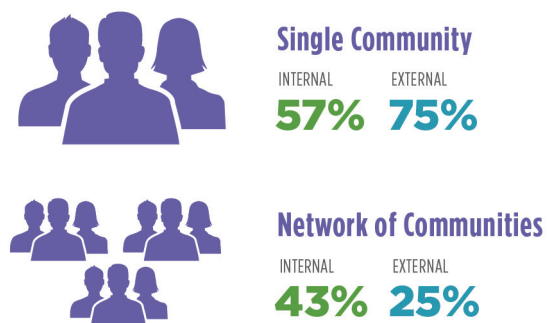|	Internal	External	
#1	Aurea/Jive	Higher Logic	**#1**
#2	Igloo	Khoros	**#2**
#3	Higher Logic	Salesforce Community	**#3**
#4	Sharepoint/Microsoft	Vanilla	**#4**
#5	Yammer/Microsoft	Verint	**#5**

■ Internal Average ■ External Average

This year's research population uses a variety of platforms. The research specifically asked about over twenty different platforms and the biggest option selected was "other", showing the fragmentation of the platform market. Above are the top five primary platforms used in this research sample for internal and external programs.

Top Reporting Departments for Community Programs

- Community is an independent department
- Customer Support
- Information Technology
- Internal Communications
- Marketing
- Product / Engineering
- Knowledge Management

■ Internal Average ■ External Average

There is no dominant functional reporting structure for community programs, although internal and external communities tend to report to a different set of functional areas. Many community programs are independent departments without direct functional oversight.

Community Ecosystem

Single Community

INTERNAL EXTERNAL
57% **75%**

Network of Communities
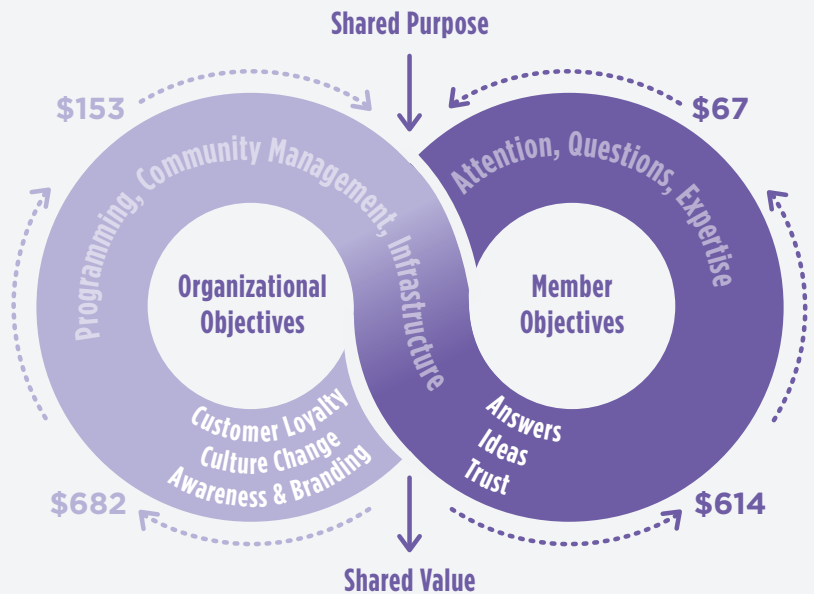
INTERNAL EXTERNAL
43% **25%**

As they mature, many community programs represent not just one shared purpose but many, creating an ecosystem of sub-communities that may interact, but also function independently. This structure is more common for internal community programs that typically address more use cases for more functional groups.
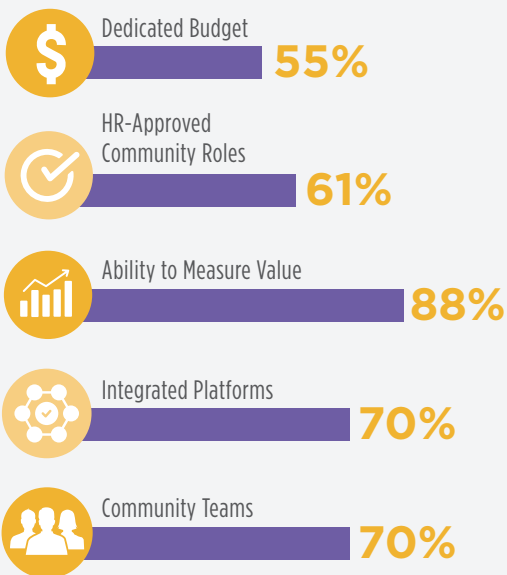
Advanced Communities
CREATE
GENERATIVE VALUE

Shared Purpose

$153

Programming, Community Management, Infrastructure

Organizational Objectives

Member Objectives

Attention, Questions, Expertise

$67

Customer Loyalty
Culture Change
Awareness & Branding

Answers
Ideas
Trust

$682

$614

Shared Value

...PROPELLED BY
STRUCTURAL SUPPORT & INCLUSION...

Dedicated Budget
55%

HR-Approved Community Roles
61%

Ability to Measure Value
88%

Integrated Platforms
70%

Community Teams
70%

MEASURE Cross-Functional Engagement Objectives
45%
OF THE TIME

REPORT to Cross-Functional Executives
51%
OF THE TIME
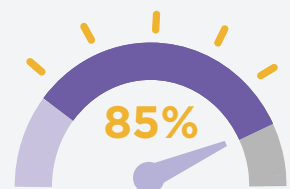
TRAIN Cross-Functional Experts
42%
OF THE TIME

...ACCELERATING SHARED VALUE & INNOVATION.

5315%

4782%

4136%

2778%

1469%

Community ROI echoes the pattern of innovation

Community Members Feel:

SEEN: **72%**

HEARD: **80%**

85%

Communities Positively Impact Culture & Brand

Advanced Communities
CREATE GENERATIVE VALUE

Community structures create abundant, organic, and regenerative growth. Thriving communities generate more value for individuals than is contributed to them, driving loyalty, generosity, advocacy, and reinvestment.

The limits of extractive business models, with the disproportionate losses and gains they produce, are becoming increasingly apparent. Organizations using community models to empower and collaborate with employees, customers, and other stakeholders are seeing outsized gains. This success is prompting organizations to expand community investments and extend the impact of community programs.

Community leaders have witnessed this generative dynamic for thousands of years. The power of communities created some of the most influential institutions in history – religious communities, new models of government, the craft guilds of Belgium and The Netherlands, universities like Oxford and Harvard, and secretive clubs like the Freemasons. More recently, commercial models like Airbnb, social movements like Burning Man, and the political campaigns of Bernie Sanders and Elizabeth Warren are examples of organizations generating influence and power by using a community model that incorporates non-financial value exchanges. All of these communities, on the whole, produced more value for individuals than they contributed, and organizations were rewarded with the loyalty, generosity, advocacy, and reinvestment of those same individuals.

Until recently, much of the community value exchange was difficult to quantify and translate into financial figures. It was impossible to project the offset between the investment required and the generative impact. As a result, those organizations that undertook community approaches were mostly mission-driven. Commercial organizations operate with metrics and accounting, and because the community business model could not be translated into financial metrics, community

operating models were not included in traditional accounting and financial reporting. As the community business model becomes better understood, it is becoming a more common operating model, especially in organizations where knowledge and innovation are vital assets.
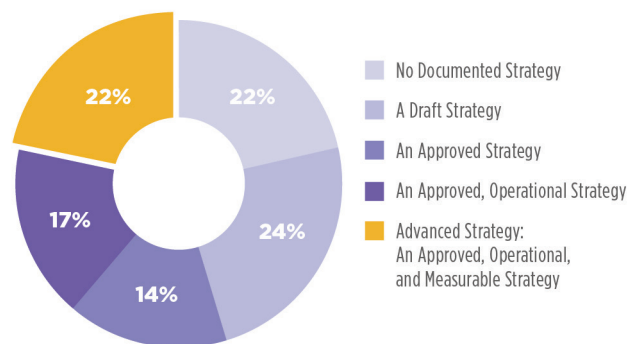
Historically, organizations with community operating models were motivated by something more than profitability, and yet, those who apply this approach well, enjoy extraordinary financial success. Examples of this include many professional associations, churches, and private schools. Ironically, many of the most successful organizations have forgotten their community roots in a race to maximize financial returns, which has undermined their original operating model and increased risks as shared value diminishes. Examples are rife in associations, religion, and educational institutions.

Successful community approaches create equitable, generative, sustainable, and innovative organizations. These organizations empower, engage, and reward the potential of everyone in their ecosystem, unlocking the capacity of their network to do more.

Community Business Models Can Be Measured

Over the last few years, this research has begun to tease out financial metrics that document community value, first confirming an approach to community return on investment (ROI) and then showing how ROI changes and grows as communities mature. This year's research goes one step further and shows how financial investment and member investment married together generates compelling returns for both. This data validates what we've anecdotally witnessed for a long time – that

Strategic Maturity of All Communities

- No Documented Strategy
- A Draft Strategy
- An Approved Strategy
- An Approved, Operational Strategy
- Advanced Strategy: An Approved, Operational, and Measurable Strategy

22% 22% 24% 14% 17%

thriving communities yield more value for every participant than they contribute.

Comparing Advanced Communities – those with measurable strategies – to Average Communities reveals this generative financial dynamic. Advanced Communities are 22% of all communities in our findings and are weighted slightly more than Average toward external, customer-facing use cases.

Advanced Communities consistently show more management maturity and better results, both for the organizations that sponsor them and the community members who participate in them. These communities typically represent slightly larger organizations, and have three times more members than Average Communities, although they are not significantly older. They are more likely to integrate their community platforms with other channels where their members engage and with business systems. This integration makes communities easy for members to use and effective for community teams to manage and measure. This ease of management may account for some of the size differential because it allows community teams to manage bigger communities efficiently.

Advanced Communities can often directly connect community performance to key strategic business objectives for both external, customer-facing communities and internal,
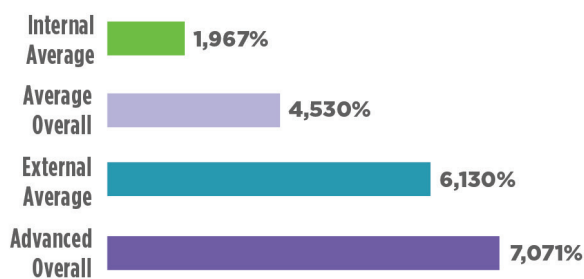
employee-facing communities. What's more, these communities are impacting some of the most complex and, what were previously somewhat intractable, business challenges like customer loyalty and organizational change. Advanced Communities do this by integrating and aligning multiple stakeholders, creating a shared understanding of needs and solutions, and streamlining and rationalizing the employee and customer experience. Communities improve efficiency and speed across an organization's ecosystem.

Annual Cost Per Member for Community Programs

Average Member

$174 — Average Overall

$153 — Advanced Overall

Active Member

$1,235

$1,115
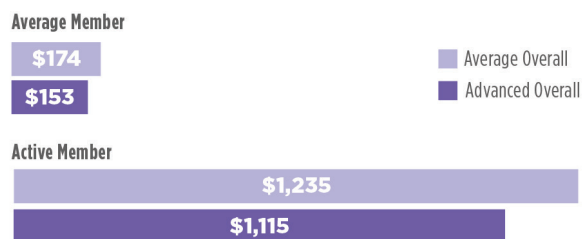
*Active Members are those that engage in Sharing, Asking & Answering, and Exploring behavior

Community Financials Confirm Generative Dynamics

Advanced Communities show the highest ROI in our data set – this is unsurprising given their ability to measure progress and success. This success results in increased budgets and hiring. Advanced Community teams are bigger than Average Community teams - but with communities that have three times the number of members. As a result, they pay less per member and get more in return. Their strategic maturity yields generative value. In short, they get more for less.

Members contribute value to communities through their attention, time, and expertise. This contribution is measured most easily by the answers they provide. Members of Advanced Communities provide slightly more answers than members of Average Communities. However, the value of these answers is significantly higher because they are accessible to larger communities, resulting in more reuse. This expanded use of answers increases the value but not the cost of each answer. Advanced Communities generate more value by generating more search and discovery activity.

Top 3 Business Outcomes of Communities

54% Organizational and Cultural Change

67% Customer Loyalty

49% Communications Efficiency

48% Lower Support Costs

43% Awareness and Branding

47% Awareness and Branding

■ Internal Average ■ External Average

Community ROI

|	
Internal Average	1,967%
Average Overall	4,530%
External Average	6,130%
Advanced Overall	7,071%

Based on Average Assumptions Monthly:
Program Costs = $44,448
New Answers = 1,641
Successful Searches = 66,155
Value of an Answer = $165

This generative value dynamic becomes even clearer when looking at cost per member by community age. New communities require a lot of investment and start with a relatively small number of members, so the cost per member averages almost $300. That figure suggests a less compelling business model when we imagine an online community to be hundreds, thousands, or even millions of members. This initial investment is required to introduce new behaviors – prompting members to do their work in a different way and, in the process, capturing conversations, connections, and answers. Investment increases as infrastructure and governance are developed and rolled out. As communities age, however, the cost per member decreases dramatically. This decreasing cost per member demonstrates how communities normalize new behaviors as they mature, and become generative, requiring less centralized investment per member over time. As membership continues to increase, the cost per member is reduced even further.

Investment is required to reach this generative tipping point, where operating costs decrease and stabilize. Our data shows that the cost per member starts relatively high and begins to drop after the first year, falling significantly between the third and fourth years. As this happens, the community budget growth slows. If an investment is not made early on, especially in community management, communities can stall before reaching this generative inflection point.

Generative Value Accelerates Innovation

Digital channels excel at making the work of communities efficient. This work is developing and acting on shared meaning, purpose, and value. This work is the fundamental driver of innovation. The Renaissance, the Industrial Revolution, and even the technology market took decades to develop and were dependent on the physical concentration of their communities and the speed of information technologies. The Internet has dramatically sped up innovation and adoption cycles by increasing the speed of communications. Today's constraint is the trust required to create shared meaning, which is often left mostly to chance. Communities are changing that as they create intentional webs of relationships, trust, and collaborative behaviors.

Annual Cost Per Member by Community Age

ROI by Community Age
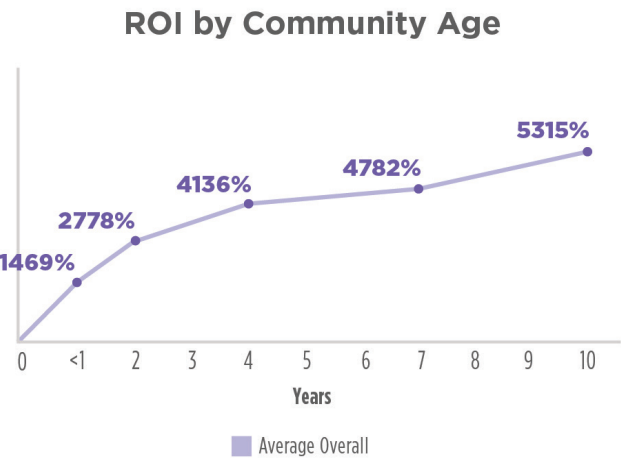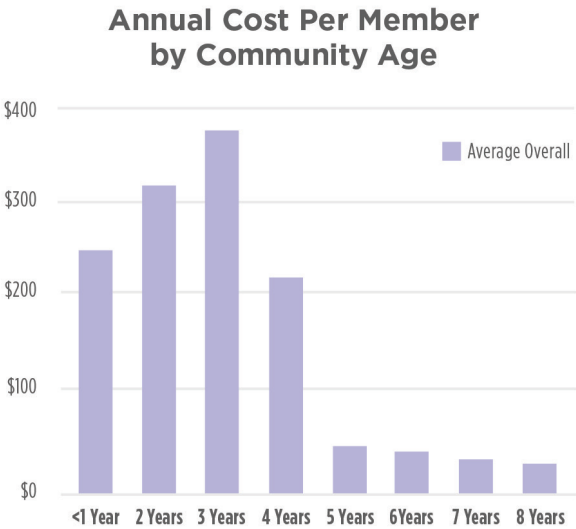
By looking at community ROI over time, we see this dynamic at work. Early on, communities attract only the most passionate because there is less explicit value to gain in return. As those early members start to develop and articulate shared value, it becomes more accessible and useful to others, prompting the community to accelerate and grow rapidly. As the knowledge generated in the community is more broadly adopted and standardized, growth slows, creating the classic S curve of innovation.

Communities are engines of innovation and, because of that, can stimulate rapid organizational adaptation – a pressing need because of the complex and quickly moving challenges faced by our society. Being able to articulate the financial dynamics of communities is critical to helping executive stakeholders and financial controllers understand why, how, and when investment pays off. While we see a willingness for boards of directors and c-suite executives to approve budgets for community programs, it suggests those budgets are exceptions to standard operating budgets. Programs with Advanced Strategies are less likely to have their budgets approved at this level, suggesting they can prove their effectiveness. This difference also suggests that investment and budget growth can be justified, establishing community programs as a standard operating function, which will grow with the value they generate and less likely to be seen as expendable or optional.

This operational normalization demonstrates how communities are changing the way

organizations engage with customers and employees and, in turn, evolving their business models. Critical to operational maturity is the maturity of metrics. 88% of Advanced Communities can calculate community value, and 70% can directly link it to business outcomes. For communities that can connect engagement directly to business value, 77% of Advanced External Community programs impact customer loyalty – a top line, complex objective being pursued aggressively in today's business climate. For Internal Communities that can connect community performance to business objectives, 54% can connect it to cultural and organizational change, another complex objective being prioritized as organizations of all kinds pursue agility and innovation.

Historically, the biggest challenge facing a community's ability to maximize potential was their narrow use case and relative isolation within their organization. Communities were originally used for discrete, tactical use cases like self-service customer support. While value was relatively easy to calculate, it represented bottom-line cost-savings, not top-line growth potential. As such, communities typically did not get visibility beyond their functional context.

The power of communities, however, lies in their ability to align across divisions and boundaries. Over the last decade, more organizations have recognized this potential and applied them to broader and more strategic challenges. This recognition has integrated communities into many cross-functional processes. Communities change the way organizations work by increasing access to opportunities and distributing prosperity across an organization's entire ecosystem.

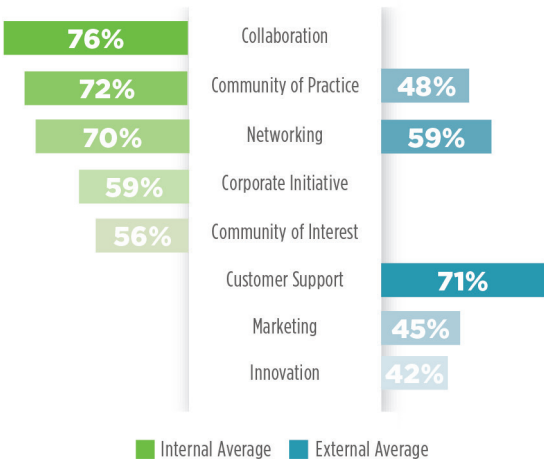## Communities Propel Organizational Change

The structure of traditional organizations – hierarchical management, accounting standards, and legal policies – was primarily optimized for standardized and efficient production. As human work moves away from production, old operational structures act like cages, restraining human potential, and punishing adaptation and diversity. Efforts to create cultures of innovation are typically stymied by control functions designed for a different purpose. Liberating people from centralized control and constraints through changes to governance, infrastructure, metrics, and management is necessary to make agility and innovation core organizational strengths. Indeed, it is required to keep up with how quickly market changes happen now that public communications channels are no longer controlled by organizations.

Communities offer a compelling model for a more fluid organization. Regular engagement and alignment with markets maintains trust, credibility, and relevance. Ongoing engagement with employees ensures rapid expertise development, alignment around decisions, and distribution of leadership and responsiveness. While organizations have been using communities for many years, it is only in the last few that executives see community structures as a new governance model for the ENTIRE organization. This year's data reveals both the growing breadth and depth of this operational integration.

Communities are being extended and integrated into more use cases. While External Communities still most often address customer support objectives, they also address an average of 3.4 different functional use cases. Internal Communities address even more – an average of 4.2 use cases. That diversity of use drives more complex structures, with 43% of Internal Communities structured as a network of many communities compared with only 25% of External Communities.

Top 5 Community Use Cases

Use Case	Internal Average	External Average
Collaboration	76%	
Community of Practice	72%	48%
Networking	70%	59%
Corporate Initiative	59%	
Community of Interest	56%	
Customer Support		71%
Marketing		45%
Innovation		42%

■ Internal Average ■ External Average

Cross-functional integration is often seen in formalized community performance goals for individuals outside of the community team. 45% of Advanced Community programs have

formalized cross-functional performance goals, while only 28% of Average Community programs do. Externally, it is most common for customer support, marketing, and product groups to have these goals. In contrast, internally, communications, learning & development, HR, and marketing are the most common functional areas with formal objectives.
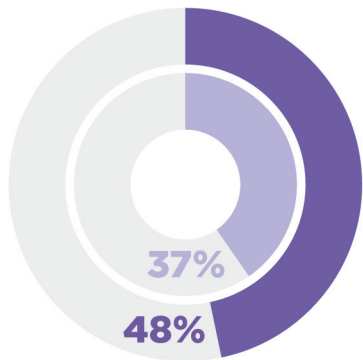
Community Skills Are Essential to Leadership

Managing communities is becoming a general leadership skill as communities and networks become pervasive inside and around our organizations. There is a significant increase in the number of community Centers of Excellence to support community management skill development. While community teams have been acting
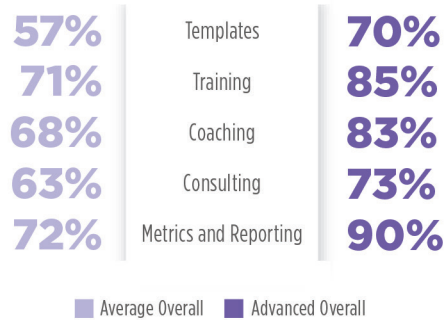
as support centers for individuals across organizations for years, in 2018 only 8% of research participants reported having a Centers of Excellence. This year, that number jumped to 28% for Average Community programs and 48% for Advanced Community programs. These Centers of Excellence provide metrics and reporting, training, coaching, consulting, and templates that are often delivered through communities of practice. We expect to see well-resourced Centers of Excellence become a defining characteristic of high-functioning community programs of the future.

The evolution of community programs introduces new challenges. Community teams now require business, program management, consulting, strategy, analytical skills, and the tactical skills of engaging, administering platforms, and content curation. Advanced Community teams are less likely to be teams of one and more likely to have roles like Directors of Community, Community Analyst, Community Strategist, and Engagement Specialist. However, 16% of communities still have no full-time community management staff, and 33% only have one full-time team member. Advanced Community teams average six full-time staff, who are more likely to fill specialized positions. This growth in roles is both a challenge and an opportunity for experienced community leaders, many of

Community Programs with Centers of Excellence

37%

48%

CoE Services

Average Overall		Advanced Overall
57%	Templates	70%
71%	Training	85%
68%	Coaching	83%
63%	Consulting	73%
72%	Metrics and Reporting	90%

■ Average Overall ■ Advanced Overall

Community Team Size

	5.7		7.3
Full-time	3.7		5.9
Part-time	2.0		1.4

■ Average Overall ■ Advanced Overall
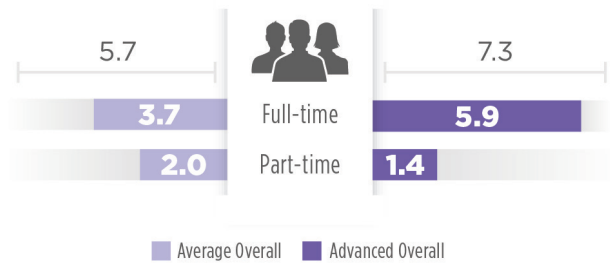
whom thrive as generalists. These community leaders are often well-suited to program management and director roles if they gain sufficient business and strategy skills. As programs mature, there will be more demand for community professionals with deep expertise in engagement, analytics, content, technology, program management, and/or business strategy.
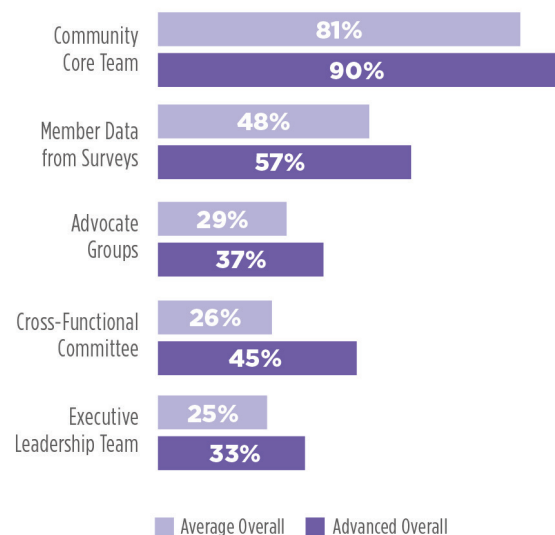
Critically, 61% of Advanced Community programs have formalized roles that are approved by HR – an indicator that community approaches are becoming normalized and essential to the organization. Only 34% of Average Community programs have formalized roles, which suggests a level of instability and uncertainty.

Systemic Inclusion Empowers Potential

Thriving communities ensure that all members have access, are seen, feel validated, and have the opportunity and support to lead. Inclusion is regularly rebalanced as communities grow and evolve. Transparency keeps understanding, expectations, and boundaries aligned so individuals can choose how they wish to participate based on their needs and interests. Advanced Community programs are significantly more likely to include key cross-functional stakeholders in decision-making. This structure comprises members, advocates, member leaders, internal cross-functional teams, and the organization's leadership team.
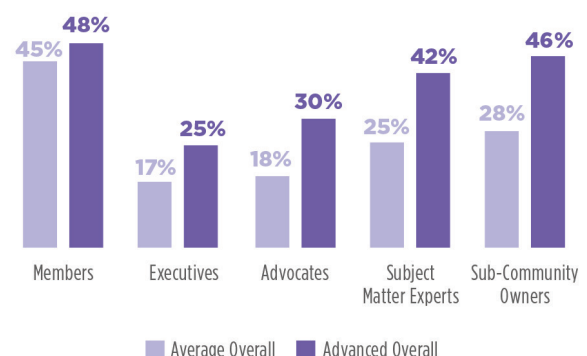
Broad inclusion ensures that decisions are informed by a variety of perspectives and

Inclusion of Stakeholders in Community Decision-Making

	Average Overall	Advanced Overall
Community Core Team	81%	90%
Member Data from Surveys	48%	57%
Advocate Groups	29%	37%
Cross-Functional Committee	26%	45%
Executive Leadership Team	25%	33%

■ Average Overall ■ Advanced Overall

with many stakeholders in mind. Including a diversity of perspectives encourages fewer and more broadly-applicable decisions. These broader guidelines distribute more power and authority to those closest to the work. A great example of this is when Mary Barra, CEO of GM, simplified a complex ten-page dress code into two words, "Dress Appropriately." This policy demonstrates trust in individuals, empowering them to make decisions and prompting them to think for themselves. Critical to this decision-making inclusion is access to training and support that reinforces community values.

Formal Community Training Offered to Stakeholders

	Average Overall	Advanced Overall
Members	45%	48%
Executives	17%	25%
Advocates	18%	30%
Subject Matter Experts	25%	42%
Sub-Community Owners	28%	46%

■ Average Overall ■ Advanced Overall

That access to training at all levels of the organization ensures alignment around values in a way that supports engagement and advocacy.

Inclusivity, support, and transparency require active alignment with, as well as the support of, senior executives and other stakeholders. Advanced Communities report more metrics to a broader variety of stakeholders. Advanced Communities are also more than twice as likely to track unique visits, questions, answers, searches, response times, and net promoter scores than Average Communities. These metrics represent the breadth of impact, value, quality, and sentiment – a comprehensive view of progress. Advanced Communities are likely to report to senior executives more frequently than Average Communities. 71% of Advanced Community teams report to senior executives, and 54% do so weekly or monthly. Only 45% of Average Communities report to senior executives with only 41% doing so weekly or monthly. This reporting pattern demonstrates the strategic visibility of communities and the inclusion of senior business leaders.

Top 5 Metrics Advanced Communities Report to Executives More Often than Average Communities

60%
Active Members

53%
Total Activity

43%
Unique Visitors

35%
Questions & Answers

34%
Net Promoter Score (NPS)
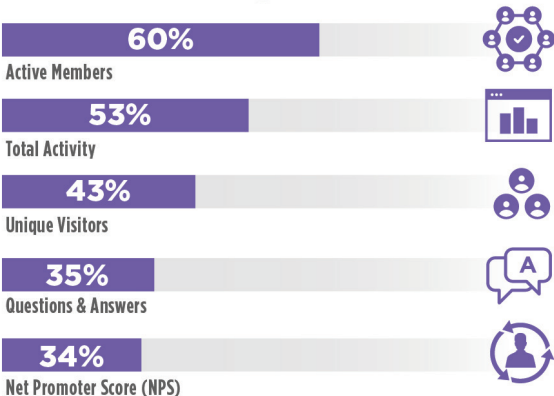
These webs of communications and decision-making channels require investment in community management, but that investment is richly rewarded. The potential unlocked by empowering a diverse network, aligned and synced by core principals, is enormous and correlates with community ROI and positive cultural and brand impact. It requires comfort in releasing decision-making control from the hierarchical bottleneck and making critical conversations transparent. More than giving up control, this leadership change requires a mindset shift that enables executives to viscerally understand that empowering others does not diminish but instead enhances their own value.

Operational Maturity Demonstrates Commitment

Communities are beginning to replace more rigid processes for functions where creativity and innovation are more critical than standards and production efficiency. This shift indicates that executives understand that leadership too needs to change. Leadership becomes less about structural control, force, and extrinsic incentives and more about creating energy, momentum, and commitment around a shared purpose. This structure prioritizes those who opt into the shared purpose and see their work as more than a transactional exchange. Because of this dynamic, leadership is open to anyone with motivation, influence, and access to the community.

This shift is reflected in Advanced Communities that are more likely to have dedicated and growing budgets, budget

approval moved into operating budgets, bigger community teams, and funded roadmaps. Average Community programs are less likely to have mature budget processes, see their budgets grow, or have funded roadmaps, and their budgets are more likely to be approved by exception. For Average 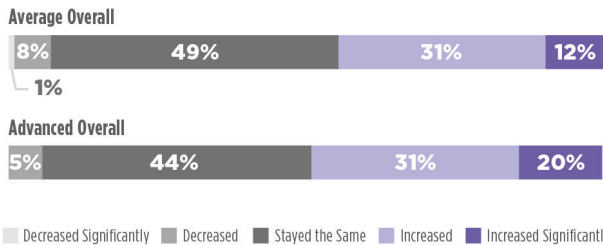Communities, this makes planning, investment, and hiring more challenging. 55% of Advanced Communities have dedicated budgets, but only 38% of Average Communities do.

Approval Level of Community Budget

Average Overall	17%	51%	32%
Advanced Overall	11%	48%	41%

■ Other ■ BOD or C-Level ■ Senior VP or VP

2020 Community Budget Growth

Average Overall

8%	49%	31%	12%

└ 1%

Advanced Overall

5%	44%	31%	20%

■ Decreased Significantly ■ Decreased ■ Stayed the Same ■ Increased ■ Increased Significantly
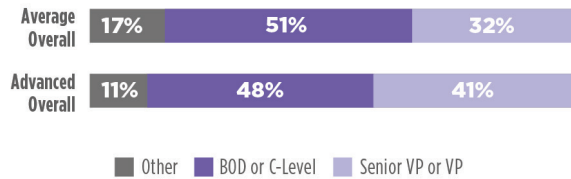
Notably, only 16% of Average Communities have funded roadmaps even though 38% include budget requests in strategies. 54% of Advanced Community programs include budget requests in strategies and are rewarded 41% of the time with funding. This success in funding suggests that the ability to measure strategy is a key factor in securing the investment required to deliver it.

The investment in infrastructure, management, integration, and programming

Communities with Funded Roadmaps
*Approved and funded community roadmap

Average Overall	16%
Advanced Overall	41%
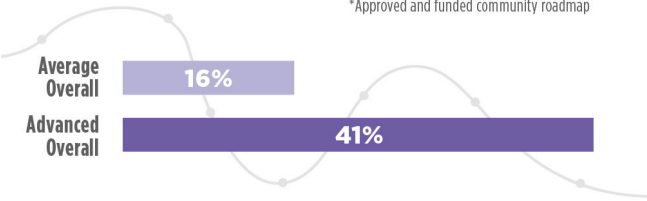
made by Advanced Communities is a potential explanation for why they are three times larger than Average Communities despite similar age and use case distribution. Commitment and investment translate into clear purpose, easy access, more training, and obvious benefits for members. By giving employees and customers motivation, access, ease, and rewards, Advanced Communities streamline and improve the employee and customer experience. This improvement in experience delivers higher productivity, innovation, and loyalty.

Empowered Cultures Seize Opportunity

Communities are the structure of broad and deep empowerment. They help individual members feel seen and heard. When they feel valued, members feel less vulnerable and are more likely to share their experiences, knowledge, and perspectives.

Culture Change Can Be Measured

Measuring the breadth and depth of engagement behaviors by the categories in the Community Engagement Framework™ allows community leaders to communicate how collaborative their culture is. Measuring culture allows it to be seen, understood, communicated clearly, and influenced. Gaps

and issues can be pinpointed, attended to, and tracked. Management has actionable data that points to progress in collaboration and trust. More strategically, this focus shifts from the production of more content to solving new challenges. This system becomes more productive, more flexible, and more innovative.

Community Engagement Profile

Average Overall	52%	25%	11%	7%	6%
Advanced Overall	51%	24%	11%	8%	6%

■ Inactive ■ Validate ■ Share ■ Ask & Answer ■ Explore
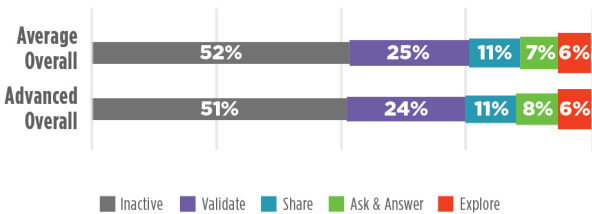
The power of communities is in their boundaries – attracting and often verifying members that have a strong interest in and expertise related to the community's shared purpose. This pull creates a distinguishable social environment with agreed-upon guidelines and scope. As people connect and build relationships, they extend their trust to the community as a whole. Thus, the volume of higher value engagement in well-managed communities tends to outstrip the value of engagement in open channels. The average community engagement profile has seemed to stabilize, with about 25% actively engaging versus passively consuming or not returning. This profile can change dramatically by use case, context, size, and member profile. Communities are immensely diverse, and as the discipline of community management matures, we see more consistent differentiation between uses cases. The most significant distinction between communities is between those developed for external/customer participants, and those focusing on internal/employee participants.

Active Engagement Creates Shared Value

High rates of engagement in communities propel generative value. Each member extracts more value from the community than they contribute to it; by connecting, validating others, sharing expertise, asking questions, and discussing challenges. As this engagement is captured, members access it by searching and browsing, and over time the information increases in relevancy and volume. This captured value drives down community costs per member over time as investment focuses less on generating value and more on curating it. Experienced community professionals know that the most active members create considerably more value than average members – and our data shows a 12:1 ratio between active and average member contributions. That contribution ratio is 15:1 for Advanced Communities who do a better job cultivating and rewarding active members.

42% of Advanced Communities have formal advocacy and member leadership programs compared with only 28% of Average Communities. These advocacy programs, like communities generally, require upfront investment in management but yield more

Annual Answers per Member

Average Members: .5 / .5

Active Members: 6 / 7.6

■ Average Overall ■ Advanced Overall
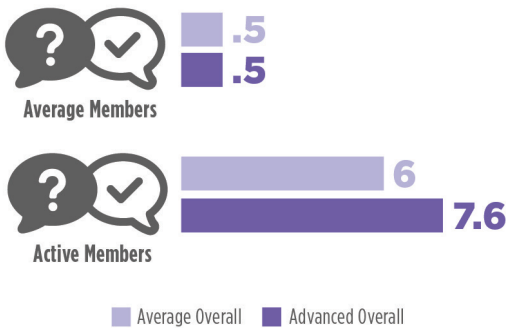
captured value more quickly. This rapid increase in value for new members may be one reason Advanced Communities are three times larger than Average Communities.
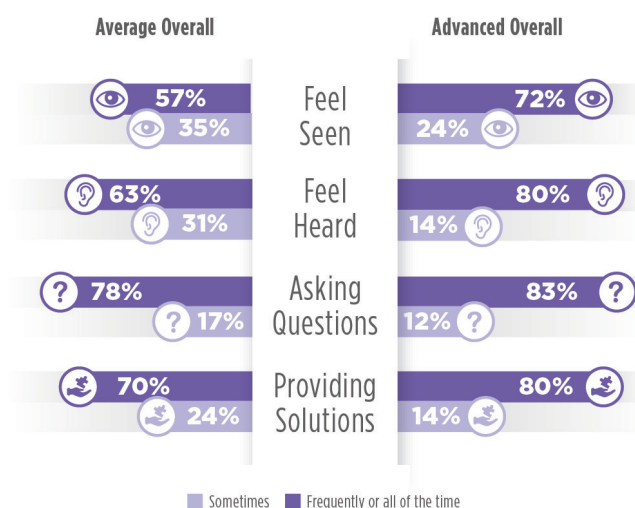
Community engagement supports every member's success by giving them access to the knowledge and value of the entire community. By supporting them in their work, it inspires their loyalty. It exposes people to new ideas, prompts product and service use, and rapidly surfaces shifting needs. Constant, iterative conversations help everyone understand quickly changing situations and adapt appropriately without a centralized directive. By changing how organizations change, communities are an invaluable strategic asset as markets churn and change abruptly.

Empowerment Motivates Contribution

Understanding the interplay of emotions, empowerment, and behaviors is where great community leaders excel. The best leaders craft cultures that validate individuals, encouraging and rewarding them for sharing their expertise and perspective. In turn, the transparency of sharing prompts connections with others who need and want their unique value. The validation and value exchanged between members reinforce individual confidence and empowerment. These exchanges create a positive feedback loop that sustains and increases engagement.

High-functioning communities start with a compelling shared purpose – a mission that is meaningful to both the community and

Members of Advanced Communities Are More Empowered

Average Overall		Advanced Overall
57% / 35%	Feel Seen	72% / 24%
63% / 31%	Feel Heard	80% / 14%
78% / 17%	Asking Questions	83% / 12%
70% / 24%	Providing Solutions	80% / 14%

■ Sometimes ■ Frequently or all of the time

its members. By validating, sharing, asking, answering, and exploring, the community creates a shared understanding of its opportunities and sets about addressing them. By doing this in a shared space, progress is transparent, solutions are consolidated, iteration happens quickly, and everyone benefits. The community generates innovation, and individuals learn, develop credibility, increase their influence, and garner opportunities. Everyone wins.

Communities Generate Positive Emotional Impact

The greatest fear in giving up control and enabling an environment of self-directed work and distributed decision-making is that it will devolve into chaos, damaging the brand, and leaving the organization exposed. Left without leadership, online communities can quickly become a place for self-promotion or conflict and, as a result, either uninteresting or anxiety-inducing. Intentionally- and well-managed communities are far from chaotic, however, and leave members feeling

confident, knowledgeable, supported, and empowered. Good community management is the difference. By intentionally cultivating and facilitating a community from the start, community managers reduce the risk of both nothing, and too much, happening. They are extraordinarily effective at encouraging valuable contributions, mitigating poor behavior, and reducing the need for moderation, saving the organization from headaches and unnecessary ongoing expense.

Well-managed communities have an overwhelmingly positive impact on culture and brand, with little downside risk. This positive impact does not mean that there is no conflict in communities. Conflict, however, is constructively resolved and used as a prompt to learn, align, and innovate.

The generative model successfully used by thriving community programs to deliver win-win-win value gives us a window into what is possible for organizations that are bold enough to rethink corporate governance, seizing the opportunity presented by community.

Community Impact on Culture & Brand Sentiment
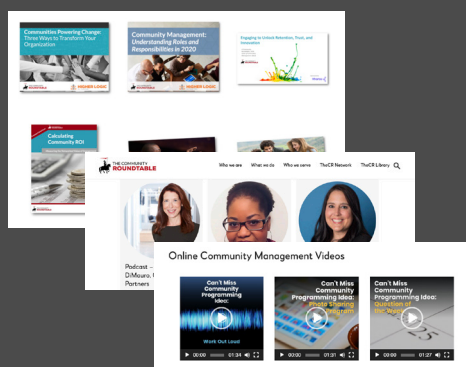
Average Overall — 52%, 70%, 18%

Advanced Overall — 65%, 85%, 20%

■ Positive   ■ Significantly Positive

No "Signficantly Negative" responses were found.

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THE COMMUNITY ROUNDTABLE

Recommendations for Executive Stakeholders:

Research Finding	Recommended Action
46% of Average Communities do not have an approved strategy.	❑ Ensure the community strategy is discussed, vetted, and approved.
78% of Average Communities cannot measure their strategy.	❑ Create a strategy with clear, actionable metrics.
49% of Average Community teams include one or fewer full-time professionals.	❑ Secure community resources to address engagement, technical, strategy, business, and content needs.
84% of Average Community teams lack a funded roadmap.	❑ Provide the resources to realize strategic goals.
Only 38% of Average Community programs have dedicated budgets.	❑ Commit to a dedicated community budget that ensures its success and sustainability.

Recommendations for Community Leaders:

Research Finding	Recommended Action
Advanced Communities are more likely to report Active Members, Total Activity, Unique Visitors, Questions and Answers, and Net Promoter Score (NPS).	❑ Track metrics that reveal breadth and depth of activity, value, and experience.
Only 31% of Average Community teams report to cross-functional stakeholders.	❑ Define and track how the community addresses cross-functional goals. Report this informally to stakeholders.
72% of Average Communities lack a formal advocacy and leadership program.	❑ Develop an advocacy program that encourages and rewards member leaders.
43% of Average Community platforms are not integrated with other channels or systems.	❑ Audit and identify other primary member channels and data sources. ❑ Secure commitment for integrations with business and technical stakeholders.
30% or fewer Average Community programs have formal training for multiple stakeholder groups.	❑ Develop formal community training for sub-community owners, subject matter experts, advocates, and executives.

Impact of the Global COVID-19 Crisis on Community Programs

The COVID-19 crisis is impacting a majority of community programs but responses are mixed. 12% of programs have significantly accelerated plans while 9% have significantly stalled plans. The rest are almost equally split between some acceleration, no change, or some stalled plans. Given the dramatically negative impact the crisis has had in many sectors, this is a relatively positive outlook for community teams, although it is unlikely to feel that way to anyone directly impacted.

Impact of COVID-19 Crisis on Community Plans

9%
26%
24%
28%
12%

- Significantly stalled plans
- Stalled plans
- Little or no change
- Accelerated some plans
- Significantly accelerated
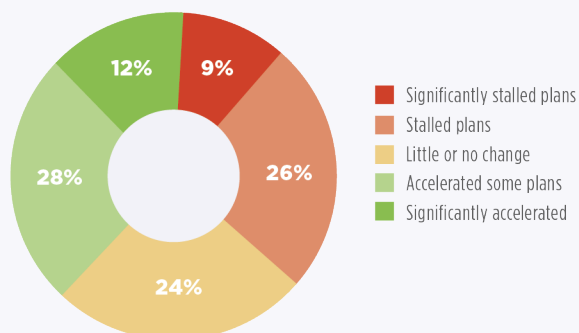
Not surprisingly, the hiring outlook is more tempered with 20% of programs putting hiring on hold and 10% of programs reporting lay-offs or expected lay-offs. 14% of community programs are still hiring or expecting to hire, especially contract staff that preserves flexibility.

> **The community program is dead in favor of panic sales and product pushes.**

Anxiety is the norm for a majority of community professionals including 14% who feel very anxious or paralyzed. This is not surprising given the instability in the economy, the concerns for the health and care of loved ones, and the potential impact of the crisis on personal finances.

Members of TheCR Network reported striking differences. TheCR Network members are 29% more likely to be accelerating or significantly accelerating their plans, 3x less likely to have stalled or cancelled plans, and are 6x more likely to be adding resources than the survey average. Members of TheCR Network are 2x more likely than average to feel empowered, proactive, and energized and a majority of them feel positive instead of anxious. This may be because members of TheCR Network tend to be more experienced and in more senior roles, both of which give them more perceived control. It may be that members of TheCR Network have a higher level of strategic support. It may be that membership in TheCR Network community empowers them with support and resources. Regardless it is notable that anxiety and stalled plans are not necessarily the default across the community space – and plenty of programs are seeing increased interest, use, and support as their organizations transition to digital engagement as a primary channel of collaboration.

> **Community has become a life line for the organization. It was already a key initiative for 2020 but is now significantly more essential to the our business strategy.**

External Communities

ELEVATE THE

CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE

- **Customer Loyalty**
- **Lower Support Costs**
- **Awareness & Branding**
- **Product Improvements**
- **Communications Efficiency**

ADVANCED COMMUNITIES....

Generate Higher ROI:

6130% **9888%**

Invest More to Improve Impact:

$115 **$697** $127 **$822**

...HAVE SUPPORTIVE & ADAPTIVE STRUCTURES...

Higher Dedicated Budgets:

$ 42%
56%

Measurable Strategies:

Key Metrics/KPIs Strategic Objective Roadmap
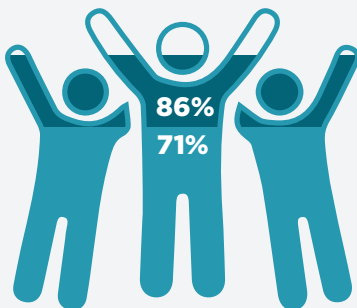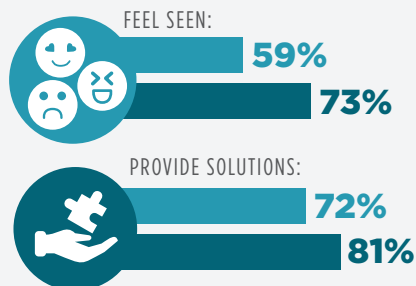
56% More Resources

71% HR-Approved Roles

...THAT ORCHESTRATE CUSTOMER ENGAGEMENT & LOYALTY.

Overwhelmingly Positive Impact on Brand Sentiment:

86%
71%

Members Feel Empowered:

FEEL SEEN:
59%
73%

PROVIDE SOLUTIONS:
72%
81%

Resulting in 20% More Active Members.

...Success results in **150%** more **FUNDED ROADMAPS.**

Average External   Advanced External

External Communities Elevate the
CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE

External, customer-facing communities are the original way organizations used online communities for business goals. Initially, the technology industry used them to provide self-service support because they work particularly well for sharing complex code and specific instructions. As more organizations adopted community approaches, they realized external communities not only lowered customer support costs, but also generated new ideas, drove product adoption, and exposed brand advocates to buyers. This transition changed the role of communities from tactical cost centers to top-line customer enablers that have a significant impact on revenue and profitability.

Community focus has evolved from those early days. Increasing customer support efficiency is no longer the dominant business objective communities serve – customer loyalty has taken the top spot. Communities are uniquely suited to address the complexity of the customer's experience by aggregating information, resources, experts, and peers across the customer lifecycle. Great communities become the primary gathering spot and center of gravity for an organization's market. They generate a wealth of data that brings real-time market intelligence into the organization and creates a connection to top-line financial impact.

Advanced External Communities – the research segment with 100% approved, operational, and measurable strategies – reveal how successful communities operate. While many External Communities impact a variety of business outcomes, Advanced External Communities seem to focus on and prioritize two: customer loyalty and lower support costs. This focus positively affects both of these areas, in addition to having a higher than average impact on a range of other use cases. In short, focus drives overall success.
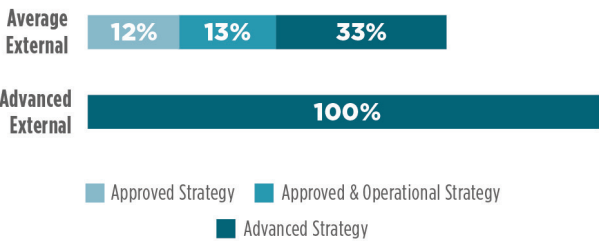
Advanced Strategies Propel Value

Only 33% of External Communities have measurable strategies – ones that clearly state what success looks like and how it is tracked. Programs without these metrics have a much harder time focusing the way Advanced External Communities can because of this gap. If strategic focus drives overall success, the ability to measure matters. Advanced External Community strategies are more likely to include business objectives, roadmap requirements, financial projections, and defined use cases. Strategically aligned reports with clear progress on objectives provide stakeholders with easy to understand value.

Strategic clarity is often rewarded with commitments and investment. The majority of Advanced External Communities have approved roadmaps, and nearly half of those roadmaps are funded. For External Communities generally, only 19% benefit from resourced roadmaps. While Advanced External Communities continue to thrive, this investment gap will keep most External Community programs from developing the strategies and measurement they need to prove their value. For too many community programs, a roadmap – with committed investment – is still the exception. Leading community programs, however, are demonstrating why this matters and how it correlates with the ability to generate value.

Business Outcomes Connected to External Communities

Average External		Advanced External
67%	Customer Loyalty	77%
48%	Lower Support Costs	67%
47%	Awareness and Branding	40%
32%	Product Improvements	37%
28%	Communications Efficiency	28%
35%	Product Usage	28%
27%	Quality Improvement	28%
21%	Innovation	23%
20%	Revenue Growth	23%
23%	Productivity and Efficiency	23%

External Community Strategic Maturity

Average External	12%	13%	33%
Advanced External	100%		

■ Approved Strategy ■ Approved & Operational Strategy
■ Advanced Strategy

Communities with Funded Roadmaps

*Approved and funded community roadmap

Average External	19%
Advanced External	47%

While Advanced External Communities are strategically mature, they tend to be slightly younger than all External Communities and three times larger. They generate more value per member because their active members contribute 30% more answers than Average External Communities. The ratio of accessed answers to new answers in Advanced

External Communities is 33:1, increasing the reuse and value of each captured answer. For Average Communities, the ratio of accessed answers to new answers is lower at 27:1, which limits redundant conversations. If the value of an answer is $100 in time saved, that represents $600 more in value for every answer. If a community receives 10 new answers a month, that increased reuse of answers creates an additional $72,000/year in value. Advanced External Communities are larger and they do better at maximizing their value, resulting in higher ROI.

External Ability to Calculate Value and ROI

ROI

6130%	9888%
Average External	Advanced External

Thorough strategies, measurable objectives, ability to articulate value, and the advantage of funded roadmaps all correlate with one another. While it is impossible to statistically pinpoint the primary driver, experience tells us that a mature strategy – one with a business plan – is the best place to start.

Investment in Operations Expands Impact

Operational infrastructure reinforces strategy and aligns organizational structures, which removes friction and increases capacity. This infrastructure 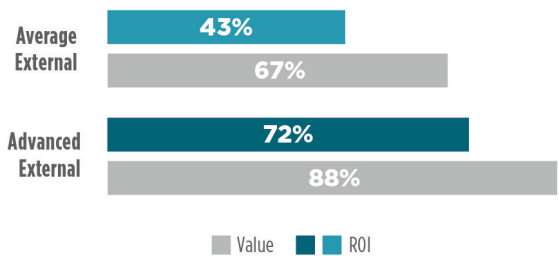also aligns individual motivations, promotes strategic behaviors, and creates supportive prompts. It translates strategy into tactics. Because operational infrastructure is typically expensive, it is only developed and maintained once an approach is proven. Comparing Advanced External Communities to Average External Communities shows the impact operational investments make.

Advanced External Communities are more likely to have mature operational elements like policies, integrated technology, frequent reporting, leadership programs, and formal training. They are more likely to have dedicated budgets than Average External Communities, and significantly more likely than the Overall Average to have them. Dedicated budgets set an expectation of ongoing funding and provide more spending flexibility, which empowers community teams to align resources with current needs. Teams with dedicated budgets are larger and have more formalized roles, which allows

External Dedicated Budget
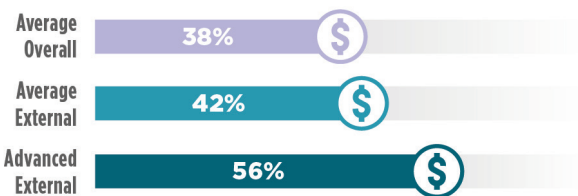
for increased stakeholder collaboration, advocacy programming, and mature metrics collection and reporting.

As a result, fewer Advanced External Communities receive budget approval by boards of directors or c-level executives, who tend to approve special projects rather than operational budgets. Most are approved by vice presidents or senior vice presidents, who are more likely to understand the strategic benefits of communities as well as their operational needs. Advanced External Communities prioritize community management resources more than technology in their budgets. This investment prioritization is a consistent trend in our research – programs with a solid strategy, funded roadmaps, and dedicated budgets tend to value and support community management.

External Budget Allocation
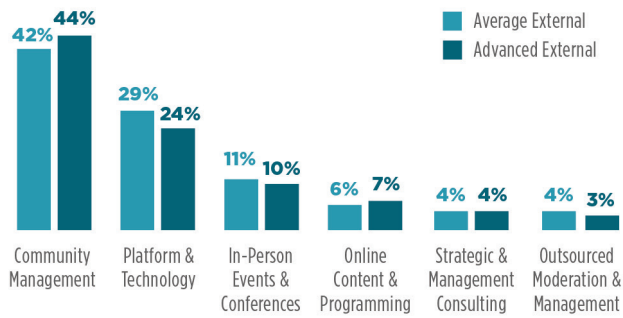
Inclusion is Explicit and Formalized

Communities are powerful when they empower and engage individuals, increasing the capacity to tackle meaningful work. Each community member who is empowered to act and feels supported is more likely to contribute, and Advanced Communities are explicit in their inclusion. This is best demonstrated by their investment in defined processes, roles, and benefits. Incremental investment in governance yields compounding value that offsets customer support and marketing costs. Advanced External Communities spend an average of $1,381 annually on each active member (those contributing vs. those passively consuming) and see a 768% ROI. Average External Communities spend $1,094 annually per active member and see a 485% ROI. While both are great investments, the data suggests that increasing investments to support, include, and engage members maximizes financial returns.

The increased investment is seen in the size of Advanced External Community teams, 51% of which added community staff in the last year. These communities have, on average, about

Executive Level Approving Budget

six full-time team members. In comparison, Average External teams only saw 43% growth over the past year, and their community teams are relatively small. 71% of Advanced External Communities have their community roles approved by HR compared to only 42% of Average External Communities. This bigger team size suggests that the roles on an Advanced External Community team are better understood, supported, and valued by their organizations.

External Community Team Size

	Average External	Advanced External
	5.2	7.1
Full-time	3.7	5.8
Part-time	1.5	1.3

■ Average External ■ Advanced External

Given bigger teams, it's no surprise that Advanced External Communities see more of every type of community role on their teams than the Average External Community. Typically, community roles are seen as general roles. Advanced External Communities are more likely to have Community Engagement Specialists, Community Strategist, Platform Administrator, Community Analysts, and Director of Community roles. This trend reveals a different picture of community positions; only two of the five, Director of Community and Community Manager are general roles. All the other roles are for specialists in engagement, strategy, technology, and analytics. Notably, not one in this list of priorities is a content specialist,

External Community Team Roles

Average External	Role	Advanced External
82%	Community Manager	85%
55%	Moderator	63%
46%	Community Engagement	58%
41%	Community Strategist	58%
36%	Community Systems/Platform	53%
31%	Community Analyst	50%
37%	Director of Community	50%
35%	Content Specialist	37%
22%	Subject Matter Expert	23%
20%	Event Planner	23%
12%	Community Executive	18%
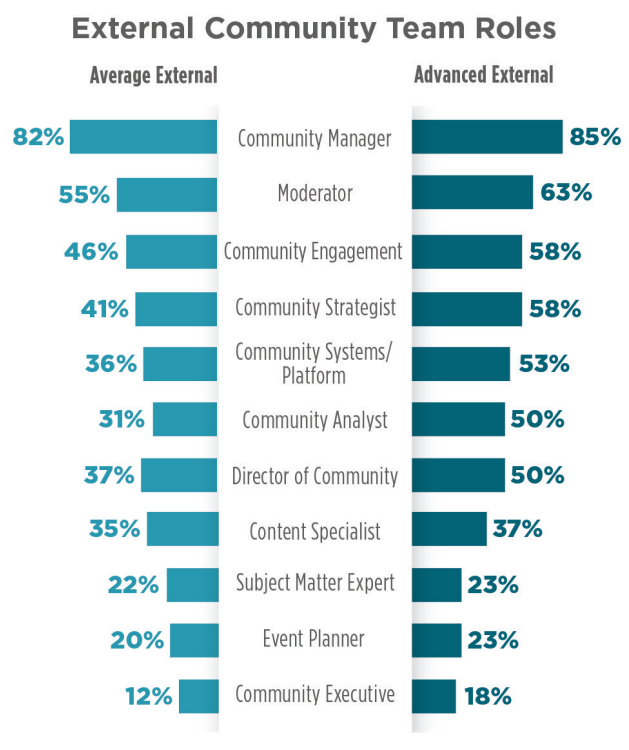
and while that role does exist on some teams, it is not common.

Over 50% of External Communities sit in either Customer Support, Marketing, or Product groups with a smaller handful in External Communications, Operations, Learning & Development, Knowledge Management, and about 10% operating as an independent department. Regardless of their functional area, Advanced External Communities report out more often to all stakeholder groups, except boards, which is likely because fewer of them rely on boards for budget approval. Of particular note is how much more commonly Advanced External Communities report to senior and cross-functional executives, ensuring that decision-makers have a broad understanding of community performance. Advanced External Communities not only

report to a more diverse set of stakeholders, but they are also more likely to include a variety of groups in their community decisions. This inclusion of both inbound inputs and outbound communication requires an investment of time and business skills, and many Average External Community teams likely just don't have the capacity to spare.

Investment in inclusion is also seen in the commitment of Advanced External Communities to formal advocacy programs. These programs support and reward one or more segments of community leaders. Many communities have informal advocacy programs that are active, vocal, and driven by relationships between community teams and community members. For teams with more sophisticated strategies, these programs are formalized, with consistent cultivation and recognition. 47% of Advanced External Communities have formalized these programs and defined specific benefits for the individuals within them. The most

Reporting Channels

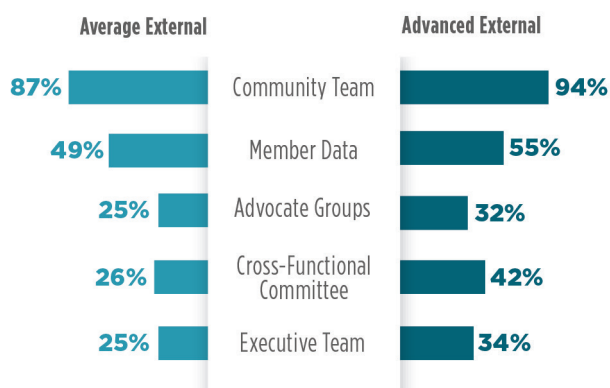|	Average External	Advanced External
Direct Supervisors	78%	90%
Senior Executives	49%	73%
Cross-Functional Executives	35%	47%
Community Members	16%	24%
Professional Development Teams	19%	23%
Board of Directors	16%	15%
No Regular Reporting	11%	2%

■ Average External ■ Advanced External

Top Benefits of Advocacy Programs

Average External		Advanced External
68%	Visual Recognition	78%
57%	Feedback on Community Features	67%
61%	Access to Community Team	65%
52%	Private Collaboration Space	61%
51%	Early Feedback on Product/Services	55%
45%	Advanced Access to Information	53%
38%	Invitations to Exclusive Events	49%
40%	Feedback on Community Roadmap	45%

Inclusiveness of Community Decision-Making

Average External		Advanced External
87%	Community Team	94%
49%	Member Data	55%
25%	Advocate Groups	32%
26%	Cross-Functional Committee	42%
25%	Executive Team	34%

Maturity of Advocacy and Member Leadership Program

	Formal	Formal & Multi-tiered
Average External	25%	9%
Advanced External	32%	15%

■ Formal ■ Formal & Multi-tiered

popular benefits include visual recognition, community team access, feedback on community features, access to the community team, private collaboration spaces, and input into product decisions. Like the best community strategies, these advocacy and member leadership programs provide benefits to the community as a whole, by distributing leadership, providing leadership development, and offering leadership opportunities. This win-win approach costs organizations more per member but also increases member contributions and overall ROI. Investment in community leadership development is an excellent example of how inclusion generates value.

Metrics and Technology Reinforce Value

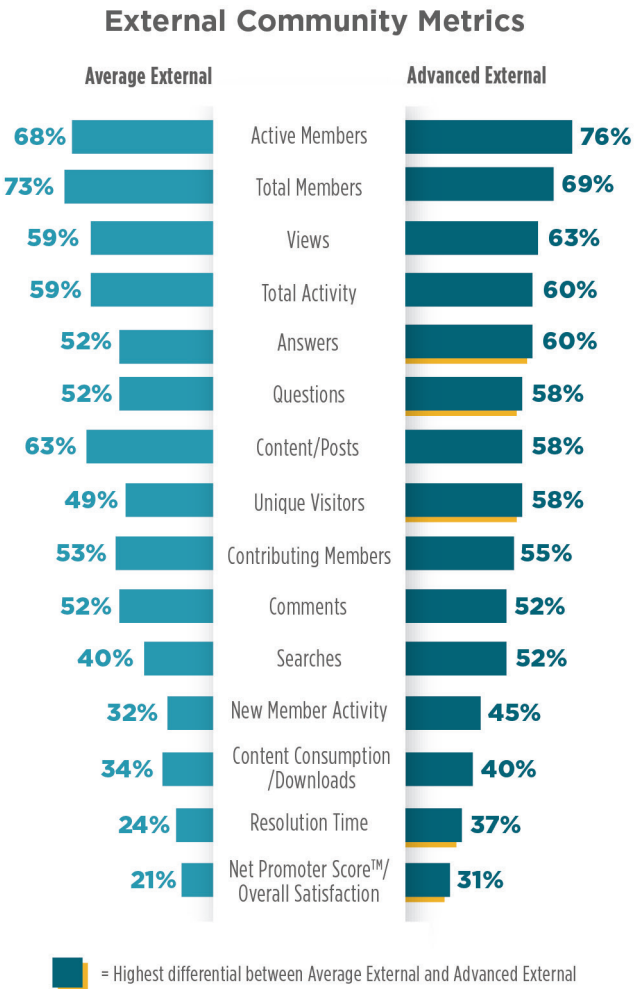Metrics are a powerful way to help everyone see community value, especially when metrics can clearly connect to improvements in the business model and the customer experience. When metrics show that a community improves the business model but not the customer experience, the community is likely seen as a cost-containment measure. While worthwhile, investment in cost containment is rigorously analyzed for effectiveness, and any new investment becomes challenging to justify. When metrics show that a community improves the customer experience but does not improve financial or business impact, investment in the community can also not be justified financially.

For too long, community and engagement metrics focused on activity volumes without connecting them to business value. This

External Community Metrics

	Average External		Advanced External	
Active Members	68%		76%	
Total Members	73%		69%	
Views	59%		63%	
Total Activity	59%		60%	
Answers	52%		60%	
Questions	52%		58%	
Content/Posts	63%		58%	
Unique Visitors	49%		58%	
Contributing Members	53%		55%	
Comments	52%		52%	
Searches	40%		52%	
New Member Activity	32%		45%	
Content Consumption /Downloads	34%		40%	
Resolution Time	24%		37%	
Net Promoter Score™/ Overall Satisfaction	21%		31%	

■ = Highest differential between Average External and Advanced External

disconnect is starting to change as Advanced External Communities increase their focus on strategic value. Looking at the metrics Advanced External Communities report suggests that decision-makers are more sophisticated about understanding business impact. The five metrics they are more likely to report are Net Promoter Score/NPS, Answers, Questions, Resolution Time, and Unique Visitors. Broadly, these five metrics look at the breadth of impact, the value of engagement, and impact on the customer experience, giving executives a well-rounded but straightforward set of metrics to understand the value of communities.

When community metrics focus on value and experience, so too do community platforms. Integrating platforms with customer engagement channels and business data systems is critical to understand the value of the customer experience. Advanced External Communities prioritize customer data and business system integration and its importance in decision-making and management. Advanced External Communities have an average of 3.2 integrations compared to 2.5 for Average External Communities. For those that do integrate, the most popular integrations are with Single Sign-on/Identity, CRM, and content

this study listed their platform as "other," which includes a wide variety of small and open-source platforms. The external community platforms used most by research respondents are Facebook Groups, Higher Logic, Khoros, Salesforce Community Cloud, Vanilla Forums, and Verint.

Average External Communities gave their platform vendors an NPS score of -24. For Advanced Communities, a -16 NPS score showed some improvement. Community teams struggled the most with community analytics and event management functionality. 14% of Average External Communities and 19% of Advanced External Communities have plans to migrate over the coming year. As communities become mature, expectations increase for technology and vendors. The maturity of community programs also reveals new opportunities to deliver community value – one that vendors will be interested in pursuing.

Maturity of External Community Platforms

	A dedicated space that is integrated with other engagement channels	A dedicated space that is integrated with business systems	A dedicated space that is integrated with other channels and with business systems
Average External	13%	26%	19%
Advanced External	8%	34%	27%

Average Platform Integrations

Average External
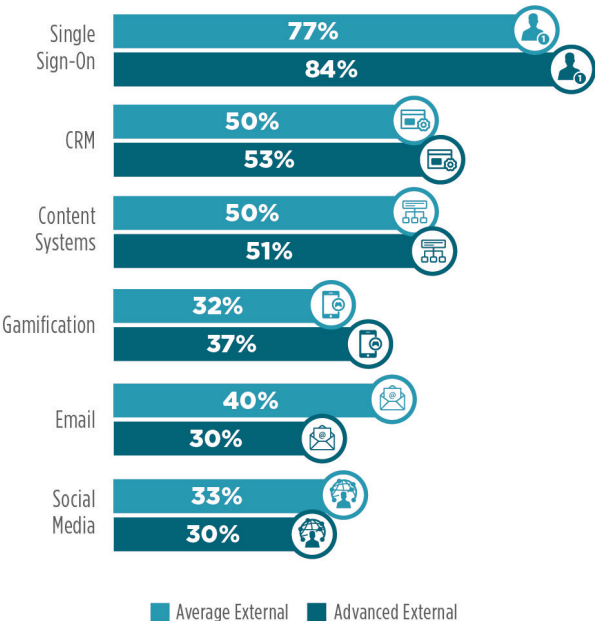# 2.5

Advanced External
3.2

management systems. These integrations make it easier for the community teams to do their job - to see, understand, and manage the community. They also make customer engagement easier by linking activities on the community platform to other communications channels used by the community.

The options for community technology are increasing as more customer- and market-facing platforms add group and discussion features. The largest cohort of communities in

External Community Platform Integrations

	Average External	Advanced External
Single Sign-On	77%	84%
CRM	50%	53%
Content Systems	50%	51%
Gamification	32%	37%
Email	40%	30%
Social Media	33%	30%

> In the past few months of 2020, numerous organizations around the globe had to operate virtually. Almost overnight, workforces had to adapt quickly to working remotely, using digital collaboration tools, meeting exclusively via video conference, all while maintaining a new work-life balance. Canadian Standards Association already had a well-established practice of being able to work digitally and asynchronously because of our online community; it took some getting used to for some. But by mid-March, all that changed. Work-from-home began, and the community saw an explosion of activity. There was a 300% increase in active users, 400% more participation in the form of views, comments, and sharing, and an 800% increase in people creating new content. Very quickly the community went from being a secondary channel to a primary channel, rising to meet these new challenges and helping CSA adapt quickly to dramatic changes in the way we work.
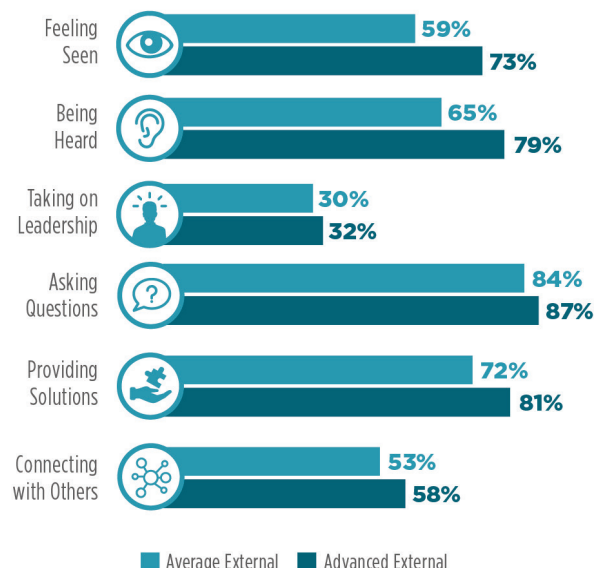
PETER BROADLEY
COMMUNITY MANAGER, CSA GROUP

Empowered Customers Animate Brand Value

Being seen and heard are the most potent value communities deliver to individuals. Communities actively empower members by helping customers feel seen and heard because they actually are seen and heard. Customers are assured of their value because the organization values them, not just their transactional importance. Customers in these communities feel, more often, that they have something to contribute. Organizations supported by these communities find that customer contributions are not just helpful but essential. Being seen and heard opens the door for the development of shared valued and a positive brand impact, the "halo effect" generated by great communities.

Member Empowerment in External Communities

Frequently or All of the Time:

	Average External	Advanced External
Feeling Seen	59%	73%
Being Heard	65%	79%
Taking on Leadership	30%	32%
Asking Questions	84%	87%
Providing Solutions	72%	81%
Connecting with Others	53%	58%

■ Average External   ■ Advanced External
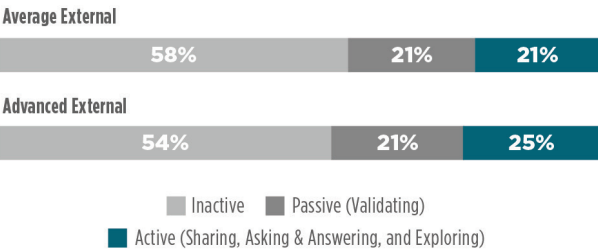
Advanced External Communities do a markedly better job of helping members feel seen and heard. Not surprisingly, these communities also have a higher percentage of members feeling empowered to provide solutions than Average External Communities. When a member of an Average External Community shifts from a passive recipient of information to an active participant, their activity increases by more than 10x. Their ROI – the return they get for the time they invest – increases by over 200%. This makes investing in advocacy and member leadership programs a no brainer.

External Community Engagement Rates

Average External

58%	21%	21%

Advanced External

54%	21%	25%

■ Inactive ■ Passive (Validating)
■ Active (Sharing, Asking & Answering, and Exploring)

Engagement profiles for Advanced External Communities are only slightly better than for Average External Communities. Critically, however, that increase is in active members – those that are 10x more valuable. Because Advanced External Communities have 300% more members who benefit from that activity, this difference is significant. The investments Advanced External Communities make in community management, inclusive governance, sophisticated metrics, and integrated platforms, not only pay for themselves but also increase the value of each member, completing a virtuous repeating cycle.

Recommendations for Executive Stakeholders:

Research Finding	Recommended Action
67% of External Communities lack an Advanced Strategy.	❑ Define community success metrics.
Only 19% of External Communities have a funded roadmap.	❑ Ensure community teams have the resources to be successful.
58% of External Communities lack dedicated budgets.	❑ Commit to a dedicated community budget that ensures its success and sustainability.
Advanced External Community teams have 53% more full-time professionals.	❑ Secure community resources to address engagement, technical, strategy, business, and content needs.
Only 50% of External Communities integrate with CRM systems.	❑ Fund integration, so value and impact can be more easily measured.

Recommendations for Community Leaders:

Research Finding	Recommended Action
35% of External Community programs lack a community roadmap.	❑ Define the initiatives and programs required to meet community objectives.
Only 42% of External Community teams have roles approved by HR.	❑ Define community job descriptions and initiate conversations with HR stakeholders.
67% of External Communities lack formal advocacy programs.	❑ Develop an advocacy program that encourages and rewards member leaders.
Advanced External Communities are more likely to track resolution time, Net Promoter Score™, and New Member Activity.	❑ Consider tracking resolution time, Net Promoter Score™, and New Member Activity.
Only 49% of External Community teams report to senior executives.	❑ Develop an easy-to-share strategic dashboard that highlights community value.

Internal Communities

REVEAL

UNTAPPED POTENTIAL

Delivering Complex Business Outcomes:

- Culture & Organizational Change **54%**
- Communications Efficiency **49%**
- Awareness & Branding **43%**
- Productivity **35%**
- Innovation **27%**

Supporting Broad Use Cases:

Collaboration   **Community of Practice**   **Networking**

But are Underused:

<1 Answer/Year → **2020** → **7 Successful Searches/Year**

POOR OPERATIONAL SUPPORT LIMITS SUCCESS...

22% Have NO Full-Time Staff Members

40% Have ONE Full-Time Resource

Average Internal Team Staff: **2.8**

APPROVED

Only **24%** Have HR-Approved Community Roles

80% Lack Leadership Programs

Only **30%** have a **DEDICATED BUDGET** & only **11%** have **FUNDED ROADMAPS.**

...DESPITE TANTALIZING EVIDENCE OF IMPACT.

Positive ROI: **1,967%**

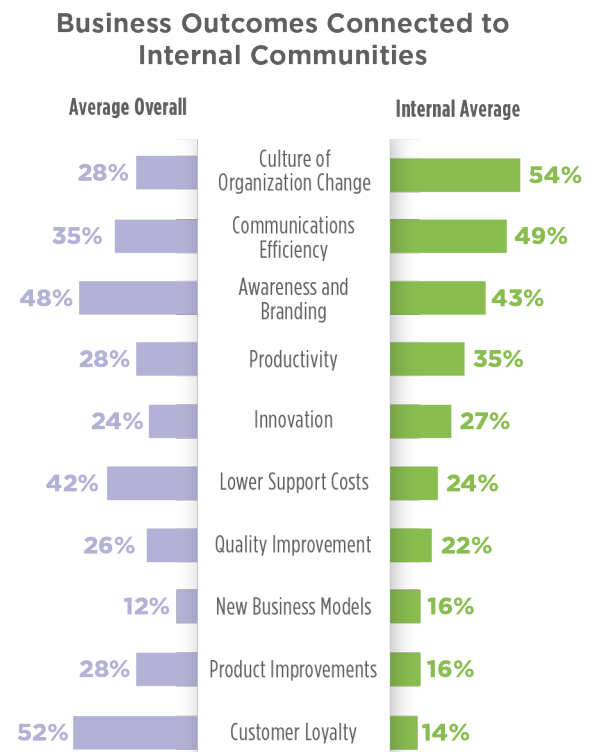**20%** More Active Members

Members Feel Connected & Empowered to Lead:

57% Invest in Centers of Excellence

Internal Communities
# REVEAL UNTAPPED
POTENTIAL

Communities have the potential to change the way organizations work, becoming engines of agility, alignment, and innovation. Thriving internal communities empower employees to connect and lead, and many can link performance directly to business outcomes. Communities are also changing how organizations change. By distributing leadership, including stakeholders, and empowering individuals, communities become agile and adaptive operating structures – something every organization needs.

Internal communities are much more than change agents. The most successful deliver improved communications efficiency, awareness and branding, productivity, and innovation. Why then can only 39% of Internal Communities directly connect their performance to business results? Why can only 26% measure their ROI?

While some Internal Communities have shown that measuring business outcomes, value, and ROI is possible; the vast majority are still not able to translate community

Business Outcomes Connected to Internal Communities

| Average Overall		Internal Average
28%	Culture of Organization Change	54%
35%	Communications Efficiency	49%
48%	Awareness and Branding	43%
28%	Productivity	35%
24%	Innovation	27%
42%	Lower Support Costs	24%
26%	Quality Improvement	22%
12%	New Business Models	16%
28%	Product Improvements	16%
52%	Customer Loyalty	14%

performance into business and financial terms. Calculating community ROI using The Community Roundtable's model with survey data shows that Internal Communities have an ROI of 1,967%. While this is positive and encouraging, it is considerably lower than the ROI of Average Communities. This lower than average ROI is consistent with the untapped potential we see in other data. Internal Communities are, for the most part, not integrated into daily or even weekly workflows of most organizations that have them. The opportunities to accelerate value and transform the ways organizations work is vast.

Internal Community ROI

Average Overall — 4,530%
Internal Average — 1,967%
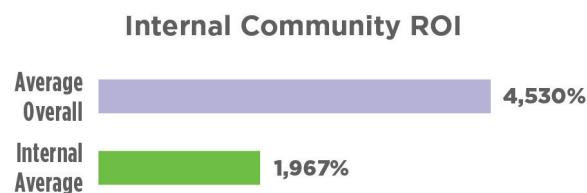
Based on Average Monthly Internal:
Program Costs = $26,655
New Answers = 507
Accessed Answers = 6,510
Value of an Answer = $151

Ability to Calculate Value and ROI

Average Overall
Value — 62%
ROI — 37%
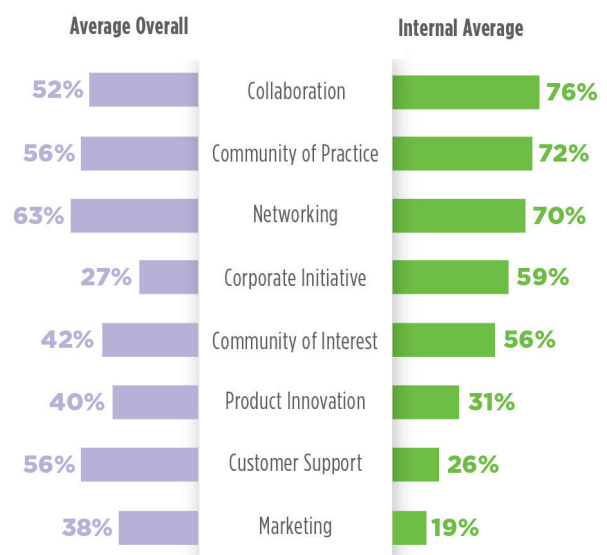
Internal Average
Value — 55%
ROI — 26%
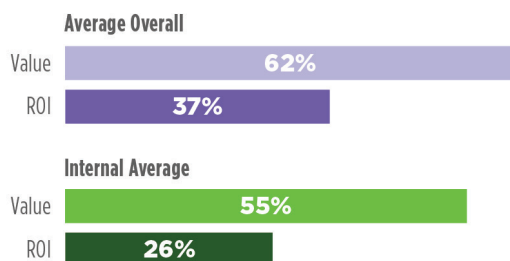
Potential is Thwarted by Low Adoption and Strategic Gaps

Employees influence organizational performance all day, every day. Data reveals that Internal Community members contribute less than one answer per year and access only seven. If communities supported the way people worked, this rate could be for a month, a week, a day, or even an hour. The rate of adoption and use of Internal Communities is anemic yet holds intriguing opportunities.

When Internal Communities are used, they cultivate new behaviors that streamline workflows, connect colleagues across silos, improve quality, and change culture. Internal Communities support broad communication and work behaviors that apply to every individual and function within an organization. However, most employees and leaders do not understand how communities can improve their work, nor are they compelled to explore.

Internal Community Use Cases

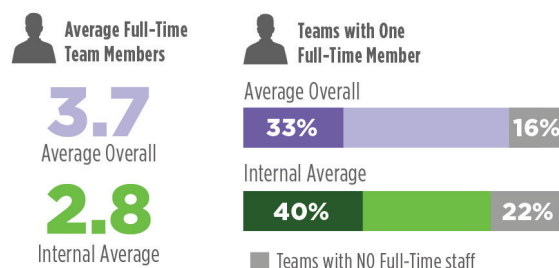| Average Overall		Internal Average
52%	Collaboration	76%
56%	Community of Practice	72%
63%	Networking	70%
27%	Corporate Initiative	59%
42%	Community of Interest	56%
40%	Product Innovation	31%
56%	Customer Support	26%
38%	Marketing	19%

The challenge with community adoption is translating the compelling impact of communities in a way that motivates stakeholders and provides them with the support and rewards to change behaviors. The groups that most often include community teams – Internal Communications, Knowledge Management, IT, and Learning & Development – don't typically have the consulting, business analysis skills, or capacity to do this work. This lack of capacity in consulting, education, and translation skills is throttling adoption and slowing the potential stream of impact to a drip.

Annual Value-Add and Value-Gain for Internal Community Members

<1 Answer/Year   2020   7 Successful Searches/Year

Internal Community teams are struggling. 62% consist of one or fewer full-time staff, which is woefully inadequate. Internal Community teams are underfunded, under-resourced, and are facing overwhelming challenges and opportunities. This lack of support suggests a lack of strategic guidance and 81% of Internal Communities lack measurable strategies. While many Internal Communities have approved strategies, only 19% translate their objectives into metrics. Without understanding what success looks like and having the ability to spot it, success is elusive and frustrating to both those tasked with success and those hoping for it.
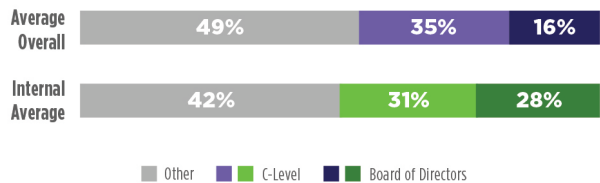
Internal Community Team Size

Average Full-Time Team Members

3.7 Average Overall

2.8 Internal Average

Teams with One Full-Time Member

Average Overall
33%   16%

Internal Average
40%   22%

■ Teams with NO Full-Time staff

Measurement is critical for community teams to secure alignment and prioritize work. Without it, no one knows when progress is made or when it stalls. When stakeholders can see the impact, they can justify budget, advocate for the community, communicate progress, and collaborate with others. In the absence of measurable strategies, stakeholders must invest on faith and few have the latitude to do so. 28% of Internal Community budgets are approved at the board of directors level. While that exposure is helpful, it demonstrates that budgets for Internal Communities are exceptions, not standard operating investments. As exceptions, budgets are vulnerable, and they are less likely to be integrated into the governance of the organization. The conspicuous lack of funding for roadmaps reveals the ambivalent and vulnerable nature of Internal Community programs and suggests that community teams have little operational support. In contrast, 47% of Advanced External Communities have approved and funded roadmaps – giving them the tangible support and resources they need to make decisions and move forward confidently.
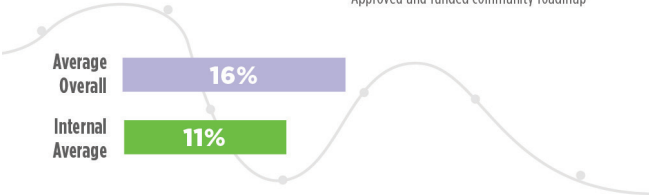
Funding is critical to address the strategic and operational shortfalls we see in Internal Community programs. On the strategic side, it is notable that the most significant gaps between Internal Communities and Average Communities are key metrics, community roadmaps, and ROI projections. These are all elements that would allow executive stakeholders to understand the costs and benefits of success. Investing the time and resources to articulate value and develop metrics is a critical milestone on the road to valuable, productive, and generative communities.

Elements of Community Strategy

= Highest differential between Average Overall and Average Internal

Executive Level Approving Community Budget

Average Overall	49%	35%	16%
Internal Average	42%	31%	28%

☐ Other ☐ C-Level ☐ Board of Directors

Communities with Funded Roadmaps

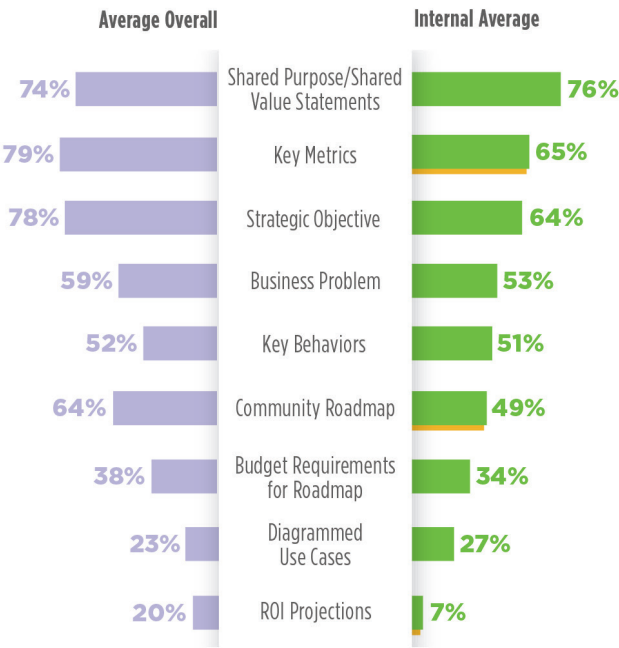*Approved and funded community roadmap

Average Overall	16%
Internal Average	11%

Underinvestment in Management Hampers Impact

Accelerating the transformative impact of communities requires changes to operational infrastructure, leadership, management, and performance measurement. These changes require considerable investment, led by a team of community professionals to incorporate community approaches into core operational processes in HR, IT, finance, and legal functions. This core community team needs strategists and analysts. It requires technical, content, and engagement specialists who train, coach, support and reinforce the integration of the communities into workflows. This team fosters communication best practices while also aligning infrastructure and experiences. The community team effectively transitions from directly doing the work of community management to building the organization's community management capacity while managing standards and infrastructure. They become Centers of Excellence providing services and supporting teams across the organization.

57% of Internal Communities report having Centers of Excellence. The majority of Internal Community teams, however, have one or fewer full-time staff. Stretched and without much change in capacity over the years, it's hard to imagine how these teams can be successful with the additional responsibility of training and supporting everyone across the organization. Additionally, the consulting and training that help others to learn community management requires different skills and expertise, which simply cannot be addressed by such a small team. Investing in community teams is critical if organizations expect them to support a transition to agile, engaged, and innovative cultures.

Centers of Excellence Services

Average Overall		Internal Average
71%	Training	82%
72%	Metrics and Reporting	78%
68%	Coaching	76%
63%	Consulting	73%
57%	Templates	67%
59%	Platform Management	62%

■ Average Overall   ■ Internal Average
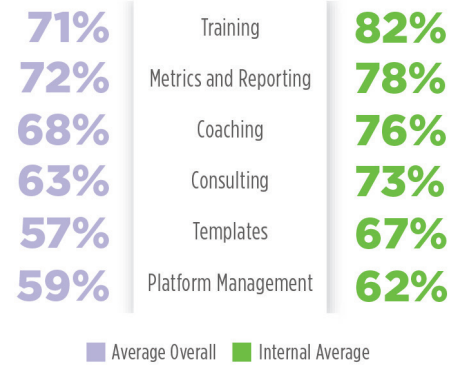
The most significant barrier to community adoption and use is organizational governance and operational structures that are not aligned with the adaptive and transparent work they enable. This tension creates excessive and conflicting motivators for members. This conflicting pressure heightens individual risk and results in people satisfying only the minimum and obvious requirements of their role. The impulse to do the bare minimum typically goes unarticulated because conflicting incentives are felt rather than explicitly acknowledged, compounding the problem. In the absence of clarity and alignment, people choose preservation – they would rather do nothing than do something wrong. It makes initiatives, like changing the way people communicate, challenging, especially when that behavior increases their exposure.
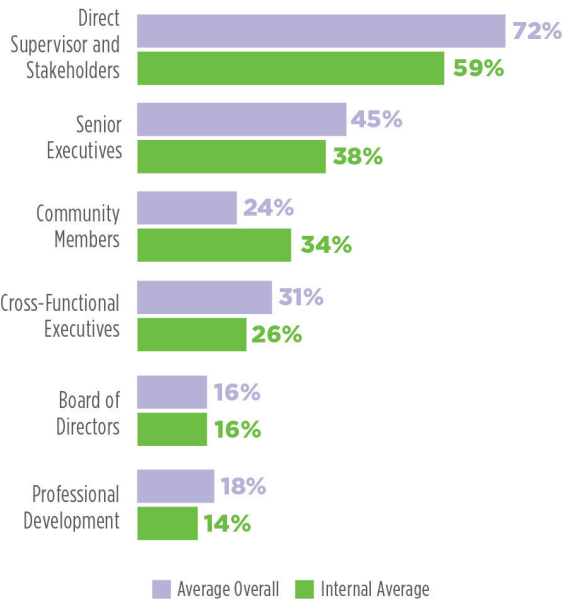
Multiple operational areas need to adapt to address these conflicting motivations: legal policies, HR policies, individual performance objectives, business metrics, management practices, and infrastructure. All of these factors influence motivations, ease of behaviors, and prompts - the three elements identified in B.J. Fogg's Behavior Model - that impact the frequency of behaviors. Accomplishing this work requires new, formalized community roles and dedicated budgets. Today, only 30% of Internal Community budgets are dedicated, and only 24% of community roles are approved by HR. Until organizations recognize the value of internal community teams and commit to their viability, internal communities will fail to deliver on their potential.

One reason that Internal Community teams are underfunded may be that they are less visible to their executives and stakeholders than Average Communities. Internal Community teams report less frequently to these groups, which makes it more likely that the community initiative goes

overlooked and underappreciated. Internal Communities are also less likely than External Communities to have formal leadership programs for community advocates, another management mechanism that improves awareness, credibility, and influence while increasing activity. Collectively, this creates a picture of Internal Community teams as more isolated and less inclusive than more mature and successful communities.

Where Internal Community programs do invest is in technology, spending 39% of their budget in this category. They spend more in this area but seem to get less in return than Average Communities. This spending might be due to enterprise IT requirements for security, data, and performance, all of
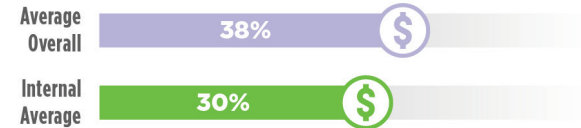
Community Reporting Channels

	Average Overall	Internal Average
Direct Supervisor and Stakeholders	72%	59%
Senior Executives	45%	38%
Community Members	24%	34%
Cross-Functional Executives	31%	26%
Board of Directors	16%	16%
Professional Development	18%	14%

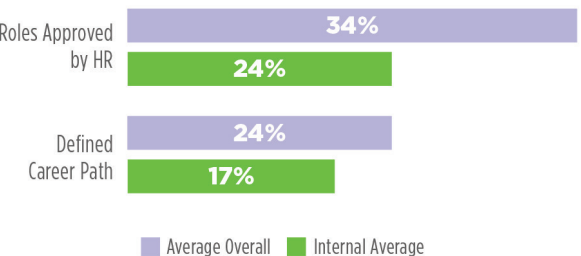■ Average Overall   ■ Internal Average

which can add considerable cost. Internal Communities integrate with slightly more channels than Average Communities and tend to integrate with other employee channels like single sign-on and content management systems.

Most striking, Internal Communities give platform vendors an NPS™ score of -22, similar to the -21 score given to vendors by Average Communities. Both have a lot of room for improvement compared to the

Communities with Dedicated Budgets

Average Overall	38%
Internal Average	30%

Maturity of Community Roles

Roles Approved by HR	34% / 24%
Defined Career Path	24% / 17%

■ Average Overall   ■ Internal Average

Maturity of Advocacy and Member Leadership Program

	Formal	Formal & Multi-tiered
Average Overall	20%	8%
Internal Average	13%	7%

■ Formal   ■ Formal & Multi-tiered
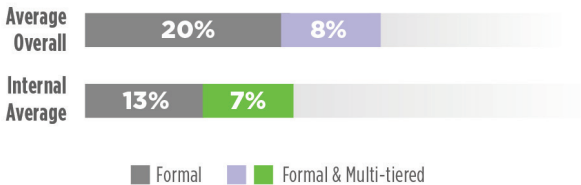
Maturity of Community Platforms

Average Overall	17%	24%	16%
Internal Average	19%	22%	11%

■ A dedicated space that is integrated with other engagement channels
■ A dedicated space that is integrated with business systems
■ A dedicated space that is integrated with other channels and with business systems

Average Platform Integrations

Average Overall
2.7

Average Internal
3.0

2019 Satmetrix NPS Benchmark for software at 30 and the Retently 2020 NPS Benchmark for enterprise software at 44. However, only 10% of Internal Communities plan to migrate in the next twelve months. They are either committed to vendors for reasons other than their performance or don't feel like they have good alternatives. Regardless, the investment Internal Communities make in technology does not seem to be yielding high performance.
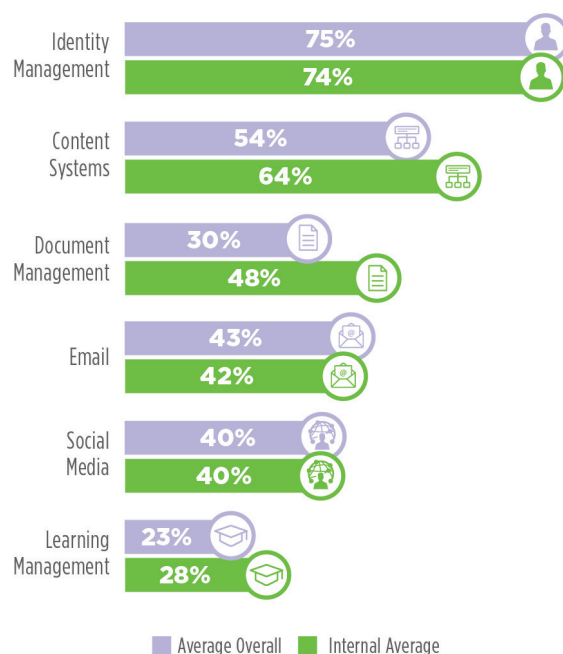
The strategic and operational maturity of Internal Communities is low, with an over-prioritization of technology. While technology is required to enable high-performing communities, it needs to be balanced with investments in community management.

Communities Demonstrate the Ability to Empower and Engage

Despite low adoption, Internal Communities do empower and engage individuals. More members of Internal Communities are active due to the relatively stable nature of employee attention compared to the ebb and flow of customer interest. Internal Community members also have a noticeably higher percentage of validating behaviors, which includes viewing, resharing, and reacting to content. This activity suggests employees use communities regularly to access existing content, but less often to contribute new material by sharing, asking, commenting, answering, and discussing. While Internal Communities help employees feel empowered in some ways, the data shows that there is an opportunity to help them feel more seen and heard, which is the first step
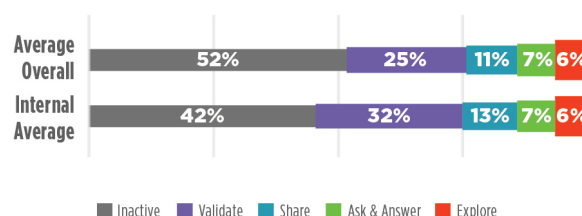
Community Platform Integrations

Integration	Average Overall	Internal Average
Identity Management	75%	74%
Content Systems	54%	64%
Document Management	30%	48%
Email	43%	42%
Social Media	40%	40%
Learning Management	23%	28%

■ Average Overall   ■ Internal Average

in encouraging members to ask questions and respond to others.

Internal Community stakeholders appear to understand the need for better community management and its potential impact on adoption and use. 57% of Internal Communities now state they have Centers of Excellence, which train and enable people throughout the organization. This finding is in stark contrast to our 2018 data, which revealed that 47% of community teams acted like Centers of Excellence, but only 8% identified themselves as such. While this progress is encouraging, Centers of Excellence programs are severely constrained by lack of staffing and investment.

Internal Community Engagement Profile

	Inactive	Validate	Share	Ask & Answer	Explore
Average Overall	52%	25%	11%	7%	6%
Internal Average	42%	32%	13%	7%	6%

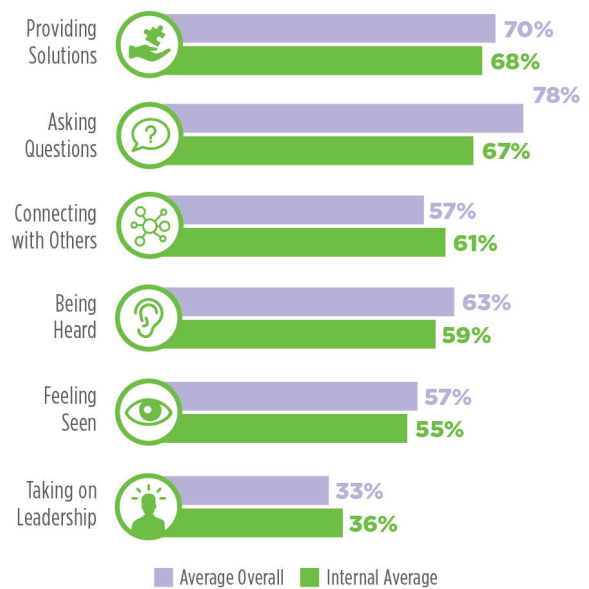■ Inactive   ■ Validate   ■ Share   ■ Ask & Answer   ■ Explore

Internal Communities are providing tantalizing hints of their potential impact, which is suppressed by an over-emphasis on technology and underinvestment in community management. 40% of Internal Community programs still have only one full-time community management professional, and 22% have no full-time staff. Interestingly, this heavy emphasis on technology doesn't decrease the cost per member, much of which might be driven by enterprise security and compliance requirements. However, Internal Communities also have significantly lower ROI than External Communities, in large part because of low adoption. The most profitable communities, those in the Advanced External segment, also spend more per member than Average Communities, but that reflects in more investment in community management versus in technology, and, in return, they get dramatically higher ROI. While External Communities are applied to different business objectives, the business model and dynamic are similar. Internal Community programs can learn from these successful approaches in ways that will dramatically impact their success.

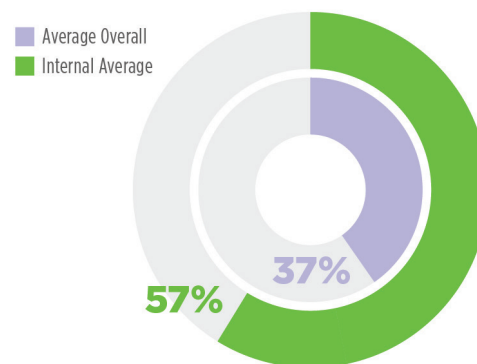## Use High Performing Communities to Inspire Breakthrough Gains

Investing in online communities, especially during uncertainty, requires assurances of success. But crises and challenges also provide the impetus to rethink and reassess. There is now ample evidence that community approaches are fundamentally

Member Empowerment in Internal Communities

*Frequently or All of the Time:

	Average Overall	Internal Average
Providing Solutions	70%	68%
Asking Questions	78%	67%
Connecting with Others	57%	61%
Being Heard	63%	59%
Feeling Seen	57%	55%
Taking on Leadership	33%	36%

Internal Community Programs with Centers of Excellence

Average Overall
Internal Average

37%
57%

changing organizations in ways that address their pressing challenges. Reaching those outcomes, however, requires more than technology and systems administration. Community programs need to integrate into daily work in ways that complement existing teams and channels. They need to support the shift in people's mindsets and corporate governance from a production mentality to

a culture of innovation. Communities are the most effective means to support, reward, and sustain this shift if given the resources to do so.

Internal Communities are underfunded, but they are profitable, thanks to the enormous ability of communities to deliver value. Investing in people who can motivate and reward behavior change will positively impact that return on investment. Robust community teams focused on promoting collaboration behaviors that align with business objectives can create self-sustaining and generative engines of innovation.

Internal Community Budget Allocation

Community Management	Online Content & Programming	In-Person Events & Conferences	Strategic & Management Consulting	Outsourced Moderation & Management	Platform & Technology
39% / 32%	6% / 4%	11% / 12%	5% / 7%	4% / 4%	31% / 39%

*Other = 5% Average / 2% Internal

■ Average Overall ■ Internal Average

Annual Cost Per Internal Community Member

■ Average Overall
■ Internal Average

Average Member
$174
$261

Active Member
$1,235
$1,262

*Active Members are those that engage in Sharing, Asking & Answering, and Exploring behaviors

> As an international company with a distributed structure, collaboration across geographies has always been challenging for Air Liquide employees. Our communities of practice have increased the ability of colleagues to meet each other, build trust, and collaborate. One such community recently won an award for optimizing a key product and included employees from Canada, Mexico, and Brazil. This type of collaborative innovation would not be realized without the community.

MARIA O'CONNOR
TECHNICAL KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT, AIR LIQUIDE

Recommendations for Executive Stakeholders:

Research Finding	Recommended Action
89% of Internal Community teams lack a funded roadmap.	❑ Provide the resources to realize strategic goals, including adoption and use.
Only 38% of Internal Community teams have more than one full-time person.	❑ Secure community resources to address engagement, technical, strategy, business, and content needs.
70% of Internal Communities lack dedicated budgets.	❑ Commit to a dedicated community budget that ensures its success and sustainability.
57% of Internal Community programs report being a center of excellence in spite of low staffing.	❑ Ensure the consulting, analyst, training, and strategic capacity is available.
74% of Internal Community teams cannot calculate ROI.	❑ Fund a community business plan that includes ROI projections.

Recommendations for Community Leaders:

Research Finding	Recommended Action
Over 40% of Internal Community strategies lack strategic objectives and key metrics.	❑ Define community success metrics.
64% of Internal Communities don't report to executives.	❑ Develop an easy-to-share strategic dashboard that highlights community value.
80% of Internal Community programs lack formal advocacy programs.	❑ Develop an advocacy program that encourages and rewards member leaders.

What's Next?

A Future of Fear, Uncertainty, and Doubt

While the future is always uncertain, it currently feels more unpredictable and fragile than it has for a long time – especially for those of us who never lived through a world war, the Industrial Revolution, or The Great Depression. The COVID-19 crisis has had such a broad and deep impact that it might prompt a restructuring of our society and what we prioritize, but it is not yet clear. Travel has come to a halt, both figuratively and literally. We have found ways to compensate, some of which have improved outcomes and others that are teaching us how much we need to change. While the COVID-19 pandemic is immense, it is only one of many monumental and complex challenges on the horizon.

And yet we need certainty to calm our anxieties and help us move forward. Community leaders are navigators, uniquely qualified to guide us through ambiguity in ways that help us find meaning and value. This leadership is not accomplished by having answers but by reminding people of who they are, what they collectively value, how to create shared meaning, and how to collaborate in ways that move everyone forward. Community leaders create certainty, not by delivering answers, but by weaving us together and helping us believe and use our inherent value and skills. By empowering us, they give us the confidence to help ourselves, moving forward confidently into the unknown.

An Emerging, Co-Created Future

The future will only bring more uncertainty that requires rapid transitions. Change is the new normal. We have known that intellectually, but the COVID-19 crisis has made us feel the reality of it. It has shaken some people to the core. It has exposed hierarchical leadership models as insufficient at best, dangerous at worst. It has elevated those that can help make sense of changes, connect with us authentically, speak hard truths kindly, and inspire us to think and act together. These people are the community builders who are firm in their values but adaptable and collaborative in their approaches.

Executives and boards would be wise to invest in this kind of leadership capacity and the community governance structures that unleash human potential. Investing in these initiatives will promote a new way to work that empowers each of us to engage, contribute, and thrive – together. We will need leaders that know progress, not perfection, is how dramatic change happens.

"Perfection is the enemy of engagement."

How to Use this Research

The Community Roundtable has delivered groundbreaking research for over a decade. Our research explores communities and how to optimize them for engagement, inclusion, and innovation. Online community managers pioneered early digital communities and learned how to encourage and reward productive behaviors without the authority to mandate them. To succeed, community leaders use governance models that act like a trellis instead of a cage, empowering individuals and enabling their potential. These community governance models are now applied across industries, functions, and types of organizations, and, in many cases, community approaches are changing corporate governance.

Our research aims to help executives and community practitioners identify, strategically manage, and measure communities in their organizations. We do so by reporting current practices, operational benchmarks, and community value.

Use this research to:

- Validate and audit your approach
- Prioritize your resources
- Identify gaps & opportunities in your program
- Build a roadmap
- Justify budget requests
- Inform conversations with stakeholders
- Educate staff

Strategy: Market Impact

Strategy: Business Impact

Operations: Benchmarking and Defining Value

Tactics: Measuring Communities

Tactics: Defining Community Management

2009

2014

2020

THE COMMUNITY ROUNDTABLE

Rachel Happe and Jim Storer founded The Community Roundtable in 2009 to advance the business of community.
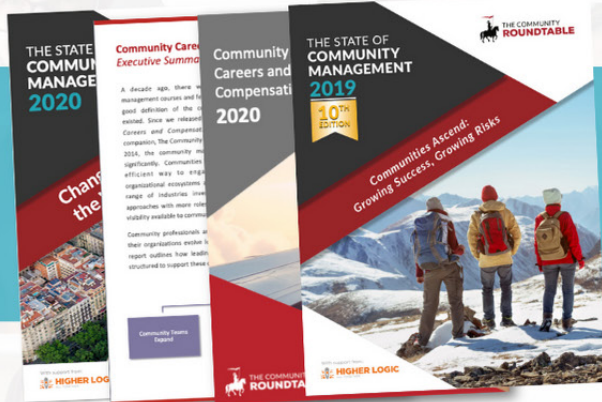
Our work informs community building, change management, and professional collaboration worldwide.

Top brands rely on us for industry trends, best practices, and community innovations because of our unparalleled experience.
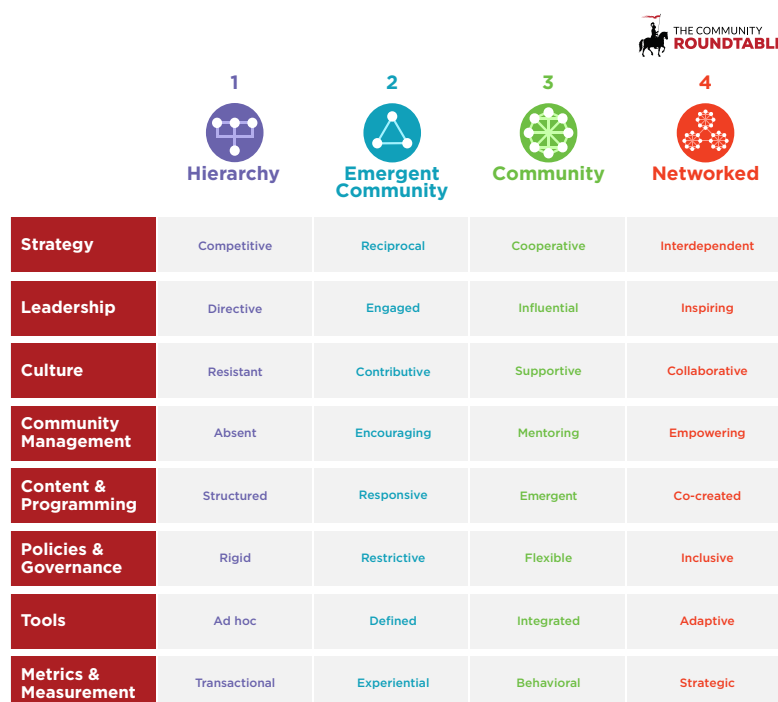
We empower thousands of global community professionals through our workshops, training, research, strategy, and with our private peer community, TheCR Network.

How will we help you?

THE COMMUNITY ROUNDTABLE

The Community Maturity Model™: Measuring Community Management Maturity

	1 Hierarchy	2 Emergent Community	3 Community	4 Networked
Strategy	Competitive	Reciprocal	Cooperative	Interdependent
Leadership	Directive	Engaged	Influential	Inspiring
Culture	Resistant	Contributive	Supportive	Collaborative
Community Management	Absent	Encouraging	Mentoring	Empowering
Content & Programming	Structured	Responsive	Emergent	Co-created
Policies & Governance	Rigid	Restrictive	Flexible	Inclusive
Tools	Ad hoc	Defined	Integrated	Adaptive
Metrics & Measurement	Transactional	Experiential	Behavioral	Strategic

© 2020 The Community Roundtable

Community management has been an implicit responsibility of leadership for as long as humans have cooperated to govern themselves. Communities have always been hard to measure because of their diversity, complexity, and emergent nature. Online, however, the dynamics of community came into focus and allowed us to understand how communities formed, developed, and evolved. This led to the more explicit role of the community manager and the discipline of community management.

The Community Maturity Model defines the eight competencies and four stages we feel contribute most to the development of a healthy, productive, and trusting community. This version of the Community Maturity Model was updated in 2019 to reflect a decade of research in the updated descriptions.
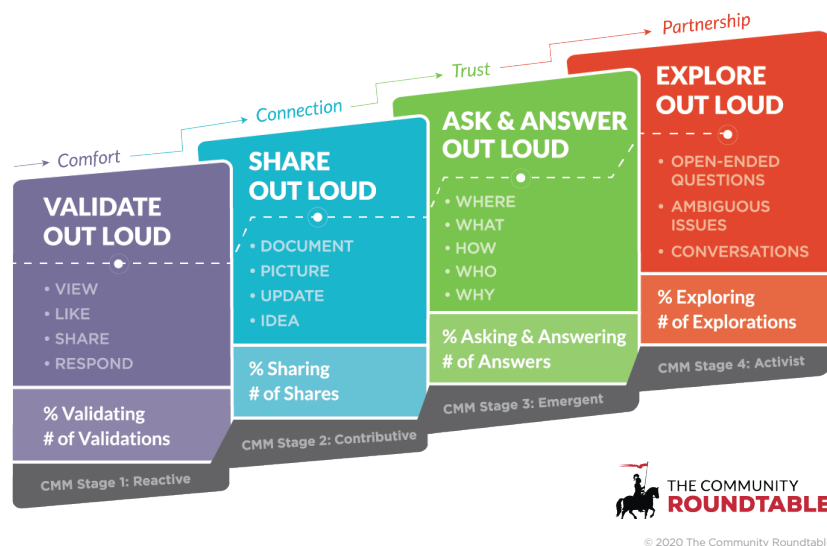
Our clients use the Community Maturity Model to:

- Train and educate stakeholders on the requirements of good community operations

- Assess their community approach

- Develop a roadmap and budget for their community program

More information about the Community Maturity Model can be found here:
http://the.cr/community-maturity-model

The Community Engagement Framework™: Measuring Engagement and Value

The Community Engagement Framework diagram showing CMM Stages 1-4: Reactive (Validate Out Loud), Contributive (Share Out Loud), Emergent (Ask & Answer Out Loud), and Activist (Explore Out Loud), with progression through Comfort, Connection, Trust, and Partnership.

© 2020 The Community Roundtable

The Community Roundtable's mission is to advance the business of community.

Throughout our history, we have focused on measuring the impact of community leadership, which we can see through engagement. Over the years, it's become clear that organizations do not really understand the dynamics of engagement, how to deconstruct and measure it, and how to tie engagement to business outcomes and value.

We developed the Community Engagement Framework to help do just this and it helps to:
- Deconstruct and categorize the range of engagement behaviors
- Connect ideal engagement objectives based on business objectives
- Link behaviors with qualitative outcomes: comfort, connect, trust, and partnership
- Identify how to measure the depth and breadth of engagement types
- Translate engagement to value and calculate ROI

Using this framework to measure engagement and track how it changes over time allows organizations to see how trust is changing in their organizations and markets. Are people more or less likely to ask questions and explore, requiring trust in the social environment?

This framework concisely articulates what we've learned working with hundreds of clients. You can download a high res version of this framework here: **https://the.cr/engagementframework**

TheCR Network is your first stop for community success.
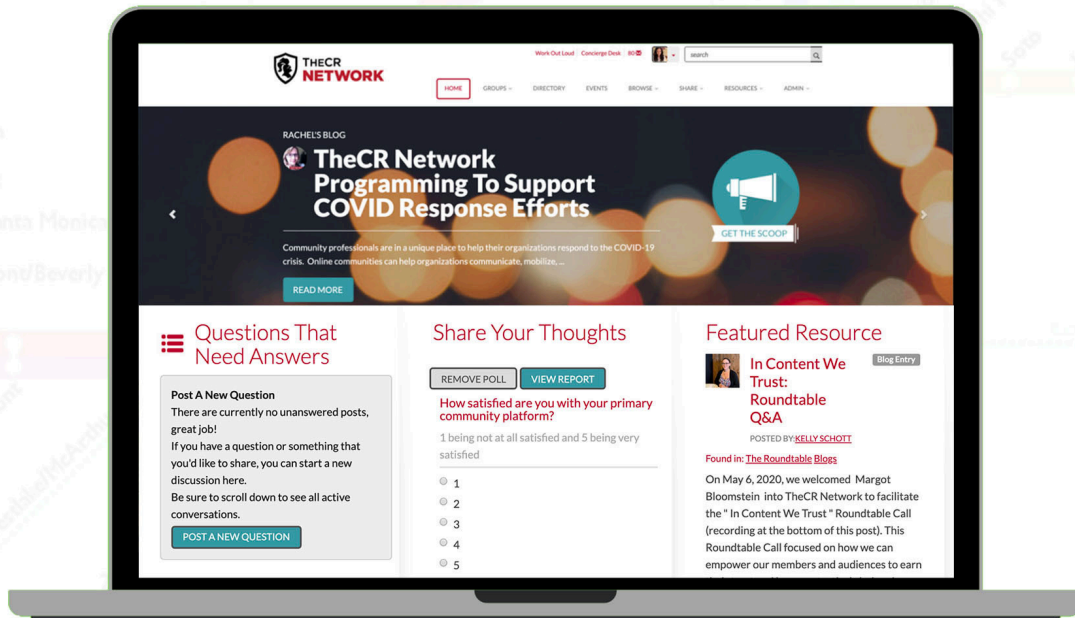
Just BYOCM*.

*Bring your own community manager.

Access strategic and tactical resources

Connect with global community experts

Measure and track your success

http://the.cr/thecrnetwork

Join Our Commuity-Building Ecosystem

TheCR Network, our private, peer community, maps our ecosystem of strategic and tactical assets to our Community Skills Framework™, providing the most comprehensive set of research-backed online community resources in the world.

ENGAGEMENT ASSETS

Training
- Community Management Fundamentals
- Social Executive Shorts

Research and Content
- Community Engagement Framework™
- Engagement Resource Bundle
- Playbook and Guideline Examples

Programming
- Facilitated Work-Out-Loud and Happy Hours Weekly

STRATEGIC ASSETS

Research and Content
- State of Community Management
- ROI Calculator and Research Brief
- Strategy Examples/Case Studies

Programming
- Strategy Office Hours
- Concierge Services

TECHNICAL ASSETS

Research and Content
- Community Technology Framework™
- Platform Requirements Library
- Vendor Comparison Tool

Programming
- Vendor Cohorts
- Platform Demos
- Case Study Roundtables

BUSINESS ASSETS

Training
- Community Program Essentials

Research and Content
- Community Careers & Compensation
- Dashboard Examples

Programming
- CoE Working Group
- Public Speaking Lab

Assessments
- The Community Score™
- Research Office Hours

CONTENT ASSETS

Research and Content
- Editorial and Topic Cycle Templates
- Community Programs eBook
- Proven Content Examples/Case Studies

Programming
- Show and Tell Content Sharing

Members have exclusive access to weekly Roundtable calls, 20+ resource bundles and hundreds of case studies, reports, and resources focused on these five segments.

Membership in TheCR Network empowers global organizations with the scalable assets they need to design, build, and manage successful online community programs.

TheCR NETWORK

THE COMMUNITY ROUNDTABLE

THE COMMUNITY
ROUNDTABLE