Communities Powering Change: Three Ways to Transform Your Organization

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Overview

Online community programs are a critical way to enable organizations to adopt, and thrive, with a more networked structure.

Many organizations, from global powerhouses to mature non-profits, are at a crossroads. These organizations face risk on all sides. Technology is rapidly reducing market windows and eroding margins, customers are more demanding because they have a wealth of options, employees need new skills and expertise, and trust is decreasing across the board. Most of these challenges are complex and no one product, solution, or service will address them adequately. Complex challenges require a myriad of solutions delivered in a variety of ways, few of which are standardized.

Enter community.

Control, stability, and efficiency are no longer assets, but liabilities. Leaders increasingly recognize the need for a network-centric approach that removes bottlenecks and allows for the agile decision-making and empowered individuals.

In this eBook you will explore three ways community provides unique value to organizations:

1. Communities Empower Individuals

2. Communities Advance Complex Objectives

3. Communities Enable Thriving and Adaptive Ecosystems
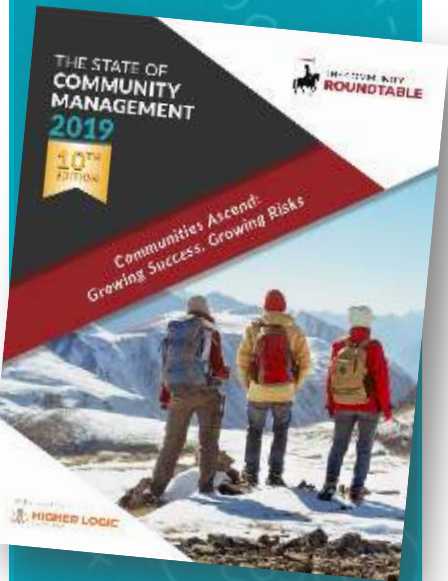
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About the State of Community Management Report

The State of Community Management is our annual research platform that tracks the performance of communities and community management across the eight competencies of the Community Maturity Model.

Now in its 11th year, The State of Community Management report is the most referenced and trusted resource in the community industry.

Leadership and management are evolving in fundamental ways, driven by changing access to information brought on by technology. Information and people can no longer be controlled through centralized governance structures and, at the same time, are more susceptible to being controlled through their relationships, cultures, and influences.

That shift has been disorienting to both those in leadership and management roles and to individuals, as we collectively work to understand this enormous shift in how power is exerted. Communities are now seen as critical governance approaches to transform organizations and culture.

Download the Report

The Community Maturity Model™

Introduction to the Community Maturity Model™

The Community Maturity Model™ defines the eight competencies we believe are required to build successful business communities. It also articulates how these competencies progress from hierarchical organizations to those that have embraced a networked approach to their business.

First published in 2009, it is widely used today by global community leaders to:

Evaluate and assess their organization's social and community efforts through gap analysis	Understand the expertise and skill sets required for successful community development	Develop a roadmap to advance community efforts in their organization

Educate and manage expectations of executives, advocates, and colleagues	Create training for those tasked with working on social strategy and community management

How to Use The Community Maturity Model™

Use the Community Maturity Model™ in the following ways:

- Assess a community or community program's strengths and weaknesses

- Assess the gaps in a community or community program

- Create development objectives

- Identify where to focus resources for maximum ROI

Click to read more about the Community Maturity Model™

The Community Maturity Model™

	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

Calculate Your Community Score

	1 Hierarchy	2 Emergent Community	3 Community	4 Networked
Strategy	Competitive	Reciprocal	Cooperative	**Interdependent**
Leadership	**Directive**	Engaged	Influential	Inspiring
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Metrics & Measurement	Transactional	**Experiential**	Behavioral	Strategic

In about ten minutes you can complete a custom assessment to help you understand your community management maturity. You'll then receive a scorecard with your maturity for each of the eight competencies in the Community Maturity Model.

The Community Score allows you to identify where to focus resources for maximum ROI on your community efforts.

Start your assessment now. (It's free!)

Communities Empower Individuals

Communities Empower Individuals

Organizations that understand behavior and how to influence it have a significant competitive advantage over those that don't. Organizations that understand behavior, know how to impact it, AND are trusted have even more of an advantage. Building that foundation of trust starts with empowering individuals.

63% of communities empower members frequently or all of the time. That empowerment comes in a range of forms – feeling seen, being heard, providing solutions, and taking initiative. It's easy to see these numbers, nod, and move on, but empowering people to feel seen and heard is no small achievement.

"The Imperva Community allows our customers to get trusted answers to questions quickly and empowers them to get the most out of the products they already have.

 The Community also provides our Client Success team with the metrics needed to provide outstanding support and offer meaningful upsell opportunities. "
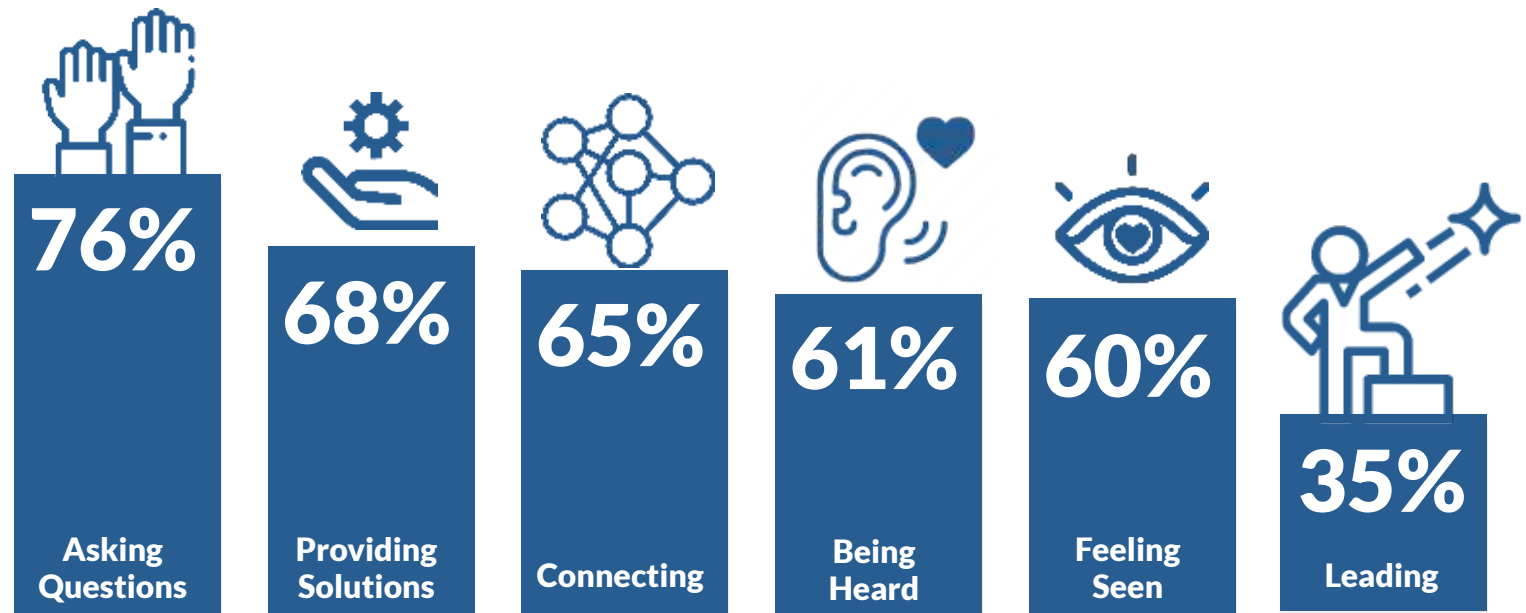
Christopher Detzel,
Global Community Manager, Imperva

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Communities Empower Individuals

Empowerment is the universal access point for individuals to feel like they matter, be accepted for who they are, and feel their contributions are meaningful. That empowerment directly impacts whether and how often they share their expertise and is the foundation for innovation because it impacts motivation, engagement, productivity, and creativity.

Empowered people are engaged, constructive, and highly productive, which all contributes positively to their organization's culture.

Community members are empowered frequently or all of the time in the following ways:

76%	68%	65%	61%	60%	35%
Asking Questions	Providing Solutions	Connecting	Being Heard	Feeling Seen	Leading

Data from the State of Community Management 2019 Report

How Can You Use Community to Empower Your Members?

When individuals are inspired, engaged, and empowered they fuel a self-reinforcing positive feedback loop. Success breeds success because people see engagement rewarded, which in turn increases how comfortable they are engaging in the community themselves. People live up or down to the expectations set by those around them – and their imaginations and ambitions are limited or expanded based on what they can see in their communities.

Empowerment Challenge: How many processes can you move out of email or off of paper to your community?

❑ Have a question? Start archived FAQs in your community, and make sure there is a way for members to post new questions (and get new answers from subject matter experts).

❑ Need support? Have your members submit support tickets in your community. Share the answers back to the community (when applicable) to create transparency and avoid duplicate work in the future.

❑ Soliciting customer evaluations from a program in operation? Have customers provide real-time feedback in a community and encourage product managers to follow along and participate when appropriate.

❑ Want to reward and recognize brand champions? Use member spotlights and AMAs(Ask Me Anythings) to highlight outstanding people in your community.

By moving these workflows to your community, you can increase efficiency, but more significantly you can improve customer/member satisfaction. Our research shows that members feel better about their contributions when they have a clear path to follow.

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COMMUNITY IMPACT: IMPERVA
Shared by Christopher Detzel, Global Community Manager

The Imperva Community is less than one-year-old, and provides peer-to-peer networking, a knowledge base, and product optimization for clients.

CHALLENGE

Reduce our support case load and enable customers to help us make better products.

GOAL

We wanted the built-in "automation rules" on the Higher Logic platform to help us engage clients in the community. This tool allows us to personalize messages and actions based on where clients are in their journey. By looking at engagement for the last 90 days, we can segment the audience, and email them directly from within the platform.

OUTCOME

This type of automated engagement has had a huge positive impact on communication with members. By using the automation tools we are able to customize the customer experience, get data around how customers are engaging, and make data-driven decisions on what content to create.
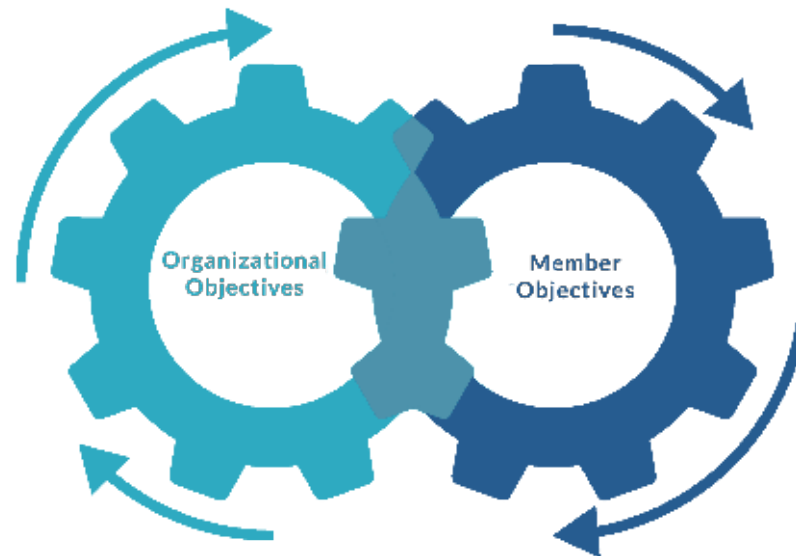
Communities Advance Complex Objectives

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Communities Advance Complex Objectives

Transitioning to an ever-changing, adaptive, and high-trust organizational environment is enormously challenging as it requires changes to almost every area of business operations, including how we think about leadership and management. Community approaches scale trust, remove bottlenecks, and empower individuals to act on new information quickly and transparently, while enabling others to learn and maintain a shared situational awareness as things change. This incremental yet rapidly-iterative approach to change is the best way to transform an organization without destructive and abrupt upheaval.

Community programs are compelling because their outcomes can be connected to complex business objectives like innovation, culture change, and customer retention. These are some of the most tenacious challenges that organizations face today, making these findings particularly encouraging and exciting.

Communities create shared value where the organizational and member objectives overlap

Communities Advance Complex Objectives

Communities also contribute to tactical and complex member objectives, from getting faster answers to increasing trust and confidence. Our research shows that communities generate value for members that applies to a diversity of workflows and experiences, including reducing negative emotional impact, generating specific ideas, and general inspiration.

Communities become dynamic ecosystems due to their capacity to make employee and customer experiences better while also addressing complex outcomes for the organization. Communities are not just a method of better executing on one use case, but are a core governance structure that accelerate ecosystems, both inside and outside of the organization.

" We invite Genesys experts to the screen for a bi-monthly "Q&A Show" to discuss topics and answer questions from the community. This programs provides value through ticket deflection, enhanced engagement , and adding new distinct voices to the community. This sort of human connection is far more difficult to convey through the written word and headshots alone."

Clay Tison, Senior Director,
Genesys University Technical Strategy and Innovation

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How Can You Advance Complex Objectives?

Community programs provide a way to empower individuals to collaborate, share, and learn, while removing bottlenecks that can arise when multiple people are involved in a project or program.

Community Challenge: Think of an existing process that creates a bottleneck for your members.

In an increasingly networked world, customers and members expect answers to their questions in near real-time. If they can't find the information then need, now, they may abandon their search, or move to their social networks to voice their frustrations.

You can use community programs to reduce the time it takes for someone to get an answer, improve satisfaction rates, and reduce overall support requests.

Moving documentation, support, and FAQs to an online community allow people to find the answers they need when they need them. Providing a centralized location for people to find information, ask questions, and get the support of their peers and your organization has been shown to reduce the number of new support requests, and makes customers more willing to contribute and collaborate online.

What other bottlenecks do you face that community can solve for?

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COMMUNITY IMPACT: GENESYS
Shared by Clay Tison, Senior Director, University Technical Strategy and Innovation

The Genesys Community evolved from three primary product-supporting online communities, originating in 2002, 2014, and 2017. All these communities were consolidated, using the same platform, in 2018.

CHALLENGE
Our challenge was to empower C-Level Executives with a two-way communication channel to share critical information regarding COVID-19 to the entire workforce in a timely and accessible manner.

GOAL
Our goal was to be transparent, be human, and stay connected despite our "everyone-is-suddenly-working-from-home" reality. Normal communication methods involved our Executives communicating via recording and/or webinar which were crowded and suffered from technical challenges.

OUTCOME
Our online community proved to be the perfect way to communicate without exhausting our bandwidth. This unforeseen crisis opened communication between all levels of our organization unlike before. As a result many of our executives have interacted in the community for the first time.

Communities Enable Thriving and Adaptive Ecosystems

Communities Enable Thriving and Adaptive Ecosystems

Communities are often mistaken as approaches for a single use case – and they can be successful that way.

For decades, online communities used in a business context were often focused on customer support case deflection and 74% of external community programs still identify this as a functional process they support.

Those community programs deliver tremendous value to organizations, but are often sold short when their focus remains narrow. The immense power, and great challenge, of community approaches is that they break down silos and barriers, making organizations more integrated, porous, and adaptive. In fact, for 36% of community programs there are individuals in other functional areas that have community-related performance goals. The functional areas outside of the community team most likely to have community performance goals are marketing, customer support, product/engineering, and learning & development.

"The community is a really critical tool in helping us to expand our audience and bring more traffic to our website, in a way that no amount of marketing can do."
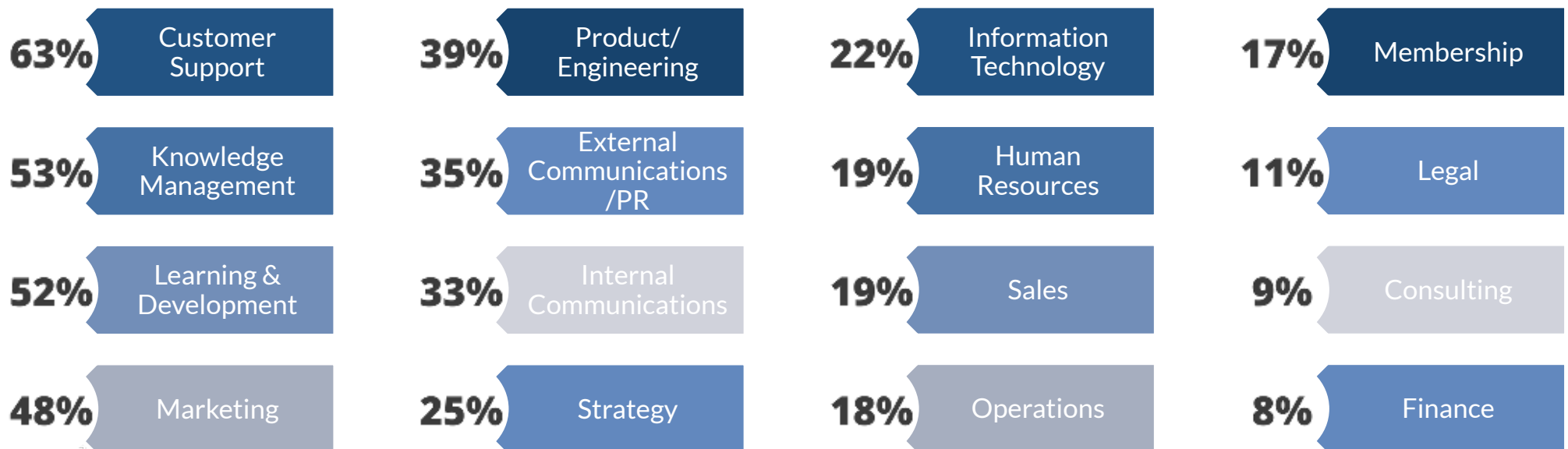
Allison Dolan
Chief Content Officer, EdTA

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Community is a Cross-Functional Tool

Successful communities generate benefits for budgets across the organization. That complexity is currently hard to manage because many organizations operate with budgets and metrics that are rigid and discrete. There is growing recognition that customer and employee experiences span functional processes and optimizing organizational performance requires cross-functional solutions.

Communities are the best and most sustainable method to integrate knowledge, innovation, and culture across silos. They deliver solutions that customers and employees are demanding, but need formal changes to organizational budgeting to be sustainable because too often community teams have to beg or borrow informally to secure the resources that they need to be successful.

Functional Processes Enabled by Community

63% Customer Support	39% Product/ Engineering	22% Information Technology	17% Membership
53% Knowledge Management	35% External Communications /PR	19% Human Resources	11% Legal
52% Learning & Development	33% Internal Communications	19% Sales	9% Consulting
48% Marketing	25% Strategy	18% Operations	8% Finance

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Data from the State of Community Management 2019 Report

How Can You Enable a Thriving Ecosystem?

How do you hear about what is on the mind's of your customers, members or alumni? Are you waiting for them to come to you and share their concerns, ideas and frustrations?

Online communities empower your audience to engage in a thriving ecosystem that allows them to share their thoughts, and increases their satisfaction through two-way communication.

Our research has shown that online community programs save organizations time and allows them to support their audience in ways that they previously had not been able to. Providing a safe place for your customers or members to interact, share feedback, connect with each other, and be recognized and rewarded for their contributions not only boosts satisfaction, it creates an enthusiastic, engaged group of brand ambassadors.

There are many ways to use your online community to facilitate interaction and collaboration:

- ❑ Connect members or customers 365 days a year, not just at live events
- ❑ Provide a place for them to share feedback and product/service ideas
- ❑ Enable peer-support and networking in a knowledge base, FAQs, and discussion forums
- ❑ Keep enthusiasm for your programs high through online challenges and contests
- ❑ Provide a place for members to engage in professional development and online learning activities

Your community can be a powerful way to extend your brand ecosystems, and capture the attention and energy of your existing users in a new, collaborative way.

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COMMUNITY IMPACT:
Educational Theatre Association

At six years old, the Theatre Education Community provides networking, problem-solving, and professional development to EdTA's members, available 24/7 online.

CHALLENGE → Connect members who felt isolated and didn't have a way to connect with peers. Many members reported feeling like they were "alone on an island" and weren't sure where to go for help or find resources.

GOAL → As members were often the only art teacher in their school or even in their district the goal was to find a way to connect them. EdTA wanted a place for members to interact with each other. In the Theatre Education Community, members can connect with other teachers from across the world, and really get feedback, and advice, and ideas, and exchange resources from all over.

OUTCOME → When it launched, the Theatre Education Community was open to EdTA members and anyone who wanted to join or visit. Doing this not only created a invaluable environment for educators, but boosted organic search traffic. Of 13K active community members, more than half are not members of EdTA. The amount of user-generated content, all of which is indexed and ranked in Google, has increased the number of organic keywords ranking, boosted monthly clicks, and improved search engine results pages.

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Creating Value with Community

Communities are complex and ever-changing. In person, they are challenging to see in aggregate and, therefore, almost impossible to measure.

Online, however, we can see how communities form, change, fragment, divide, and dissipate. That allows us to communicate community dynamics, value, and impact.

Some community value is still easier to see because it is direct. Getting support, advice, and answers offsets more cumbersome and resource-intensive methods because communities are quite efficient at matching and exchanging value between those who need it and those who have excess capacity. That value is what we can measure most easily and translate into financial results because it has a direct impact on the cycle time of a workflow. While other community outcomes, like the value of having empowered employees, cannot be translated into financial terms, we must recognize that it exists and contributes to overall organizational performance.

Empowering members, improving the quality of work, innovating, and norming new behaviors in ways that increase trust and agility are all outcomes of community that happen over time in a complex interplay of validation, content, and dialog.

Communities allow understanding and meaning to be co-created, and this evolving conversation, paired with the empowerment to act, makes community approaches one of the most effective means to changing culture and transforming organizations. Instead of telling individuals how to change, communities support individuals in a way that allows them to learn and grow, bringing them along and inspiring them to change. In the process, this reduces friction by decreasing anxiety and with it, resistance.

About
The Community Roundtable
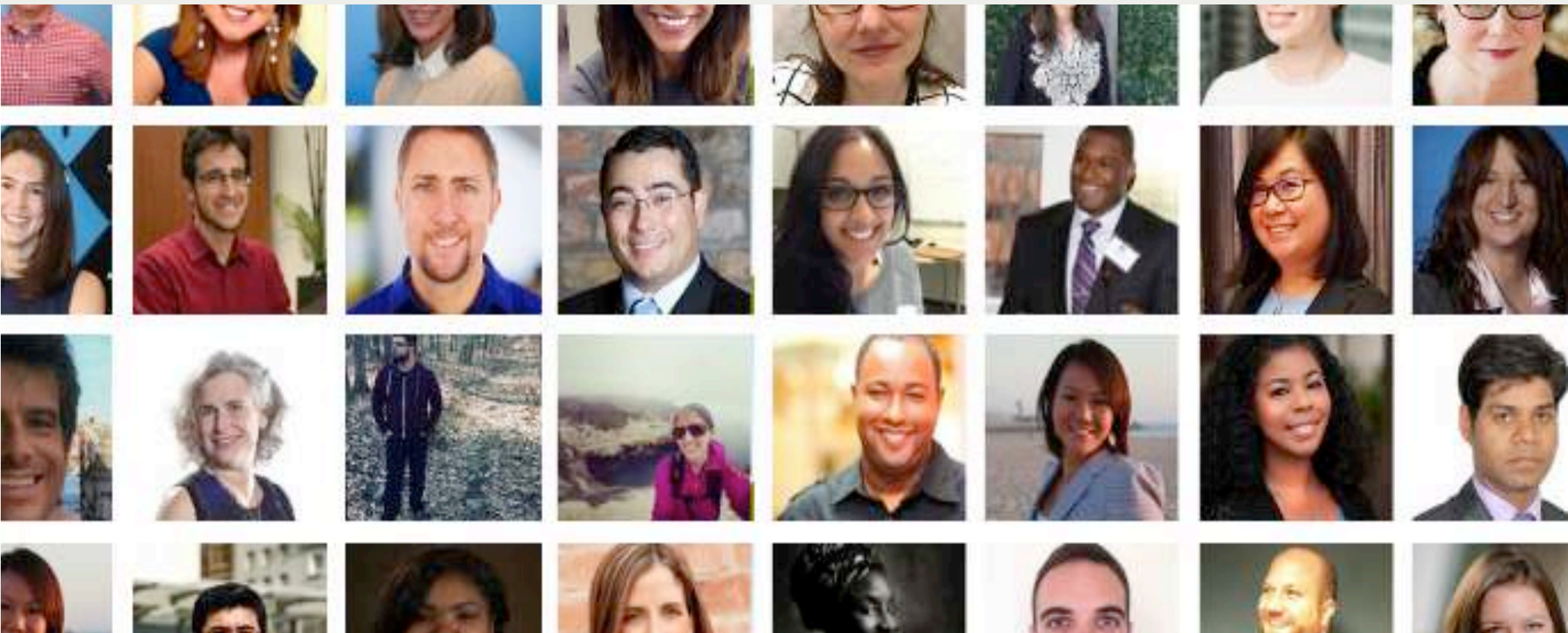
About The Community Roundtable

The Community Roundtable is the most trusted voice in community management.

Using the industry's only comprehensive research - the State of Community Management - as a framework, we help global community leaders define, launch, manage, and measure effective community programs.

How do we help community leaders build award winning community programs?

"The perspective I've gained has been invaluable in making the case for community-related budget and resources. It has also helped me build a vocabulary to communicate about communities."

Microsoft

Alex Ulanon
Senior Community
Program Manager

"TheCR Network offers so many support opportunities, it has been very helpful to connect with other people who are living this role."

ez cater

Genevieve Jabineau
Caterer Growth &
Success Manager

"The CR is a one-stop shop for learning everything there is to know about communities, connecting to other communities professionals and building community skills."

HILTI

Erik S. Meyers
Head of Corporate
Communications

Read more testimonials at: the.cr/customersuccess

More From The Community Roundtable

Find even more at: www.communityroundtable.com

META? YES.
INVALUABLE? ALSO, YES.

For over a decade global community leaders have trusted TheCR Network for the tools, research, resources, and people they need to succeed. We know there are no one-size-fits-all community solutions, so we help solve your community challenges in the most convenient and effective ways for you.