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COMMUNITY
INDUSTRY
REPORT



Executive Summary

2020 was a pivotal year for the community industry.

Since we launched the annual Community Industry Report in 2017, **community has become essential to business.** Communities themselves are increasingly mature, and becoming more valuable to business over time. Nearly nine out of ten communities have a dedicated community manager, and more than two-thirds plan to increase their investment in the coming year.

Despite a global pandemic that shook the economy, investment in community programs continued to rise. This year, communities truly showed their competitive advantage as traditional ways to reach customers were disrupted. **More than half reported their community was considered more essential by leadership since the start of the pandemic.**

Despite a stronger understanding of the value community adds to a business, fundamental challenges remain. Quantifying the value of community remains a key frustration for community managers, as does aligning their impact to the company's goals.

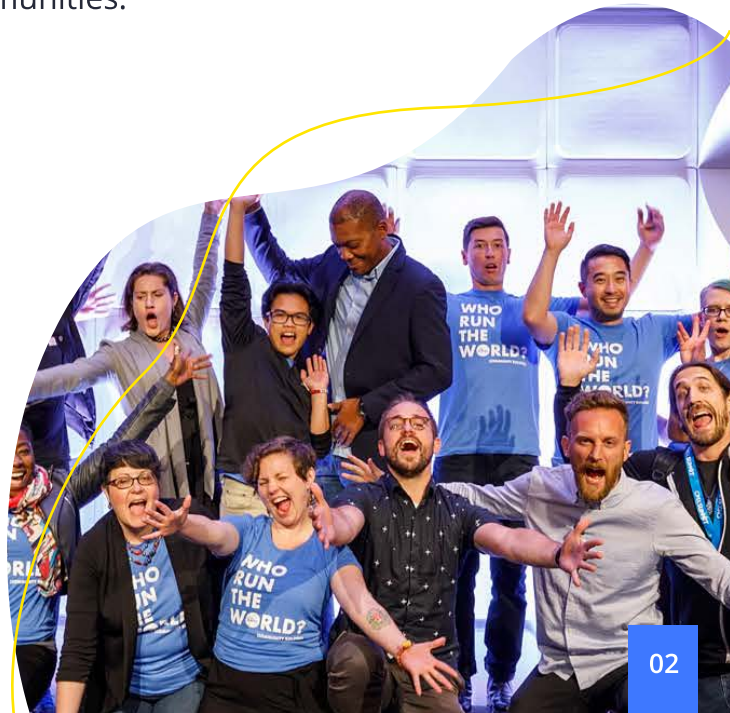
Against the odds, this year was a leap forward for the community industry. Our goal for this report is to help community professionals continue to leverage this momentum to create thriving, valuable communities.

Best,



David Spinks

Founder of CMX,
and VP of Community at Bevy



Key Takeaways

1. Community programs are scaling, and community teams are growing

62% of communities are focused on scaling

88% have at least one dedicated community manager

2. Organizations increasingly see the value of investing in community

86% agree community is critical to their company's mission

69% think their organization will be increasing their investment in community next year

3. Investment continued to increase through COVID-19



56% say their organization's leadership views community as more essential since the start of the pandemic

4. However, communities struggle to measure and report on their value



45% struggle to quantify the value of their community

5. Virtual events are increasingly critical to community programs

Half think their community has been positively impacted by virtual events.

51% will still offer virtual events when in-person resumes safely

6. More work is needed to foster diversity, equity, and inclusion

Half of communities have specific policies related to DEI.

79% of community professionals believe their organizations should take a public stance on DEI issues

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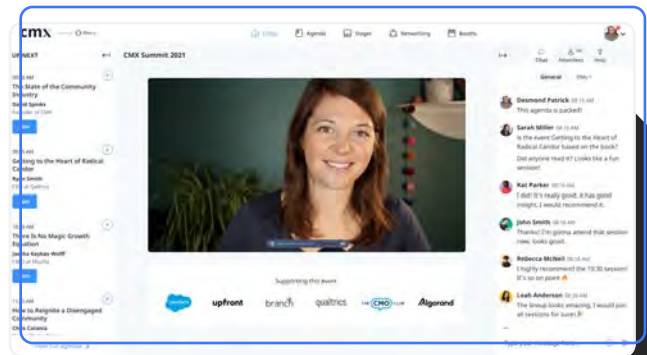
CMX is the world's largest network of community professionals.

Our mission is to help community professionals thrive, and advance the community industry. We offer world-class tools, resources, and spaces for professionals at any stage of their community journey.

We believe that community is the future of business. Our vision is a future where community creates a better, more meaningful experience for customers, companies, and the world.

Ready to take your community to the next level?

Join us at www.cmhub.com



Bevy was born out of a realization that the current tech stack for managing communities was cumbersome and that virtual event platforms aren't solving for the engagement gap and Zoom fatigue.

This is solved by three core tenets: simplifying the chaos of your tech stack into one tool, giving you complete ownership of your data (while operating at the highest enterprise security-standards), and providing world-class customer care.

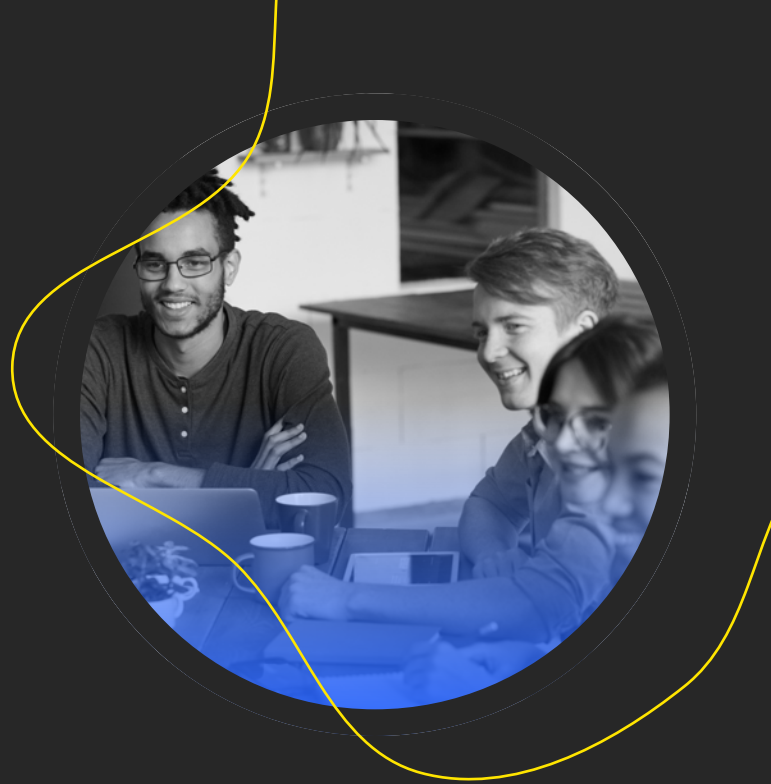
In 2019, Bevy acquired CMX to help CMX accelerate innovation for companies, institutions, and advocacy groups focused on building communities.

In partnership with companies like Salesforce, Twitch, Atlassian, Qualtrics, Google and Webflow, Bevy fuels meaningful connections globally and across industries.

Ready to say goodbye to the old way of connecting with your community? [Book a demo!](#)



About This Report



Methodology

The 2021 edition of the Community Industry Report includes responses from **528 community professionals** who completed our online survey between November and December of 2020.

To collect responses, we used email and social media outreach from CMX, CMX Connect, [Bevy](#), and distribution partners including [Grazitti](#) and [Happily.io](#). Our results include community professionals from 42 countries, representing a range of industries and company sizes.

95% of respondents said their organization has a community. 5% of respondents were considering a community, and were asked a different set of questions. Respondents who were not considering a community or did not have one were not included in this report.

While some of this year's questions were new, many were repeated from [2017](#) and [2020](#). Throughout the report, we've highlighted interesting changes in the value of community over time.

For some questions, respondents were given the ability to write in answers. These answers are shared throughout as anonymous quotes.

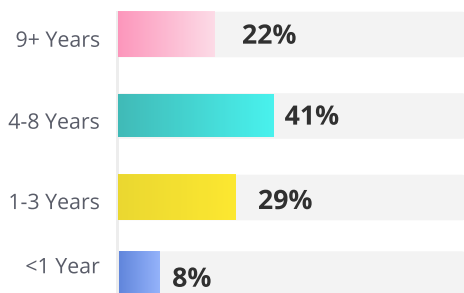
Respondent Snapshot

We asked a series of questions to better understand our pool of data, and to segment responses throughout the report for more detailed insights.

Community professionals have matured since last year. In our 2020 report, 53% of respondents had at least 4 years of experience in the profession, compared to 63% this year.

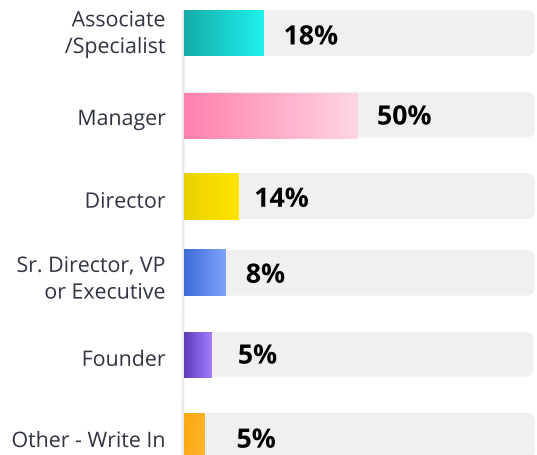
How long have you been working in community?

Sample Size: 503 (95% of Respondents)



Which job title best describes your role?

Sample Size: 527 (All Respondents)



Brands that navigated their way through 2020 successfully required a deep, trusted relationship with their customers. So it's no wonder that the world is waking up to the compounding value of great community managers. The brands that build on this momentum and place community at the heart of their business will be the standout successes of 2021.

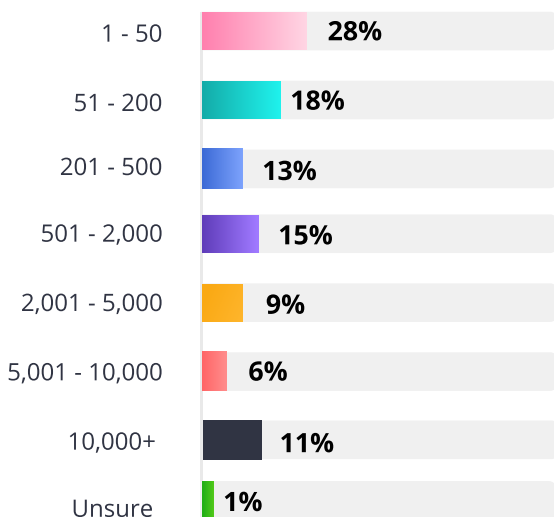
- Max Rothery, VP Community, Finimize

Company Breakdown

While 41% of our respondents were from companies with more than 500 employees, 28% were from small companies with 50 employees or fewer. Technology was the largest industry represented, at 54%.

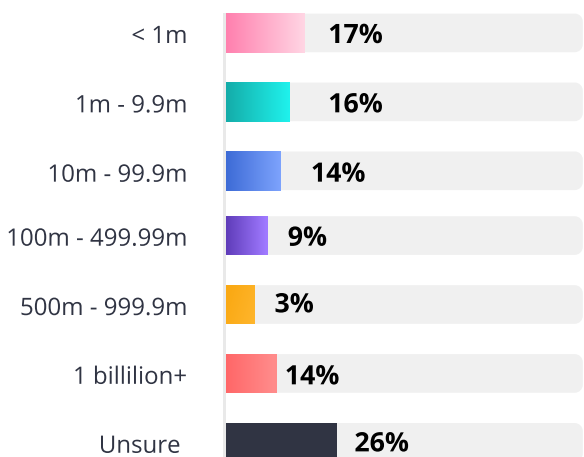
Approximately how many employees does your organization have worldwide?

Sample Size: 523 (99% of Respondents)



What is the estimated annual revenue for your company?

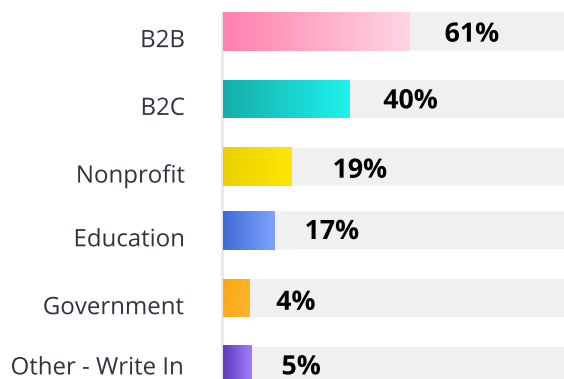
Sample Size: 528 (All Respondents)



What best describes the primary focus of your organization?

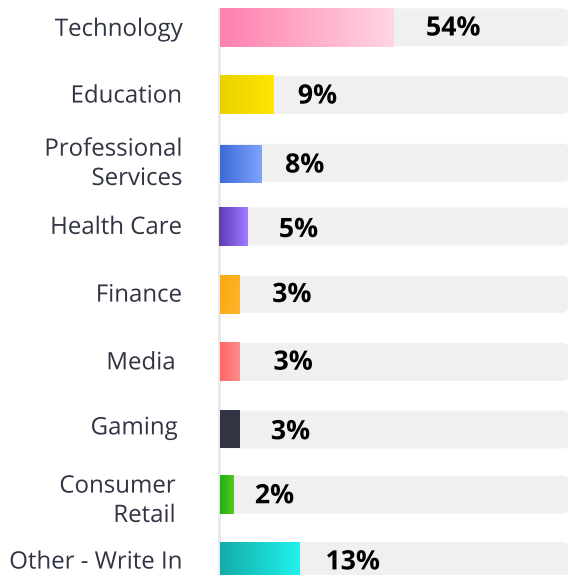
Sample Size: 513 (97% of Respondents)

Note: Respondents could select multiple options



Which of the following most closely describes the industry you work in?

Sample Size: 528 (All Respondents)

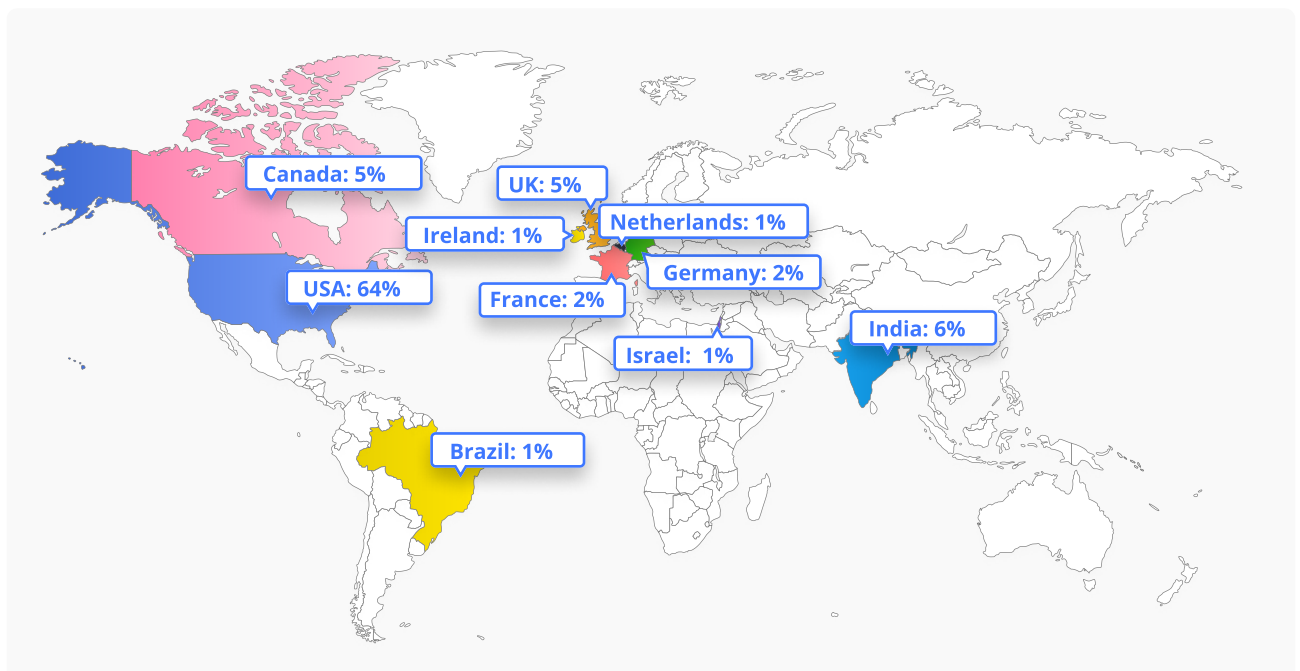


Demographics

This year, we also asked about geographic location. While the majority of our respondents were from North America, we also received responses from Europe (10%, includes the UK) and India (6%), among other regions.

What country do you live in (Top 10)

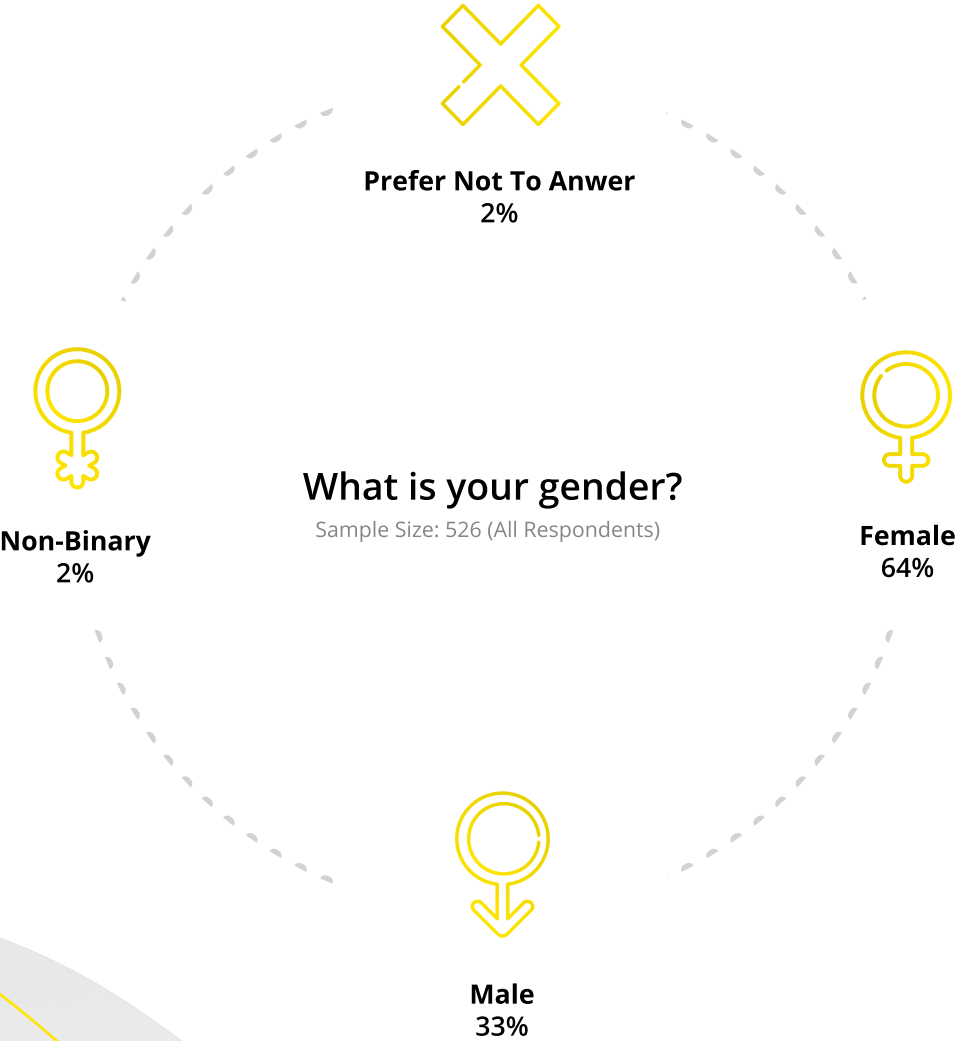
Sample Size: 528 (All Respondents)



“The best brands have community at their core and 2020 was the year the world woke up to that. It's no surprise that 56% of organizations see community as more essential since the start of the pandemic. I'd love to see this same recognition and respect for community professionals as the industry continues to grow and mature.”

- Marsha Druker, Host of Create Community Podcast, Founder of F*ckup Nights Toronto

We also asked participants to share their gender. **Nearly two-thirds (64%) of the community professionals who responded to our survey were female.**



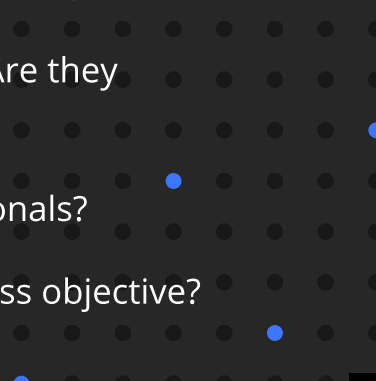


The State of Community Programs

We'll start by laying some groundwork for the state of community programs. Throughout this section, we'll compare new communities to more established programs to see how companies just launching a community are approaching its structure.

There is a lot of good news to report this year. These findings confirm what many in the industry have felt — a sense of momentum, increased interest, and a profession carving out its own lane.

This section will cover:

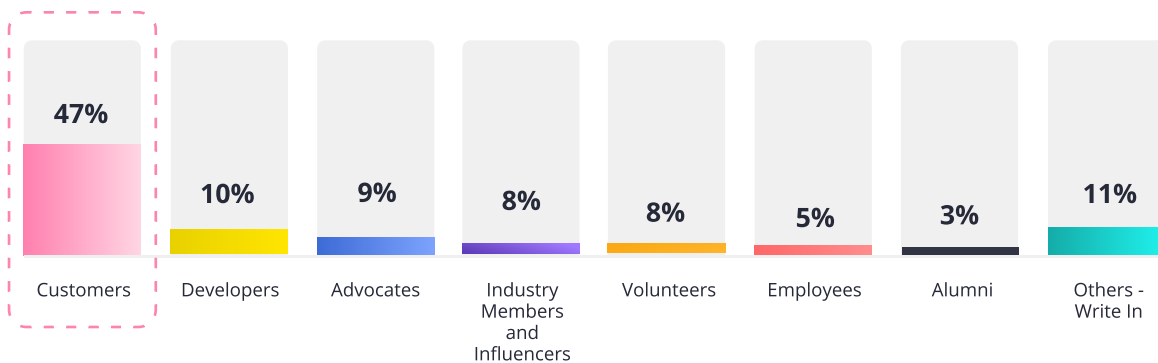
- How big are community teams? Where do they report into?
 - Do organizations recognize the value of community? Are they increasing investment?
 - What are the top frustrations for community professionals?
 - What platforms are the most popular for each business objective?
- 

The State Of Community Programs

Like last year, the majority of respondents in our study managed communities of customers (47%).

Who is the primary participant in the community you are responsible for?

Sample Size: 500 (95% of Respondents)

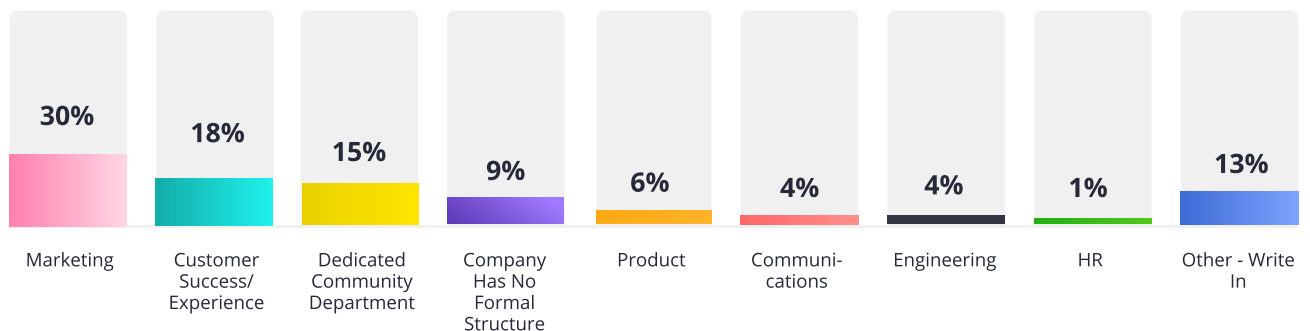


*Top responses for "other" include: Donors, entrepreneurs, founders, freelancers, students, patients, and "all of the above."

This year, we asked what department community teams report into. Marketing was the most popular answer (30%), followed by Customer Success (18%). **Just 15% of companies have a dedicated community department.**

What department is your community team part of?

Sample Size: 503 (95% of Respondents)



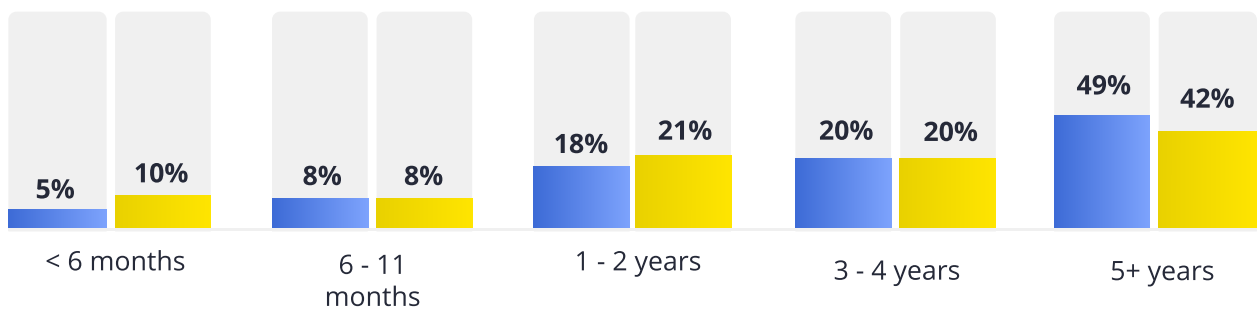
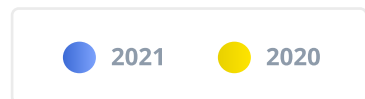
*Top responses for "other" include: Customer Support, Operations, Content, Membership, Technology/IT, DevRel, Innovation, and People Ops.

Communities Are Maturing

The age of communities in our study continued to grow — a sign that the industry itself is maturing, and organizations are seeing the long-term value.

In our last report, 18% of communities had existed for less than a year and 42% had existed for more than 5 years. This year, 13% of communities have existed for less than a year, and **49% of communities have been in action for 5 or more years.**

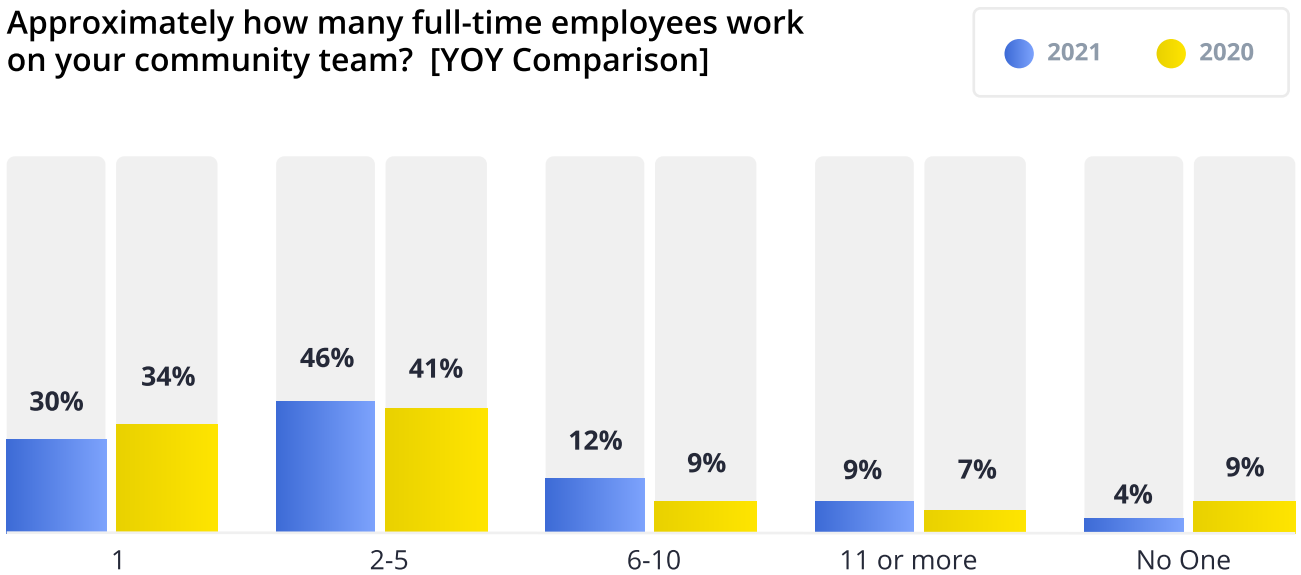
How long has your organization’s community existed? [YOY comparison]



Community Teams Are Growing

Another clear sign that companies increasingly recognize the value of community? **They're hiring more people.** This year, 67% of organizations had at least 2 full-time people on their community team, up from 57% in 2020.

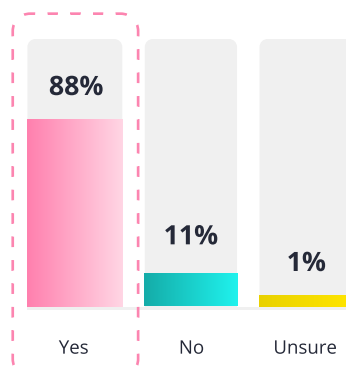
Approximately how many full-time employees work on your community team? [YOY Comparison]



In another sign the industry is maturing, **88% of organizations have at least one dedicated community manager.** The last time we asked this question in 2017, 71% had a dedicated community manager.

Does your organization have at least one dedicated community manager?

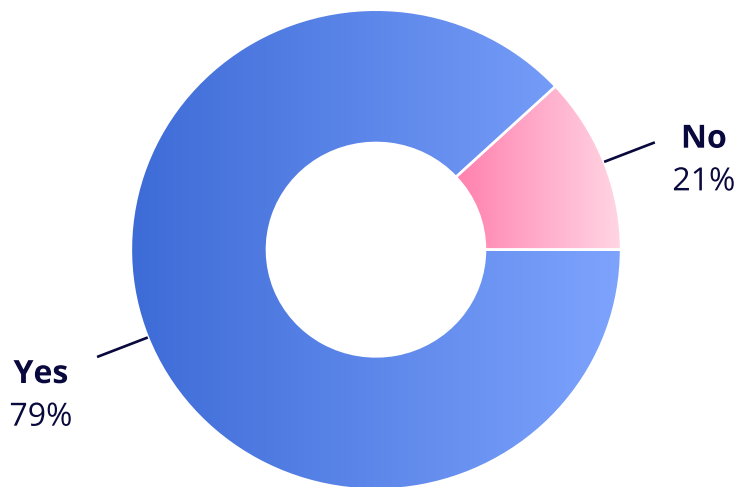
Sample Size: 503 (95% of Respondents)



This is true even for companies just starting out. 79% started off with a dedicated community manager in the first year of launching their program. This suggests that **organizations planning to launch a community increasingly see its value, and are willing to commit dedicated staff and resources.**

Does your organization have at least one dedicated community manager? (Communities less than 1 year old)

Sample Size: 63

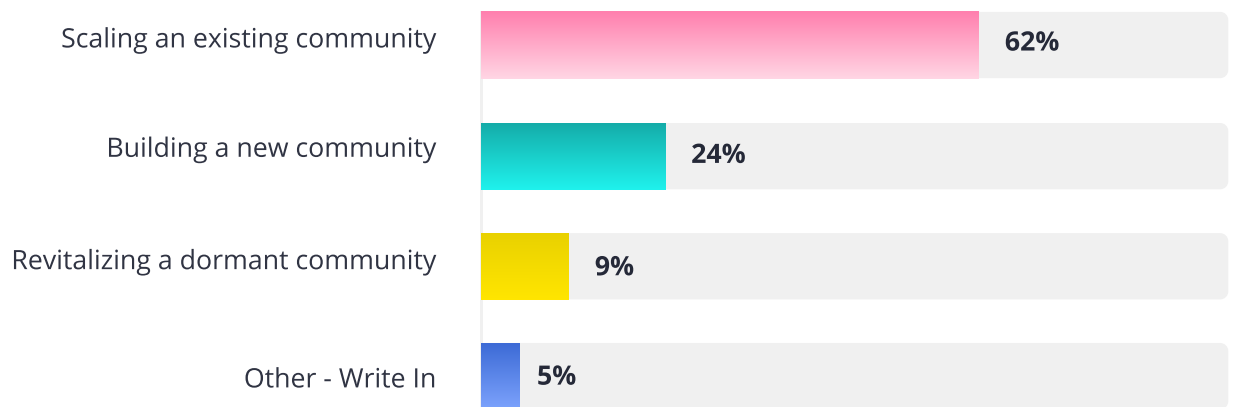


Communities Are Scaling

Nearly two thirds of community professionals (62%) are focused on scaling a community. This is similar to last year (59%).

Which option best describes the strategy for your community program?

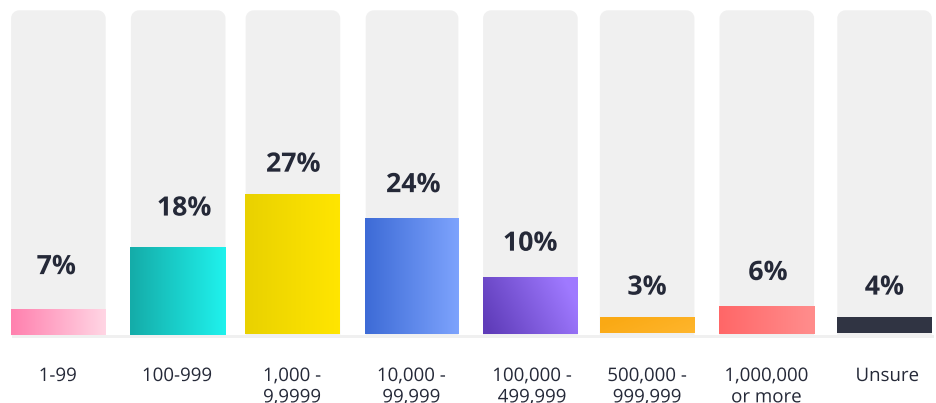
Sample Size: 502 (95% of Respondents)



The breakdown in community size was similar year-over-year, meaning there hasn't been a major shift in the size of communities. 43% of the communities we surveyed had at least 10,000 members.

Approximately how many total members are in your community?

Sample Size: 503 (95% of Respondents)



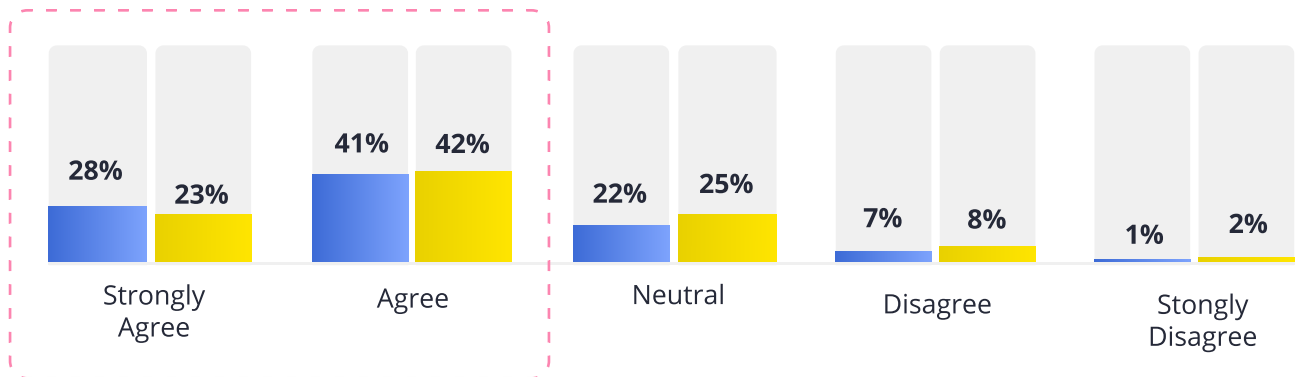
Companies Recognize Community Value

Next, we asked a series of questions about the extent to which companies are recognizing the value of community. They all added up to one thing: Community is becoming a more essential part of business.

In many cases, the percentage of respondents who agreed with each statement was similar to last year, but the percentage who "strongly agree" has gone up. **This suggests that these sentiments are strengthening.**

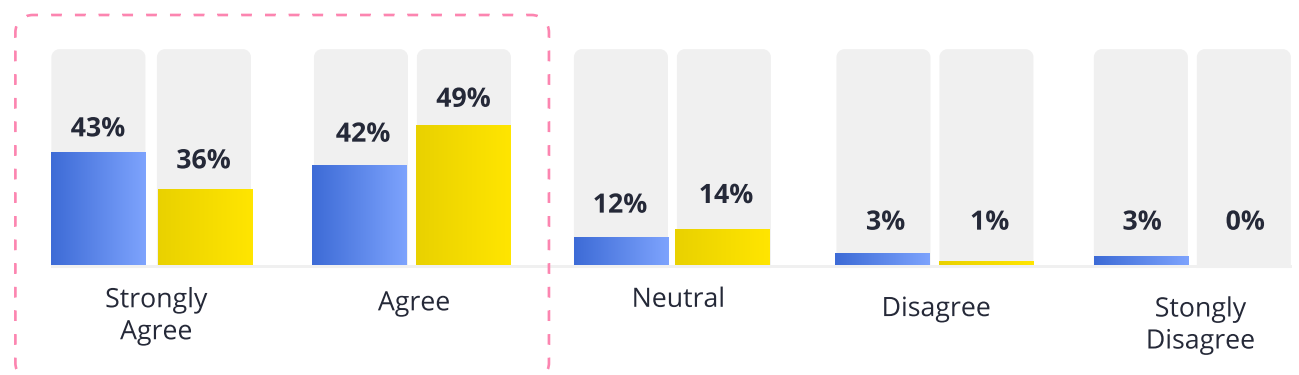
Our organization will be increasing our investment in community over the next year

Sample Size: 503 (95% of Respondents)



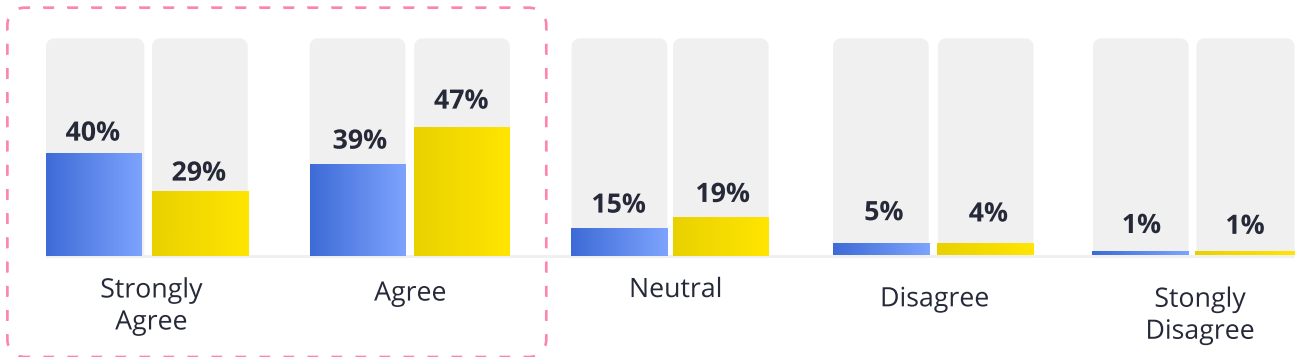
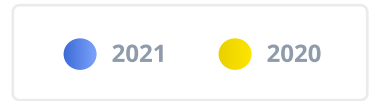
Community has had a positive impact on our organization's objectives over the past 12 months

Sample Size: 503 (95% of Respondents)



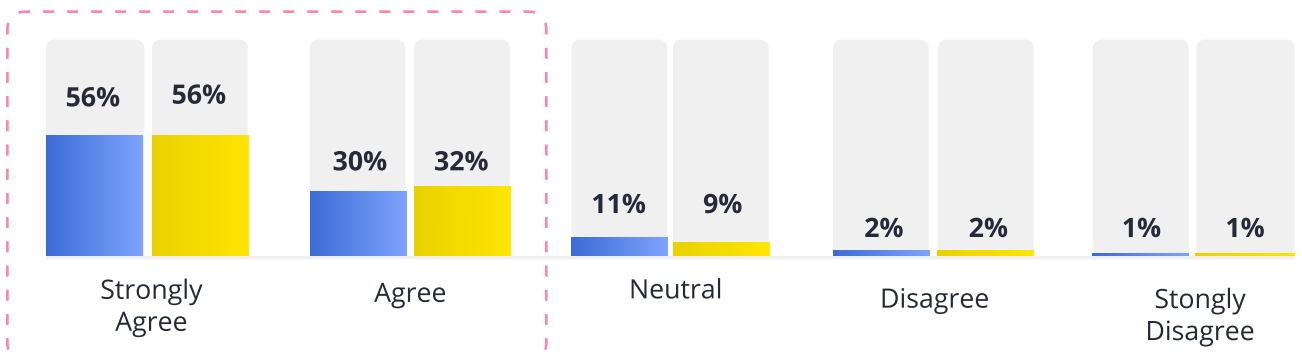
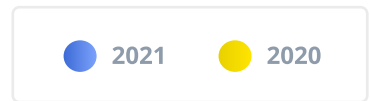
I have seen increased interest in community from other departments in my organizations in the last 12 months

Sample Size: 503 (95% of Respondents)



Community is critical to our company's mission

Sample Size: 503 (95% of Respondents)



Top Frustrations For Community Professionals

Even though there's a lot of good news to report, community professionals still face challenges.

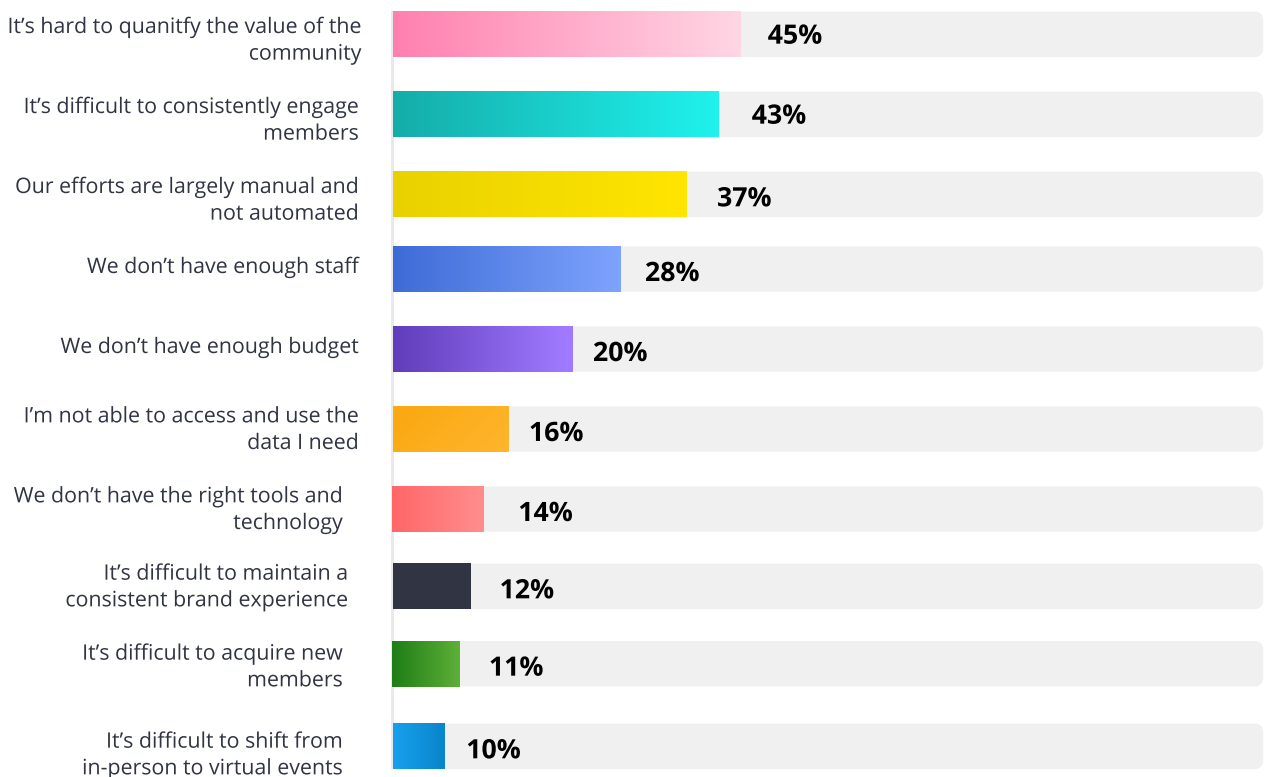
Despite a stronger consensus that community has a positive impact on their organization's objectives, many community professionals still struggle to quantify their value. This was the #1 frustration overall, and a key frustration across community size, age, and industry type. (We'll dig more into value and metrics in the next section.)

Last year's top frustration was engaging members — a challenge that may have been easier for community professionals this year thanks to the shift to virtual.

What are your top frustrations about managing your community and its activities? - Top 10

Sample Size: 503 (95% of Respondents)

Note: Respondents could select multiple options.



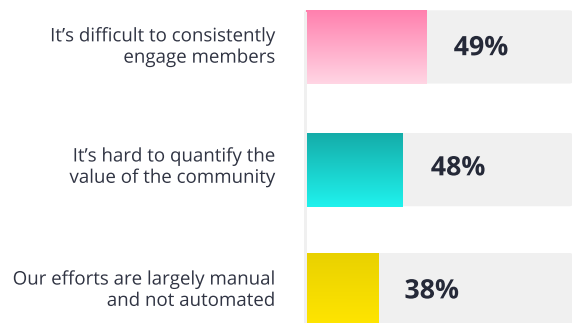
As community professionals gain more experience, they struggle less with engagement and quantifying value, but struggle more with getting the headcount they need to succeed. We compared the top frustrations of those just starting out (1-3 years experience) to seasoned experts (9+ years).

How do frustrations change over time?

1-3 Years of Experience - Top 3

Sample Size: 146

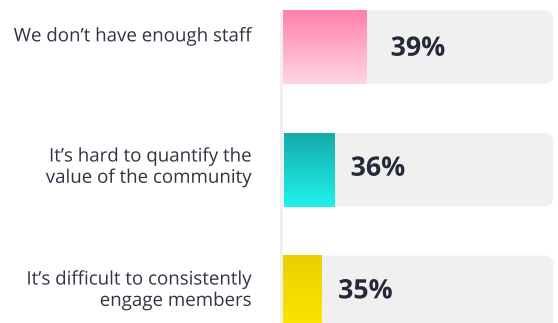
Note: Respondents could select multiple options



9+ Years of Experience - Top 3

Sample Size: 110

Note: Respondents could select multiple options



What is a common misconception about community management?

"That it's easy. A single, good community manager wears many, many hats. Engagement, support, data, admin, strategy, reporting, people management, project management, program management, public relations, light marketing etc."

- Anonymous



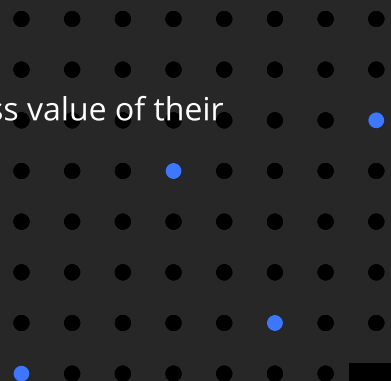


Measuring the Value of Community

What role do communities play in business? How do community managers calculate the ROI and the value they provide — and, crucially, communicate that to senior leadership?

These are fundamental challenges for the community industry. While businesses are more convinced than ever of the value of community, community managers still face challenges in tracking, measuring, and communicating that value.

This section will cover:

- What are the top business objectives for communities?
 - What are the top metrics for community managers? Which metrics are most important to company leadership?
 - Are community professionals able to quantify the business value of their community? If so, what is that value?
 - What platforms are communities hosted on?
- 

Defining Community Value

The SPACES Model

While every community serves a unique purpose, the value communities provide can be grouped under a few broad umbrellas.

For this report, we've used the [SPACES model](#) to categorize the different objectives communities serve. This model is based on the CMX team's work with hundreds of companies, as well as insights from our community members.



Support

Organizes members to answer questions for others to improve customer satisfaction and save costs.



Product

Gathers feedback and insight from members to improve products and offerings.




Acquisition

Drives new customers, leads, and/or users through community experiences or brand advocates.



Contribution

Increases successful contributions of content, code, actions, or resources to a collaborative platform, project or initiative.



Engagement

Improves loyalty and retention through a community of common interest. May be external (customers) or internal (employees, vendors, alumni).



Success

Connects customers to share best practices to drive product adoption and customer expansion.

Top Community Objectives

This year, we asked participants to name all the strategic objectives they worked towards, as well their objective that is their number one priority.

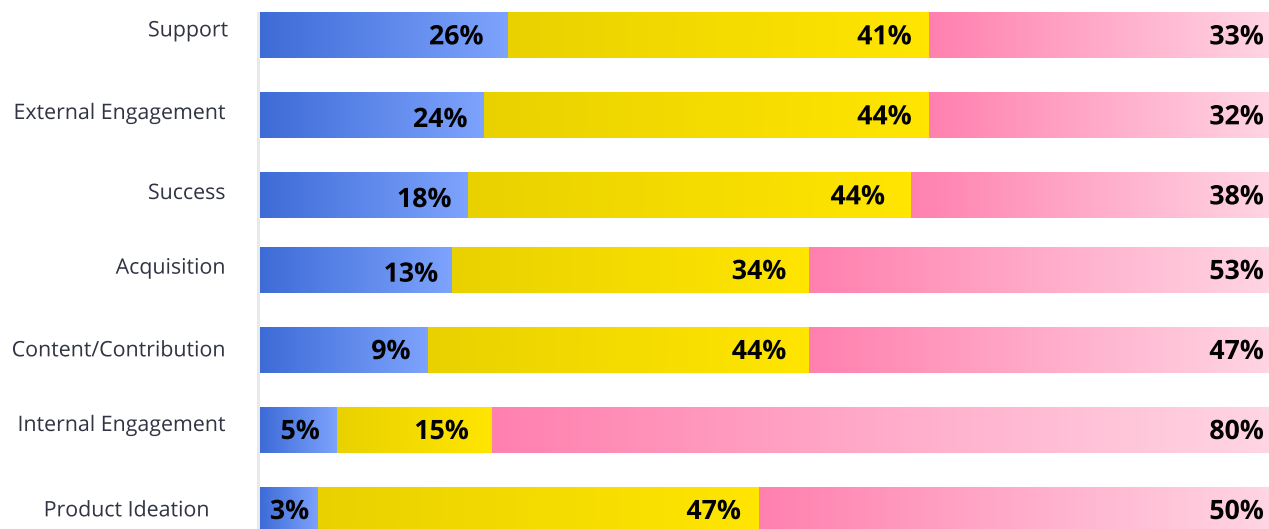
Support was the top primary objective for communities, followed closely by external engagement. Content contribution, acquisition, and product ideation were common objectives for communities, even if they weren't as likely to be the primary objective.

When we began our research in 2017, customer support was the top objective for communities, followed by acquisition. External engagement has risen in importance over the years.

Acquisition has fallen off as a top objective since 2017. Product ideation has also become less popular as a top objective, though many still consider it an objective.

What are the objectives for your community? (Primary & All)

Sample Size: 478 (91% of Respondents)



● Primary Objective

● Using but not primary

● Not using

This is the first year we broke “Success” out on its own, separate from customer support. Communities are evolving beyond customer support into the growing field of customer success — helping customers be more successful with the product to drive more adoption and advocacy.

Most Popular Objectives: Year-Over-Year Comparison

	2021	2019 <small>(online communities only)</small>	2017
1	Support (26%)	External Engagement (29%)	Support (26%)
2	External Engagement (24%)	Support (23%)	Acquisition (23%)
3	Success (18%)	Content/Contribution (23%)	External Engagement (18%)



Learn how to create a community strategy with measurable business outcomes.

[Sign up for CMX's online course, The Community MBA with David Spinks.](#)

The Most Popular Metrics

Next we asked community professionals what metrics they're tracking to measure the impact of their communities.

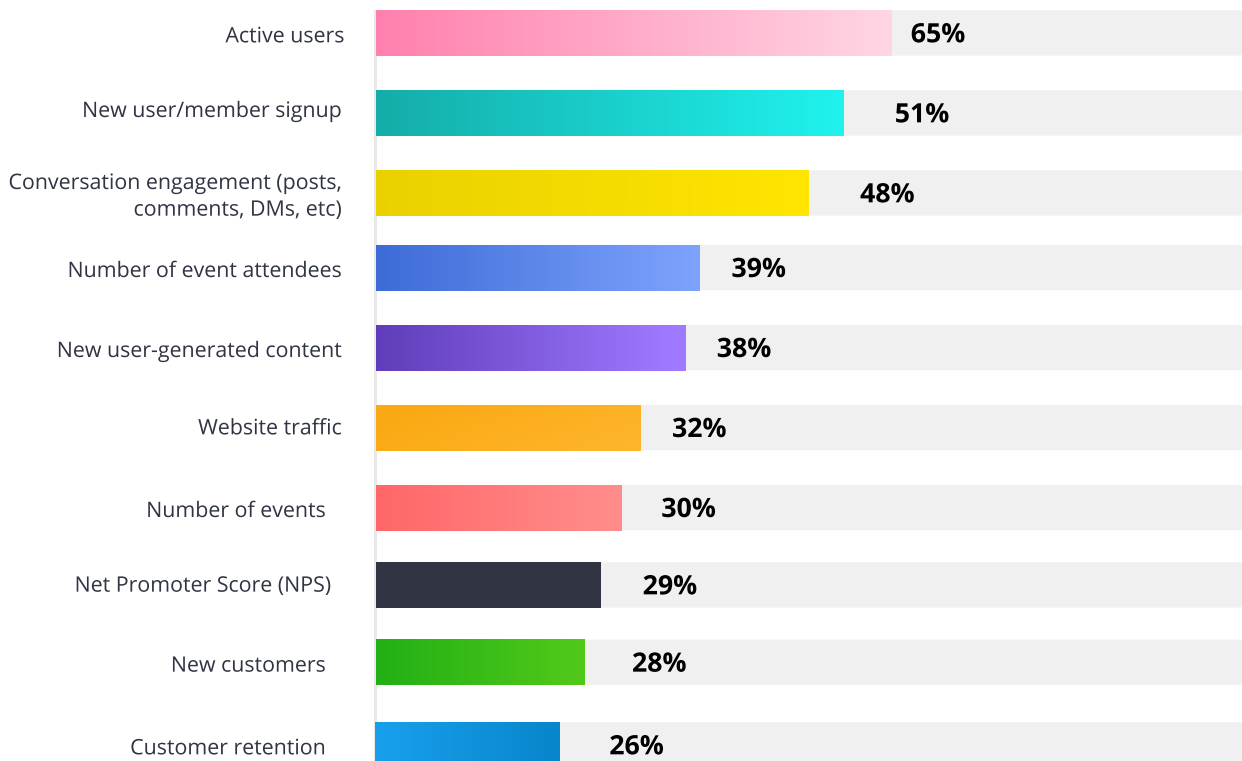
Many of the most popular metrics track community health, rather than business impact: Active users, conversation engagement, number of events, etc. While tracking community health is important, these are typically not the metrics that speak to a business's bottom line.

To guide community managers, we also pulled out the top metrics by objective. This list can be found on the next page.

What metric(s) do you use to measure impact? - Top 10

Sample Size: 476 (90% of Respondents)

Note: Respondents could select multiple options



Top Metrics by Objective

Objective	Top Three Metrics		
Support	Case deflection (27%)	Active users (22%)	Conversation Engagement (19%)
Product Ideation	Product ideas (44%)	Feature adoption (31%)	User-generated content (19%)
Acquisition/ Advocacy	New customers (45%)	New members (36%)	# Of event attendees (18%)
Content	User-generated content (47%)	Active users (32%)	Conversation engagement (24%)
External Engagement	Active users (40%)	Conversation engagement (31%)	Event attendees (23%)
Internal Engagement	Active users (41%)	Conversation engagement (31%)	Net Promoter Score (NPS) (23%)
Success	Active users (36%)	New member (21%)	Net Promoter Score (NPS) (21%)

Top Metrics For Company Leadership

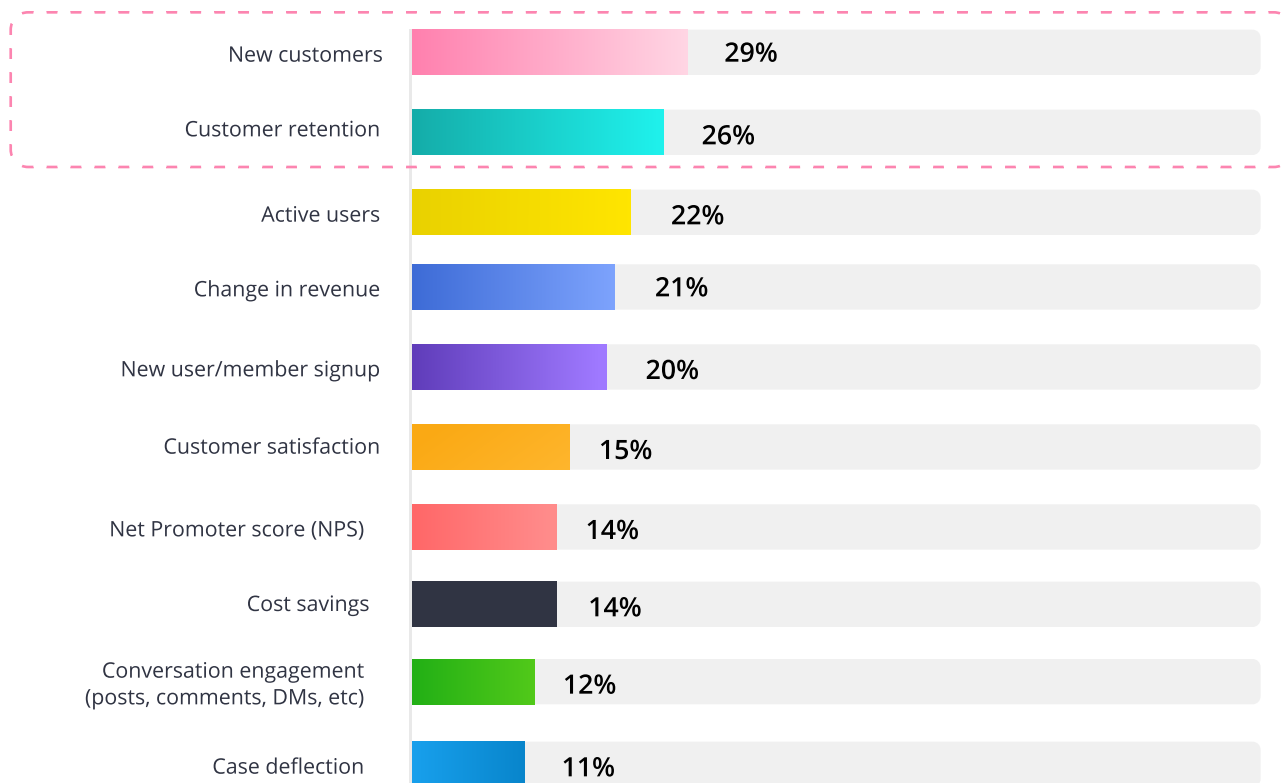
What community metrics do leadership want to see? The key metrics are **new customers and customer retention**.

There's a slight gap between the most popular metrics that leadership want to see, and the most popular metrics community managers track. Metrics like conversation engagement are significant for communities, but low on the list of leadership priorities. A key challenge for 2021 will be aligning with C-Suite leadership on the value community provides and the ways to track it.

Which of these metrics are most important to your company's leadership? - Top 10

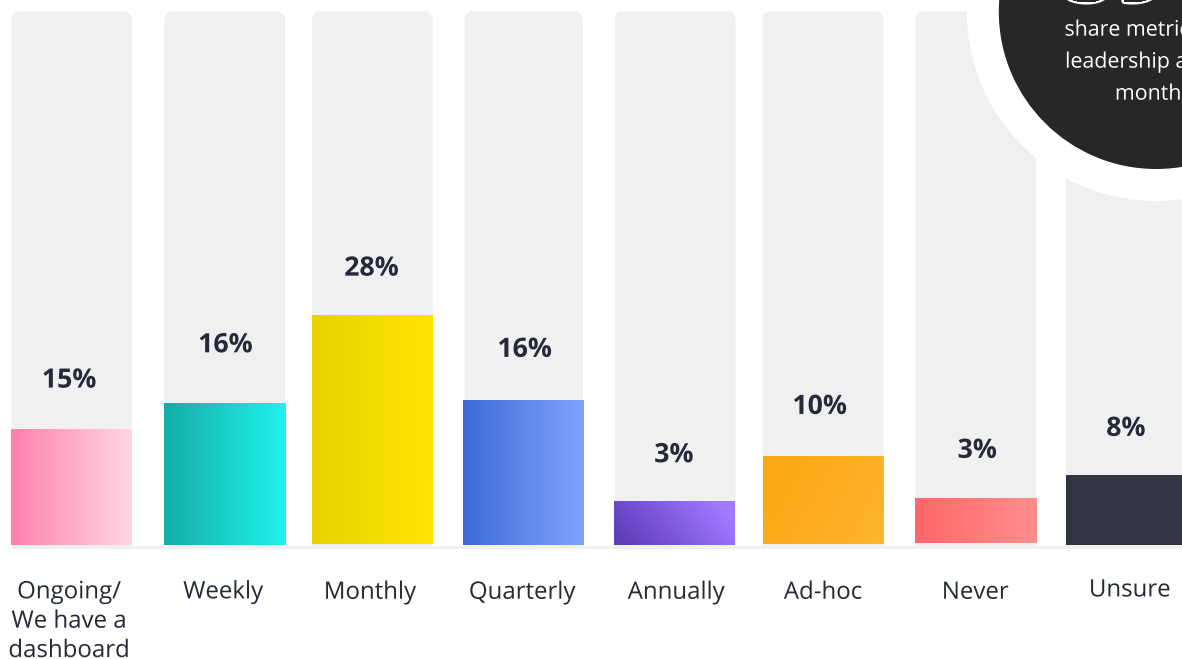
Sample Size: 457 (87% of Respondents)

Note: Respondents could select multiple options

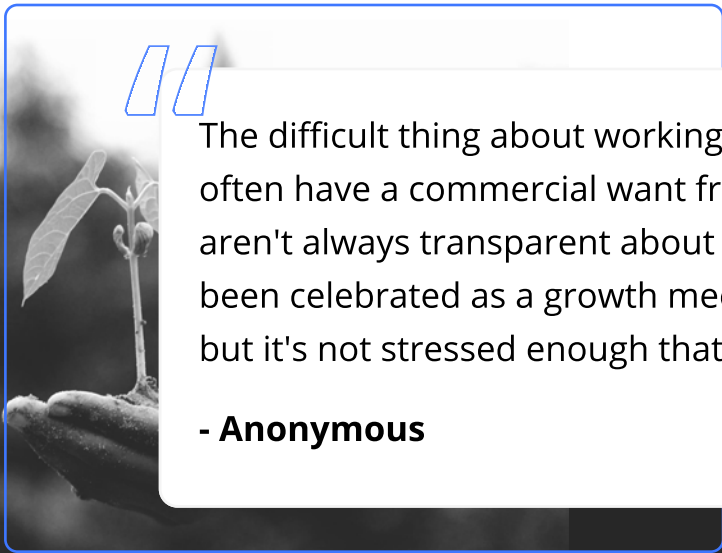


How frequently do you share your metrics with company leadership?

Sample Size: 468 (89% of Respondents)



59%
share metrics with leadership at least monthly



“The difficult thing about working with companies is they often have a commercial want from community, and they aren't always transparent about it...I think community has been celebrated as a growth mechanism (which it can be!) but it's not stressed enough that it takes time and effort.”

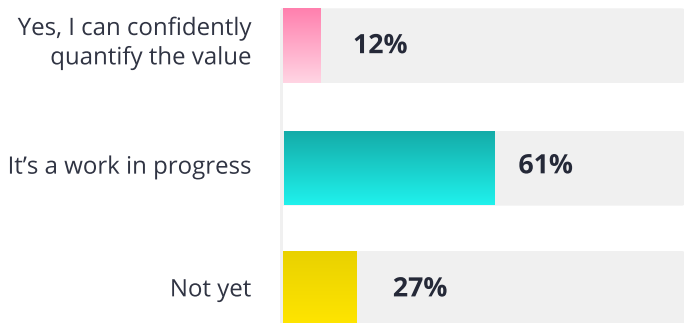
- Anonymous

Quantifying The Value Of Community

Quantifying value is a work in progress for most communities. **Just 12% of communities in our study were confident in their ability to quantify value.** And of those, 22% were unsure what the exact value was.

Are you able to financially quantify the business value of your community?

Sample Size: 459 (87% of Respondents)

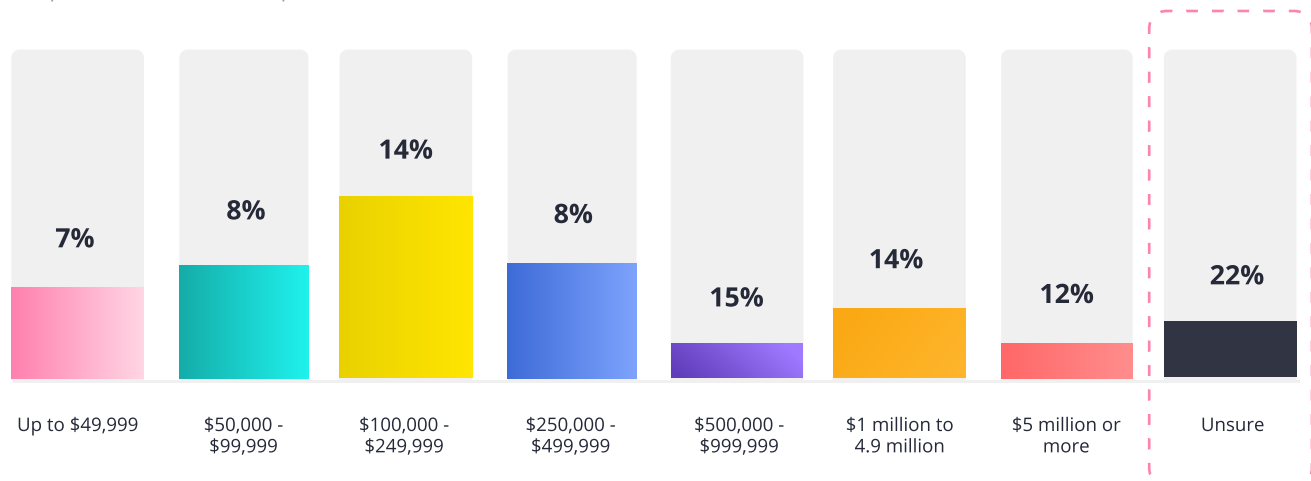


It's difficult to find the right cross-functional team of senior leadership to champion community when I don't have a seat at the table, which leads to a lack of resources, prioritization, and personnel.

- Anonymous

What business value has your community provided to the organization?

Sample Size: 59 (11% of Respondents)



Community Platforms

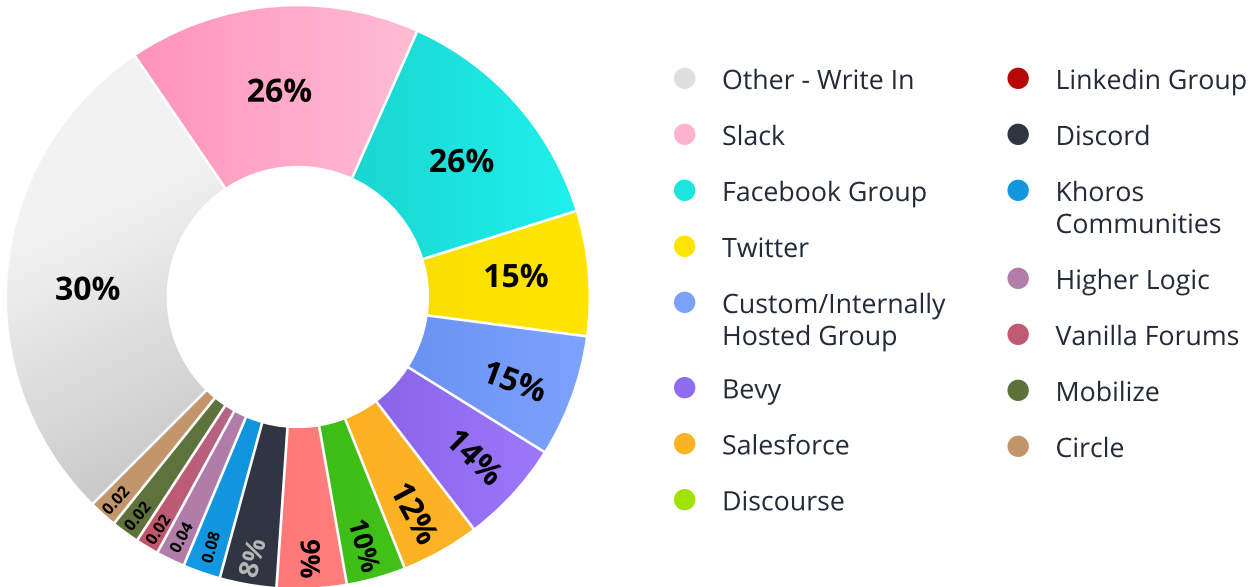
There’s still no standardization across community platforms. For the second year in a row, “other” was the most popular response, with more than 100 different write-ins.

Yet despite a proliferation of options, there’s still room for improvement. **56% are somewhat or not satisfied with their community management platform.** See full breakdown on the next page.

To guide community managers, we’ve pulled out the most popular platforms per top objectives. But this research underscores the fact that there’s no gold standard. The “right” platform is the one that helps a community achieve its specific goals.

What platform(s) do you use to host your online community? - Top 15

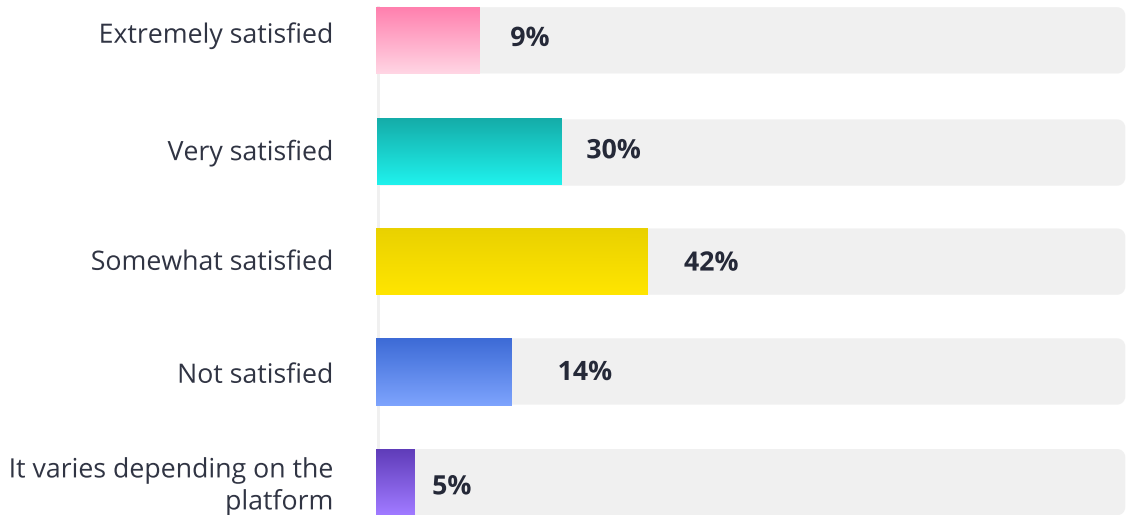
Sample Size: 503 (95% of Respondents)
 Note: Respondents could select multiple options



*Top responses for “other” include: Mighty Networks, Influxive, Instagram, Zendesk, Zoom, Telligent, WhatsApp, Github, Meetup, WordPress.

How satisfied are you with the platform(s) you use to manage your community?

Sample Size: 503 (95% of Respondents)



Top Platforms for Key Objectives

Sample Size: 503 (95% of Respondents)

Note: Respondents could select multiple options. Excludes "Other - Write In"

Primary Objectives (Most Popular)			
Support	Facebook Group (19%)	Khoros Communities (16%)	Slack (15%)
External Engagement	Facebook Group (33%)	Slack (31%)	Bevy (18%)
Success	Slack (27%)	Salesforce (21%)	Facebook Group (17%)
Acquisition	Slack (39%)	Facebook Group (33%)	Twitter or Custom (23% each)

The list of dedicated community platforms is expanding. New this year: Circle, Disciple, Crowdstack, Commsor, and more.



COVID-19 & Virtual Events

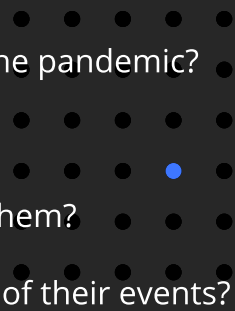


2020 was a challenging year for community teams. As the world changed rapidly, community professionals had to find new ways to connect their members, while dealing with the personal and professional impact of the pandemic.

Yet despite these challenges, **investment in community continued to reach new heights during COVID-19**. A majority of businesses in our study viewed community as more essential during the pandemic, not less.

While this is a testament to the work done by community professionals over the years, it also reflects a unique desire for connection among businesses, consumers and society in 2020. For community professionals, the challenge for 2021 will be to sustain this momentum and work to cement community's value in a post-pandemic world.

This section will cover:

- How did community strategies change due to COVID-19?
 - Did companies continue to invest in community through the pandemic?
 - How has COVID-19 affected community professionals?
 - Did the shift to virtual events help communities, or harm them?
 - What are community professionals planning for the future of their events?
- 

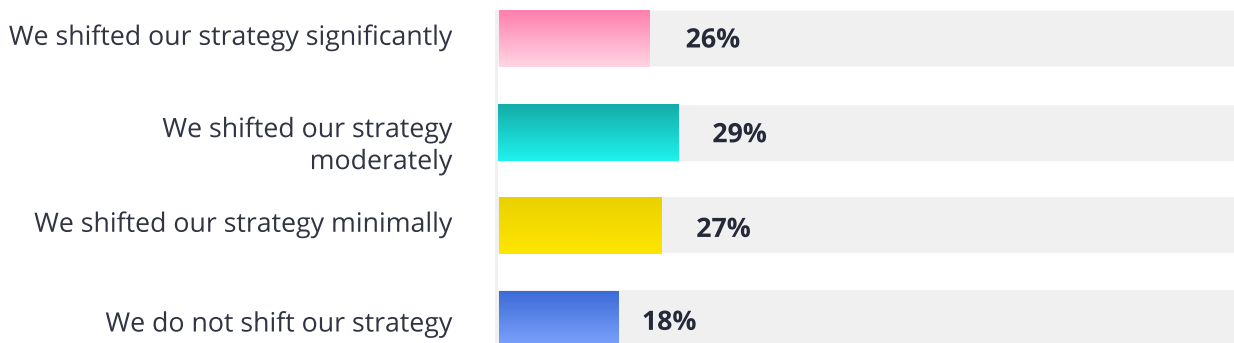
Community Investment During COVID-19

It’s true that the COVID-19 pandemic caused many to pivot their strategy on short notice. **55% of organizations shifted their community strategy moderately or significantly due to COVID-19.**

More established communities (5+ years) were the most likely to shift their strategy, with 85% reporting at least a minimal shift.

How much has your organization shifted its community strategy because of COVID-19?

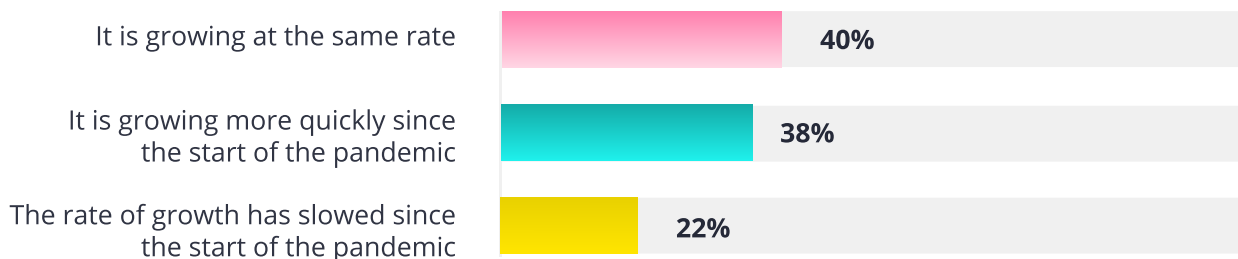
Sample Size: 471 (89% of Respondents)



However, COVID-19 didn’t stop many communities from growing. A majority reported that the size of their community grew at the same rate or more quickly during the pandemic. Just 22% said their rate of growth had slowed.

Has your community grown at a different rate since the start of the pandemic?

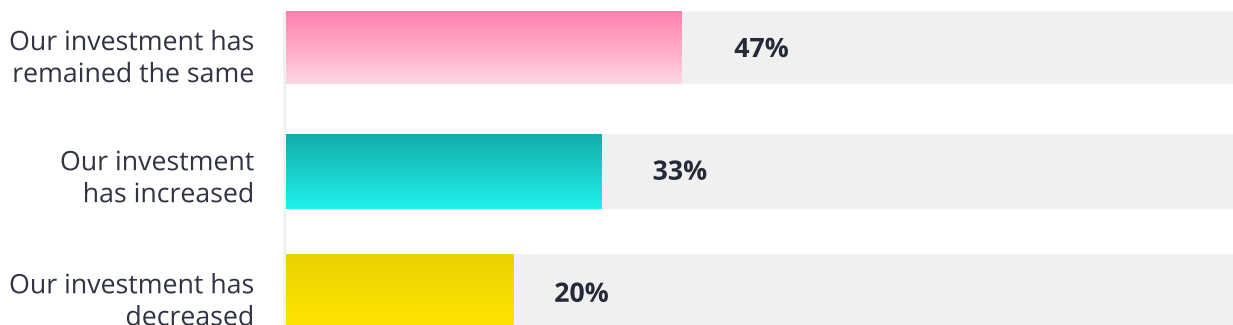
Sample Size: 471 (89% of Respondents)



Despite challenges, investment in community continued to increase. Across the board, community professionals saw more investment, headcount, and recognition from leadership.

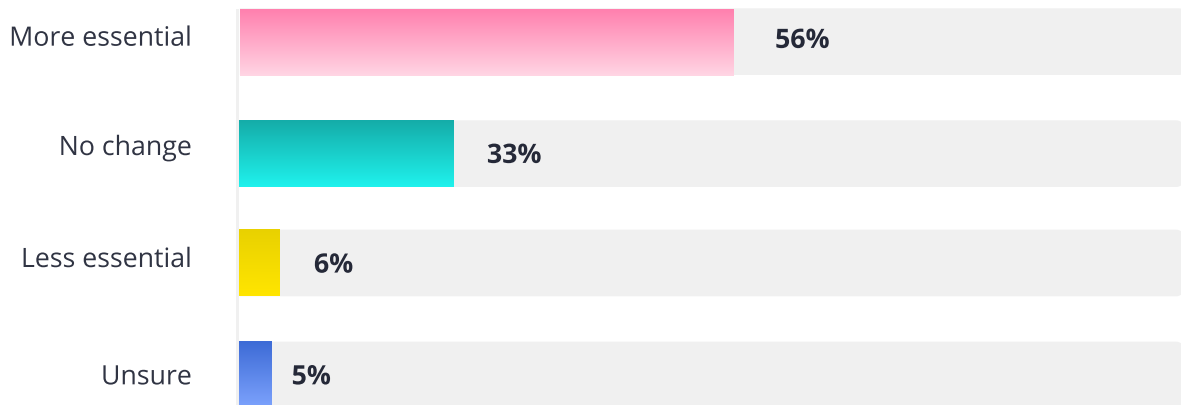
How has your organization’s investment in your community program shifted since the start of the pandemic?

Sample Size: 471 (89% of Respondents)



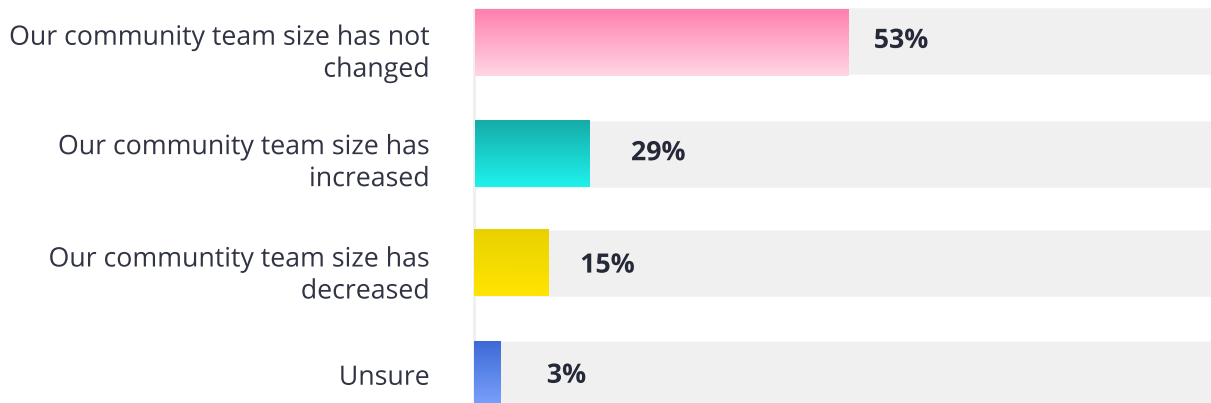
Has your organization’s leadership viewed your community as more or less essential since the start of the pandemic?

Sample Size: 471 (89% of Respondents)



Has the size of your community team changed since the start of the pandemic?

Sample Size: 464 (88% of Respondents)



“ We increased our focus on creating channels for information sharing and socialization as the community became the primary resource for sharing information about the pandemic's effect on our business and offices around the world. We've also pivoted to creating more opportunities for socialization, kudos sharing, etc. to help replace some of the lost in-person interactions in the offices.

- Anonymous

Voices Of The Community

How were community professionals impacted by the pandemic — both personally and professionally? Our respondents shared their experiences.

"We launched during COVID-19, so we were no longer able to host the launch events and educational opportunities we had hoped for. We switched to small Zoom sessions with people in our trial community. One of the hardest things is getting people to join our Zooms as a new brand." -Anonymous

"Community members are more stressed in general, which has resulted in a lot more tension from the community making people quicker to get angry or start fights. This has affected me and my team by forcing us to frequently deal with those issues over work that would be more productive."
-Anonymous

"People are starting to see the value of what we do, since we're one of the few platforms within our organization to be able to fully interact with our customers." - Anonymous

"Engaging with members has proven to be more difficult as we attempt to rise above the noise of everything else. People have less time, are way more stressed, and just trying to get through the day with their regular responsibilities. I've found people want to engage with the community but struggle to make it a priority." - Anonymous

The Rise Of Virtual Events

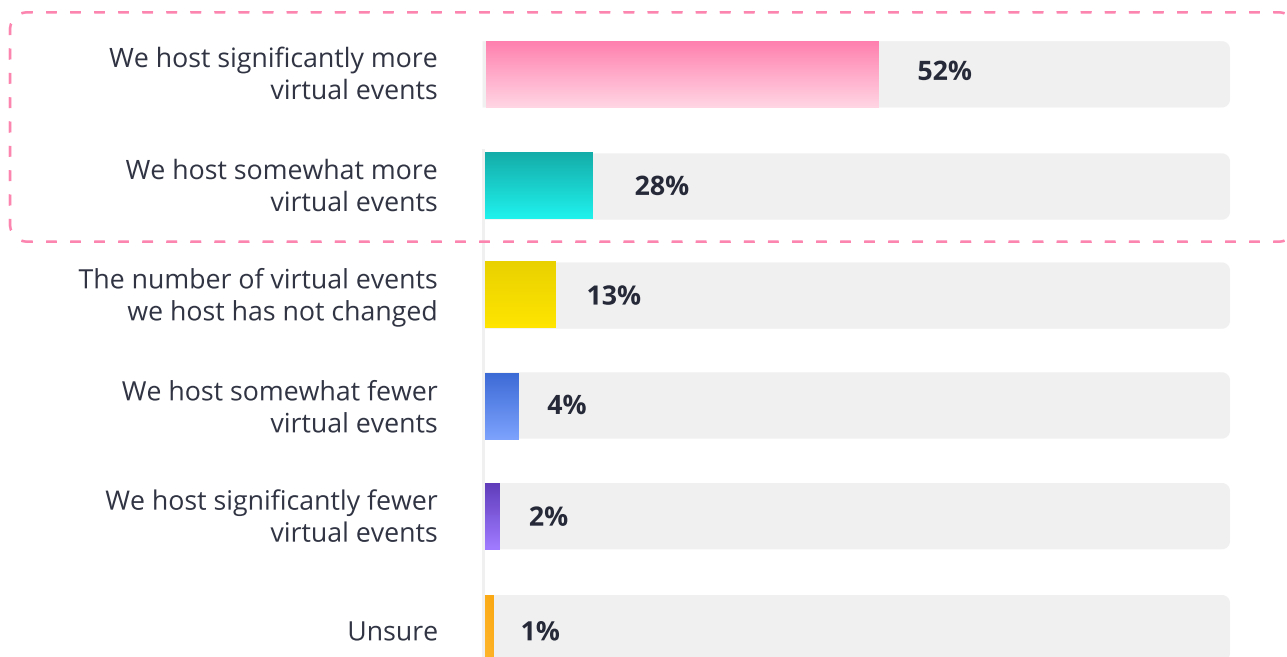
Unsurprisingly, 80% of communities reported hosting more virtual events due to the pandemic. What did surprise us was the value unlocked by virtual events. **80% of community professionals said virtual events are becoming a more critical part of their business strategy**, not a temporary stopgap.

Despite challenges like virtual engagement and Zoom fatigue, there’s plenty of upsides to virtual events: Lower cost, more accessibility, no geographic limits. Whatever the reason, this year has shown many the role virtual events could play in their future.

How has the pandemic impacted the number of virtual events your community team has hosted?

Sample Size: 345 (65% of Respondents)

Note: This question was only asked to those currently hosting virtual events





Are virtual events becoming a more critical part of your organization’s business strategy?

Sample Size: 344 (65% of Respondents)

Note: This question was only asked to those currently hosting virtual events.



It's likely that even after in-person meetings resume, we will see an increased demand for virtual offerings, as they provide a level of accessibility that's needed even without a pandemic. This is doubly influenced by the increasing recognition of access and equity issues broadly in the United States.

- Anonymous

Virtual Events Are Here To Stay

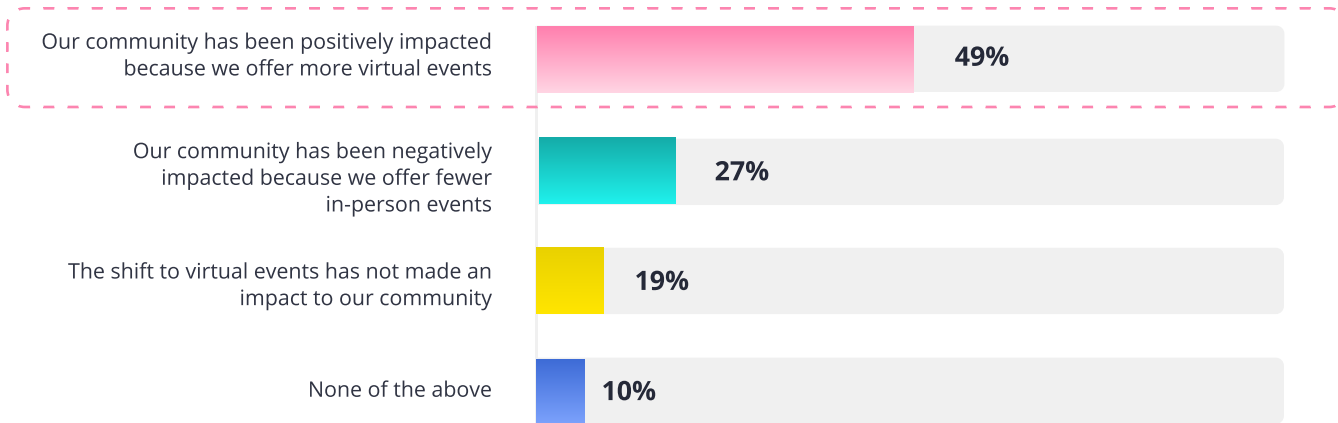
Our next set of questions focused specifically on communities that used to host in-person events, but shifted to virtual due to COVID-19. (81% of those who stopped hosting in-person events replaced some or all with virtual events.)

How did this shift affect communities? Despite the challenges of connecting virtually, **half reported that the shift from in-person to virtual events had a positive impact on their community.**

How has your shift away from in-person events changed the experience of your community?

Sample Size: 216 (41% of Respondents)

Not: Respondents could select multiple options. This question was only asked to those who used to host in-person events, but switched to virtual.



Virtual events have impacted our metrics significantly. Engagement has shifted from live attendance to viewings of recordings. We are scaling up content that can be consumed asynchronously.

- **Anonymous**



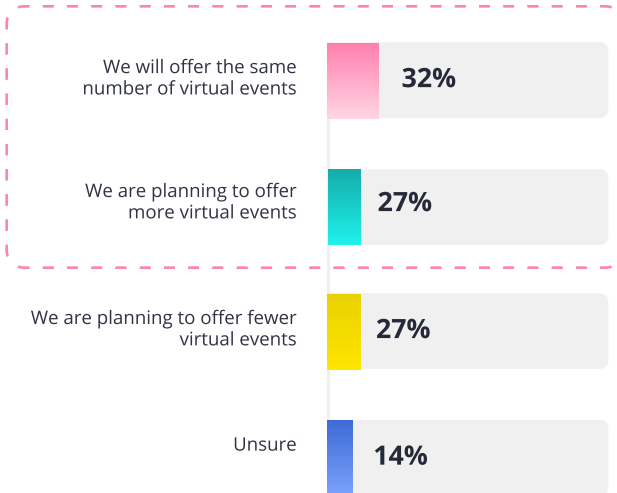
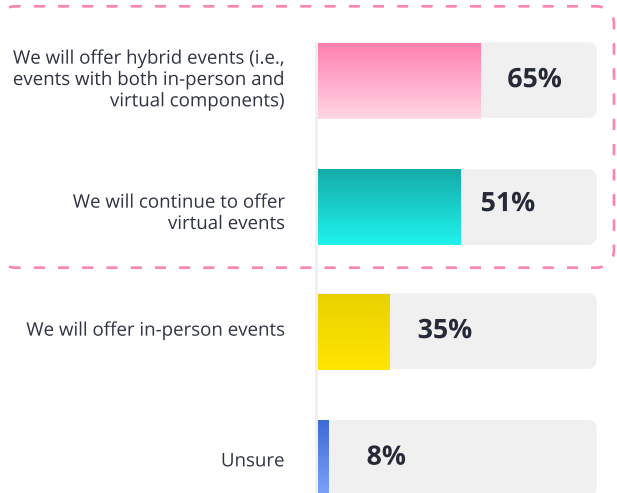
In fact, community professionals still plan to offer virtual events (alone, or as part of hybrid events) when they can safely offer in-person again. Of those who will continue to host virtual events, 59% said they would offer the same number or more.

When communities are able to safely offer in-person events, how will your events strategy shift?

Sample Size: 214 (41% of Respondents)
 Note: Respondents could select multiple options. This question was only asked to those who used to host in-person events, but switched to virtual.

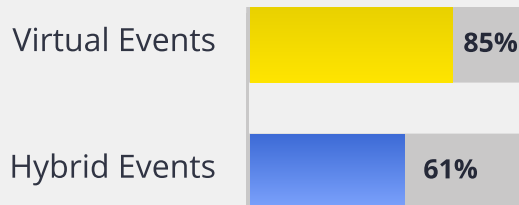
Compared to what you are currently offering, how do you expect the number of virtual events to shift once you can safely offer in-person events?

Sample Size: 110 (21% of Respondents)
 Note: This question was only asked to those who answered "We will continue to offer virtual events" in the last question.



35% of communities plan to offer in-person events once they resume safely. Of those, how many will also continue to make virtual events or hybrid events part of the mix?

Sample Size: 75

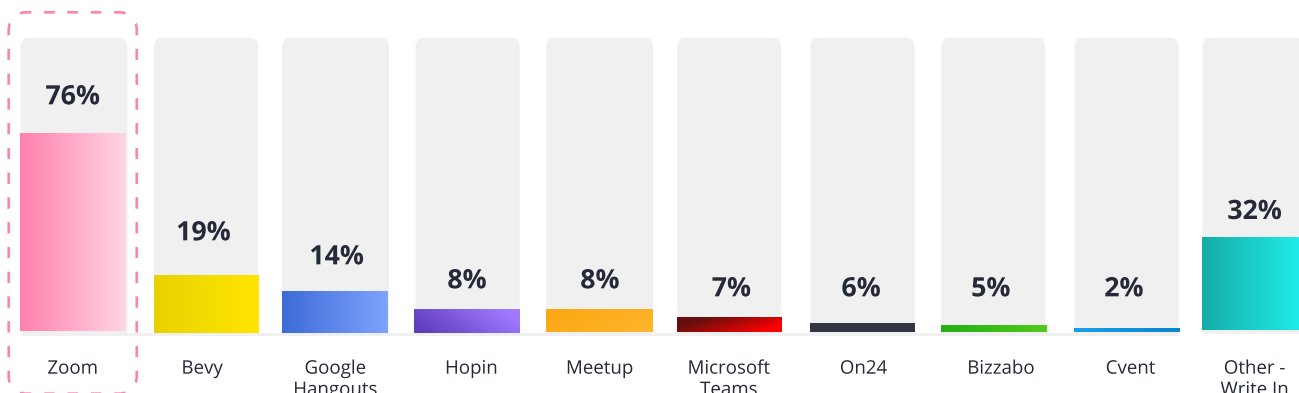


Virtual Event Platforms & Tools

A majority of communities use Zoom to host their virtual events. However, there's a wide range of platforms in use.

Which platform(s) are you using to host virtual events? - Top 10

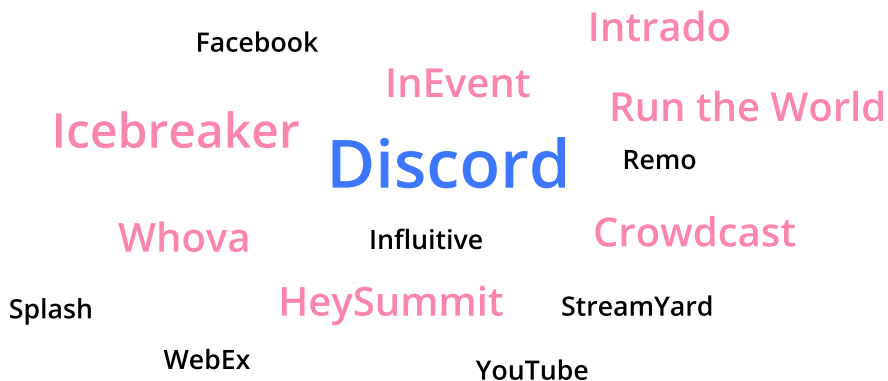
Sample Size: 345 (65% of Respondents)
 Note: Respondents could select multiple options



Note: CMX partnered with Bevy to distribute this survey.

Other Platforms (Write In)

Note: Responses sized by popularity



Diversity, Equity & Inclusion

This year, the conversation around diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) took on new urgency. Following the death of George Floyd and Black Lives Matter protests around the world, many turned a critical eye to DEI practices within their own company, and their community.

This section will cover how the community industry responded to this year's events, and how communities are approaching DEI practices and policies. We also cover the racial and ethnic composition of our survey respondents.

This is our first attempt to take an industry-wide look at this question, and we hope this data contributes to transparency and accountability around these issues.

Diversity In The Community Industry

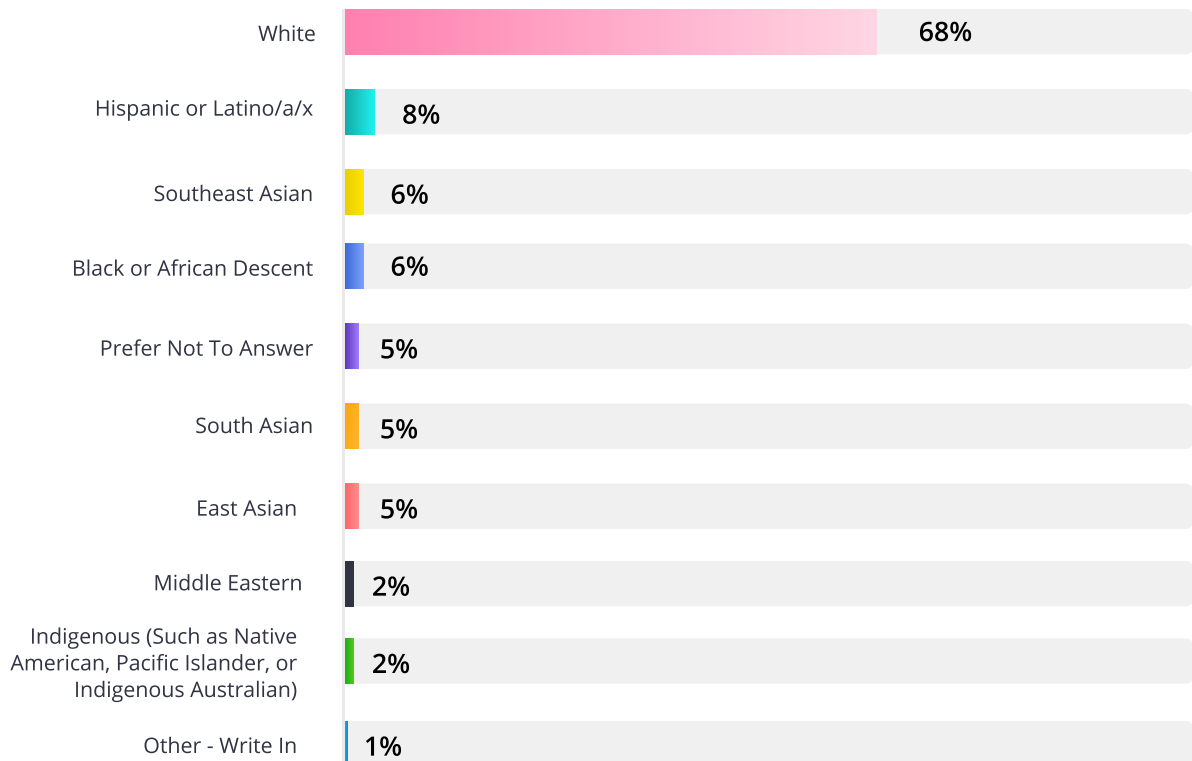
Below is the breakdown of racial or ethnic identities for participants in this study. This is the first year we included this question.

A majority of community professionals are white (68%). That number is higher in Europe (77% white), and North America (75% white, no responses from Mexico).

There's more work to be done to break this down further, and there's more work to be done to break this down further by sector, seniority level, compensation, gender and more.

What is your racial or ethnic identity?

Sample Size: 527 (All Respondents)
 Note: Respondents could select multiple options

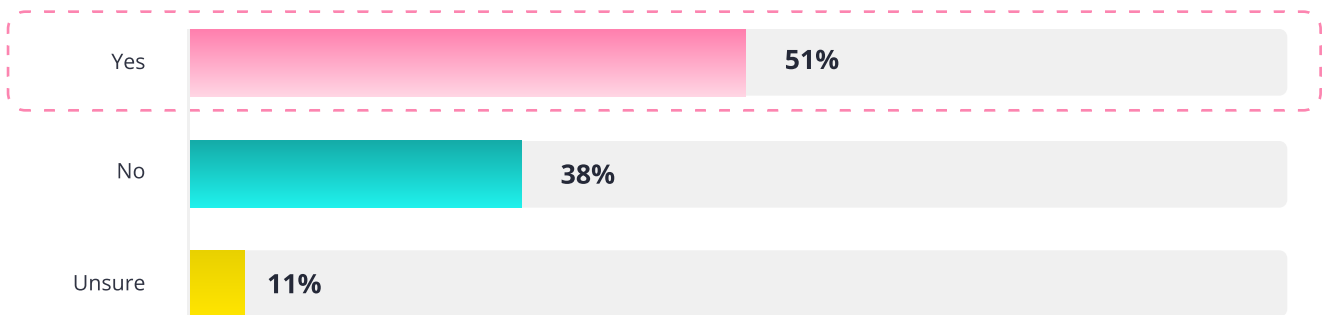


Community Policies

Half of the communities in our study have specific DEI policies for managing their community. This was true even for brand-new communities (54%).

Do you have specific policies related to diversity, equity and inclusion for your community?

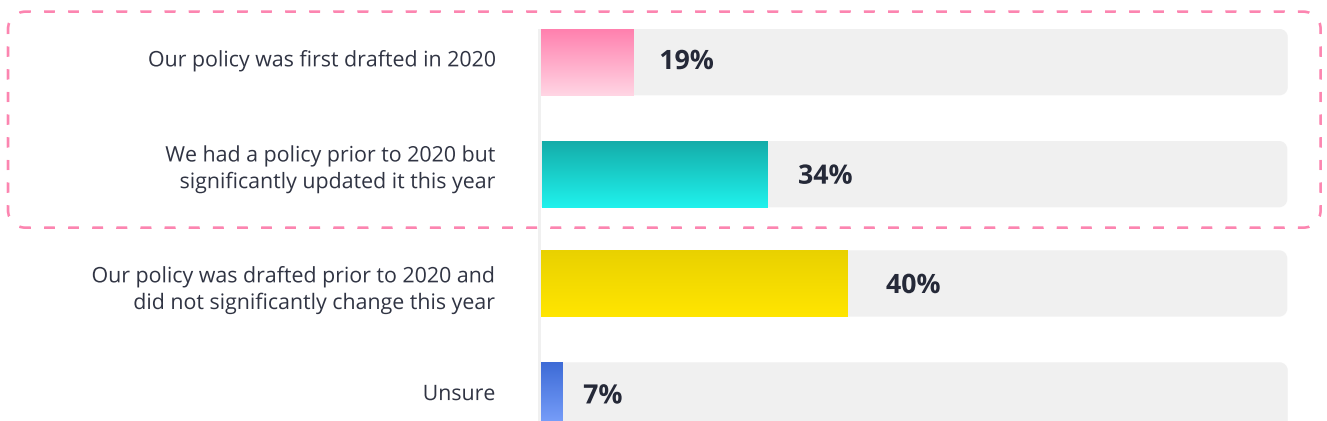
Sample Size: 466 (88% of Respondents)



53% of all communities with a DEI policy either created or significantly updated it this past year.

Was your policy created in 2020?

Sample Size: 238 (45% of Respondents)

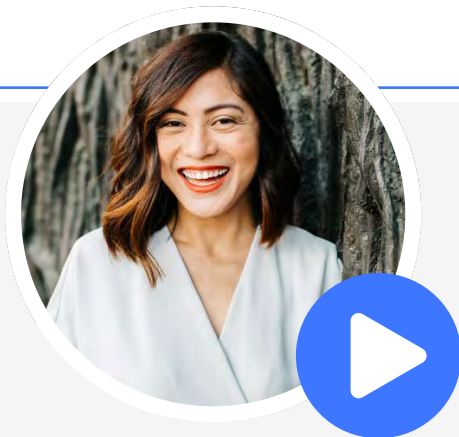
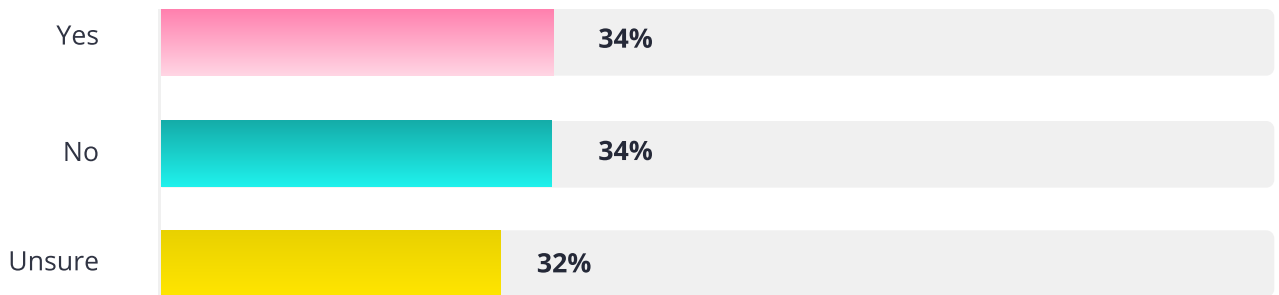


While the number of communities with a dedicated policy is likely to rise next year, not all communities agree that this is a necessity.

Of those who do not already have a DEI policy, one-third has a plan to create one. One-third were unsure.

Do you have plans to create policies for diversity, equity and inclusion for your community?

Sample Size: 181 (34% of Respondents)



Watch [Kay Fabella's](#) talk from CMX Summit 2020 on How to Be an Inclusive Community Leader

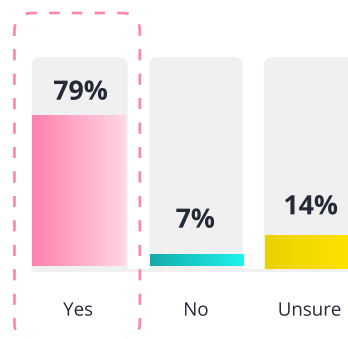
Taking A Stance

The majority of community professionals (79%) believe their organization should take a public stance on issues related to diversity, equity and inclusion.

However, only about half of communities in our study took a public stance on Black Lives Matter. How did community members respond? Of those who took a stance on Black Lives Matter, more than half received only positive feedback.

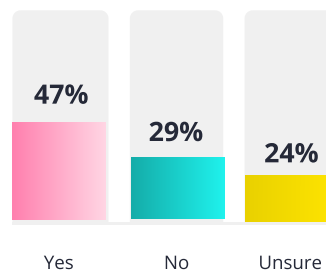
Do you think your organization should take a public stance on diversity, equity, and inclusion issues?

Sample Size: 466 (88% of Respondents)



Did your community take a public stance on Black Lives Matter?

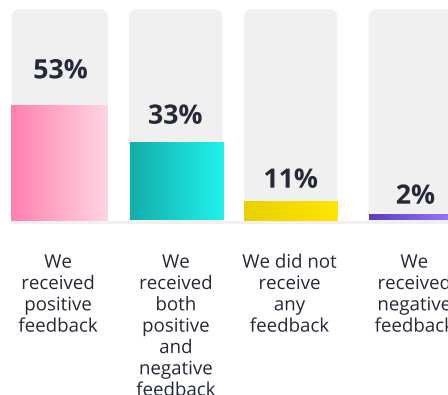
Sample Size: 466 (88% of Respondents)

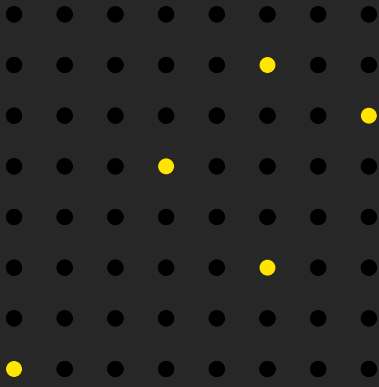


What type of response did your stance elicit from the community?

Sample Size: 221 (42% of Respondents)

Note: This was only asked to those who answered Yes for the previous question.



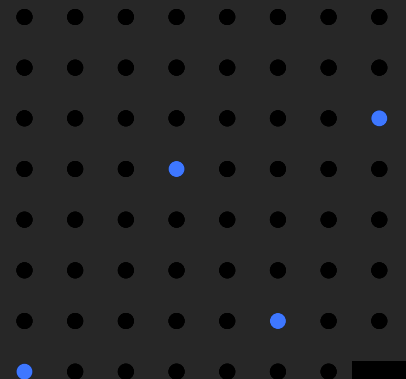


What's Next?

No one can predict what next year will hold. But communities are entering 2021 with unprecedented levels of buy-in, commitment, and appreciation.

Will this momentum continue next year? How can community professionals position themselves to take advantage of this moment—and tackle the next set of challenges?

This research serves as a jumping-off point for your 2021 strategy. Read on for our recommendations to set your community up for success this year.



Recommendations For Your 2021 Community Strategy

1

Align community vision and company leadership

Community professionals will need to both understand how their community fits into company-wide objectives, and continue to educate their organization on what community truly means. Use this research to help get buy-in by sharing industry baselines, and don't forget to check out more case studies from CMX to help make the case.

2

Track business outcomes

The most popular metrics for community managers focus on community health: Active users, new users, conversation engagement. But the metrics that are most important to leadership are business outcomes: New customers, customer retention. Connecting community activity to business outcomes will be key to communicating value to the C-Suite.



3

Take advantage of more event types

This year showed us the potential of virtual events. Even if in-person events resume next year, 51% believe virtual events will be part of their strategy. Communities have more options than ever (including hybrid), and will need to set thoughtful goals for their events program.

4 Build inclusive spaces and diverse teams

The value of community goes beyond just business outcomes. Communities can make a difference in the lives of members, and impact society. Next year, communities should continue to use this opportunity to build spaces that are welcoming and uplifting for everyone. Start by auditing your hiring process, internal culture, and community guidelines to recognize and reduce bias.

5 Take your seat at the table

Community managers are used to working with limited resources. But if you're one of the 69% whose organization will increase its investment in community next year, don't wait to step up to the plate. Put your budget to use today to ensure community becomes an irreplaceable part of your business.

“My advice to anybody in the community business is, cement it now. Start working right now to make sure you're telling a story, delivering value, getting buy-in. The people investing today in cementing community as a valuable business practice are the ones who are going to win.”

-Brian Oblinger, Community Expert and Strategic Consultant

More From CMX

Now that you've been equipped with this data, don't let it sit there on your desktop. It's time to take action! And the CMX community is here for you every step of the way.



Join the CMX community on Slack, Facebook, or in our members-only Pro space.

cmxhub.com/community



Find your local CMX Connect chapter to meet with other community professionals in your neighborhood, or start your own!

events.cmxhub.com

cmxACADEMY

Level up your community building with CMX Academy, the business school for community professionals.

cmxhub.com/academy



Acknowledgements

Thank you to all of the community managers, community professionals, and members of the CMX Community for participating in the survey and sharing their experiences. Our community members are the heart of our research, and we couldn't have done it without you.

Specific thanks to the following people for testing the survey, sharing their feedback on the findings, and helping us make these insights actionable:

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Report team:

Lead Researcher and Writer: Mary Cass, CMX

Designer: Michelle Wong, Bevy

Additional Input: Virginia Demarco, Bevy

Survey Design and Analysis: Mantis Research

Strategy: David Spinks, Founder, CMX

Did you find this report valuable? Did you use it to guide your community strategy? Have an idea for how we can improve it next year?

We'd love to hear from you!

Send us your stories and feedback: team@cmxhub.com.

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