

PROJECT COMMUNITY BUILDING – YOUNG PROFESSIONALS

COMMUNITY BUILDING HANDBOOK COMPLEMENTARY GUIDE

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PREFACE

This Complementary Guide is written to provide additional information to the Community Building Handbook (PowerPoint) to support and help each at the University of Twente (UT) in setting up and strengthening communities. It is our aim to provide a sufficient starting point for community building at UT. It is a take-whatever-you-need-from-this-handbook since every community is unique and therefore requires a unique and customised approach.

Having a vibrant and lively community is a desire that is widely expressed, and many efforts are focussed on building such communities. The use of these concepts has emerged over the years, increasing its presence in action plans, policy documents and above all, in the overall strategy of the university, Shaping2030. Even though many are familiar with the concepts, it is the explanation of what we mean when we speak of communities and community building that is lacking.

Communities and community building have proven to create an impressive effect on, for example, employee well-being, increased quality and a general sense of belonging and relatedness. It is a concept, introduced by Robert Putnam in his book *Bowling Alone: America's Declining of Social Capital*, which emerged in the United States as a strategy to improve neighbourhood quality. In increasing the relations between the individuals, improvements were realised in decreasing crime rates, improving quality of life and the physical appearance of the neighbourhoods. Just by simply making connections between the individual neighbours, also known as increasing social capital. This way of thinking has been adopted by other types of communities with the goal of fostering similar results that have been seen in the neighbourhood context.

Nowadays, solutions to societal problems are crossing the borders of traditional disciplines and areas. This implies that in finding solutions, one requires a joint effort by pooling resources from different disciplines. This joint effort can be stimulated by creating a strong community in which individual members feel empowered, supported and above all, at home. To kick-start such a community or to strengthen an existing one, one requires **a community member to take the lead**. At UT, several roles have been identified and put into practice such as community support officer and community coordinator. Since it is expected that cross-disciplinary cooperation will increase, we call upon you as a community member to take the lead in kick-starting and strengthening your communities!

*Community building can be a tool for **shaping individuals**. A strong community can contribute to the well-being of individuals due to an increased sense of belongingness and relatedness, but also to an individual's career development due to increased interaction between junior and senior employees.*

*Community building can be a tool for **shaping connections**. A strong community consists of numerous mutual connections between individuals. In strengthening a community, these connections will become stronger and new connections can arise, both within UT and with external partners.*

*Community building can be a tool for **shaping society**. A strong community pools their resources, energy and perspectives to find integral and innovative solutions to societal challenges today. It is evident that this transcends the impact of a single individual.*

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1. HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE?

You can use this Community Building Handbook and the Complementary Guide in diverse ways. First, you can use it as **a means to increase your knowledge and insights on community building at UT**. Moreover, if you are working on community building or starting a project in that direction, you can use the Community Building Handbook and the Complementary Guide **as a tool in your project**. This implies that you follow the logical sequence of this document during your project to provide structure and concrete actions and recommendations.

This Complementary Guide is divided into two parts. In the first part, **phase one** of community building, you will get an answer to the questions of **what, when and why, concerning community building**. Here, you can find information on what community building is and how a community differs from other groups of individuals such as teams or networks. Also, you will learn that organisational goals, as motivation to pursue community building, can differ per community context and sphere. After completing this phase, you can better assess whether community building is the appropriate tool for you, concerning your group of individuals and your organisational goals.

In case you have determined in phase one that community building is the appropriate tool for you, we strongly advise you to read **phase two**. In the second part, phase two, you will **get an answer to the who and how questions on community building**. Here, you can find more practical information and tools on how to build and strengthen a community. Whether you are starting a new community or strengthening an existing one, the tools included in this Community Building Handbook and the Complementary Guide can be helpful in both cases. After completing phase two, you will have an overview of concrete actions and steps that you can take to foster community building.

As we did our best to provide you with a complete set of information on community building, we acknowledge our limitations in doing so. Therefore, the Community Building Handbook and the Complementary Guide conclude with **an overview of additional sources and information**. These originate from both internal and external sources. We highly recommend you also have a look at these.

At the beginning of each section, you can find an image of the corresponding PowerPoint slide from the Community Building Handbook. These are added for indicative purposes only. An explanation of the content will be added in the lower part of the section. At the beginning of each section, the goal and a set of recommendations and actions are formulated that you can use as building blocks in your community building project.

2. PHASE 1: A COMMUNITY

- ✓ The goal of phase one is to help you determine whether community building is an appropriate tool for you in pursuing your organisational goals.

We do this by explaining what a community is, and what we mean when we speak of community building. It is important to remember that different types of groups require different tools. Therefore, we help you to distinguish between a network, a team and a community. Is the group that you are focussing on a community? Or are you aspiring to form a new group with the characteristics of a community? If so, it is important that you identify the sphere in which your community (to be) is located. It is important to remember that community building is not a goal itself, but it is a means to foster organisational goals and these goals differ per community context. After completing phase one, you can better assess whether community building is the appropriate tool in your case.

2.1 WHAT IS COMMUNITY BUILDING?

- ✓ The goal of this section is to help you to get a better understanding of the concept of Community Building.

Actions and Recommendations

- Describe the attributes of a Sense of Community (Membership, Influence, Integration and Fulfillment of Needs and Shared Emotional Connection) for your group of individuals. Are some of these attributes present, or are you able to positively influence the attributes? Do this to get a better understanding of your group of individuals as a (potential) community.
- Do not use this explanation of this concept to conclude whether it concerns a community or not. If one of the attributes is not present in your group of individuals, this does not mean that it might not be a community.

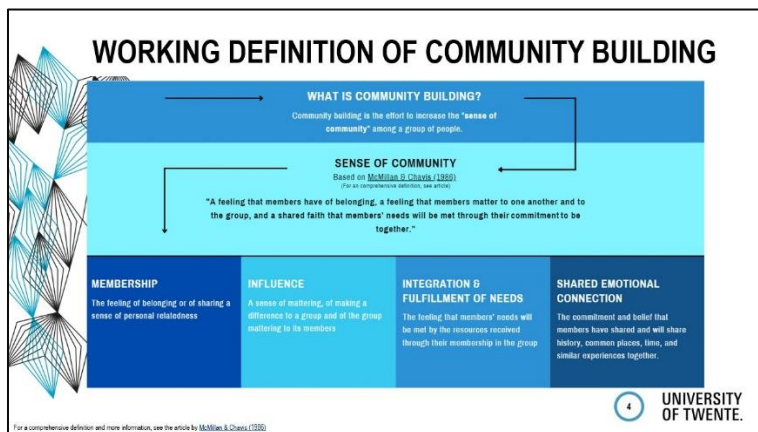


Figure 1: Corresponding Slide - Source - Community Building Handbook slide 4

The definition and explanation that are central in the Community Building Handbook and Complementary Guide are quoted from *Sense of Community: a definition and theory by McMillan & Chavis (1986)*.¹ The definition by McMillan and Chavis (1986) is selected to make sure that we have a common understanding of what the concepts of community and community building are and to make sure that several tools and instruments by the World Bank can be used in the context of UT.² Also, the sub-components they identify are concepts that are relatively easy to understand. You should note that this is just one of many definitions that can be found in academic literature and that there are numerous other definitions by other authors, for example, Chertok (1997) on the sense of community, and the definition of community building by Robert Putnam.

¹ McMillan, David & Chavis, David. (1986). Sense of Community: A Definition and Theory. *Journal of Community Psychology*, 14, 6-23. 10.1002/1520-6629(198601)14:13.0.CO;2-I.

² [Documents \(worldbank.org\)](#)

2.1.1 Community Building

In the Community Building Handbook and Complementary Guide, we define community building as: “the effort to increase the Sense of Community amongst a group of people.” But what do we mean when we speak of a Sense of Community? In academic literature, we follow the tradition of McMillan & Chavis (1986) that define a sense of community as: “a feeling that members have of belonging, a feeling that members matter to one another and to the group, and a shared faith that members’ needs will be met through their commitment to be together.” This definition consists of four sub-components: Membership, Influence, Integration and Fulfillment of Needs, and Shared Emotional Connections. You can find an overview of the sub-components and their hypothesised relationships in figure 2.

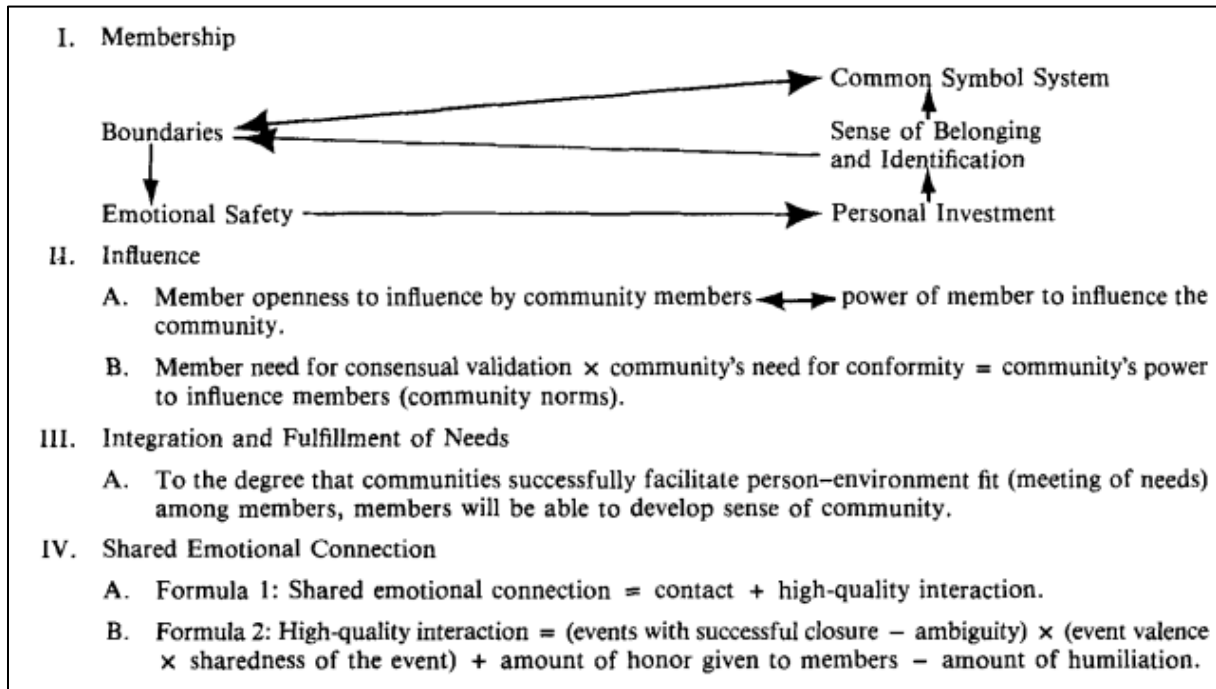


Figure 2: Elements of Sense of Community and their hypothesised relationships by McMillan and Chavis (1986).

2.1.2 Membership

The first sub-component of a Sense of Community by McMillan and Chavis (1986) is Membership. This component has five attributes: boundaries, emotional safety, a sense of belonging and identification, personal investment, and a common symbol system. These attributes work together and contribute to a sense of who is part of the community and who is not (McMillan & Chavis, 1986, p.11).

2.1.3 Influence

The second component of a Sense of Community by McMillan and Chavis (1986) is Influence. The following statements, which are derived from group cohesiveness research, apply to this attribute (McMillan & Chavis, 1986, p.12):

- Members are more attracted to a community in which they feel that they are influential.
- There is a significant positive relationship between cohesiveness and a community's influence on its members to conform. Thus, both conformity and community influence on members indicate the strength of the bond.
- The pressure for conformity and uniformity comes from the needs of the individual and the community for consensual validation. Thus, conformity serves as a force for closeness as well as an indicator of cohesiveness.
- Influence of a member on the community and influence of the community on a member operate concurrently, and one might expect to see the force of both operating simultaneously in a tightly knit community.

2.1.4 Integration and Fulfillment of Needs

The third component of a Sense of Community by McMillan and Chavis (1986) is Integration and Fulfillment of Needs. To the degree that communities successfully facilitate person-environment fit (meeting of needs) among members, members will be able to develop a sense of community (McMillan & Chavis, 1986, p.15).

2.1.5 Shared Emotional Connection

A shared emotional connection is based, in part, on a shared history. It is not necessary that group members have participated in the history in order to share it, but they must identify with it. The interactions of members in shared events and the specific attributes of the events may facilitate or inhibit the strength of the community (McMillan & Chavis, 1986, p.13).

1. The more people interact, the more likely they are to become close (contact hypothesis).
2. The more positive the experience and the relationships, the greater the bond. Success facilitates cohesion (quality of interaction).
3. If the interaction is ambiguous and the community's tasks are left unresolved, group cohesiveness will be inhibited (closure to events).
4. The more important the shared event is to those involved, the greater the community bond (shared valent event hypothesis).
5. The importance to the member of the community's history and current status, also known as emotional involvement. The more you invest, the more emotionally involved (investment).
6. Reward or humiliation in the presence of the community has a significant impact on attractiveness (effect of honour and humiliation on community members).
7. Spiritual bond.

2.2 IS IT A NETWORK, A TEAM OR A COMMUNITY?

- ✓ The goal of this section is to help you determine whether your group can be characterised as a network, team or community.

Actions and Recommendations

- Use the tool in figure 5 to determine what characteristics fit your group.
- Keep in mind that in practice a group can have characteristics from both networks, teams, and communities. We recommend you to check what characteristics fit best, or what characteristics fit your vision for the group best.
- Is your group a network? We recommend you to look into different methods of network building if you want to strengthen your network.
- Is your group a team? We recommend you to [contact HR](#) and look for different methods of team building if you want to strengthen your team.
- Is your group a community? We recommend you to continue with chapter 2.3.

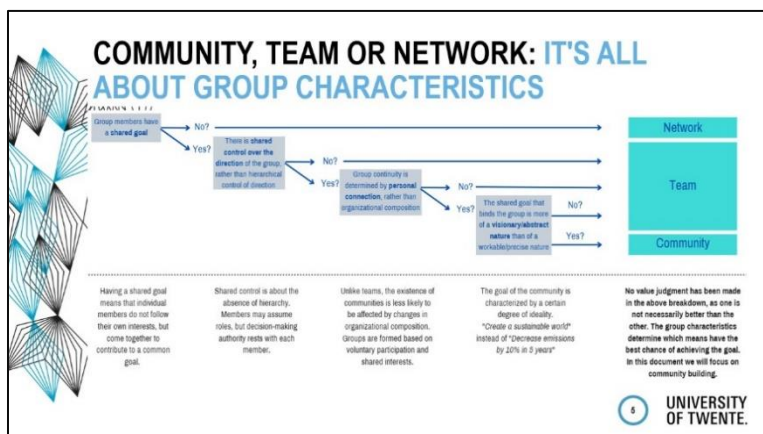


Figure 3: Corresponding Slide - Source - Community Building Handbook slide 5

Before actively using community building as a tool, it is important that you recognise the different characteristics of a network, a team, and a community. These terms are often used interchangeably by people within the University of Twente. Yet, there are significant differences, between the types of groups and the potential tools that you can use to strengthen the groups.

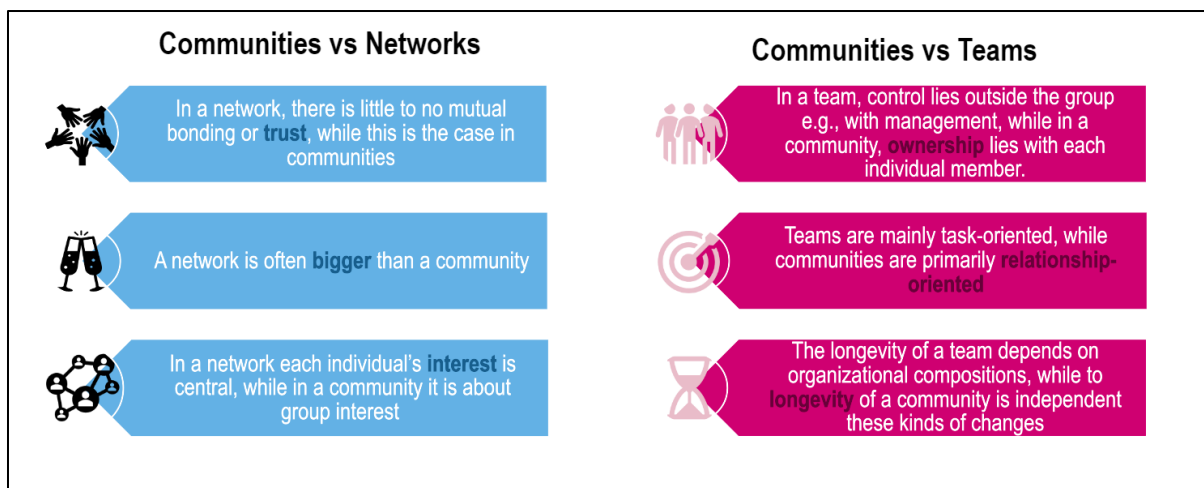


Figure 4: Communities versus Networks and Teams³

2.2.1 Communities versus Networks

In figure 4 you can see an overview of a comparison between certain characteristics between communities, networks and teams. On the left side of the picture, a comparison is presented between a community and a network.⁴⁵ A community is characterised by mutual bonding and trust. On the contrary, this mutual bonding and trust is not necessarily a characteristic of a network. If this is hard to identify in your group, ask yourself the following question: *is striving for mutual bonding or trust one of the goals of our group?* If so, it is more likely that your group can be characterised as a community.

Furthermore, a network is often bigger than a community. This is because in a community, relationships between individuals are often reciprocal and acquaintance is not via another, but direct. This implies that in a network, not all individuals are mutually acquainted. Next to that, a community can be characterised by putting the group's interest central. Here the focus lies on the common interest of the group while in a network each individual is pursuing their interest. This often results in the fact that networks have no shared goals or missions, unlike communities.

2.2.2 Communities versus Teams

In figure 4, on the right side, you can find an overview of the different characteristics of a team and a community.⁶ First of all, if you look at the control in a group, you can find a significant difference. In a team, the control of the group is hierarchically determined. This implies that you can find a team often in a managerial structure. The control of the group is concentrated outside the group. On the contrary, in a community control lies within the group and is shared among group members. So, the degree to control (influence) the direction of the group, which is also addressed by McMillan and Chavis (1986), is most likely to be a characteristic of a community.

Concerning orientation, in a team, you can often find a more task-based orientation.⁷ This implies that a team is often established for the sake of fulfilling certain tasks or solving specific problems. This is often already obvious by the choice of names such as task forces and working groups. When the task is fulfilled or the problem is solved, the team often finds no continuity. In comparison, a community is more relationship oriented. This means that their interactions define the community (and its continuity) and not the tasks they are executing. You can find a clear example of this at UT. Two separate groups are working on diversity, equity and inclusion. For specific tasks, such as making the terms of employment more inclusive, a team is established, that for a certain time works on this subject. However, Th!nk with Pride at UT is also a group that works on diversity, equity and inclusion, and is also contributing to making the terms of employment more inclusive, but the members of the group are not defined by that task. They are defined by their interactions, shared values, beliefs and interests. The previous part, it was shortly touched upon the continuity of the groups and the different factors that influence this continuity. Another factor that is of influence, is the organisational composition. If the organisation reorganises, changes vision etcetera, the continuity of certain teams can be affected. However, the longevity of a community is mostly independent of such organisational factors. This is also because a community is not hierarchical based and does not depend on the organisational structure or tasks. Please note that these are characteristics that are often found in these types of groups, but do not necessarily have to be present in your group. It can also be that you find characteristics in your group that direct to both a community and a team.

³ [Teams, communities and networks - The focus of Social Now 2020](#)

⁴ [Community or Network: What's the Difference? | Impactrics](#)

⁵ [Communities versus networks? - wenger-travner](#)

⁶ [Teams, communities and networks - The focus of Social Now 2020](#)

⁷ [Communities versus teams? - wenger-travner](#)

2.2.3 Tool

As described above, there are several characteristics that you can use to distinguish whether your group concerns a network, a team or a community. In order to do so, a flowchart is created that you can use. This flowchart can be found in figure 5.

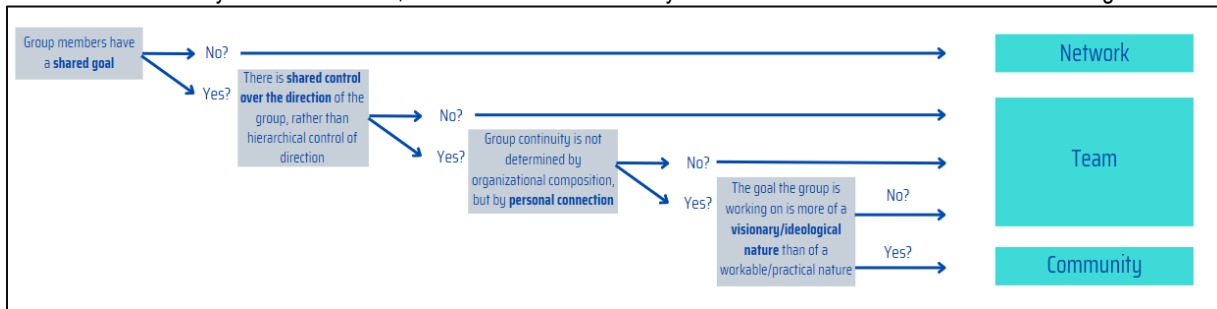


Figure 5: Flowchart: group characteristics and group type.

The first question you must ask is whether there is a shared goal. If there is no shared goal amongst a group of people, one can generally speak of a network. E.g., during a networking event, individual participants are motivated to interact with each other based on their interests instead of a common goal. You can distinguish between a team and a community by looking at shared control, continuity determined by personal connection and the nature of the goal. The second important question is about the control of a group. Is there shared control over the direction or lies the control outside the group? If there is no shared control, your group most likely can be characterised as a team. The following question is about the continuity of a group. A team is often characterised by goals that have an end date and once that end date is reached, the team in that composition ceases to exist. For example, teams that work on projects or a specific research proposal. The final question concerns the nature of the common goal. If the nature of the goal is more visionary/ideological, it is most likely that your group is a community instead of a team. An example of such a community is a sustainability community.

“In a recent case, the management of a group wanted this group to become a community, which also reflected their organisational goals. However, when using the flowchart in figure 5, it turned out that the group could best be described as a team.”

2.3 WHAT IS MY COMMUNITY CONTEXT AND WHAT ARE MY GOALS?

- ✓ The goal of this section is to help you identify in which context your community is located and subsequently to which goals your community building strategy can contribute.

Actions and Recommendations

- If you want to identify in what context your community is located, check the composition of the population of your community.
- If you want to know to what goals your community building project can contribute, identify the context in which your community is located.
- If you have a specific goal that you want to address with your community building project, check in which context your community should be located to positively influence that goal.

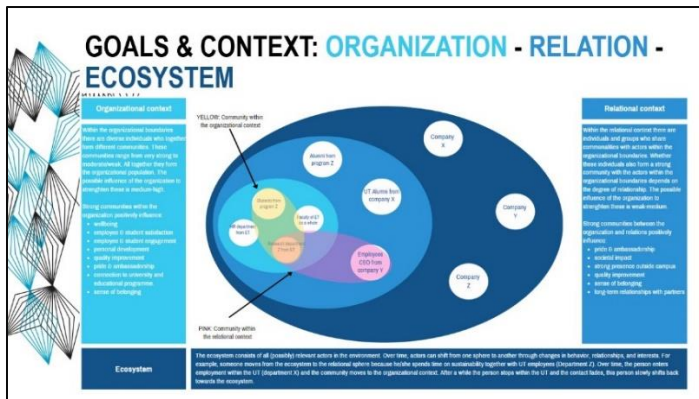


Figure 6: Corresponding Slide - Source - Community Building Handbook slide 6

In this part of the complementary guide, we will investigate the context and the goals when embarking on a community building journey. The insights in this chapter are based on internal documents and external literature. But why is it important to identify the context? The goals that you can reach with community building are highly dependent on the context in which the community is located. For example, when you start with community building in the organisational context, this can contribute to several organisational goals. However, if your goal is to create more societal impact. The organisational context might be too limited, and you might require broadening your scope to the relational context. In this section, we distinguish between communities in the organisational and the relational context. Together with people/companies that are not part of the community, they form the ecosystem. This is visualised in figure 7.

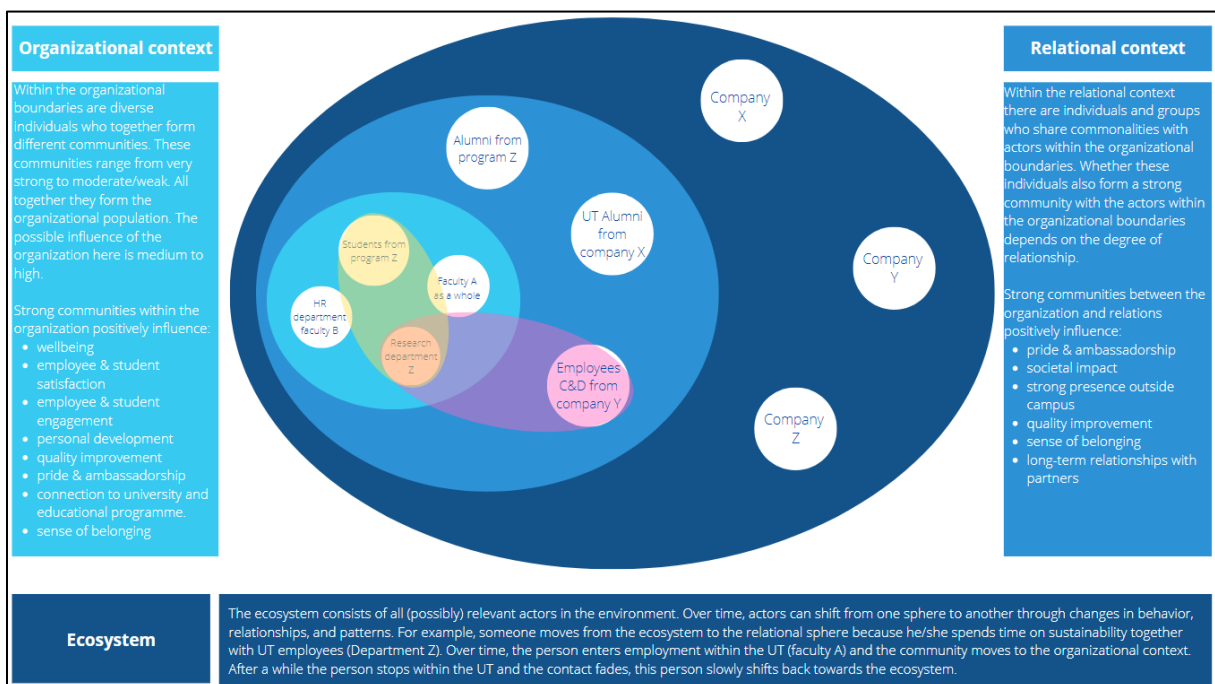


Figure 7: Visual to illustrate the different contexts. Please note, the names in the visual are created

2.3.1 The Organisational Context and Goals

How can you check in which context your community is located? There is a simple method to do so. If your community comprises people that are connected to UT via education and/or employment, we argue that your community is in the organisational context. This is also visualised as the yellow bubble in figure 7. Since the organisational context comprises the current UT population, this implies that the communities in this context fall within the policy scope of the UT. Therefore, one can conclude that the influence of the organisation on the communities, but also the communities on the organisation, is medium to high. This means community building in this organisational context can positively influence the following topics.

Strong communities within the organisational context positively influence:

- Improve well-being⁸
- Improve employee and student satisfaction⁹
- Improve employee and student engagement¹⁰
- Increase personal development¹¹
- Improve quality¹²
- Improve pride & ambassadorship¹³
- Increase the connection to the university and educational program¹⁴
- Increase sense of belonging¹⁵
- Increase resilience¹⁶
- Exchange knowledge¹⁷
- Reach a common goal¹⁸

If you are working at UT and your work/project should contribute to one of the above-mentioned topics, community building can be an appropriate tool for you.

2.3.2 The Relational Context and Goals

Suppose the population of your community comprises both people that are currently affiliated with UT but also people that are acquainted with UT but are not current employees or students. In that case, we can argue that the community lies in the relational context. This is also visualised as a red bubble in figure 7. Here one can consider the UT population, alumni, former employees and employees from companies that engage in joint projects at the UT. In comparison to communities in the organisational context, communities in the relational context are not (fully) within the policy scope of UT. This implies that there is a low to medium influence of the organisation on the community and vice versa. Strong communities in the relational context between the UT population and relations positively influence:

- Pride & Ambassadorship¹⁹
- Societal impact²⁰
- Strong presence outside the campus²¹
- Quality improvement²²
- Sense of belonging²³
- Long-term relationships with partners

If you are working at UT and your work/project should contribute to one of the above-mentioned topics, community building can be an appropriate tool for you.

2.3.3 The Ecosystem

The ecosystem consists of all (possible) relevant actors in the environment. For example, company X in figure 7. By definition, individuals in the ecosystem are not part of your community since there is no relationship. For example, as soon as company X, in figure 7, becomes part of your community, it moves to the relational context. Next to that, communities can also move. As communities and their composition can change, they can also move from one context to another. This can be due to changes in behaviour, interests, relationships and patterns. Additionally, you can also strategically choose in which context your community should be located, depending on the goals, as described above. You can do this by for example creating rules on membership (or removing rules on membership).

⁸ M&C – Annual Plan 2022, UT Quality Agreements

⁹ Rapportage Onderzoek Thuisbasis projectgroep COV

¹⁰ Rapportage Onderzoek Thuisbasis projectgroep COV, Glaser & Denhardt (2009), Blackwell & Colmenar (2000)

¹¹ UT Quality Agreements, ECIU - Building an ECIU University Community, NRO Symposium Hoger Onderwijs (2021), The Organisational Frontier (2000), Rohde, Reinecke, Pape & Janneck (2005)

¹² UT Quality Agreements, NRO Symposium Hoger Onderwijs (2021), Thompson & MacDonald (2005)

¹³ M&C – Annual Plan 2022

¹⁴ Rapportage Onderzoek Thuisbasis projectgroep COV

¹⁵ UT Quality Agreements, Avramchuk (2017), Mulroy & Lauber (2008), Eib & Miller (2006)

¹⁶ UT Quality Agreements, ECIU – Building an ECIU University Community

¹⁷ The Organisational Frontier (2000)

¹⁸ Eib & Miller (2006), McNeely (1999)

¹⁹ M&C – Annual Plan 2022

²⁰ M&C – Annual Plan 2022, TNW Annual plan 2022, ECIU – Building an ECIU University Community

²¹ TNW annual plan 2022, ECIU – Building an ECIU University Community, Blackwell & Colmenar (2000)

²² UT Quality Agreements, NRO Symposium Hoger Onderwijs (2021), Thompson & MacDonald (2005)

²³ UT Quality Agreements, Avramchuk (2017), Mulroy & Lauber (2008), Eib & Miller (2006)

“In a recent case, it was advised to focus on community building in the organisational context due to the fact that the majority (but not exclusively) of the goals were corresponding with those mentioned in 2.3.1.”

3. PHASE 2: BUILDING A COMMUNITY

- ✓ The goal of phase two is to help you take concrete steps in building your community.



Figure 8: Corresponding Slide - Source - Community Building Handbook slide 7

In phase one, you have determined that your group of people is a community (or you want it to become a community), in what context your community lies and what goals you can/want to achieve. Is your conclusion from phase one that community building is the right tool for your project, in phase two we will provide several steps that can help you with actually starting to build your community. **Whether it is an existing community or one that you aim to start, the steps in this chapter are relevant in both cases.** Community building, as stated in the first chapter, means increasing the sense of community within a group of individuals. Each of the steps mentioned in this chapter influences one (or multiple) subcomponent(s) of the concept sense of community, subsequently contributing to an increased sense of community.

The sub-chapters in this chapter refer to different community building steps that you can take. This is not a complete list but it can give you an indication of where to start. Also, there is no obligation to adhere to the sequence that is presented in phase two. We can imagine, especially if your community already exists, that some steps are familiar or not relevant anymore. However, it is recommended, also if you have already completed that step before reading this complementary guide, to look at the actions and recommendations of each sub-chapter.

3.1 WHAT ARE KEY SUCCESS FACTORS IN COMMUNITY BUILDING?

- ✓ The goal of this section is to give you more insight into what key success factors are in community building on which you should focus.

Actions and Recommendations

- *Please note that both intrinsic drive and extrinsic priority are important key success factors in community building and their effect decreases dramatically if only one of those factors is present.*
- *If you start a new community or want to increase the sense of community in your existing community:*
 - *Describe the intrinsic drive of the (potential) members and formulate actions to improve this intrinsic drive. For example, highlight events or topics that are important to all members to increase a shared emotional connection between the members.*
 - *Describe the extrinsic priority of the (potential) community topics and goals and formulate actions to improve this extrinsic priority. For example, try to bring the topic to the attention of management.*



Figure 9: Corresponding Slide - Source - Community Building Handbook slide 8

Two key success factors were identified that seem essential for successful community building (see figure 10). From several interviews with individuals engaged with community initiatives at UT, an overview of good practices in community building was created. The findings of the key success factors originate from these interviews and find part of their validation in the definition by McMillan & Chavis (1986).

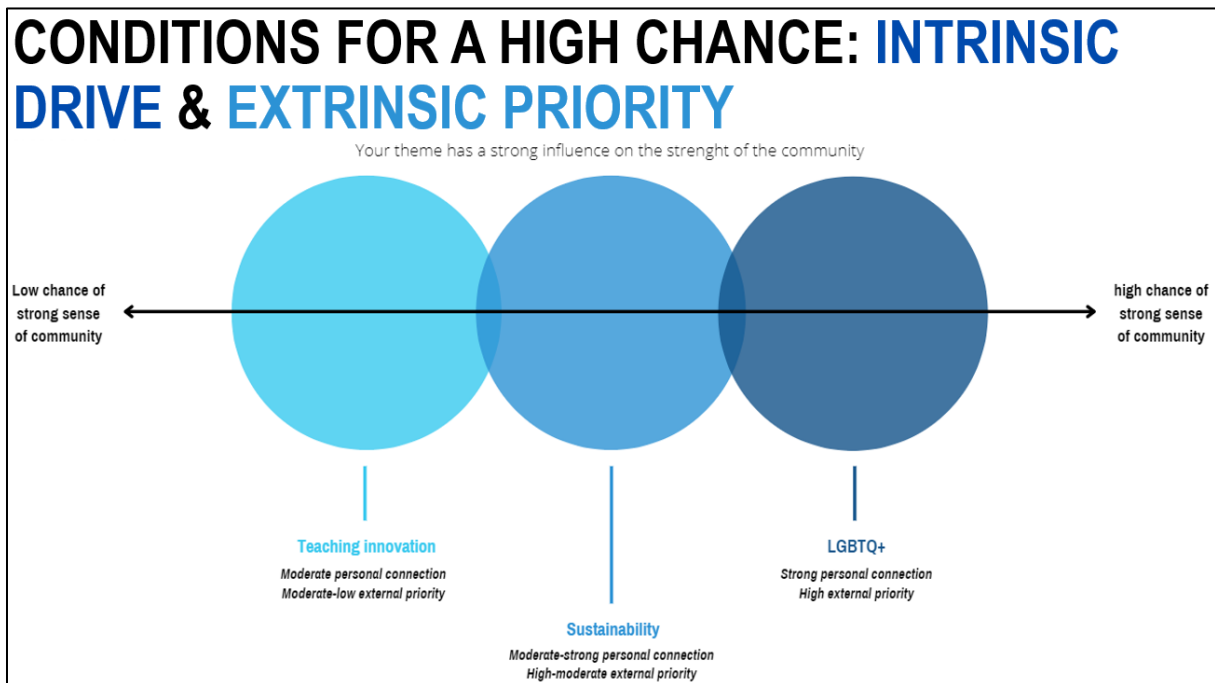


Figure 10: visual intrinsic drive & extrinsic priority

3.1.1 Intrinsic Drive (personal connection)

One of the two essentials for successful community building is that the members need to feel an intrinsic drive to engage. This intrinsic drive is most likely to be stronger if people feel that they have a strong personal connection to the main topic of the community. This personal connection is similar to the **shared emotional connection** that McMillan & Chavis (1986) mention in their literature and is likely to affect the sense of community similarly. As an example, the Th!nk With Pride community at UT is a very strong community when it comes to a personal connection (shared emotional connection) to the topic but also to the other members, as the people feel like they have a shared goal and identity (**sense of belonging and identification** by McMillan & Chavis, 1986). If there is no intrinsic drive from the community members themselves, as they are the ones that keep the community alive, the sense of community will decrease, and your community will weaken.

3.1.2 Extrinsic Priority

Next to a strong intrinsic drive, another key success factor is the external urgency and/or priority that is given to the topic or goal of the community. This means that the organisation or environment in which the community is located gives high priority to the existence of the community and devotes a great deal of time and resources to it. For example, within the Digital Society

Institute, there is a person tasked with a community support role. This person is responsible for community building in the institute. By hiring community support, the organisation shows that there is a priority for this community to grow stronger. This extrinsic priority can also be expressed by the organisation if they facilitate financial means for activities or physical locations that are put in place for the community.

“In a recent case, it was advised to consult the community on what lies close to their intrinsic drive and formulate a goal for the community accordingly to increase the chance of a strong community.”

3.2 BOTTOM-UP OR TOP-DOWN?

- ✓ The goal of this section is to help you to be aware that when you want to start community building, you require bottom-up initiative and top-down facilitation.

Actions and Recommendations

- *Are you starting a new community? Often there is no clear boundary between members and non-members yet and subsequently between bottom-up and top-down (subcomponent **boundaries** by McMillan & Chavis 1986). Before you start, clearly define the roles of the people involved and assign those to top-down efforts and bottom-up efforts. We advise you to do this to prevent making the mistake to kick-start a community top-down instead of bottom-up which negatively affects the sense of community.*
- *Are you working on community building within an existing community?*
 - *Are you a community member? We advise you to take the initiative for the direction and actions within the community together with other community members and to ask for top-down facilitation.*
 - *Are you part of management and not part of the community? We advise you to facilitate resources to the community and ask community members to take initiative for the direction and actions within the community. And you would think, what is the pay-off for me as management? Why would I simply provide resources? Please go back to chapter 2.3 to see all the benefits of a strong community in your organisation.*
- *Are you in a top-down position, always remember this phrase in community building: **don't force but facilitate.***

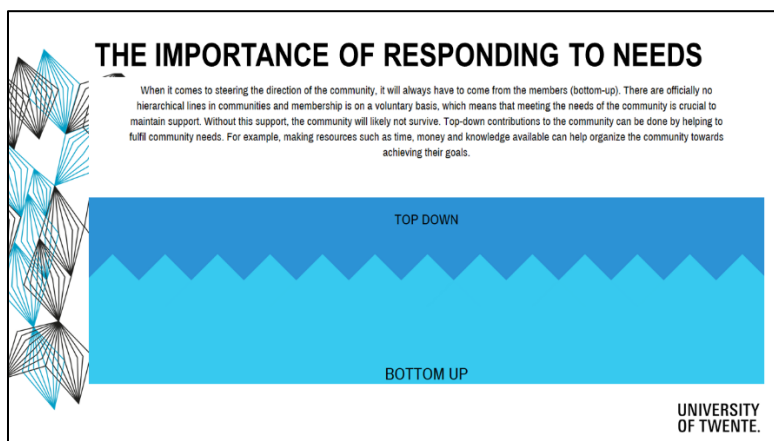


Figure 11: Corresponding Slide - Source - Community Building Handbook slide 9

In figure 12, a visual is presented that visualises the share of top-down effort and bottom-up effort in community building. When it comes to steering the direction of the community or taking actions to strengthen the community, this must emerge from the community members themselves (bottom-up). Not all community members need to be taking initiative as long as the directions and initiative come from within the community and not outside the community. This is actually what McMillan & Chavis (1986) talk about when they mention the crucial factor of **influence** in increasing the sense of community. If the directions and the actions to take come from outside the community itself, the members feel that they have little influence, which will subsequently lead to a decrease in sense of community.

Next to that, there are officially no hierarchical lines in communities and the commitment of members is often determined not only by **the shared emotional connection** but also by **the fulfilment of needs**. This means that meeting the needs of the

community is crucial to maintain support. Without this support, the community will not survive. So, while initiatives, direction and actions should emerge bottom-up, top-down contributions to the community can be done by helping to fulfil community needs, **integration and fulfilment of needs** (which is mentioned by McMillan & Chavis, 1986, as a key factor in the sense of community). For example, making resources such as time, money and knowledge available, which help the community with achieving its goals. However, you should be careful that top-down effort is not taking control over the community.

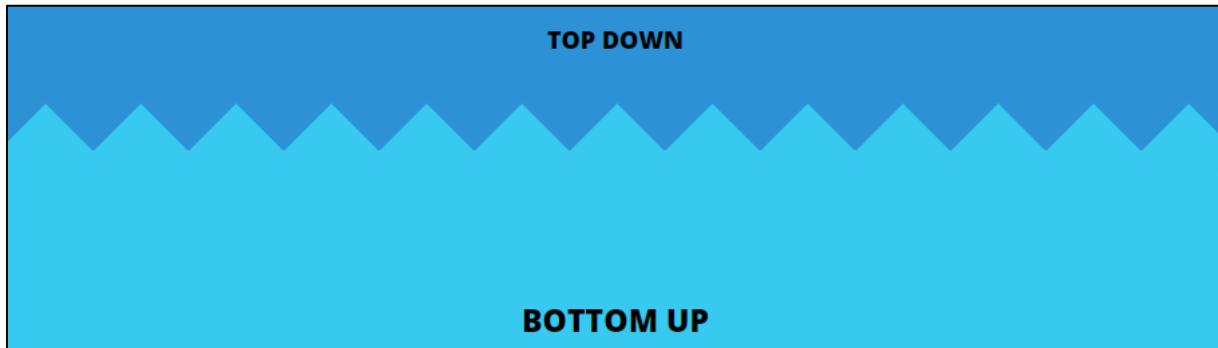


Figure 12: visual of the bottom-up versus top-down share in community building

“In a recent case, it was advised to set up an idea box for activities. In that way initiative for organising activities within a community is transferred from management (top-down) to community members themselves (bottom-up).”

3.3 WHAT COMMUNICATION CHANNELS DO I USE?

- ✓ The goal of this section is to introduce different communication channels to you and to help you decide on which one fits your community and community preferences best.

Actions and Recommendations

- *Are you starting a new community? Try to summarise your needs and check which communication channel seems most appropriate. Looking for a channel with many interaction opportunities? Explore for example MS Teams or Prikbord.*
- *Are you working with an existing community? Evaluate the e-communication channels that you use now and analyse whether they are most appropriate or whether you should choose another or an additional one next to the one you have.*
- *Are you not sure what communication channel you should use? We advise you to try different channels, combine different channels and evaluate the effects. Make sure that the evaluation is stored properly so that in the future if for example, members want another e-communication channel, you can base a decision on previous experiences with e-communication channels.*

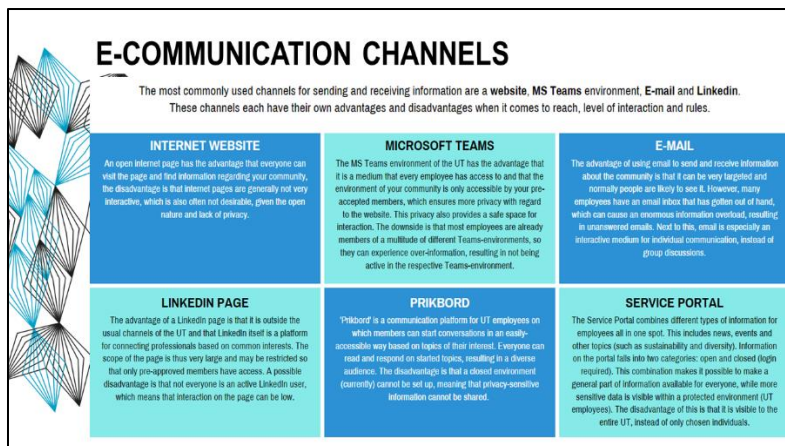


Figure 13: Corresponding Slide - Source - Community Building Handbook slide 10

Within a community, it is important to make use of e-communication channels where interaction can take place and information can be shared. These electronic communication channels have proven their importance over the past years during the COVID-19 crisis. As frequent interaction and high-quality interaction can contribute to an increased **shared emotional connection** (McMillan & Chavis, 1986), these communication channels can help in strengthening the sense of community. Within the University of Twente, there are several channels for interaction and sending and receiving information, namely the UT website, the MS Teams environment, e-mail, LinkedIn, Prikbord and the Service Portal. These channels each have their advantages and disadvantages when it comes to the scope, level of interaction and rules. The different channels with their advantages and disadvantages will be discussed below and can help you decide on which channel is most suitable for strengthening your community.

3.3.1 Internet Website

An open internet page has the advantage that everyone can visit the page and find information regarding your community. The disadvantage is that internet pages are generally not very interactive, which is also often not desirable, given the open nature and lack of privacy. So, you can use an internet website for introducing a **common symbol system**, which will subsequently increase the sense of community. However, due to the limited interaction possibilities of an internet website, it is advised to select an additional e-communication channel.

3.3.2 MS Teams

The MS Teams environment of UT has the advantage that it is a medium that every employee has access to and that the environment of your community is only accessible by your pre-accepted members, which ensures more privacy in comparison to the website. This privacy also provides a safe space for interaction. The downside is that most employees are already members of a multitude of different Teams-environments, so they can experience information overload, resulting in not being active in the respective Teams-environment. A teams-environment can contribute to increasing a sense of community among a group since it is **membership-based**, members can **influence** the content in the environment, and there is the opportunity for interaction both textual and also high-quality interaction via video, which increases the **shared emotional connection** among community members.

3.3.3 Email

The advantage of using email to send and receive information about the community is that it can be very targeted and normally people are likely to see it. However, many employees have an email inbox that has gotten out of hand, which can cause an enormous information overload, resulting in unanswered emails. Next to this, email is especially an interactive medium for individual communication, instead of group discussions. So, email can be an e-communication tool for your community since the interaction possibilities can increase the **shared emotional connection** and you can create an Outlook group with all the members to highlight **membership**.

3.3.4 LinkedIn

The advantage of a LinkedIn page is that it is outside the usual channels of UT and that LinkedIn itself is a platform for connecting professionals based on common interests. The scope of the page can be large and may be restricted so that only pre-approved members have access. A disadvantage is that not everyone is an active LinkedIn user, which means that interaction on the page can be low. LinkedIn can be an e-communication channel for your community since interaction possibilities increase the **shared emotional connection**, members can **influence** what is posted on the page and restricted accessibility can result in a feeling of **membership**.

3.3.5 Prikbord

'Prikbord' is a communication platform for UT employees on which members can start conversations in an easily accessible way based on topics of their interest. Everyone can read and respond to started topics, resulting in a diverse audience. The disadvantage is that a closed environment (currently) cannot be set up, meaning that privacy-sensitive information cannot be shared. This means that no clear boundaries can be set on **membership** in this channel. However, this channel is mainly for interaction between different individuals, and they have a lot of **influence** on what they publish, so the use of this channel can contribute to an increased **shared emotional connection**.

3.3.6 UT Service Portal

Via the Service Portal of UT, departments can provide information on their pages, link to the intranet pages and publish news items. Also, the employee portal has been transferred to the Service Portal. This is a place for information provision for the community, however, the level of interaction on this platform is limited. So, the service portal can serve as a **common symbol system** and there can be **boundaries** on access to certain information, which can result in an increased feeling of **membership**.

“In a recent case, it was advised to use e-mail as a communication means to introduce new members to the community in order to foster personal connections between current and new community members.

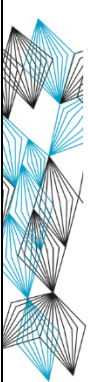
Next to that, it was advised to make the information on the online page more attractive to increase a sense of membership.”

3.4 HOW DO I ENGAGE, GROW AND SUSTAIN MY COMMUNITY?

- ✓ The goal of this section is to introduce different strategies to engage, grow and sustain your community and to help you decide on which one fits your community and community preferences best.

Actions and Recommendations

- *Are you kick-starting a new community? Formulate your community goals and identify per each of the above-mentioned strategies how they could contribute to your community and its goals. Subsequently, we would advise you to formulate concrete actions for two or three activities in the beginning.*
- *Is your community an already existing one? Check what strategies are already implemented in your community and which are not. Evaluate the effect of those already implemented. Are they contributing to building your community sufficiently or do you need an additional strategy?*
- *We recommend you to experiment with the different strategies and with different combinations. Each community is different, and each requires a different approach.*



ENGAGE, GROW & SUSTAIN

In addition to the thematic conditions for a great chance of a strong community and the (digital) channels to reach (potential) members, a strong and long-lasting community also masters the art of **creating and strengthening mutual social relationships**. We call these **'engagement activities'**.

Events
Organizing meetings/activities is a very important means to ensure the continuity and strength of the community and to keep members motivated and engaged. The moments when like-minded people come together serve as an ideal situation to exchange ideas, formulate a vision together and thus create and strengthen a personal bond with each other.
Storytelling
Storytelling is telling credible stories that are relevant to the target group and that ensure that there is a connection between events. These stories ensure that the target group understands (complex) information, remembers the information and creates an emotional bond.
Friendraising
The concept of friendraising involves an organization to establish a meaningful, genuine and quality relationship with other people inside or outside the group. The friendships that are established are purely authentic, regardless of financial prospects. The purpose of the relationship is to add value to the community by raising financial resources.
Floorwalking
Floor Walking is a method where an experienced community member will spend time at certain locations and literally Walks the Floor responding to individual queries, problems, tasks and community-related issues from (potential) members of the community.
Ambassadors
An ambassador represents the community or a certain part within it to the outside world. This person has a promotional role and ideally should therefore be a person of prestige or relevancy, in order to build others to themselves (and the community).
Branding
Branding stands for the image of a brand. In this case the community, the feeling it evokes in the public and the image people have in mind of the community. Branding is not the sum of everything that happens within the community, but the sum of how other people perceive what is happening.

Figure 14: Corresponding Slide - Source - Community Building Handbook slide 11

In addition to the thematic conditions for a great chance of a strong community and the (digital) channels to reach (potential) members, a strong and long-lasting community also masters the art of creating and strengthening mutual social relationships.

We call these “engagement activities.” These engagement activities influence the **membership, influence, integration and fulfilment of needs and shared emotional connection**, which subsequently increases the sense of community. You can also use these activities to increase **intrinsic drive** and **extrinsic priority**, as both seem crucial factors in community building.

3.4.1 Events

Organising meetings/activities is a particularly important means to ensure the continuity and strength of the community and to keep members motivated and engaged. The moments when like-minded people come together serve as an ideal situation to exchange ideas, formulate a vision together and thus create and **strengthen a personal bond** with each other.

3.4.2 Storytelling

Storytelling is telling credible stories that are relevant to the target group and that ensure that there is a connection between events. These stories ensure that the target group understands (complex) information, remembers the information, and creates an emotional bond. Also, this contributes to a sense of **belonging and identification**.

3.4.3 Friend-raising

The concept of friend-raising (evolution of fundraising) involves an community establishing meaningful, genuine, and high-quality relationships with other people inside or outside the group. The friendships that are established are purely authentic and grounded in common vision and values. The purpose of the relationship is to add value to the community, this could be financial, but also by providing knowledge, access to a network, etc.

3.4.4 Floorwalking

Floorwalking is a method where an experienced community member will spend time at certain locations and literally “walks the floor” responding to individual queries, problems, tasks, and community-related issues from (potential) members of the community.

3.4.5 Ambassadors

An ambassador represents the community or a certain part within it to the outside world. This person has a promotional role and ideally should therefore be a person of prestige or notoriety, to bind others to themselves (and the community).

3.4.6 Branding

Branding stands for the image of the brand, in this case, the community, the feeling it evokes in public, and the image people have in mind of the community. Branding is not the sum of everything that happens within the community, but the sum of how other people perceive what is happening.

“In a recent case, it was advised to find ambassadors within the smaller sub-communities and organise events that reflect the needs of the community. It was advised to use a newsletter to engage in storytelling about successful past and upcoming events for the community.”

4. ADDITIONAL TOOLS AND INFORMATION

- ✓ The goal of this section is to provide additional tools and information that you can use when working on community building.

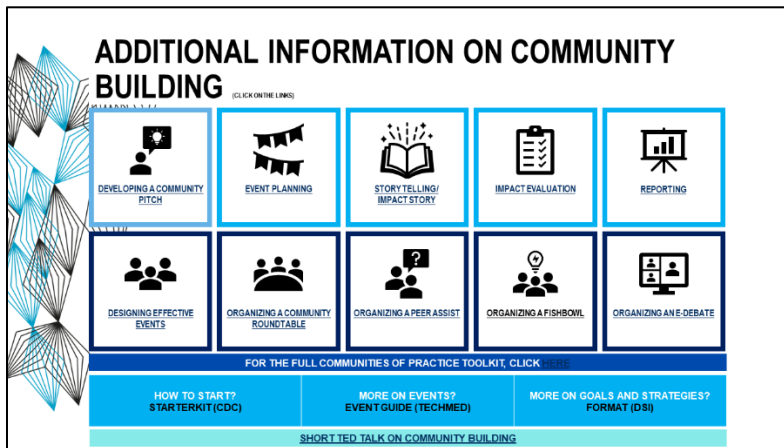


Figure 15: Corresponding Slide - Source - Community Building Handbook slide 12

4.1 COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE TOOLKIT – SOURCE WORLDBANK

The Communities of Practice Toolkit of the World Bank contains a lot of additional information on community building. The World Bank adheres to the same definition by McMillan and Chavis 1986, which increases the applicability of the information.

You can find the information via this web page: [Documents \(worldbank.org\)](https://documents.worldbank.org)

4.2 COMMUNITY BUILDING STARTERKIT – SOURCE CDC (UT)

Sometimes a community arises independently, but you can also actively influence the start of a community. If you ensure that a few preconditions are met, you will succeed in getting a community off the ground. To guide this process, the Innovation Lab of the Centre for Training and Development (CTD) has developed the Community Starter Kit. Please note, you can also use this tool to evaluate your existing community.

You can find the Community Building Starter kit here: <https://www.utwente.nl/en/service-portal/services/hr/resources/downloads-community-building-project/210805community-starterskit-97-en-def.pdf>

4.3 EVENT CANVAS – SOURCE THE CANVAS REVOLUTION

The event canvas is a strategic management template for developing new or documenting existing events and conference models. The event canvas is a visual chart with elements describing an event's promise, how it helps stakeholders to get their jobs done, resolving pains and creating gains within a set framework of commitment and expected return. The canvas articulates how the behaviour changes as a result of having participated in the event as well as stating the required levels of satisfaction against expectations. Additionally, the canvas outlines the costs and expected revenues in relation to the customer journey (service design) and the instructional design of the event.

You can find the Event Canvas here: [Event Canvas - The Canvas Revolution](#)

4.4 GOALS AND STRATEGIES FORMAT – SOURCE DSI (UT)

At the Digital Society Institute at UT, prof. dr. K. Schildkamp created a goals and strategies format for networks. However, these questions can be similarly helpful when working on the goals and strategies in your community.

You can find the Goals and Strategies Format here: <https://www.utwente.nl/en/service-portal/services/hr/resources/downloads-community-building-project/goals-and-activities-network-empty-example-2.pdf>

4.5 LECTURE ON COMMUNITY BUILDING – SOURCE TED TALK

In a talk by Emily Webber, it is stated that communities of practice can be a powerful tool to increase effectiveness.

You can find the talk on this web page: [Building Successful Communities of Practice by Emily Webber - Mind the Product](#)

5. CHECKLIST WITH ALL ACTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Below, we have combined all actions and recommendations as stated in the previous chapters. This checklist can be used parallel with the handbook and complementary guide. Since this checklist is only stated in the complementary guide, the corresponding slide numbers of the handbook are included as the usage will be more straightforward. Note, this checklist should not be used without the handbook and/or complementary guide next to it, since the aforementioned are necessary for the correct context.

Phase	Sub-phase	Action/recommendation	Checklist	Corresponding slide of the handbook
Communities	What is a community?	Describe the attributes of a Sense of Community (Membership, Influence, Integration and Fulfilment of Needs and Shared Emotional Connection) for your group of individuals. Are some of these attributes present, or are you able to positively influence the attributes? Do this to get a better understanding of your group of individuals as a (potential) community.		4
		Do not use the explanation of community building to conclude whether it concerns a community or not. If one of the elements is not present in your group of individuals, this does not mean that it might not be a community.		4
	Is it a network, a team, or a community?	Use the tool in figure 5 to determine what characteristics fit your group.		5
		Keep in mind that in practice a group can have characteristics from both networks, teams, and communities. We recommend you to check what characteristics fit best, or what characteristics fit your vision for the group the best.		5
		Is your group a network? We recommend you to look into different methods of network building if you want to strengthen your network.		5
		Is your group a team? We recommend you to contact HR and look for different methods of team building if you want to strengthen your team.		5
		Is your group a community, we recommend you to continue with chapter 2.3.		5
	What is my community context and what are my goals?	If you want to identify in what context your community is located, check the composition of the population of your community		6
		If you want to know to what goals your community building project can contribute, identify the context in which your community is located.		6
		If you have a specific goal that you want to address with your community building project, check in which context your community should be located to positively influence that goal.		6
Community building	What are key success factors in community building	Please note that both intrinsic drive and extrinsic priority are important key success factors in community building and their effect decreases dramatically if only one of those factors is present.		8
		If you start a new community or want to increase the sense of community in your existing community: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Describe the intrinsic drive of the (potential) members and formulate actions to improve this intrinsic drive. For example, highlight events or topics that are important to all members to increase a shared emotional connection between the members. 		8

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Describe the extrinsic priority of the (potential) community topics and goals and formulate actions to improve this extrinsic priority. For example, try to bring the topic to the attention of management. 		
	Bottom-up or top-down?	Are you starting a new community? Often there is no clear boundary between members and non-members yet and subsequently between bottom-up and top-down (subcomponent boundaries by McMillan & Chavis 1986). Before you start, clearly define the roles of the people involved and assign those to top-down efforts and bottom-up efforts. We advise you to do this to prevent making the mistake to kick-start a community top-down instead of bottom-up which negatively affects the sense of community.		9
		Are you working on community building within an existing community? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Are you a community member? We advise you to take the initiative for the direction and actions within the community together with other community members and to ask for top-down facilitation. Are you part of management and not part of the community? We advise you to facilitate resources to the community and ask community members to take initiative for the direction and actions within the community. And you would think, what is the pay-off for me as management? Why would I simply provide resources? Please go back to chapter 2.3 to see all the benefits of a strong community in your organisation. 		9
		Are you in a top-down position, always remember this phrase in community building: don't force but facilitate.		9
	What communication channels do I use?	Are you starting a new community? Try to summarise your needs and check which communication channel seems most appropriate. Looking for a channel with many interaction opportunities? Explore for example MS Teams or Prikbord.		10
		Are you working with an existing community? Evaluate the e-communication channels that you use now and analyse whether they are most appropriate or whether you should choose another or an additional one next to the one you have.		10
		Are you not sure what communication channel you should use? We advise you to try different channels, combine different channels and evaluate the effects. Make sure that the evaluation is stored properly so that in the future if for example, members want another e-communication channel, you can base a decision on previous experiences with e-communication channels.		10
	How do I engage, grow and sustain my community?	Are you kick-starting a new community? Formulate your community goals and identify per each of the above-mentioned strategies how they could contribute to your community and its goals. Subsequently, we would advise you to formulate concrete actions for two or three activities in the beginning.		11
		Is your community an already existing one? Check what strategies are already implemented in your community and which are not. Evaluate the effect of those already implemented. Are they contributing to building your community sufficiently or do you need an additional strategy?		11
		We recommend you to experiment with the different strategies and with different combinations. Each community is different, and each requires a different approach.		11

Table 1: Complete Overview Checklist of Actions and Recommendations

6. SOURCES

6.1 SOURCES EXTERNAL

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6.2 SOURCES INTERNAL

- UT Quality Agreements 2019-2024
- Rapportage Onderzoek Thuisbasis projectgroep COV
- M&C – Annual Plan 2022
- Starterskit Community Building (Career Development Centre)

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